

“CHANGELING HUMORISTS:” THE SPEECH ACTS OF THE EARLY MODERN
ENGLISH FOOL

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ABSTRACT

Nikki Roulo: "Changeling Humorists:" the Speech Acts of the Early Modern Fool
(Under the direction of David Baker)

This dissertation pushes back against traditional theories of locating the fool within the carnivalesque traditions of subversion. Instead, it examines the ways in which the fool's speech acts create an interstitial space to revise the humanist notion of civitas and transfer sovereignty from the royal court to the people. As a staged figure and a humanist trope flitting throughout seventeenth century discourses, the early modern English fool occupies a multimodal position and uses speech acts to democratize an access to voice before the English Civil War.

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“Sovereigne of the World:” The Early Modern Fool and His Verbal Play

In 1590, Edward Daunce recalls an encounter between an Italian jester kept at Elizabeth I’s court and two Spanish ambassadors: “The actors were, that *Bergamasco* (for his phantastick humors) named *Monarcho*, and two of the Spanish ambassadors retinue, who being about foure and twentie yeares past in Paules church in London, contended who was soueraigne of the world: the *Monarcho* maintained him self to be he, and named their king to be but his viceroy for *Spain*: the other two with great fury denying it.”¹ Seasoned ambassadors to Elizabeth’s court, the Spaniards surely witnessed *Monarcho*’s foolery previously at court and may even have been the butt of *Monarcho*’s jests.² Yet they seemingly took offense to the notion that the fool claimed to be sovereign of the world and one who appointed the nations’ kings as viceroys. The question posed by the ambassadors prompted *Monarcho* to deride them for not knowing who governed them. But their adamant denial and fury at such an answer prompts us to consider the tete-a-tete more than merely an interaction between the court fool and courtiers. The ambassadors’ great fury, recorded by Daunce, suggests a fear that such words may affect or bring forth a certain

¹ Edward Daunce, *A Briefe Discourse of the Spanish state vvith a dialogue annexed intituled Philobasilis* (London: Printed by Richard Field, 1590), 39.

² See Marion E. Colthorpe, “April 14 1568,” in *The Elizabethan Court Day by Day*, Folgerpedia (2017), n.p. *Monarcho*, himself, acquired quite the acclaim as evidenced by his numerous gifts:

April 14: Wardrobe account, including the Queen’s first payments ‘for an Italian named Monarcho’: a red gown, a jerkin, a doublet of striped sackcloth, red hose, a blue taffeta hat. *Monarcho* received numerous gifts of colourful clothes, 1568-1575. [Arnold, 106]. *Monarcho* is referred to by several contemporary authors as a court jester; in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* Shakespeare describes Armado as ‘a *Monarcho* and one that makes sport to the Prince’.

truth of Monarcho's statement: that he is sovereign of the world. Moreover, Monarcho, here, identifies his role as not only unrestrained power over the world, but as one who appoints. He *gives* sovereignty to particular individuals. But to whom does the fool grant sovereignty? And how?

In order to trace the change over time in the fool and answer the questions that arise from such a historical pattern, "Changeling Humorists" method examines how fools' verbal play functioned in such a way that made them a critical influence in the devolution of monarchy before the English civil war and made fools fall out of favor in the Restoration.

Inherited Motley: A Hagiography of the Early Modern English Fool

Numerous cultures possess their own tricksters, including Brer Rabbit, Kokopelli, Till Eulenspiegel, Howleglasse, Bricriu, Loki, Ainsī and Kaulu. These figures dominate a shared social narrative and reveal certain truths about their culture(s). However, they often operate as the Bakhtinian lord-of-misrule; that is to say, they teach via antithesis.³ The narrative of Little Rabbit Foo-Foo, for example, does not endorse bopping field mice on the head. Rather, Little Rabbit Foo-Foo enacts these anti-normative behaviors to illustrate their consequences and dissuade its audience from pursuing these behaviors or actions. These carnivalesque figures purposefully disrupt socio-political order precisely so the restored order reifies when the carnival concludes. James Scott notes, "Nothing illustrates the veiled cultural resistance of subordinate groups better than what have been termed trickster tales."⁴ Scott underscores that while the trickster narratives cut across class, these narratives emphasize certain groups of resistance to cultural norms. Indeed, as tricksters, fools flourish as figures of disruption and certain types of

³ See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helen Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2009).

⁴ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), 162.

political and cultural resistance. But the fool—as a figure—remains slightly distinct from a trickster in that it always operates as a social and political critic. Bakhtin and Scott argue that such resistance inevitably reifies social order. However, the fool, in using speech acts (which I discuss later in this introduction), transfers a certain power to the people that cannot be commodified or returned.

Traditionally, critics, including Robert Bell and Richard Priess, read early modern English fools as the medieval morality play's Vice descendants. Their medieval court antecedents often fell into the category of the "naturally born" fool, one who is intellectually challenged or disabled. Irina Metzler traces the pattern of fools kept as pets, a domestic form of charity to take in those mentally or physically disabled.⁵ Moreover, these fools could be men or women. Women also "played the fool," as the accounts of Jane the Fool and Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* demonstrate. And certainly, the sixteenth century English theater staged a natural fool, who presented the audience's vices to them. Towards the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, the evolution in fools became palpable and recorded in the text themselves. A new fool emerges as a more intellectual, humanist folly figure. Textual evidence from Shakespeare's plays further evidence this shift from natural to artificial fool. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio question's Olivia's decision to tolerate her father's fool, Feste:

I saw him put down the other day
with an ordinary fool that has no more brain
than a stone. Look you now, he's out of his guard
already; unless you laugh and minister occasion to
him, he is gagged. I protest, I take these wise men,
that crow so at these set kind of fools, no better
than the fools' zanies.⁶

⁵ See Irina Metzler, *Fools and Idiots? Intellectual Disability in the Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2015).

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, in *Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton Publishing, 2012).

Here, Malvolio distinguishes between Feste and an “ordinary fool,” or natural fool. Feste requires an occasion to act the fool. He responds to his interlocutors. This description underscores the verbal and rhetorical import of this “new” fool represented by Feste. Malvolio dismisses these new fools and those learned people who take pleasure in them as the natural fool’s stock sidekicks. This scene reifies the fool’s position as centrally verbal and as an interlocutor in a conversation.

“Changeling Humorists” will not be focusing on natural fools (clowns), such as Bottom from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, nor do I limit my discussion to popular stage fools. For the purposes of clarity, however, I use the term “clown” to refer to a “natural fool,” and fool to refer to an “artificial fool.” A natural fool refers to either a “rustic bumpkin” or appears mentally deficient. One easy example of a natural fool occurs in *Gamer Gurton’s Needle* where the Bedlam inhabits the role of the natural fool. An artificial fool, on the other hand, refers to a wit who plays the fool. Shakespeare’s mid to late career fools—Feste, Touchstone, Autolycus, etc.—all remain artificial fools. Unlike the vices in medieval morality plays or the parasites of classical Greek and Roman plays, the English early modern fool did not consistently serve a singular role (to point out a specific deadly vice or attach themselves to wealthy families). Instead, it undergoes a significant shift and its varied roles modulate. It simultaneously combines the stock features of the Italian zanni from *commedia dell’arte*, the acerbic political critiques of the French *sottie*, the trickery of the German Pickleherring, and the music of the Yiddish “wise men of Chelm.” I attempt to faithfully keep with the early modern understanding of a “fool.” While the Vice, from medieval morality plays, regulates individual behavior and the clown demonstrates the excess of vices in a person, the fool regulates society. And in the seventeenth century, the early modern usage of the term fool could refer to the character on

stage, the actor himself, the court jester, the writer, or a humanist trope in texts such as Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly*.⁷

In the seventeenth century, fools were much more cosmopolitan. Archibald (Archie) Armstrong accompanied Charles I to Spain during the failed Spanish match, and Thomas Coryate, Prince Henry's fool, travelled around Europe and Asia.⁸ Coryate even wrote several epistle tracts that record his travel to India, and his writing falls into a much earlier tradition of traveling with a diary or erasable tablet to record the "outside" world.⁹ A "literate Elfe," in the words of Ben Jonson, Coryate travelled more by "his wit than his feet," or put more simply, his contemporaries lauded his intellect alongside his impressive record of travel.¹⁰

Fools and the actors who played fools climbed the same social class ladders, often being from the lower or the burgeoning middle class and apprenticed out as children. The actors who played stage fools often led professional careers outside the theater and also wrote and published texts that passed through St. Paul's Churchyard. Andrew Cane and Robert Armin, for example, both maintained their work as master goldsmiths in London. Armin even attempted to define fools in his two tracts, *A Nest of Ninnies* and *Quips upon Questions*, and he went on to write a

⁷ Robert Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009) 1-3.

⁸ See "Archie Armstrong," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁹ See Shayne Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 227. For a more thorough account of travel writing and the exotic, which arguably Coryate's writings contributed, see also his first chapter.

¹⁰ Ben Jonson, "To the London Reader, on the Odcombian writer, Polytopian Thomas the Traueller," in Thomas Coryate, *Coryates Crambe, or his Colwort Twise Soddan and now Served in with other Macaronicke dishes, as the second course to his Crudities* (London: Printed for William Stansby, 1611). See, too, Anon, "Certaine Anacreonticke verses praeambulatory to the most ambulatorie Odcombian Traueller," in Thomas Coryate, *Coryates Crambe, or his Colwort Twise Soddan and now Served in with other Macaronicke dishes, as the second course to his Crudities* (London: Printed for William Stansby, 1611). Jonson likely used "elf" to mean "mischievous" or "imp" rather than referring to the supernatural. The location of Coryate's body remains unknown, as he died abroad. Today, he is more commonly known for his travels, which makes Jonson's testament to his wit all the more striking.

play and translate a poem from Italian to English. And rather than doggerel or mere nonsense, the writing of “fools” remains quite cogent and even prophetic. The ending couplet from Archibald “Archie” Armstrong’s pamphlet, *Archie’s Dream*—“Changes of Times surely cannot be small, /When Jesters rise and Archbishops fall”—sounds almost like a Bob Dylan song that one might now hear playing while shopping for groceries in a food co-op or ordering coffee in a café.¹¹

Licensed to freely speak, the fool theoretically could not face a treason trial. And in the seventeenth century, few texts recount the punishment of a fool for speaking.¹² The few literary records of punishments attest to the validity of the license: the continuance of the “lord of misrule” tradition and the importance of a voice “to wound and confound,” in the words of Robert Armin.¹³ Various accounts of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater place the stage fool as the most important character on the stage. If we believe Ben Jonson, the best actors played the fool, and William Shakespeare’s audience clearly recognized the prominence of the fool.¹⁴ Jean-Christophe Mayer points out that a seventeenth-century reader writes in the margins of a First Folio that Robert Armin acted as “the best foole that ever was.”¹⁵

¹¹ Archibald Armstrong, *Archie’s Dream: Sometimes Jester to His Majestie, but exiled the court by Canterburies malice with a relation for whom an odd chaire stood voide in hell* (London: s.n. 1641).

¹² The three texts are: John Denham’s *The Sophy*; William Shakespeare’s *King Lear*; Archibald Armstrong’s *Archie’s Dream*.

¹³ Robert Armin, *Quips upon Questions or, A clownes conceite on occasion offered bewraying a morrallised metamorphoses of changes vpon interrogatories: shewing a litle wit, with a great deale of will; or in deed, more desirous to please in it, then to profite by it. Clapt vp by a clowne of the towne in this last restraint, hauing litle else to doe, to make a litle vse of his fickle muse, and carelesle carping* (London: Printed by W. White, 1600), n.p.

¹⁴ See Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*.

¹⁵ Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare’s Early Readers: A Cultural History from 1590 to 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019), 108.

By the mid-seventeenth century, we see counter-impulses. Jestbooks proliferated in the 1630s and later. In spite of their ephemerality, jestbooks were often bound in sturdy enough bindings to sustain the everyday abuse and to be collected by an early modern reading audience who clearly found them important. (Later, antiquarians, who often could find “no wit” in them, bound them together with other jestbooks.)¹⁶ Moreover, the marginalia on the title page of Thomas Duffet’s *A Fond Lady* indicates that readers also still thought in terms of the fool.¹⁷

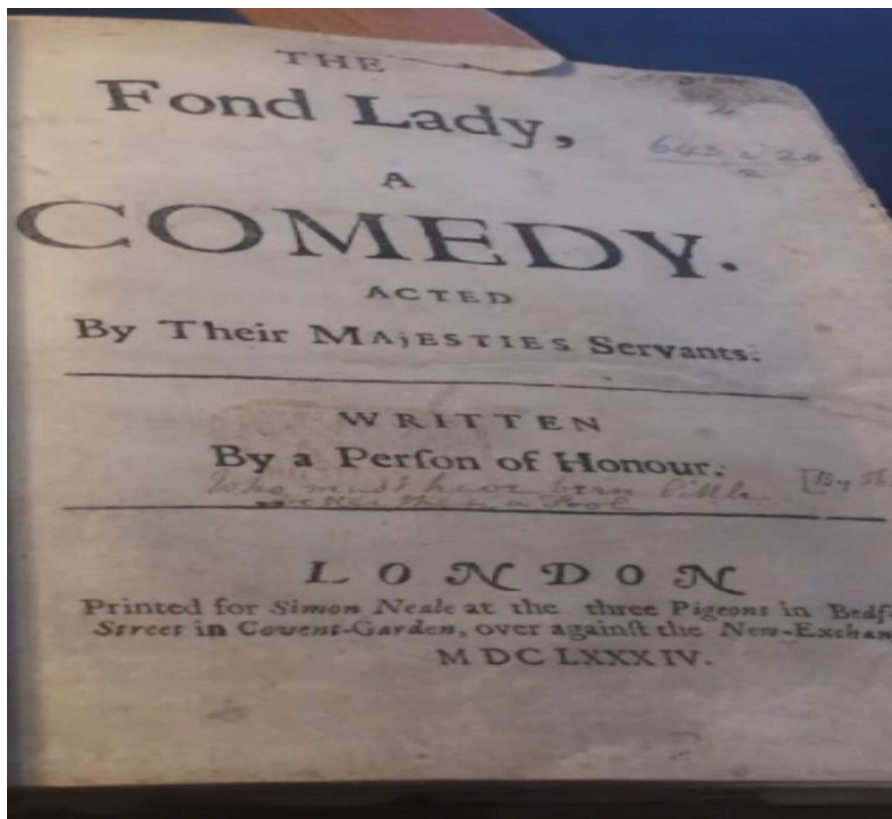


Figure I: Marginalia in Thomas Duffet’s *The Fond Lady*: “Who must have been little more than a Fool” However, as the marginalia on a copy of Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* indicates, later seventeenth-century readers shied away from the term “fool.” A reader identifies “Tom Jones, a foolish

¹⁶ Frederic Ouvry, Preface, in *Quips upon Questions* (London: Privately Printed, 1875), i.v.

¹⁷ See Thomas Duffet, Title Page, in *A Fond Lady* (London: 1684). The British Library.

Welchman, that could neither write nor read, zany to the Silly Astrologer.”¹⁸ While Butler uses both the term “fool” and “zany,” the reader uses “zany” and “foolish” as descriptors. Indeed, the dramatic personages and title pages from the later seventeenth century plays featured “jesters” and “zanies,” but not fools. And Restoration writers, including Nahum Tate (who reworked *King Lear* for a Restoration audience), stripped the fool from the stage. In Additional MS 45,865, which contains a copy of William Cavendish’s *Wits Triumvirate* (1635?), we see a later hand strikethrough the play’s fool characters, even though they appear in the play.

In the 1630s, Caroline playwrights often disavowed the fool publicly. In *The Antipodes*, Richard Brome notes:

in the dayes of *Tarlton* and *Kempe*,
Before the stage was purg’d from barbarism,
And brought to the perfection it now shines with.
Then fooles and jesters spent their wits, because
The Poets were wise enough to save their owne
For profitabler uses.¹⁹

Here, Brome claims that the fool with barbarism “was purg’d.” Before, fools took on some of the playwrights’ tasks often through collaboration or improvisation, which Shakespeare’s Hamlet decried. But the Caroline playwrights reworked the fool in such a way that they went undetected by the court and city pressures. The fool, therefore, seems to operate in a way that on the surface appears dangerous as any educated intellectual could take up the mantle of the all-licensed fool. For me, this raises a trajectory of questions that the dissertation attempts to parse: What about the fool’s voice makes it unsuitable for the public stage? What about its licensed voice forced

¹⁸ Samuel Butler, *Hubdras* (London: Printed by Richard Parker, 1689), 343. William Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

¹⁹ Richard Brome, *The Antipodes* (London: Printed by I. Okes, 1640), n.p.

Caroline playwrights to [un]identify it? Why does the stage fool "disappear" but emerge in genres meant for a "select" audience?

In order to answer these questions, "Changeling Humorists" looks at the fool's speech acts. I use the term "speech act" to define the various cultural tropes and genres that the fool performs. The book's central argument claims the fool transfers sovereignty of free speech and judgement of governance to an instructed public vis-a-vis domestic genres, which in the fool's mouth become speech acts. Speech acts describe and perform the utterance, and they also elicit a direct response in the interlocutor, which I discuss at length later.²⁰ The early modern fool uses these speech acts in a precise, methodical way to critique society and educate the public. These acts play with what would be culturally familiar (what Pierre Bourdieu suggests forms cultural capital) to the early modern audience.²¹ This familiarity forms a point of power intersection, or a *dispositif*. Through their shared *dispositif*, the fool's speech acts incorporate the context, the audience and readers, and the channels of power, including sovereignty.

This dissertation's claim challenges accounts of free speech, individual rights, and sovereignty that historians and literary scholars, including Michael McKeon, Richard Cust, and Kevin Sharpe trace.²² Cust points out the seventeenth century notion of a free parliament that spoke its mind to the prince on policy, but Cust suggests such a parliament acted as an intercessor on behalf of the public man.²³ In other words, one's elected representative in

²⁰ See J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). Here, I elide both illocutionary and perlocutionary acts for the sake of brevity.

²¹ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson (New York, Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.

²² See Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Richard Cust, "The 'public man' in late Tudor and Early Stuart England," in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, edited by Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007); Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992.

²³ Cust, "The 'public man' in late Tudor and Early Stuart England," 130.

parliament possessed the right to free speech, but the public possessed no such privilege. Eventually, the role of the public (and public interest) in government with the civil war would shift. McKeon observes this devolution of absolutism (or the trickle-down effect of sovereign power to the people) in the seventeenth century, noting the “civil wars created a crisis of domestication.”²⁴ Certainly, the English Civil War caused such a crisis and sparked certain questions about governing among the public. “[It] forced English people to look critically and skeptically at the customary assumption that in human sovereignty we experience an accommodation of divinity,” McKeon observes, and at the same time, “[A]t a lower level, however, the civil wars also complicated the idea of the public interest by contributing to the separation of the state from civil society, making explicit the existence of multiple private interests that had to be taken into account in the assessment of the public interest.”²⁵ Yet this book demonstrates that such separation from state and civil society and questions of public interest in fact occur as salient topics in fools’ speech acts, including *Monarcho*. It suggests that the devolution of absolutism, as McKeon coins it, occurs much earlier than the English civil war and manifests in cases such as the fool.

So what fool?: a Fool’s Definition

So what do I mean when I use the term, “fool?” When I reference my work on the fool, most interlocutors envision my work entailing a jovial, funny, clownish figure whose buffoonery entertains a jeering crowd surrounding the new public stages. Though I contend that my work engages with a more serious, acerbic humanist topos, my interlocutors’ skepticism remains clear. This introduction teases out the often conflated terms of fool, clown and jester. In *The World*

²⁴ McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*, 343.

²⁵ McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*, 343.

Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding, Ian Donaldson proposes the sheer madness of attempting to define comedy--and by extension folly--as it remains ephemeral. Acknowledging this madness, as Donaldson terms it, I allow the ephemera to identify itself. Rather than trap itself in a cyclical identification, “Changeling Humorists” relies upon earlier taxonomies. Critics use the terms of clown, fool, and jester seemingly interchangeably. Indeed, this interchangeability reflects early modern usage.²⁶ But, for analytical purposes, when we discuss the fool, we need to carefully distinguish between character and actor; persona and writer; stage fool from court jester.

Critics, including Robert Hornback, Preiss, and Robert Bell, cathect in their identifications of the fool, primarily by examining Shakespeare’s fools.²⁷ I note “recent” because earlier understandings of “fool” offer a more nuanced understanding of the fool’s duality and socio-political involvement. In 1906, Ambrose Bierce identified the intellectual sarcasm and import of the fool in his (admittedly satirical) definition.²⁸ However, the definition of the fool delivered by the gossip in Ben Jonson’s *The Staple of News* offers arguably the best definition for this evolving figure. During an interlude, the gossips of the play lament it lacks a fool. But

²⁶ Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 1-3.

²⁷ See Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare*; Richard Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship in Early Modern Theater* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014); Robert Bell, *Shakespeare Great Stage of Fools* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

²⁸ Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil’s Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), n.p. Bierce defines a fool as:
FOOL, n. A person who pervades the domain of intellectual speculation and diffuses himself through the channels of moral activity. He is omnific, omniform, omniperceptive, omniscient, omnipotent. ... He created patriotism and taught the nations war ... He established monarchical and republican government. He is from everlasting to everlasting—such as creation’s dawn beheld he fooleth now. In the morning of time he sang upon primitive hills, and in the noonday of existence headed the procession of being. His grandmotherly hand was warmly tucked-in the set sun of civilization, and in the twilight he prepares Man’s evening meal of milk-and-morality and turns down the covers of the universal grave. And after the rest of us shall have retired for the night of eternal oblivion he will sit up to write a history of human civilization.

the play actually redefines the fool to slip under the court and religious censors and pressures.²⁹

The aptly named Tattle, one of the gossips, defines the fool as “the finest man i'the company, they say, and has all the wit. He is the very justice o'Peace o' the Play and can commit whom he will, and what thee, error, absurdity as the toy takes him, and no man say, black is his eye, but laugh at him.”³⁰ In her definition, Tattle notes the professionalism of the fool—it remains the best actor.

As the fool remains the best actor in the company, it makes sense that the fool delivers many epilogues and praedelums. It both judges, incites and punishes. It uses absurdity—whether in wordplay or concept as a tool to exact this judgment. Yet it remains free from vengeance (and no one should accuse it of such). And Jonson’s use of the common proverb also adds even more judicial emphasis: the fool cannot be “committed for a crime” socially or politically. Before settling upon Jonson’s definition, I considered Erasmus' definition that fools “speak truth and even open insults and be heard with positive pleasure.”³¹ Erasmus uses the term, “morosophers,” or learned fools, to refer to what critics term an artificial fool. While Erasmus teased Thomas More with the term, “morosopher” encapsulates the philosophical and learned antics of the fool. But Erasmus' definition cannot aptly apply to the early English fool. Consider Lear's threat to whip his fool, the complaints made by Inigo Jones against Ben Jonson and many other such instances. It appears that an English audience did not always take complete “positive pleasure” in the proclamation of their folly. To me, Jonson's definition avoids this pitfall and seems more comprehensive. It will serve as the base term as I examine what the fool does and how it functions, and how these functions change or become co-opted over time.

²⁹ See Nikki Roulo, “‘A fool upon record:’ The Redefinition of the Caroline Stage Fool.”

³⁰ Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News* (London: Printed by I. B., 1631).

³¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1994), 57.

The definition points to the fool's role as a justice, or magistrate, of the peace. The fool highlights the absurdity in error; it becomes a toy. But toy simultaneously refers to a plaything and a witty saying.³² The fool points out error and absurdity, thus, through its sayings. Jonson's definition asks us to pay closer attention to the *language* of the fool. The definition includes a proverb, "Black is his eye," which circulated widely. Ray records the proverb as, "You cannot say black is his eye (or nail). That is, you can find no fault in him, charge him with no crime."³³ And the association with eyes (one of the words in the Hebrew Bible for conceit) and the fool also asks the audience to recall Proverbs 26:5.³⁴ The observation—or *seeing*—of a fool connects directly to his conceit, or wit. And the fool requires an answer according to its wit. The fool becomes a justice, one who sees all and who uses verbal acts to point out error and absurdity, who cannot be convicted of a crime, and who demands an answer to such an accord.

The proverb also connects the fool with more sinister forms of satire and with women, who maintained their separate counter-culture of jesting.³⁵ Mary Randolph notes, "The women of satire ... [have] an affinity with pain and disease and disaster of all kinds. Here and there emerge details which mark her as a woman of her profession: an association in one way or another with the color black."³⁶ While Jonson most likely never knew the Irish proverb, it certainly circulated

³² See "Toy," in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

³³ J. Ray, *A Complete Collection of English Proverbs Also the Most Celebrated Proverbs Scotch, Italian, French and Spanish* (London: Printed for T. And J. Allman, 1818), 121.

³⁴ See Proverbs 26:5, in the Geneva Bible, 1599. The line is translated from the Hebrew as "Answer a fool according to his foolishness, lest he be wise in his own conceit." See also the Aleppo Codex, which reads "ענה כסיל כאולתו פן-ה יהיה חכם בעיניו." The line uses the term eyes in lieu of conceit. Moreover, the definition of the early modern fool, by Jonson, counters the Bible's usage of the term "fool." Fools' speech acts slip beneath censor, in part, because Christian culture does not anticipate justice from a fool's mouth.

³⁵ See Pamela Brown, *Better a Shrew than A Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell UP, 2003).

³⁶ See, too, Mary Claire Randolph, "Female Satirists of Ancient Ireland," in *Southern Folklore Quarterly* VI no. 2 (1942): 85-86.

in the cosmopolitan cultural milieu, and some of the audience, doubtlessly, associated the color black with satire and particularly a painful, exacting form of satire. And indeed, any critique or frank conversation produces pain. In his essay, "On Conversation," Michel de Montaigne defines a spoken encounter by "the sharpness and vigor of its communication, like love in biting and scratching: it is not vigorous and generous enough, if it be not quarrelsome, if it be civilized and artificial, if it treads nicely and fears the shock—."³⁷ For Montaigne, verbal encounters should produce pain, if to be real, natural, and to function. Yet in its "biting and scratching," it produces pleasure. For an early modern audience, as Michael Schoenfeldt points out, the dichotomy of pain and pleasure closes when physiology and the body become tools for articulation and mapping.³⁸ Thus, while at first an anathema to link the fool with painful satire, it actually provides a truer parameter for the fool and its actions. This definition with its multiple connotations remains apt for classifying the early modern English fool. The fool's speech acts, therefore, follow Montaigne's theory of conversation. The fool uses the everyday to often painfully critique political and social absurdity and abuses. I am talking about the fool as a public practice, both as a literary text and context. "Changeling Humorists" also traces a diachronic movement. Robert Hayman's *Quodlibets*, for example, publishes a seemingly archaic fool at the same time contemporary London texts on the surface abjured from containing a fool while simultaneously reworking the fool.

Boaty McBoatface: Speech Acts and Theory

Speech act theory provides a useful lens for studying how fools operate and change over this brief historical period for these three reasons: 1.) it illustrates the resistance in fools' verbal

³⁷ Michel de Montaigne, "On Conversation," in *Essais*.

³⁸ See Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

play; 2.) it addresses the use of context and context collapse; 3.) it explicates how fools incorporate pragmatism and lived experience. In order to develop a shared vocabulary to explain the early modern English fool's functions and operations (on stage and off), I expand upon the critiques of Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Stanley Fish to consider speech acts embedded in the literary and peruse how fools such as Monarcho manipulate these speech acts to educate and transfer a form of sovereignty to the public. By no means is this book the first to acknowledge speech acts in literature. Pushing against J. L. Austin and John Searle's insistence upon felicity or "truth" requirements for a speech act, Stanley Fish argues that context and intention be considered within speech act theory.³⁹ For Searle and Austin, "truth" in a speech act seemed incompatible entirely, for fiction suspends reality, even if it performs a mirror of reality for the audience to encounter its image. Richard Ohmann sidesteps this problem by pointing out our dual approach to the world: "we assume the real world and judge the felicity of the speech acts ... [in fiction] we assume the felicity of speech acts and infer a world."⁴⁰ In other words, we trust the appropriateness of the speech act to body forth a world for us in literary works.

We trust that speech acts do produce *something* and imagine a space predicated upon them. For Derrida, the differences between real and performative speech acts are insignificant. As Fish puts it, Derrida's critique of speech acts "denies the obvious differences between fiction and real life. But in fact it denies nothing. It simply asserts that the differences, whatever they are (and they are not always the same), do not arrange themselves around a basic or underlying difference between unmediated experience and experience that is the product of interpretive

³⁹ See Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham: Duke UP, 1989), 489.

⁴⁰ Richard Ohmann, "Speech Acts and the Response to Literature," at MLA, December 1976.

activity.”⁴¹ But Fish also applies a certain form of pragmatism (organized around the accrument of knowledge vis-à-vis experience) to such speech acts. By which, the speech act mediates the experience of the audience. For example, one of Autolycus’ speech acts in *The Winter’s Tale* takes the familiar shared experience of hearing a ballad on the street that the audience experienced and mediates the lived experience by performing it. Derrida extended the context to include all interlocutors and each situation. But as he points out, no context is a completely closed circuit.⁴² By closed, he means resistant to the grafting of other associations and interpretations. For Butler, performance remains intrinsic to every social interaction, including speech acts, and the performativity of speech cannot be isolated from the body.⁴³ “This, then, is how successful performatives occur,” Fish writes, “by means of the shared assumptions which enables speakers and hearers to make the same kind of sense of the words they exchange. And this also explains why the successful performatives is not assured, because those who hear with different assumptions will be making a different kind of sense.”⁴⁴ This pragmatic inflection speaks directly to the way speech acts of the fool function via shared knowledge or cultural experience. Not assured and always speculative, such speech acts remain subject to fallibility, but when they do work, they become an incredible force of action that sidesteps censorship.

But whereas Derrida and Butler follow the same pattern in conceptualizing speech acts as constative statements (ones which may imply the first person), I push the term and consider statements that do not use first person to incorporate the “death of the author,” or more

⁴¹ Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies*, 53.

⁴² See Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” In *Limited Inc* (1988), 9.

⁴³ See Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: 1997), 141.

⁴⁴ Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally*, 52.

specifically, the culturally authored.⁴⁵ Moreover, prior speech act theory does not account for power hierarchies nor relationships intrinsic within language. Although English lost the formal “you” still present in languages such as French and German, it still retains the royal “we.” Furthermore, in certain contexts, it remains safer to manipulate speech so it stays distant and unconnected—another person’s thoughts, ideas or philosophy. While William Shakespeare’s Coriolanus may very well possess a “beggared tongue” rhetorically, his speech looks very different from a beggar who may very well use the culturally authored to enact a material change. Such distance also necessitates rhetorically distancing oneself from first person pronouns. However, speech acts delivered within these contexts still remain as effective. These moments do describe and perform the act simultaneously regardless of who delivers the act or claims to deliver the act. James Scott observes with his own social interactions, “when I had to choke back responses that would not have been prudent I often found someone to whom I could voice my unspoken thoughts.”⁴⁶ As we know, imprudent speech often festers until it manifests in various articulations to someone privately or the public as satire, libel, graffiti, pamphlets, social media postings, and so forth. That same logic persists when we look back and trace it forward. By expanding the term speech act to include the culturally authored, I can explicate the voice articulated through the fool’s specific remixing of tropes and genres regardless of whether they specifically use the first person.

⁴⁵ See Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. While Austin considers any statement delivered during acting “infelicitous,” everyone acts in any interaction with interlocutor or an environment. My expansion of the term includes the acting environment. See, too, Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author,” in *Image-Music-Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

⁴⁶ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), ix-x.

Because these speech acts remain culturally authored, they provide a mechanism that transfers power. For Scott, Michel Foucault, Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakhtin, resistance merely reifies power hierarchies. Scott and Foucault suggest these power hierarchies become social while Marx argues for the hierarchies to remain endemic to capitalism and economies. Meanwhile, Bakhtin posits a middle ground and cites a reinstatement of the dominant power system in place. The interlocutor and medium, however, affects these power hierarchies and systems and their co-opting. As J. G. A. Pocock points out, they in fact belong to the same system. Pocock argues that “it is the imperfect character of verbal statements which renders them answerable and human communication possible, and there may be said to exist a Hobbesian kind of obligation to verbalize my acts toward my neighbor so that he may have the opportunity of answering them. ... [I]n the context of a consideration of politics itself as a language-system and language itself as a political system. And although my politics will initially develop as a classical structure of shared power, I shall—in order to make it quite clear that it is power that is being shared—start with a consideration of words as actions and as acts of power toward persons.”⁴⁷ In other words, words as acts (speech acts) transfer a certain power and obligations to the conversant. Separating power (or politics) from words remains impossible, even more so when we consider a culturally authored text, one with a multitude of authors and not a singular, individual with a certain power to bequeath.

In any case, the anonymity of the fool’s speech acts keeps the power of free speech transferred. Once circulated, such power remains impossible to recall or commodify the power and critique transferred. Ban it, and it becomes the latest text read. Instead, the fool’s speech act

⁴⁷ J. G. A. Pocock, “Verbalizing a Political Act: Towards a Politics of Speech,” in *Political Theory*, vol. 1 no. 1 (1973): 28.

proliferates in culture, passed on and recycled. That is not to say that the fool becomes “anti-establishment,” “anti-institution,” or “anti-hierarchy.” As James Simpson cogently complains, “[t]he very practice of Anglo-American literary criticism and pedagogy depends on presenting literature as resistant, anti-hierarchical and anti-institutional.”⁴⁸ Yet I want to challenge this codependence as literary history rarely parses so neatly into categories of “resistance” or “anti-institutional.” To be “anti-institutional,” by effect, means simply to belong to another institution. Moreover, the literary history of the fool and its speech acts cannot neatly be defined as a proto-Marxist, anti-establishment leftist, or even of the Levellers’ company. Simultaneously, the fool resists, conforms, and works within its own hierarchies. Its speech acts transfer a power that cannot be commodified, I suggest, but that power operates within the current social and political systems and frameworks.

Where We Were and Are Now

The extant criticism on fools offers a good overview of how scholars identify the figure in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, but this strand of criticism remains limited. Critics, including Preiss and Robert Hornback, focus almost exclusively upon the stage fool’s presence in plays. Even though Robert Bell begins by addressing Erasmus’ *In Praise of Folly*, the criticism only accounts for Elizabethan and Jacobean stage fools in their central arguments. Critical interest in the fool seems to owe its start to the studies of festival and humor. Without an understanding of the place of mirth, “fools’ text” seems unintelligible, as we can see from Frederic Ouvre’s early commentary. In his introduction to Armin’s work, Ouvre laments, “[a]lthough the work thus appears to have gone through three editions, I cannot say that there is much wit either in the

⁴⁸ James Simpson, *Permanent Revolution: The Reformation and the Illiberal roots of Liberalism* (Harvard: Harvard UP, 2019), 3.

Questions or in the Quips. Nevertheless, the book is a highly curious one."⁴⁹ His remarks underscore the nineteenth century's general inattention to the fool and its verbal wordplay. While early critics rarely consider the fool, the turn of the twentieth century brought a change to this lapse. E. K. Chambers' *The Mediaeval Stage* records the importance of the "Feast of Fools" in understanding early drama, and in 1923, Olive Busby published her master's thesis, "Studies in the Development of the Fool in the Elizabethan Drama." She traced the fool back to the medieval vices and festivals. The focus on festivals provides useful frameworks to consider the place and function of humor (and purposeful folly) in the Renaissance.

While the critical conversation on comedy tends to focus upon festivals, the limited extent of criticism on the fool spends an exponential amount of energy on identifying fools or positing their various origins. Vicki Janik provides an exhaustive taxonomy of fools in literature and art. Other critics, including John Kerrigan, track the difference in fools between textual editions or throughout Elizabethan theater.⁵⁰ Various critics, including Tiffany Stern, Robert Hornback, Robert Bell and Bart van Es, helpfully distinguish a turning point in the types of stage fools. Most critics concur that this change actually stems from a change in Shakespeare's acting company. Often, these critics apply the terms "natural fool" and "artificial" fool to refer to this schism in stage fools.

Almost all extant criticism on fools agrees that when William Kempe left the company, Robert Armin replaced his style of clowning with acerbic wordplay. Nora Johnson, Catherine Henze, van Es and Margreta de Grazia quibble about the level of collaboration between Robert

⁴⁹ See Frederic Ouvry, Introduction, in *Quips upon Questions*.

⁵⁰ See *Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, edited by Vicki Janik (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1998); John Kerrigan, "Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in King Lear," in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, edited by Gary Taylor and Michael Warren (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983). Kerrigan's chapter examines the substantial differences in Lear's Fool between the quarto and folio editions.

Armin and William Shakespeare. Henze and Johnson suggest that Armin and Shakespeare likely colluded, whereas van Es vehemently rejects the idea.⁵¹ Instead, he points out that Shakespeare remained attuned to his actors and likely wrote each fool's part with Armin in mind. However, he posits a collaboration between William Kempe and Shakespeare. Kempe traveled the continent and could provide Shakespeare with the knowledge of the various European traditions speckled throughout the plays. But even van Es acknowledges that these traditions could easily be found in numerous sources. He claims the "starkest contrast between Armin (watching the stage in 1599) and Kemp was not the physical difference between a diminutive satirist and a clownish strong man but the opposition between pan-European and domestic appeal."⁵² For van Es, Shakespeare's choice to hire Armin remains peculiar. He replaced a professional actor with an upstart "pixie" balladeer whose only claim to fame appeared in cheap print. Despite his disdain for Armin, in the end, van Es discloses that Armin created the "motley fool." Moreover, van Es shares his disdain of Armin's fooling with the more zealous Puritans and other audience members, but he overlooks this affective response. While Armin certainly helped shape the "artificial fool" and possibly collaborated with Shakespeare, the major gap in these studies tends to be encapsulated quite simply in the question, "Why?" The seemingly ubiquitous focus upon Shakespeare's fools seems to preclude the cultural and historical significance of this shift.

The attention to the social antagonism towards fools remains limited. Angela Heetderk's thoughtful examination of Feste's performance demonstrates "how song highlights the marginal

⁵¹ See Catherine Henze, *Robert Armin and Shakespeare's Performed Songs* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Margareta de Grazia, *"Hamlet" without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007); Nora Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵² Bart van Es, "His Fellow Actors Will Kemp, Robert Armin and other Members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the King's Men," in *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography*, edited by Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), 263.

position of both female characters and male characters deemed outside the parameters of idealized masculinity.”⁵³ She aptly points out the tenuous position of stage fools who “are not only threatening because they are difficult to identify, but they are also the targets of longstanding anti-fool sentiments in medieval and early modern literature. This anti-fool literary history associates singing, vocational fools with lying and outright treachery.”⁵⁴ I would like to build upon Heetderk’s observation and parse the relationship between treachery and an unstoppered voice.

While most critics focus on Shakespeare's famous fools, several critics do broaden their discussions and attempt to posit why fools "disappeared" or fell from popularity. Richard Helgerson claims fools became a casualty of the shift to an author-driven stage.⁵⁵ Yet he locates this shift in the early seventeenth century, so his theory overlooks forty years of fools who dominated the stage well after this shift occurred. Self-styled as a "literary archeologist," Hornback traces the tradition back through the Middle Ages in his reading of Yorick's skull. Yet he neglects to really address the nuances of fools’ tools or how it might influence or impact the broader socio-religious sphere. He claims that the stage fool's decline in Caroline drama stems from a neoclassical turn. Caroline theatre, he suggests, stripped away the bawdiness of old comedy. And stage fools, he posits, could not accommodate this turn.⁵⁶ For obvious reasons, this suggestion does not represent an accurate sketch of the period's drama and tensions, or a

⁵³ Angela Heetderks, "'Better a witty fool than a foolish wit': Song, Fooling, and Intellectual Disability in Shakespearean Drama," in *Gender and Song in Early Modern England*, edited by Leslie Dunn and Katherine Larson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 64.

⁵⁴ Heetderks, "'Better a witty fool than a foolish wit': Song, Fooling, and Intellectual Disability in Shakespearean Drama," 67.

⁵⁵ Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 218.

⁵⁶ Robert Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface Comic Traditions: From the Old World to the New* (New York: Palgrave, 2018).

"decline" of fools. Not only does it ignore all classical comedy, it seems to overlook any "neoclassical" references and turns in Shakespeare, George Chapman, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe and others. Moreover, Caroline drama remains far from sanitized. One only need read Richard Brome's *The Antipodes* or any of Ben Jonson's late plays. Furthermore, the "artificial" fool (who quoted Cato, used syllogisms, and sublimated folly) readily addressed classical works and neoclassical ideas. Barbara Otto's pervading theory—that fools disappeared from the Caroline stage because of the lack of mimetic representation—also neglects to address the historical or cultural contexts.⁵⁷ By all accounts, Archie Armstrong continued to receive his pay of two schillings when Charles I pared the court staff when he combined households in 1625. He also accompanied Charles on his trip to Spain. Moreover, Armstrong remained at court until 1637. Charles replaced him with a less provocative jester, "Muckle John." Moreover, a plethora of jestbooks and "fool's texts" circulated London, suggesting a mass demand for such texts.

Of the scholars who examine fools' verbal play, Ralph Lerner offers a particularly provocative reading. He helpfully connects the political tensions of the period to the adoption of "foolish" personae. Lerner examines the *tete-a-tete* between Thomas More and Erasmus to suggest that they adopt the persona of fools to disguise their critiques of tyranny and skepticism within folly. Lerner aptly identifies the playfulness between More and Erasmus and their trust in the other's comprehension of shared information. But I quarrel with Lerner's premise that the "fool's test" seems impenetrable due to their misdirection and obfuscations. He limits the audience reception, suggesting that to understand the text one must be on the "inside" of the joke. For Lerner, More and Francis Bacon's work possesses the universal "high themes" that both

⁵⁷ Barbara Otto, *Fools Are Everywhere: The Court Jester around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

attracted and repelled a reader.⁵⁸ Here, he underestimates the cultural references that would contextualize the text to a contemporary reader that modern readers lack. Moreover, he does not account for the performativity of such a role or what it does—besides providing a shield from censors to the reader. (In More's case, this shield would prove useless against the executioner's axe.)

Meanwhile, Priess also picks up on the polarizing effect of fools and uses Yorick's skull as an example of cultural detritus. It makes "the speaker want to vomit" and represents the "institutional moment when clowns are the object of both nostalgia and repudiation."⁵⁹ Though he never fully explicates a connection, this repudiation that he identifies may stem from the plurality of the role. Preiss aptly points out that "Vice, devil, and clown all designate a principle of pluralism in the play, interrogating its ideologies of domination from a skepticism aligned with the disenfranchised audience, with whom the player cultivates a bond. The multiplicity he subtends is thus tied to the stability of his identity: because Dick Tarlton or Will Kemp is always Dick Tarlton or Will Kemp, spurning the confines of his role to speak as himself."⁶⁰ I concur with Preiss that fools, such as Feste from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, promote a plurality—that "changeling motley humorist" that Donne attempts to control in the opening of his satire. However, if we believe the metatheatrical moments in Shakespeare and Brome's plays, we know most actors often spurned these roles. Moreover, what happens to this stability in subsequent productions of the plays or in the "lesser" stage fools, such as John Singer or Thomas Greene, whose "singular" identity may never envelope their roles?

⁵⁸ See Ralph Lerner, *Playing the Fool: Subversive Laughter in Troubled Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁵⁹ Richard Preiss, "Robert Armin Do the Police in Different Voices," in *Performance to Print in Shakespeare's England*, edited by Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 208.

⁶⁰ Priess, "Robert Armin Do the Police in Different Voices," 208-209.

While criticism on festivals and mirth typically skirts fools, it offers a useful lens for looking at how humor regulates the politics of [dis]order. By 1965, Bakhtin finally persuaded an audience to accept the subversiveness of carnival. In his dissertation, *Rabelais and his World*, he stresses the importance of carnival in medieval and Renaissance lives. Bakhtin underscores that these occasions built “a second world and a second life outside official kingdoms, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year. If we fail to take into consideration this two-world condition, neither medieval cultural consciousness nor the culture of the Renaissance can be understood. To ignore or underestimate the laughing people of the Middle Ages also distorts the picture of European culture's historic development.”⁶¹ His work links carnival and the grotesque to systems of power. He suggests that carnival serves as a tool for dissent against official power.⁶² Whereas Karl Marx suggests that festivals serve to perpetuate class conflict, Bakhtin argues that it remains a separate world in which everyone takes part.⁶³ In the words of Terry Eagleton, Bakhtin's theory possesses a

⁶¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 4.

⁶² Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 4-6. He also notes that the “boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture.” See Charles Felver, “A Proverb turned Jest in Measure for Measure,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 11 no. 3 (1960): 385–387. See, too, Charles Felver, *Robert Armin, Shakespeare's Fool: A Biographical Essay* (Kent: Kent State University, 1961). See Olive Busby, *Studies in the Development of the Fool in the Elizabethan Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923). Building on Olive Busby's work, Charles Felver helpfully attempts to sketch out an essay biography of Armin. In a separate essay, “A Proverb turned Jest in Measure for Measure,” Felver attempts to trace the “scraps and fragments” of a proverb in “Shakespeare's artful borrowings.” For Felver, these contrivances remain purely linguistic rather than cultural. At the same time, Bakhtin would argue that such contrivances always remained within a social system.

⁶³ While they do not focus on the fool, Michel Foucault, Victor Turner and Rene Girard explore ritual as a tool that forms and maintains certain social forms and power. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Co, 1970), 359. Victor Turner posits that these “liminal personae (‘threshold people’) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space.” The liminal self, therefore, remains outside of (or rather in opposition to) the social systems and cultural space. Rituals' goals include the reintegration of liminal self into the community. Yet reintegration remains a continual circular cycle. Turner aptly points out that “individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality. The passage from lower to higher status is through a limbo of statuslessness.” The self always remains in the process of fashioning itself dialectically against others through its daily rituals. Turner defines *communitas* as “society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured

“certain idealizing strain in [his]...extravagant hymn of the common folk. Carnival would seem a world that banished tragedy.”⁶⁴ Indeed, carnival always seems to oppose tragedy. Its opposition functions not by denying tragedy, but by parsing and mocking it. Here, we see neither Marx nor Bakhtin's theories offer a completely persuasive understanding of the carnival's interplay with politics.

Current critics use a combination of Marx and Bakhtin's theories. Leah Marcus disagrees with Bakhtin's point of carnival's separation from mainstream culture. Instead, she offers a more complete argument of festival's role by synthesizing Bakhtin's points with Marx's theory. She points out that festivals and its “seemingly lawless topsy-turvydom can both undermine and reinforce—it can constitute a process of adjustment within a perpetuation of order; the precise balancing of the two functions depends on local and particular factors and creates different effects at different places and times.” This model, to me, offers a more persuasive lens through which we may examine festivals and the "comedic" in Renaissance literature. Moreover, Marcus astutely observes that "Stuart kings were commuted to maintenance of a 'paradox state' by which festival freedom was seen as a sign of submission to royal power."⁶⁵ This 'paradox state' certainly becomes integral to our understanding of the relationship between the stage fool and audience. But where Marcus refuses to go—to "determine the social functioning of the old calendar customs in Stuart England ... [and] the politics of marginality" —is what “Changeling Humorists” attempts to parse.⁶⁶

and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.”

⁶⁴ See Terry Eagleton, "The Politics of Humor: Whose Laughter, Which Comedy?" in *Commonweal*, May, 06, 2019.

⁶⁵ Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth*, 7-8.

⁶⁶ Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth*, 7.

While “Changeling Humorists” picks up where Marcus ends her study, it offers more than simply an extension of Marcus’ argument. Instead, I combine these three dominant modes of criticism with an examination of a wide range of literary texts (including stage plays, poems, ballads, pamphlets, and jestbooks), legal records from the Privy Council, and censorship records. My project will attempt to push the current critical conversation further in three key ways: 1.) by explicating how fools, including Will Sommers, Robert Armin, and Autolycus from Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, function through speech acts in the broader literary and political cultures within early modern; 2.) by extending the conversation on stage fool into mid seventeenth-century and looking at its “pejorative” effects feared by both Royalist and Parliamentary sympathizers; 3.) by offering a broader, more thorough intellectual history of the stage fool in early modern literature.

To study how fools, such as Armin, democratize an access to voice (otherwise unacceptable except through the mediation of performance), my approach attempts to trace the intellectual history of fools. Thus, “Changeling Humorists:” 1.) analyzes their speech acts and 2.) traces how an early modern audience understood, responded, used and accused fools. The first part of this approach examines the various texts in which these acts appear: plays, poems, pamphlets, ballads and so forth. But it also draws upon the textual and cultural and historical contexts with which it engages and of which most of its contemporary audience would recall. Imagery of folly copiously appears throughout early modern texts. Henry Peacham’s *The Compleat Gentleman*, for example, features woodcuts depicting the various humors. The plate depicting sanguine—a sought after state—features a young man playing a lute in a spring field. Beside him, a goat stares across the field. The scene seems idyllic and innocuous. Except the word for goat in Greek shares its stem with tragedy. And any reader with a scrap of Greek or

who read various stage treatises would recognize this verbal play. Thomas Heywood also references actors sacrificing goats (tragedy) to Bacchus in his *An Apology for Actors* (1612).⁶⁷ These texts span from the tunes on ballads through anti-theatrical tracts and religious pamphlets. So far, none of the critics' arguments about fools examine closely the rise in antitheatrical writing (including William Prynne's *Histriomastix*) that attack the role of fools. Priess acknowledges that Thomas Nashe lumps Armin with Phillip Stubbes, but he never investigates the nuances of Nashe's decision to classify Armin in the same category as Stubbes, whose *Anatomy of Abuses* also derides the theater.⁶⁸ Ironically, too, none of these critics sustain any discussion on censorship and the censoring of vice, which "Changeling Humorists" brings into conversation with fools' speech acts.

The Book's Skeleton

Though "Changeling Humorists" presents an intellectual history, the topic of fools and the complexity of the culture, language and texts in which fools' reference and respond eschews a synchronic chronological history. Due to the archives of ephemera this book draws upon, the anonymous authorship and cultural resonances also spurns single author chapters. The book, thus, divides itself into three chapters focused upon genres with loose ties to a cultural past (proverbs and household catalogues), to the present (circulating ballads and drinking songs), and to the possible future (fake news and prophecy).

The first chapter, "Tongues of Mercury: The Interstitial Spaces of the Fool's Proverbs, Quips, and Catalogues," examines the ways fools use, create and corrupt the brief domestic genres of proverbs, catalogues and quips. My attention to these three types of speech acts stems

⁶⁷ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors, Containing Three Briefe Treatises* (London: Printed for Nicholas Oakes, 1612), n.p.

⁶⁸ Priess, "Robert Armin Do the Police in Different Voices," 208-209.

from the prologue of Jonson's play. Performed at court in 1634, Jonson's *A Tale of a Tub* opens with what appears as standard disclaimer:

NO State-affaires, nor any politique Club,
Pretend wee in our Tale, here, of a Tub.
But acts of Clownes and Constables, to day
Stuffe out the Scenes of our ridiculous Play.
A Coopers wit, or some such busie Sparke,
Illumining the high Constable, and his Clarke.
And all the Neighbour-hood, from old Records,
Of [H] antick Proverbs, drawne from Whitson-Lord's,
And their Authorities, at Wakes and Ales,
With country precedents, and old Wives Tales;
Wee bring you now, to shew what different things
The Cotes of Clownes, are from the Courts of Kings.⁶⁹

In addition to many key points, the prologue acknowledges the fool's sources that juxtapose the people and court. The "antick proverbs" inhabit both the antique and the madness of the festivals and "wives' tales." These illuminate the "high constables." Yet "busie Spark" readily converses in both cultural realms. Besides the voyeuristic pleasure of experiencing the provincial, what do the court and upper-class audiences gain from the use of "antick" proverbs? What are viewers and readers supposed to gain from this juxtaposition? The legal and historical language of "precedent," "records," and "authorities" suggests a kind of judgment or justice. The genre of a quip or proverb more blatantly emphasizes the reader or listener's knowledge and cultural memory. In order for one to understand the proverb, one must be accustomed to the culture. These genres' intrinsic natures make them difficult to translate and require the reader—particularly with aphorisms—to supply the logic. Jonson's use of antick proverbs remains far

⁶⁹ Ben Jonson, "A Tale of a Tub," in *The Works of Ben Jonson* (London: Printed for Richard Meighen, 1640).

from rare. John Skelton's "Speak, Parrot," annoys the reader with its layered proverbs and sayings delivered about the court to the court in the words of a pet parrot.

This first chapter argues that proverbs, quips, and catalogue create pedagogical spaces in their common ground (what I term interstitial) for the audience and fools to discuss humanist issues of civitas, or citizenship. From John Skelton's Parrot Fool to the proverbs in the travel accounts of Thomas Coryate, the fool in these texts recrafts current proverbs in such a way to instruct its audience. The chapter, then, turns to facetious catalogues by John Donne and Thomas Browne to examine how fools open a space to dialogue upon politics. It concludes with a discussion of quips by studying Robert Armin's fool text and pamphlets discussing the fools' state post-theater ban (1642) as case studies of this interstitial space for critiques of citizenship. Such discussions of citizenship anticipate questions of political authority and justice doled out through political systems. These questions of justice and political authority are brought to the forefront when fools such as Autolycus use ballads to instruct an audience in validating or invalidating justice.

Chapter II focuses upon circulating ballads and quodlibets and interrogates how fools use these genres as speech acts to interrupt and critique justice within early modern England. The fool's main repertoire included music, particularly ballads that the audience recognized and potentially heard or would hear outside the theater. Richard Braithwaite's *Whimzies* includes balladeers amongst his cast of foolish characters. And in Nashe's interlude, Will Sommers calls for a bauble and fiddle as he steps on stage. From tracts defending the theater, we know that theater musicians played outside the theater for steep fees. When Parliament closed the theatres,

the actors lamented on the behalf of the theatre's musicians as well.⁷⁰ While music certainly provided entertainment, the chapter suggests that as a fool's speech act, it provides more than an auditory pleasure.

The ballad-selling scenes in *The Winter's Tale* attest to its inclusion of the audience's music knowledge. Turned out of the Prince's household for his proclivity to thieve, Autolycus wanders the roads and sells ballads. In one such scene, he advertises his ballads by tunes:

Autolycus: Why, this is a passing merry one and goes to the tune of 'Two maids wooing a man:' there's scarce a maid westward but she sings it; 'tis in request, I can tell you.

Mopsa: We can both sing it: if thou'lt bear a part, thou shalt hear; 'tis in three parts.

Dorcus: We had the tune on't a month ago.

Autolycus: I can bear my part; you must know 'tis my occupation; have at it with you.⁷¹

Mopsa and Dorcus already know the tune, having learned it with another ballad "a month ago." Other ballads likely shared this tune, and the audience would recall them as Autolycus begins to sing. Moreover, the recycled tune creates a blurring of content and context. The process of overwriting lyrics to a new ballad blurs it with the content of the old ballad.

This second chapter explores how the fool uses the collaborative nature of ballads and music to remix or overlay song narratives. It first looks at how Lear's Fool adds a stanza to a ballad that Feste, from Shakespeare's earlier *Twelfth Night*, delivered. It looks at how the music from Feste (played by the same actor) brings the song's narrative into *King Lear*. Then, the chapter proceeds to trace the practice of narrative overlay in Autolycus' use of ballads in *The Winter's Tale* to critique justice. We see this self-same process used by Alexander Brome as he adopts a fool's voice in his drinking songs to discuss Royalist justice in the Interregnum. This

⁷⁰ See Anon, *The Actors remonstrance or complaint for the silencing of their profession and banishment from their severall play-houses in which is fully set downe their grievances for their restraint* (London: Printed for Edward Nickson, 1643).

⁷¹ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, in *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton Publishing, 2012).

chapter, then, turns to how the fool interrupts one narrative with another narrative in quodlibets, a genre of music that combines two pieces of music (often secular and profane). Using Shakespeare's plays, ballads from the *Rump*, Brome's drinking songs, and Robert Hayman's *Quodlibets* as case studies, the chapter examines the fool's manipulation of characteristics inherent within music to create a space to critique and educate an audience in proper forms of justice both in early modern England and the New World. The chapter proposes that fools, such as Autolycus, instruct the audience in holding accountable legal and political systems. This accountability provides a backdrop for how fools, including Lear's Fool, then predict political futures, a topic interrogated in the third and final chapter.

The last chapter, "Why should I carry lies abroad?" Prophecy, Vision and Fake News," aptly concludes the monograph with a discussion on prophecy and fake news. It suggests that censored genres in the mouth of fools, including Archie Armstong, bring into reality certain political possibilities for early modern England. Along with satire, the censors banned prophecy. Yet Merlin prophecies circulated widely via manuscript around James I's coronation. Moreover, Lear's all-licensed Fool most likely delivered this prophecy in front of James at Whitehall Palace in 1606. He coyly adds that Merlin will speak the prophecy because he "lives" before Merlin's time. The prophecy itself paints a dark corrupted world that one must turn upside down before the "going shall be used with feet."⁷² Confusing and cryptic, the prophecy asks listeners to consider the state of England under James and the censorship of certain genres. As John Milton

⁷² William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, in *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton Publishing, 2012). See Caradoc of Llancarvan, *The Histoire of Cambria, now called Wales, translated into English by H. Lhoyd, corrected and augmented by David Powel*, 1584. It seems likely—though I need to research this point more thoroughly—that Shakespeare here puns upon the historiographer's claims of "Two Merlins:" one from Cambria whose prophecies remained bewildering and complex and the later one who prophesized more plainly and came from Albion. Caradoc associates the Merlin from Albion with King Arthur. Thus, Lear's Fool may place himself in the time of the earlier Cambrian Merlin.

pointed out later, censorship bans rarely prevent the circulation of banned texts. Both James and Charles issued various proclamations on texts. On September 25, 1623, James I issued a proclamation upholding Elizabeth I's repression of "sundry intolerable offences, troubles, and disturbances, as well in the Church, as in the Civill Government of the State and Commonwealth, occasioned by the disorderly printing and Selling of Bookes."⁷³ Purposefully vague, the law punishes writers, printers and engravers alike. It also forbids the publishing of foreign books without approval. According to Charles I's records, he also drafted a proclamation limiting Latin books from abroad, but he died before its official release.

This bill became the first of many censorship proclamations that Charles I released. Using the justifications laid out in Elizabeth's law, he issued a proclamation specifically banning Richard Montagu's work. Three days after he stopped calling Parliament in 1629, Charles I released a proclamation banning the rumor mongering pamphlets. In 1640, another proclamation circulated banning all libelous texts in print and manuscript. Yet Charles I also redacted Henry Herbert's ban on William Davenant's *The Wits* and interpreted the play's certain "oaths" as "assertions."⁷⁴ Correlation might not indicate causation, and certainly, the complexity of the text and performance bans (and their actual applications) eschews such generalization. Nonetheless, the certain joie de vivre in the fool's speech acts, its unlicensed voice, and the accusations of barbarism ensure it no longer remains in court but instead becomes any pedantic thinker in the city—that motley changeling humorist that every poetic satirist may inhabit. This chapter interrogates the implications of what happens when "archbishops fall and Jesters rise."⁷⁵ What

⁷³ *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, edited by J. F. Larkin and P. L. Hughes, vol. I (Oxford, 1973), 583–584.

⁷⁴ See N. W. Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623-73* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁷⁵ Archie Armstrong, *Archie's Dream, sometimes iester to His Majestie, but exiled the court by Canterburies malice with a relation for whom an odd chaire stood void in hell* (London, 1641), n.p.

occurs when this voice of political condemnation no longer resides within the bounds of one licensed figure? The need to express a truthful critique seems paramount throughout Caroline and civil war texts. Despite the increasing censorship and the questioned state of a fully licensed fool, Armstrong and other fools manage to freely use banned genres.

The third chapter looks at how fools, including Archie Armstrong, Feste, and Show from Thomas Randolph's *Aristippus*, manipulate fake news. They underscore the "truthiness" of recognizable figures and events and combine them with the fantastical. By doing so, Show and others body forth certain possibilities while satirizing those people gullible enough to believe entirely in the proposition. The chapter, then, turns to the Merlin prophecy delivered in *Lear*, the apocalypticism of Thomas Carew's *Momus*, and Archie Armstrong's vision of William Laud's damnation to study how the fool presents such predictions to challenge their audience. Prophecy, like fake news, uses certain recognizable patterns--in prophecy's case, it is language and structure. In *Momus* and other fools' mouths, it becomes a tool to bring into possibility amongst their audiences certain political futures in a fixed context. Such possibilities are left in the audience's hands, audiences primed by Feste, Autolycus, Coryate and others to consider the nature of civitas, to decipher truths and deem what is just, and to hold accountable such power systems. This form of sovereignty passed to the audience vis-à-vis fools' speech acts, which cannot be commodified or looped back into a monarchical power system.

These chapters, thus, flesh out a more nuanced narrative of the fool as a key figure in the devolution of monarchical sovereignty with regard to free speech. A line from *A Prominent Patient* (Masaryk) encapsulates this need to disseminate the truth and its folly. In the film, Jan Masaryk responds to the German psychologist's question about his time as an ambassador in

Britain. He says, “if the court jester is the only one to speak the truth, the world is screwed.”⁷⁶ We might interpret it as the failure of the audience to listen. However, for an early modern audience, the calamity stems from the ineffectiveness of this particular court jester. While folly certainly provides entertainment and a comic relief from the bleakness of court and city life, it also intermingles this relief with critique. The outrage and incredulity towards unrestrained voices in fools, such as Andrew Cane, Archie Armstrong, Feste, among others, amplifies the amusement, but beneath the hilarity remains an acerbic truth that may shame, discomfort or provoke dissent. But in correct, controlled circumstances, free speech and the dissemination of these acerbic truths inoculates them. The destructiveness of these truths diffuse through their circulation.

“Changeling Humorists” demonstrates that early modern English fools create a voice through various speech acts that the early modern audience uses to spread such truths. For this reason, my project clearly intervenes in the current critical discourse and fills in several critical gaps. It asks early modern literary scholars to move away from the simple binaries of who plays or does not play the fool. Instead, it pushes the field to consider what the fool does and does not do and to recognize the function of its licensed voice in the shifting cultural spaces of Renaissance England. It also forces the field to confront ephemeral texts as integral pieces to understanding canonical works. The dissertation grounds itself in five main stakes: 1.) it will question and rework critical understandings of the stage fool; 2.) it underscores the importance of understanding the various cultural and political stakes with which a fool's speech engages; 3.) it offers a more nuanced picture of literature's relationship to the civil war; 4.) it complicates our understanding of Caroline drama; 5.) it reminds critics and readers that a text never remains

⁷⁶ *A Prominent Patient*, directed by Julius Ševčík (Czechia, Czech Television Radio and Television of Slovakia Arte, 2017).

singular--it involves and anticipates an audience. So, I conclude with where I should begin. In the words of Erasmus, "But someone will say, so what? What is all this leading up to? Listen, then, to how I will develop the argument."⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, 43.

I.

Tongues of Mercury: The Interstitial Spaces of the Fool's Proverbs, Quips, and Catalogues

*“When great revolutions are successful, their causes cease to exist . . .
the very fact of their success has made them incomprehensible.”*
— Alexis de Tocqueville⁷⁸

In 1607, a picture of the “Ridinge of the Asse” circulated in London. The engraving features a beggar leading a bridled donkey. While giving “pony rides” to fractious aristocrats and drunks, the beggar solicits a figure labeled Justice: “Ride if you please Sir, I doe you pray/ And by your wisdom chase this rout away.”⁷⁹ Seeming to ignore the rout who vie for a stirrup or a tiny piece of the saddle, Sir Justice declines the offer. Clearly evoking Albrecht Dürer’s earlier woodcuts for Sebastian Brant’s *The Ship of Fools*, the engraving asks us to consider the placement of each figure.⁸⁰ The aristocrat, wearing spurs (a mark of knighthood), appears attentive to the other gentlemen, who leans towards him. Justice overlooks the conspirators and faces the viewer; unlike the fairly well-clothed rout, he wears only one stocking. On closer examination, his robe seems parti-colored like fools’ motley. On the opposite side of the print, the donkey’s tail drags along a laughing fool. The act of grabbing the donkey’s tail seems innocuous—a mere act of idiocy to a modern viewer. But a London audience knew all too well what it meant to be dragged behind a donkey or horse. A year before, Thomas Wintour, Ambrose Rookwood, and Robert Keyes were dragged on a hassock behind a horse to Westminster for their

⁷⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, translated by Stuart Gilbert (New York 1955), 5.

⁷⁹ “Ridinge of the Asse.” The British Library.

⁸⁰ Sebastian Brant, *A Ship of Fools*, translated by Alexander Barclay (London: Printed by John Cawood, 1570). William Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

execution. In general, the crown executed traitors by pulling them behind a horse to the place of execution, hanging them, and then drawing and quartering them. Yet in the engraving, Justice refuses to dispel the collusion in the rout beside him. He never acknowledges that he, too, “rides the ass” from time to time.⁸¹ Thus, the engraving leaves us wondering if Justice remains a fool for punishing folly or for not admitting his folly and not listening to the people when punishing folly. And more importantly, it asks how does Justice and the jester in a combined effort treacherously provoke the beggar to speak or demonstrate the nihilism that reduces everything to masked folly?



Figure II: “Riding of the Ass”

Verbally masked folly and its effects on the audience is precisely where this chapter begins. This chapter examines how fools mask such folly through instructional spaces created by household genres: proverbs, catalogues, and quips. In doing so, fools wield these genres as speech acts to enact a space for discussions of otherwise censored or taboo topics (social and

⁸¹ This colloquialism also toys with the biblical allusion of Christ riding on a donkey. The salvific parody demands observers to question worldly justices as arbitrated by fallen and depraved men. While certainly fascinating, it falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

political) to critique the notion of *civitas* (a humanist notion of citizenship), which seems so antithetical to domestic genres. Examining the fool's use of these speech acts across genres and unmoored from the stage demonstrates the ways that the fool uses tradition and the past to affect the cultural present. This chapter examines how proverbs from John Skelton's Parrot Fool to the travels of Thomas Coryate subverted current proverbs to recraft them before turning to facetious catalogues by John Donne and Thomas Browne to demonstrate how the fool opens a space to dialogue upon politics. It concludes with a discussion of quips by examining both Robert Armin's fool text and pamphlets discussing the fool's state post-theater ban to indicate how his speech acts in these tracts creates an interstitial space for the audience to critique social states of a certain kind of citizen.

“Lyttyl prety foole:” Proverbs

In particular, one of the fool's speech acts focuses on the use of proverbs for matters beyond pedagogy and theology. A popular genre for early modern audiences, these truth sayings occupy a pedantic space and appear seemingly everywhere in early modern culture. The genre incorporates both wisdom while pointing out folly. For humanists, proverbs combined wit with cultural memory. Early modern proverbs closely followed the Bible's contiguous relationship between *hidah* (riddle) and *mashal* (proverb).⁸² That is to say, they structured their proverbs as wit that demanded a modicum of cultural knowledge or memory to unpack or solve. Combining cultural knowledge with wit, proverbs produce a universal reason for their audience, but they also require the audience to take part in this tempering of wit and memory.

Proverbs also cut across class, gender, and geolocations within a country. Children learn these sayings early in life on the street, at home, and in school where they would copy them into

⁸² For further distinctions between *hidah* and *mashal*, see James Kugel, *The Great Poems of the Bible: A Reader's Companion with New Translations* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 165.

their commonplace books. Early modern dictionaries for travelers often include proverbs and sayings, despite the fact that they rarely translate well. Meanwhile, writers, including Erasmus and Polydore Vergil, collected and quibbled over these sayings. And the correction by the hand in Additional MS 45,865 demonstrates the attention to proverbs and their integral place in a text's meaning, particularly in literary texts; the hand adds "for they choose by the beard nott the brayne" that the copied text omitted.⁸³ Early modern society, as a whole, valued the intrinsic universal truths embodied within proverbs.

⁸³ *Additional MS 45,865*, in *The British Library*.

more of mine
Boots to the
inn and on
to; and to pay
as I came; yet
it for Perowis;
ads; My teeth to
be strung to the
me hopeful
the Consull
on his chinne;
es, with my good
the Consull
me; to Barber
ring, Lotion they
knowe

for they
choose by the
beards nott
the Brayne

Figure III: "For they choose by the beards nott the Brayne," Additional MS 45,865.

Yet, for an early modern audience, proverbs also wielded a dangerous edge. Used to teach, chastise and describe, proverbs could insult, chastise, and torment. While seemingly innocuous to a modern audience, proverbs in early modern English culture faced censorship when printed. Debora Shuger points out that English common law followed the Roman concept of *iniuria*, which included “verbal transgression, oral and written, as the counterpart to physical assault.”⁸⁴ Censors examined both content and intent when censoring particular words. Rather than simply expressing a truth or a part of folk common culture, censored proverbs become tools of resistance and transgression.

And perhaps more importantly for the fool, proverbs survive by circulating and copying. For Robert Whittinton and his side of the Grammarians’ War, the nature of a proverb violates his theory of education. In the *Vulgaria*, he argues, “Imitacyon of autours without preceptes & rules/ is but a longe betynge about the busshe & losse of tyme to a younger beginner.”⁸⁵ Many of you will immediately identify the irony of his statement. His claim uses the colloquial *lingua franca*, but in his attempt to avoid citing or copying a classical writer, his turn to the pedantic also invokes a form of copying. “Beating about (or around) the bush” still remains an active part of the current transatlantic vernacular. Few of us know, however, the “rules” about when to use this proverb or its origin any more than we fully understand what “Dancing around the well” means.⁸⁶ We intuit it through listening to our interlocutors. Whittinton joins John Skelton and a

⁸⁴ Debora Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

⁸⁵ Robert Whittinton, *Vulgaria in the The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittinton*, edited by Beatrice White (1932), 35-36.

⁸⁶ See Desiderius Erasmus, *Adagia in Latine and English containing five hundred proverbs: very profitable for the vse of those who aspire to further perfection in the Latine tongue* (London: Printed by Bernard Alsop, 1621). Erasmus records the proverb, “A foole speaketh truth at some time.” See, too, Eric MacPhail, *Dancing around the Well: The Circulation of Commonplaces in Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2014), 1. MacPhail notes that Erasmus’ Adagi suffered censor, particularly when translated and “Among the proverbs missing from this [Erasmus’] proverbially bad book is the notorious dance around the well. The saying, to dance around the well,

lengthy list of intellectuals debating words and phrases, and more importantly, who uses them in the early sixteenth century.

Every Jack Raker: The Fool's Proverbs

However, early modern fools often use proverbs for a different set of outcomes. In part, they express more than a universal truth about the culture; in the mouths of fools, such as Skelton's Parrot, speech acts perform a truth or set of truths about the context in which they are delivered and create an interstitial space for the writer and audience. Skelton's fool, Parrot, employs proverbs as a tool in "Speke Parrot" (1521), but rather than impose order on the chaos, the reader's responsibility pertains to lending meaning and joining the space in criticizing the political powers that be. Examining Skelton and Whittington's role in the Grammarians' War, Jane Griffiths observes that while "Whittinton's focus is on teaching as an end itself, Skelton's is on teaching as a means to an end. Parrot's allusive satire not only illustrates the chaos brought about by Wolsey's abuses but serves as a test of his readers ability to counter the chaos by correct interpretations of his message."⁸⁷ Here, Griffiths describes the focus more broadly on their pedagogical theories, but more importantly, she illustrates the role of the reader to impose some order on the poem's absurdity. Following in the biblical tradition, Skelton's fool uses proverbs to critique the court, the aesthetics and direction of "high art," and the glib simplicity of life for those people who seldom engage in contemplation.

derives from Plutarch's *Moralia*, from the treatise or commentary. How to tell a flatterer from a friend, which Erasmus translated into Latin. When discussing *παρρησία* or free speech, which Erasmus translates as *libera admonitio*, Plutarch warns that such practice often endangers the speaker, for to speak freely to the powerful is to dance the proverbial dance around the well."

⁸⁷ Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 87.

For an almond or a date, Parrot promises to play the “lyttyl prety foole.”⁸⁸ In the poem, Skelton’s fool lampoons the court and the court ladies who titter over his abilities. Indeed, Skelton’s fool, a parrot, literally “parrots” what he observes. His wit appeases them with tales that they cannot comprehend, but though paid to speak—and perhaps, because he receives pay—Parrot veers from flattery. More specifically, Parrot takes a particular pleasure in ridiculing faux intellectuals who assume a protean relationship with knowledge: Nether wise nor wel lernid, but like hermaphrodita:/ Set Sophia asyde, for every Jack Raker/ And every mad medler must now be a maker.⁸⁹ Oscillating between “wise” or “learned” guises depending on what the context requires, these faux intellectuals possess neither enough education to be “learned” nor enough life experience to be “wise.” They attempt to maintain their status through tastes, which distinguishes them from the “every Jack Raker.”⁹⁰ Parrot laments that society sets aside the skilled, wise learning in classical traditions for the pedantic makings of any Jack Raker, or any street sweeper.⁹¹ Beneath the seemingly elitist claim, Parrot’s proverb poignantly points out the source of salient information for the tittering court ladies and foppish government officials.

The proverbial saying asks us to consider the meddler in the poem. Parrot, as a “Jack Raker,” learned languages from his ladies’ lessons and eavesdropped on their conversations. Now, governing elites look to the commentary of Parrot before classical learning. Here, the power imbalance shifts, and Parrot accrued a certain ethos and power to critique these elites; he

⁸⁸ John Skelton, “Speke Parrot,” in *The Poetical Works of John Skelton: Principally According to the Edition of the Rev. Alexander Dyce* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1864), 24.

⁸⁹ Skelton, “Speke Parrot,” 185-187.

⁹⁰ Skelton, “Speke Parrot,” 186.

⁹¹ See “Raker,” in *A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words: Obsolete Phrases, Proverbs, and Ancient Customs from the Fourteenth Century*, edited by James Orchard Halliwell, vol. 2 (London: John Russel Smith, 1860), 665.

transfers a considerable amount of power to readers who repeat his proverbs and rhymes. With the familiarity of the proverb, it opens a space for the everyday reader to engage in the critique. The audience engagement does not follow the Lord of Misrule tradition. Rather than reify hierarchies, the audience engagement may not destabilize the hierarchies that exist, but instead, they challenge such hierarchies by introducing and recognizing a “new class” of maker.

However, as Leah Marcus aptly cautions, any “inquiry into the literature of festival as a subtle artistic instrument for mirroring and transforming accepted social realities requires a careful eye to what those realities were, or were perceived to be by contemporaries.”⁹² To an extent, early modern England understood the distinctions between misrule traditions and fools’ speech acts. At first, the English court sought to distinguish between the two roles with different apparel. On December 27, 1552, a warrant from the privy council to Sir Thomas Cawarden, Master of Revels for Edward VI, commissioned a new fool’s coat and hood for the Lord of Misrule, for “the apparell which he hath allredye is not fytt for that purpose.”⁹³ A staunch Protestant, Edward VI, nonetheless, appeared to value the Lord of Misrule tradition to allow it to continue. Yet he set apart the misrule tradition. The fool traditionally wore two caps during this period: one that regulated and criticized the court (vis-à-vis playing the fool) and the other that reified the systems in place by turning and then restoring hierarchies (enacting the Lord of Misrule). The attention to the separate costumes (“fytt for that purpose”) demarcates the two roles for the early modern audience. Towards the end of the sixteenth century as the stage fool emerged, it only required one cap—that of critique. But as the fool of *Twelfth Night*, Feste,

⁹² Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 22.

⁹³ L.b.287: Warrant from the Privy Council to Sir Thomas Cawarden, Greenwich, Dec. 27, 1552. Folger Shakespeare Library.

warns, “cucullus facit non monachum.”⁹⁴ The hood does not make a fool. One should not expect to distinguish Feste by his caps. Instead, the audience becomes a part of the cultural production of the voice of fools, such as Feste.

“A rude railing timer,” in the eyes of Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences, Skelton’s brand of jesting became infamous.⁹⁵ And censorship struggled to contain Parrot and such infamous figures. David Wiles observes that “famous literary personas flourished in early modern England. Despite the best efforts of the government censors to slay Martin Marprelate, he thrived in pamphlets and, arguably, survived in the afterlife of Richard Overton’s ‘Martin Marpriest.’”⁹⁶ With fools, the task of containment becomes more difficult as memory and recorded texts evoke the voice and speech acts of said fool (in this case Parrot). And these acts disseminated orally through performance as well. Even if censors could gather up all copies of a particular fool’s text and burn them, they could not erase the performances from memory or keep people from recycling the acts on the streets. Skelton, Scoggin, Willam Kempe and Richard Tarlton entered homes in jestbooks, echoed in the streets in ballads, and insulted sensibilities in the marketplace via epigrams and libels.

Because speech acts inherently require collaboration between the interlocutors, fools’ speech acts required the audience to respond in some way with past knowledge or experience, fools became quasi-celebrities on the stage and within print culture.⁹⁷ However, this afterlife in

⁹⁴ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, in *Norton Shakespeare* (New York: WW Norton Publishing, 2012).

⁹⁵ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Printed by Richard Field, 1589).

⁹⁶ David Wiles, *Shakespeare’s Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).

⁹⁷ See Stanley Wells, “Pushed by Many Hands: Drawing Attention to Those who Experienced Shakespeare on the Page,” in *Times Literary Supplement* (March 2019), 28. Mayer, *Shakespeare’s Early Readers*, 108. This celebrity status and favoritism bleeds into early modern criticism today. In his *Times Literary Supplement* review of Mayer’s monograph, Stanley Wells records Kemp as “the best foole that ever was” while Mayer and the early hand in the

print served more than just a disembodied figure from the past. Thomas Nashe conjured the ghost of Will Sommers in his interlude performance; Ben Jonson memorialized Thomas Coryate in verse, and both of these examples evoke more than an encomium to a past fool figure. Samuel Fallon persuasively points out that for “those who had seen him in person, his appearances in jestbooks, ballads, and pamphlets—in *Tarlton’s Newes out of Purgatorie* (1590), for instance—would have summoned memories of the actor’s voice and body, grounding his textual persona in a kinetic theatrical celebrity.”⁹⁸ Indeed, the actor’s body provided more than merely an image, particularly for a pre-Cartesian audience that never demarcated body from mind. Richard Baker’s *The Theatre Vindicated, or an Answer to Mr. Prins Histromastix* points out that William Prynne “shall never give that contentment t Beholders, as honest Tarlton did, thoug he said never a word.”⁹⁹ Just appearing on stage, Tarlton soothes in a way that Prynne’s verbose moralizing cannot. It may be one reason that nineteenth century editors, such as Fredric Ouvry and James Halliwell, find the Tarlton and Robert Armin’s jests so unappealing. Without the cultural understanding or the cultural voice, the acts of Tarlton and Armin fall flat. This kinetic theatrical celebrity, to use Fallon’s term, evokes the voice of such an actor.

Especially, in the case of Nashe’s Sommers, memory and texts invoke his prior speech acts and its techniques. When this speech act is a proverb, it demands the audience not only to recall Sommers, the contexts in which they last heard the proverb, but it also affects how they

First Folio actually identify Armin as “the best foole that ever was.” Wells’ “Freudian slip” suggests a favoritism towards Kempe.

⁹⁸ Samuel Fallon, *Paper Monsters: Persona and Literary Culture in Elizabethan England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 8.

⁹⁹ Richard Baker, *The Theatre Vindicated, or an Answer to Mr. Prins Histromastix* (London: Printed by T.R., 1662).

remember the speech act when they hear the proverb again, as Nashe all too well exploits.¹⁰⁰ Censored for his role in co-writing *Isle of the Dogs*, Nashe fled London. Before his Ovidian exile, he penned a fool's text, which uses proverbs to create an interstitial space where his audience can challenge authority via performance rather than representation. In Nashe's interlude, *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592), Sommers steps onto the stage and claims, "I am a goose, or a ghost at least, for what with turmoil of getting my fool's apparel, and care of being perfect, I am sure I have not yet supped tonight. Summer's ghost I should be, come to present you with Summer's last will and testament. Be it so, if my cousin Ned will lend me his chain and his fiddle."¹⁰¹ Those of the audience, who had seen or heard of Sommers' performance, would not necessarily recognize his stage representation, but with Nashe's coaxing, remember his word play and acts. Without time to adopt the proper costume, Sommers borrows a violin and a chain. Certainly not a new connection, Nashe connects music and a license (or chain) with fools' repertoire more than patched motley or a bauble. It refocuses the audience upon Sommers' performance rather than representation, which further breaks from the misrule tradition and symbolism.

Nashe used the mnemonic memory of the Sommers with proverbs to create a legal space for the fool to adjudicate. And Nashe remained acutely aware of Sommers' voice as performing a public voice and trial by public opinion. Even before he wrote in exile for his collaboration with Ben Jonson on the *Isle of Dogs*, Nashe remained unapologetic and irreverent towards expressing unstoppered "sedition" and suffered censorship for his print arguments with his arch-nemesis,

¹⁰⁰ This movement differs from *Halslosungsrätsel* (a riddle that only the riddler possesses the information to unpack), as certain readers or audience members would have prior knowledge of the proverb that Nashe turns into a riddle. See Savely Senderovich, *A Riddle of the Riddle* (New York: Routledge Press, 2016), 31.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (London: Print by Simon Stafford, 1600).

Gabriel Harvey. His fool claims if England, like Germany which permitted Sebastian Brandt's *Ship of Fools*, would allow the *Isle of Dogs*, he would fill it with even more fools.¹⁰² Nashe relied upon the safety of Sommers' alle-licensed voice to articulate his lack of remorse for collaborating on a provocative play, and Nashe presented his case in the court of public opinion, which leveled complaints against public transgressions. Here, we see Scott's observation of speech which cannot be articulated in the present finding its way into articulation. Nashe stages a trial in his interlude where Sommers presides over it in a judicial capacity. Sommers states:

Since thou art so perverse in answering,
Harvest, hear what complaints are brought to me.
Thou art accused by the public voice
For an engrosser of the common store,
A carl that hast no conscience nor remorse,
But dost impoverish the fruitful earth
To make thy gamers rise up to the heavens.¹⁰³

Nashe underscores that the public voice, and not Sommers, accuses Harvest of simple scribe work that lacks any moral compass in transposing the grain stocks. Instead of recording accurately, Harvest increases his own store. However, Nashe also puns on "engrosser" as a legal clerk or scribe, who copies out documents *in* a "fair" hand. Such scribes could alter or corrupt in the same vein as the dishonest lawyer without any consideration of public impact. Sommers, as judge, brings the charges made by the "public voice." Sommers adjudicates with the authority of public voice.

Yet Nashe uses the term public voice quite loosely. This nonspecific address allows Nashe to tease out the issues of representation within the term. More specifically, Nashe explores

¹⁰² Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*.

¹⁰³ Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*.

what constitutes public voice, its progression or replications, and the disposition it uses for power. In the interlude, Sommers observes:

So it is, *boni viri*, that one fool presents another, and I, a fool by nature and by art, do speak to you in the person of the idiot, our play-maker. He, like a fop & an ass, must be making himself a public laughing-stock, & have no thank for his labour, where other magisterii, whose invention is far more exquisite, are content to sit still and do nothing.¹⁰⁴

Sommers uses a legal term (*boni viri*) to underscore his power to perform a voice, in this case Nashe. He performs his interpretation of Nashe as an attention-seeking fop. Sommers' lines also emphasize the *publicness* of his notoriety. Using public voice, Sommers critiques Nashe but also uses this public critique to ventriloquize the public image of the playwright. Because Sommers ventriloquizes this voice, it receives no credit. At the same time, the voice receives no censure. In other words, Sommers possesses the legal power to adjudicate in a voice that cannot be censored because of its anonymity. Moreover, Sommers as a fool must legally and consistently use such power. Dressed as any man, Sommers proceeds to use a variety of speech acts, but in particular, his proverbs open up a space for audience interaction.

While we may only encounter proverbs as pithy and folksy sayings in spoken language (and eliminate them from driven educated writing), an early modern audience would encounter them as part of a sermon as a pedagogy of morals and devotion. Such religious encounters would remind the audience of both the frequent association of preachers with fools, but also fools with judges. Yet it also underscores the biblical distrust for and endemic injustice (or misinterpretations) of the conveyed message.¹⁰⁵ However, such sermonizing would also make

¹⁰⁴ Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*.

¹⁰⁵ For the preacher as fool link, see 1 Corinthians 1:18-23, in the Geneva Bible, 1599. See, too, Job 12:17, in the Geneva Bible, 1599. The passage reads: "He causeth the counselors to go as spoiled, and maketh the judges fools." See also Proverbs 26:1-8, in the Geneva Bible, 1599. This opening to Proverbs 26 would be commonly known:
As the snow in the Summer, and as the rain in the Harvest are not meet, so is honor unseemly for a fool.
As the sparrow by flying, and the swallow by flying escape, so the curse that is causeless, shall not come.
Unto the horse belongeth a whip, to the ass a bridle, and a rod to the fool's back.

clear how the biblical proverbs functioned through their interpretations by the preacher. The link between religion and the theater has been most recently traced persuasively by Simpson. Early modern audiences knew the pedagogical purposes of a proverb and their place within sermons. In his mock ritual of reading the will, Nashe used a range of sayings and proverbs, allowing Sommers (or the ghost of his fooling) to school his audience in temperance and political deviance. In proverbial fashion, Sommers' proverbs provided some truth for everyone: "Shoot but a bit at butts; play but a span at points. Whatever you do, *memento mori*: remember to rise betimes in the morning."¹⁰⁶ Here, Sommers twists a popular saying: "Hee that will deceive the fox, must rise betimes."¹⁰⁷ Sommers combines the certainly rural importance of rising from bed early with another important, ever-present reminder of *momento mori*. As with YOLO ("You only live once"), *memento mori* iconography found its way into popular discourse and imagery.¹⁰⁸ Rather than rising early for survival and farm chores, Sommers corrupts the proverb to suggest rising early helps one pursue life and meaning in life. One must consider who leisurely engages in archery: anyone at court or aristocratic households. Yet his proverb stresses moderation: "but a bit" and "but a span."¹⁰⁹

Answer not a fool according to his foolishness, lest thou also be like him.
Answer a fool according to his foolishness, lest he be wise in his own conceit.
He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, is as he that cutteth off the feet, and drinketh iniquity.
As they that lift up the legs of the lame, so is a parable in a fool's mouth.
As the closing up of a precious stone in an heap of stones, so is he that giveth glory to a fool.

¹⁰⁶ Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*.

¹⁰⁷ George Herbert, *Outlandish Proverbs* (London: Printed by T. Plaine, 1640).

¹⁰⁸ For more on *momento mori* imagery, see Rose Marie San Juan, "The Turn of the Skull: Andreas Vesalius and the Early Modern Memento Mori," in *Art History* 35 no. 5 (2012): 958-975.

¹⁰⁹ Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*.

Nashe's fool toys with the audience. It asks us to consider what beyond hours upon hours of playing does a court retainer pursue to fill time, which returns us once more to the common proverb circulating in early modern discourse. "He that will deceive the fox" speaks to a Machiavellian outwitting.¹¹⁰ Thus, the courtiers may engage in play, but they must rise early enough to also engage in political machinations. Nashe pushes the critique of courtiers even further. While the fox seems at first to refer to any other political opponent, the fox actually appears as a figure of mockery. Earlier in the passage, Sommers observes that "the fox though he wears a chain, runs as though he were free, mocking us."¹¹¹ Yet Sommers, himself, brandishes a chain as a mark of his license to freely speak his mind and entertain the house. Sommers, with his chain, possesses power that a king does not: freedom. More precisely, this freedom allows it to mock. Thus, if the courtier wishes to "deceive" Sommers or curb his critiques, the courtier must practice moderation and take the time to study and attempt to politically undermine Sommers' voice. This entire processes of unpacking the proverb requires the audience to be familiar with the vernacular proverb and then recall it as Sommers subverts it. It creates a space for this word play with common sayings. And for the audience who listened to or read the interlude, they would likely recall Sommers' statements on the street when they heard the proverb next.

Along with Ben Jonson and John Donne, Thomas Coryate served on the official court registers as a fool to James I's son, Henry, and while he possessed the license of the fool, his wit and fooling style mixed the natural clown's attention to the local with that acerbic learned wit of the artificial fool. Making his way in Prince Henry's court proved fairly simple, as R. E.

¹¹⁰ Herbert, *Outlandish Proverbs*, n.p.

¹¹¹ Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*.

Pritchard points out: “Here Young Tom Coryate, provincial, essentially modest and with little money had to make his way which he did by amusing them, with wit, wordplay and clowning, as a sort of unofficial court jester.”¹¹² As a fool, Coryate flitted between social boundaries, which in part made him publicly popular.¹¹³ His contemporaries' elegies and panegyrics for him underscore his knowledge of Latin and wordplay in poetry. Thomas Fuller noted: “few would be found to call him *Fool*, might none do it save such who had as much learning as himself.”¹¹⁴ A working class citizen, Coryate challenged courtiers, politicians and scholars alike to intellectually rigorous wordplay.

Even Coryate himself describes his nature as more of an intellectual fool. Describing his early years, Coryate records: “Goe pretty dandy-prat to schoole/ (Said they) thou shalt no little foole/ Be counted for thy mirth./ The child in time was waxen great,/ And all the Sophists he did threat Their problemes to confound.”¹¹⁵ Challenging his instructors (the Sophists), Coryate’s mirth and wit poked at the issue within their grammar and reason to confound. And Coryate’s verbal challenges in the court also illustrates the fool’s involvement in politics. One of his contemporaries, Laurence Whitikar, noted Coryate’s interest in politics and policy-making in his elegy: “Most Politicke Thomas, now thou art no fol I see,/ For wanting no money, thou beggest in Policie.”¹¹⁶ Bridging the natural fool with the artificial fool, Coryate prized the local, from his jiggling competition with the local county to his precise records of customs during his travels.

¹¹² R. E. Pritchard, *The Odd Tom Coryate* (Sutton: History Press, 2004), n.p.

¹¹³ Mark Netzloff, *Agents Beyond the State: The Writings of English Travelers, Soldiers, and Diplomats in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2020), 88.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Fuller, *The History of Worthies of England who for parts and learning have been eminent in the several counties: together with an historical narrative of the native commodities and rarities in each county* (London: Printed by J.G.W.L. and W.G., 1662), 32.

¹¹⁵ Coryate, *Coryat’s Crudities: Hastily Gobbled up in his Five Moneths Travels*, 22.

¹¹⁶ Laurence Whitikar, xix.

Despite proverbs and idioms notoriously not translating well across languages, the attempts to provide translations of such sayings cropped up throughout St. Paul's Churchyard and travel writings in early modern England. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Coryate used proverbs to create a common ground for writer and reader, and in his *Coryat's Crudities: Hastily Gobbled up in his Five Moneths Travels* (1611), he frequently references proverbs, only to subvert or debunk them as folly.¹¹⁷ Based upon Coryate's walk through Europe, *Crudities* presents to Henry, the patron to whom the book is dedicated, and to Coryate's wider audience the European culture of its time, including the music of the Venetian School, experienced through a wit's perspective.

To respond to the incredulity of his readers, Coryate turns to proverbs to create a familiar space for his audience. He records, "But I thinke this will seeme such a paradox and incredible matter to many, that perhaps they will say I may lie by authority (according to the old proverbe) because I am a traveller."¹¹⁸ Those of his audience familiar with the proverb that "Travellers lie by authority" would find themselves in familiar verbal territory. But Coryate pivots the subject of the accusatory proverb. Because, as Coryate insinuates, his audience might lack the capacity to accept the incredulous, they might use the proverb against him to dismiss his account. By using the proverb, he anticipates his audience's reaction and opens a space for them to consider a range of truthful possibilities generated by his account rather than reacting to it as untrue. After all, distinguishing between intellectual error and a lie "is hard to make," writes Percy G. Adams, "since it is often impossible to tell how much heart and how much reason, even how much

¹¹⁷ See Michael Strachan, *The Life and Adventures of Thomas Coryate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 120-130. Strachan unpacks the book's publication.

¹¹⁸ Coryate, *Coryat's Crudities: Hastily Gobbled up in his Five Moneths Travels*, 325.

physical blindness, entered into a traveller's false report."¹¹⁹ Coryate's use of the proverb shifts the authority to make such a distinction. Rather than allowing his readers to discern truth from error or lie (which they give him authority to lie because of his experience), he wrests that authority away and instead, gives them the authority to hold him accountable. Such diplomatic broaching through proverbs appears elsewhere in the collection in response to truth claims.

Coryate responds preemptively to satirists' responses to his attempt to record a truer account of Venice than had been translated into English: "But me thinks I seeme to heare some Momus objecting unto me now I speake thus of Venice, that this is Crambe bis cocta, as it is in the proverbe."¹²⁰ *Crambe bis cocta*, or "twice boiled cabbage," refers to sloppy writing.¹²¹ Here, too, we can see Coryate anticipating his audience's disbelief by creating a familiar space to address that disbelief. But he also responds with a proverb associated with Juvenal, another satirist. Satirist begetting satirists, Coryate cautions his audience to reconsider given his expertise. His "seeming to hear" and his application of a proverb of Juvenalian satire speaks to a sense of satirical authority, which he then gives his audience leave to play Momus (or supreme satirist).

The ways that Skelton's Parrot and Nashe's Sommers manipulate proverbs to create an interstitial space for his audience becomes one of the intellectual fool's speech acts on the stage. In particular, Ben Jonson's *The Fortunate Isles and their Union* (1624/1625) offers a particularly powerful instance of fools using proverbs to create an interstitial space that challenges the court transition and trends. Jonson's masque interrogates the shifting court. With James I on his

¹¹⁹ Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars 1660-1800* (New York: Dover Press, 1980), 5.

¹²⁰ Coryate, *Coryat's Crudities: Hastily Gobbled up in his Five Moneths Travels*, 2.

¹²¹ See *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, E. Cobham Brewer, 1894. The proverb is defined as "A subject hacked out. Juvenal says, '*Occidit miseris crambe repetita magistros*' (vii. 155), alluding to the Greek proverb '*Dis krambe thanatos*.'"

deathbed and his eldest son dead, Charles I would shortly and certainly become king. Unlike his father, Charles emphasized decorum and moderation. When he combined courts, he looked to Elizabeth I's courts and pared back his court to match its size, as Kevin Sharpe cogently points it out.¹²² But Charles' relationship towards court entertainment remains quite complicated. On one hand, he attempted to regulate entertainment through releasing new editions of the *Book of Sports* that expanded the parameters to include wakes and ales and included a new introduction. His wife and infant son kept their own theatre troupes. Yet Charles also insisted on singularity and decorum, which will be discussed at length in a later chapter. He insisted upon servants acting in a moral way to project the image of a minimal, moderate moral court. Sharpe notes that "any domestic was 'known to be a profane person or outrageous rioter or ribald, a notorious drunkard, sweater, railer or quarreller,' he was to be ousted from his place."¹²³ A "railing rhymers," such as Skelton, would certainly be reprobated in Charles' court.

Writing on the eve of Charles' reign, Jonson looked ahead to the tenor of the court and the pressures to eradicate the English fool. The masque's title situates it to celebrate the union of the isles, yet neither Ireland nor Scotland would remain particularly restful during Charles' reign. Moreover, its staging remained quite austere compared to Jonson's other masques. Ian Donaldson observes that in 1618, Lionel Cranfield led the Privy Council in cutting the court's spending, particularly on masques.¹²⁴ In 1625, Jonson's masque staged mostly a tête-à-tête with minimal stage requirements. Performed on Twelfth Night, Jonson's masque features a dialogue between Jophiel, an airy spirit and intelligencer, and a student, Merefool, or "Mery-Foole./ But

¹²² Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 210.

¹²³ Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 211.

¹²⁴ See Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 383.

by contraction Mere-Foole.”¹²⁵ An “ouer-charged peice of Melancholie,” in Jophiel’s words, Merefool adopts the guise of a poor scholar to see learned apparitions.¹²⁶ An intellectually inclined figure, Merefool falls prey to Rosicrucianism, an esoteric cult which sought truths from ancient figures and practices. He practices poverty and a monk-like minimalism, and not unlike Edmund Spenser’s Archimago, he crafts an image to project upon the world. One might hastily assume Jonson followed other early modern writers in mocking unfounded images and the attempt to quickly obtain truths and knowledge that require a lifetime of reading and observation. After all, Merefool consulted a few books, despite wanting to see Pythagoras, Hermes Trismegistus, and Plato. This mockery of false image and sloppy scholarship permeates Renaissance culture. Wisdom and folly form a Janus-faced coin in the period.

However, Jonson pushes this mockery a step further to examine the fool’s role in fixing this issue. Jonson’s fool brings to the forefront what political pressures on the fool deemed problematic.¹²⁷ Satire brings with it irreverence. Mere-fool draws distinctly upon English culture while resisting other aspects of it. While Jophiel pushes back against Merefool’s request to see various classical thinkers, he offers instead to bring Howleglass and Eulenspiegel on to the stage. Merefool dismisses these figures, so Jophiel suggests, “Me thinkes, you should enquire now, after Skelton, Or Mr. Scogan.”¹²⁸ Merefool reveals his ignorance of these past rhymers and responds, “I had rather see a Brathman,/ Or a Gymnosophist yet.”¹²⁹ His ignorance of his

¹²⁵ Ben Jonson, *The Fortunate Isles and their Union* (London: London: S.n., 1625).

¹²⁶ Jonson, *The Fortunate Isles and their Union*.

¹²⁷ Here, I use the term “political” in its broadest definition that includes both the court, Parliament, and various judicature systems in addition to the church and antitheatrical writers in the city, whose influence swayed parliament.

¹²⁸ Jonson, *The Fortunate Isles and their Union*.

¹²⁹ Jonson, *The Fortunate Isles and their Union*.

predecessors and reluctance to consider learning from them remains striking. His petulance and irreverence towards anything *English* or *British* (especially in a masque whose title demands we consider the nation) locates the collective obsession with higher, esoteric and *global* arts.

Jonson also seems to caution against a fool whose focus becomes too insular. Rather than descending from the heavens, Skelton and Scoggin march across the stage to greet Merefool, and the stage quickly devolves into a riotous rhyming game. The antimasques from the rhymes quickly join in the mayhem. Rather than vices or exotic figures, Jonson stages figures from English popular culture: Owlglass, Elenor Ruming, Dr. Ratt, Mary Amber, Long Meg of Westminster, Tom Thumbe, four knaves and vapors. These antimasques stand in for chaos and vices. These systemic popular culture figures pose a problem for the increasingly austere moral image of the court. However, Jonson separates the fool from these figures. Jophiel quickly banishes the antimasques, Skelton, Scoggin, and Merefool off stage with a quick apology to the audience:

The company o'the Rosie-crosse! you wigion,
The company of Players. Go, you are,
And wilbe stil your selfe, a Mere-foole, In;
And take your pot of hony here, and hogs greace,
See, who has guld you, and make one. Great King,
Your pardon, if desire to please haue trespass'd.
This foole should haue bin sent to Antycira,
(The Ile of Ellebore,) there to haue purg'd,
Not hop'd a happie seat within your waters.¹³⁰

Jophiel's lines underscore several important points. He emphasizes that Merefool remains the masque's only fool and one that needs correcting for the new court. Merefool with his petulance and irreverence trespasses against the king. Marcus notes in Jonson's other plays that the fools as "judges have striven for greatness and 'high place' in the kingdom, forgetting that the king of the

¹³⁰ Jonson, *The Fortunate Isles and their Union*.

nation reigns over them and that their higher role can be but minister.”¹³¹ While Marcus aptly points out a common pattern in Jonson’s plays and masques, the place of a minister, for Jonson, remains important, even if subservient. In part adding to the tradition of the “pulpit-wit” (the preacher as comic actor), Jonson places the fool in the position of lecturing upon moral and ethical responsibilities. Moreover, his reference to “making another” suggests also a proselytizing function of the fool. Through his speech, Merefool converts his audience to folly.

Rather than eliminate Merefool—and by extension fools in general—for his trespass or limit him, Jonson emphasizes their place as a judge and counselor. At first, it appears Jonson in his attempt to pander to the court’s desire banishes the fool completely, but Jophiel’s reference to Rabelais argues instead for a reform of the fool. Rabelais references the Isle of Ellbore as a sight of healing, and Jonson puns upon this concept with his language of purgation.¹³² Early modern physicians often used hellebore, both black and white forms, in their receipts. In his *Methode of Physicke* (1583), Phillip Barrough observed, “If we will more diligentlie purge melancholie, we doe put in *hierapicra rufi*, whose dose is halfe an ounce, in which Hellebore is entred, which is not in use at Paris, or else take *confectio hamech*.”¹³³ In an earlier section of his handbook, Barrough noted hellebore’s purgative powers to “provoke vomiting.”¹³⁴ Merefool’s surplus of

¹³¹ Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth*, 59.

¹³² See François Rabelais, *The first [second] book of the works of Mr. Francis Rabelais, Doctor in Physick, containing five books of the lives, heroick deeds, and sayings of Gargantua, and his sonne Pantagruel. Together with the Pantagrueline prognostication, the oracle of the divine Bachus, and response of the bottle. Hereunto are annexed the navigations unto the sounding isle, and the isle of the Apedests: as likewise the philosophical cream with a Limosm epistle*, translated by Thomas Urquhart (London: Printed for Richard Baddeley, 1653).

¹³³ Philip Barrough, *The Methode of Physicke Conteyning the Causes, Signes, and Cures of Invvard Diseases in Mans Body from the head to the foote. VVhereunto is added, the forme and rule of making remedies and medicines, which our phisitians commonly vse at this day, with the proportion, quantitie, & names of ech [sic] medicine* (London: Printed by Thomas Vautroullier, 1583), n.p.

¹³⁴ Barrough, *The Methode of Physicke*.

melancholy would most obviously call for such a remedy. Yet Jonson's familiarity with both Juvenal and Horace's forms of satire infuses the lines.¹³⁵ Often described as spewing, Juvenal's satire purged the contaminants of a political body. Jonson suggests not only that Merefool must be reformed before finding a place within England's "happy waters," but that he should use Juvenalian satire to reform the nation.

Merefool's speech acts throughout the play suggest, however, this situation applies to every man. When Jophiel asks for his hand, Merefool quotes, "O Sr. a broken sleeue/ Keepest the arme back as 'tis i'the prouerbe."¹³⁶ His audience at court would recognize two proverbs that Merefool uses in his pun. John Ray records a proverb as "A broken sleeve holdeth the arm back."¹³⁷ To keep rather than to hold seems so slight a difference. Yet to keep implies an active restriction placed upon someone rather than a simple impediment. No matter the stringency, these restrictions promote a brokenness or promote an ineptitude. Such limitations placed upon the fool keep him from complacency and simply taking part in Jophiel's scheme. And by referencing the sleeve in response to Jophiel's request, Merefool, too, puns on another proverb. In his 1630 *Outlandish Proverbs*, George Herbert notes, "Every one hath a foole in his sleeve."¹³⁸ Ray's collection also records this proverb, narrowing it slightly to "Every man hath a fool in his sleeve."¹³⁹ Thus, the proverb also notes every man can play the fool. Through the audience's familiarity with both proverbs and their pendant of usage of such sayings everyday,

¹³⁵ For a more thorough study of Jonson's relationship with classical satirists, see Victoria Moul, *Jonson, Horace, and The Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge: UP, 2010).

¹³⁶ Jonson, *The Fortunate Isles and their Union*.

¹³⁷ John Ray, *A Collection of English Proverbs, Digested into a Convenient Method for the Speedy Finding Any One Upon Occasion* (Cambridge: Printed by John Hayes, 1678), n.p.

¹³⁸ Herbert, *Outlandish Proverbs*, n.p.

¹³⁹ Ray, *A Collection of English Proverbs*, n.p.

the fool invites the audience to take part in its verbal play. When we consider the end lines that argue for a reformed fool with Juvenalian satire and unleashed such a figure within England (which Caroline playwrights would later stage), the fool becomes a problematic figure for those who sought containment, particularly of voice. It becomes a licensed voice able to speak for the collective.

Jonson uses this proverb to critique the court's surveillance. As a spy, or intelligencer, Jophiel collects information and brings it back to the powers that be in Jove's court. If the fool becomes every man, as Merefool's proverb puns, it would be impossible to effectively surveil and censor. The backlash against English culture seems to follow the trajectory of what would be the new court. For Jonson, the performance and the printed page became a "sphere of self-assertion, a court of public opinion when patrons at Whitehall, or in the theatre, proved fickle."¹⁴⁰ The public provides a witness and memory when such intelligencers attempt to bring allegations. Rather than completely eliminate or embrace (by looking back to Elizabeth I's court) the tradition of the English fool, Jonson suggests the new court permit such English voices. A licensed voice generates a necessary collective.

Making the Private, Public: The Fool's Fake Catalogues and Domestic Genres

The interstitial space created by the fool's proverbs in texts intended for performance also transfers into the texts for print audiences and coterie audiences. With the surge in printed texts and consumer demand for books in the seventeenth century, printers quickly produced the so-called "fools' texts," jest books and satiric tracts in addition to the plays, which record fools' speech acts. In his infamous anti-theatrical tract, *Histrionomastix*, William Prynne bemoans the

¹⁴⁰ Joseph Loewenstein, "Martial, Jonson, and the Assertion of Plagiarism," in *Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England*, edited by Steven Zwicker and Kevin Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 279, 287.

plays printed over the past two years: “One studie being scarce able to holde them, and two years time too little to peruse them all.”¹⁴¹ Indeed, as demands for print copies surged and discourses became more publicly accessible, other issues with print and manuscript mediums arose. Suddenly, the demand for print and commissioned scribal copies provided a public platform of satiric and fool discourse normally limited to personal correspondence. Erasmus’ *In Praise of Folly* offers an early example, as it preserves *l’amitie* between Thomas More and Erasmus and publishes this relationship for a public audience. And indeed, for early modern writers, this combination of shared intellect and folly were, essentially, a Janus-faced coin. Hobbes notes: “Nor is it possible without Letters for any man to become either excellently wise, or (unless his memory be hurt by disease, or ill constitution of organs) excellently foolish.”¹⁴² Language, as a tool, mediates this division between wisdom and folly, even as it becomes publicly staged within print.

This demand for public reading material also offered the ideal platform for disseminating satiric attacks and recants as well as a fool’s acts. As one of the many side effects of this print surge, personal “housekeeping” genres, such as catalogues, became relevant, both as instruments of chaos and order, to the broader reading public. Prynne, for example, fought various satirical attacks, including an anonymous pithy pamphlet printed under his name that redacted *Histriomastix*. He resorted to printing a catalogue of his works to “prevent all Imperfect Catalogues, and to discover what Copies of his have been published by Erronious Manuscripts, varying from the Original, without his knowledge, (by some who aimed more at their own

¹⁴¹ William Prynne, *Histriomastix or the Players Scourge, or Actors Tragedie* (London: Printed by E. A. And W.I., 1633), n.p.

¹⁴² Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Printed for Andrew Crooke, 1651), n.p.

private benefit, then the publick).”¹⁴³ Prynne’s public use of the catalogue helps his contemporary readers (and present literary critics) identify falsely attributed titles and ascertain his oeuvre up to that point. Prynne’s vexation at such false catalogues suggests their frequency and hints at a popularity of such texts. It also emphasizes the “benefit” or intended audience for such works, which still remains more “private.” Whether printed or copied into manuscript miscellanies, satirical catalogues circulated in coterie audiences of friends.

These satiric catalogues made no attempts to disguise their flamboyant mockery of ignorance and invited their readers into such an inclusive space. Thomas Browne’s *Musaeum Clausum* (1684) offers a catalogue of titles that delighted his educated readers but lampooned bold public antiquary claims. One such gregarious title demonstrates Browne’s careful balance of historical knowledge and biting satire: “A punctual relation of Hannibal’s march out of Spain into Italy and far more particular than that of Livy.”¹⁴⁴ No matter if his readers knew it took Hannibal’s army six months to descend into Italy, no army marches *punctually* (that is to march to a precise point or place, or with meticulous detail) nor does any history cogently render such journey.¹⁴⁵ And to boldly proclaim such a feat as to write “far more particular” than Livy is tantamount to idiocy.¹⁴⁶ And yet many public writers made bold claims in their titles. Browne, instead, invites his readers to mock such gregarious public writers. Circulating in both print and

¹⁴³ William Prynne, *An Exact Catalogue of all Printed Books and Papers of Various Subjects Written upon Sundry Occasions by William Prynne* (London: Printed for Michael Sparke, 1643), n.p.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Browne, *Musaeum Clausum*, in *Certain Miscellany Tracts* (London: Printed for Charles Mearne, 1684), n.p.

¹⁴⁵ See “Punctual,” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Throughout the seventeenth century, “punctual” morphed. It refers to a precision with location and details, but it also referred to an exactness of time. Browne likely used it to mean the former, rather than latter.

¹⁴⁶ Browne, *Musaeum Clausum*, n.p.

manuscript, these catalogues appear written almost exclusively for a more private reading audience.

Because catalogues use the intimate knowledge that their audiences possess, the fool's use of them produces space not exclusively for mocking ignorance, politics or religion, but also for crafting a space for its readers to decide political and social judgments. While "titles contributed to the general (usually political-religious) satire and may be, to a greater or lesser extent, *ad personam attacks*," catalogues that used the fool as a speaker were less concerned with libel.¹⁴⁷ Like Browne's *Musaeum Clausum*, John Donne's *The Courtier's Library* (1650) mocks the courtiers, who wish to display false knowledge without learning it. While Browne's catalogue only promises to list "unseen" books, Donne's catalogue offers to keep its slothful readers up-to-date on the latest popular texts. Piers Brown notes that Donne's "implied secretarial author of the *Catalogus* abuses this trust by slyly purveying nonsensical books to his ignorant patron, suggesting the frustration experienced by scholars who were condemned to subordinate positions despite their superior learning. Read in this way, the *Catalogus* acts as a critique by the providers of mediated learning, directed at the recipients of such learning."¹⁴⁸ This "abuse of power" also alerts us to a performative act. Donne's "secretarial narrator" arguably inhabits the fool's role as judge and critic while using folly and performative language to deliver such critiques of "patrons."

Donne's speaker, as a fool, creates these titles and in effect, creates a social context for them to exist. The authors and persons on which each title puns sets them within performative

¹⁴⁷ Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou and Paul Smith. Introduction, in *Early Modern Catalogues of Imaginary Books: An Anthology* (Boston: Brill, 2019), 11.

¹⁴⁸ Piers Brown, "'Hac ex consilio meo via progredieris:': Courtly Reading and Secretarial Mediation in Donne's *The Courtier's Library*," in *Renaissance Quarterly* 61 no.3 (2008): 848.

contexts; these contexts affect how the readers interpret these figures, lending more nuance to the critiques Donne's speaker espouses. As it circulated in Latin as a manuscript, the audience seems most likely to be Donne's close friends and the academic circles of Inns of Court. More perverse in its methodology, Donne's catalogue provides *thirty-four* fake titles in case the courtier needs to spend the morning figuring out what facial expression to use while greeting a friend. Clearly playing into the tradition of humanist folly, Donne situates contemporary persons in comedic relationships to history and political institutions. Rather than merely lampooning or libeling these persons, Donne's catalogues invite readers to question the extent of "untruth" in these relationships.

While not all early modern audiences would empathize with those forced from their beds at ten in the morning (as Donne seemingly toys with Nashe's notion that the courtier must rise early to mitigate the consequences of the fool), Donne's audience would recognize the figures critiqued in the titles. In particular, many would be aware of the quasi-celebrity jester of Elizabeth's court, Richard Tarlton. The last title, "Tarltonus de Privilegiis Parliamenti," places the fool simultaneously within and outside of the English Parliament.¹⁴⁹ Depending on how the reader translates or understands the Latin preposition, "de," Richard Tarlton either becomes part of Parliament ("Of the Privileges of Parliament) or a close outsider observing ("On the Privileges of Parliament").

Donne's readers, thus, likely located Tarlton's voice in relation to the governing body of Parliament. And it changes how the reader considered the relationship of fools, such as Tarlton, to power and governance. In other words, we decide how political the fool's act becomes as it

¹⁴⁹ John Donne, *The Courtier's Library, or or, Catalogus librorum aulicorum*, edited by Evelyn Mary Simpson (Cambridge: Nonesuch Press, 1930).

rearticulates the collective. For Butler, “Language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeding it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body first becomes possible.”¹⁵⁰ The social context, thus, determines the body’s meaning and associations tied to that body. In turn, the speech act imposes that social context, or existence. In the case of Tarlton’s title, Donne extends the possibility that the fool holds a place within the lawmaking process as an arbiter, or that he situates himself as an outside examiner with a treatise on the governing body. Readers engage in the process of making this social context. Since both positions are true, Donne’s positioning of Tarlton in his title asks his readers to consider the fool’s relationship to government while inscribing the fool’s connection to the governing bodies. In doing so, the reader chooses which or both social contexts within which to place the fool and interpolates the “real” position of the jester in Elizabethan politics.

“Who’s the Fool?” Quips and Participants

Thus far, I have demonstrated the ways in which the fool creates and uses this interstitial space in texts that circulate primarily via verbal performance or print. Now, I want to turn to speech acts that bridge that divide between readers and verbal audiences to create such space. Whether performed or written for a reading audience, a fool’s quips and jests involve active participation from all interlocutors. Quips, like proverbs, require interaction and cutting across classes and geolocations in a given country. A quip functions by providing a quick witty comment or asking a question that requires recipients to ponder and unpack it. As with proverbs, quips function by addressing universal cultural truths or observations.

¹⁵⁰ Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, 5.

The quip, too, transcends class and conventional literary hierarchies. While Jane Kingsley-Smith suggests quibbling, quips and other such word play remains “lower class genres” rather than the higher arts of poetry and song, Renaissance humanists made no such distinctions.¹⁵¹ In Herbert’s *The Temple*, a collection of arguably sacred verse that follows the architecture of a church, we find an entire poem built around the premise of a quip. Facetiously, the poem follows “The British Church” in its order. Herbert describes the “quick Wit and Conversation” as the world’s “comfort be” (17-18).¹⁵² For Herbert, the answers to such queries (the knowledge that comes from a quip’s conclusion) come from “Thy design” or the Book of Nature to “answer these fine things shall come” (21-22).¹⁵³ Through study and divine will, the world can “have their answer home” (24).¹⁵⁴ The poem underscores the comfort provided by such wordplay and the drive to understand the enigmas of human nature. But rather than focus on the human condition, Herbert argues for examining nature. In the answer to these quips, one finds a “home.” Yet his verse describes quips as “sports,” a loaded term that simultaneously evokes performance and government (specifically monarchical) sanctioning. From Erasmus’ *In Praise of Folly* to Montaigne’s *Essais*, quips provoke the readers’ inquiry into social and ontological concerns by trading in the everyday and relying upon shared cultural knowledge. To regulate these concerns, the monarch not only attempts to regulate “everyday mirth,” as Marcus

¹⁵¹ Jane-Kingsley-Smith, Interview. Folger Shakespeare Library. April 14, 2020.

¹⁵² George Herbert, “The Quip,” in *The Collected English Poems of George Herbert* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004).

¹⁵³ Herbert, “The Quip.”

¹⁵⁴ Herbert, “The Quip.”

cogently points out, but it attempts to regulate the subject's relation to the divine, self, and knowledge.¹⁵⁵

In a fool's mouth, quips precisely counter this regulation. Fools' quips also exploit the everyday happenstance to critique sociocultural issues. Like proverbs, quips train both memory and wit, which Hobbes outlines as necessities for the body politic. And fools purposefully create spaces to train the audience in these faculties. In particular, Armin's *Quips upon Questions* uses the public voice to invoke a series of judgments on topics ranging from religion to humanist stoicism to a night out on the town. In 1600, Armin's *Quips* entered St. Paul's Churchyard where he noted, "if they passe through Paules I care not, for in Fleet-streete I haue friendes that will take Lud-gate to defende me."¹⁵⁶ His book never received criticism or complaints warranting censorship and sold quite well as it went through three print runs.¹⁵⁷ That year, Armin joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men, so the fool's acts in *Quips* clearly made him an attractive choice to William Shakespeare's company. Richard Preiss points out that "[t]he Chamberlain's Men had by 1600 replaced the boisterous, jigging Will Kemp with the more aloof Robert Armin, and though Armin still improvised a merriment at the end of the play - and presumably much of his parts within it - it was a postlude that essentially turned its back on the crowd, denying them vocalic access to both him and the stage."¹⁵⁸ While Preiss aptly notes the shift in styles between Kempe and Armin, I contend that rather block "vocalic access" that Armin subverts it. His quips

¹⁵⁵ Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth*.

¹⁵⁶ See Robert Armin, *Quips upon Questions*.

¹⁵⁷ See Ouvry, Preface, IV.

¹⁵⁸ Richard Preiss, *Finite Jest: Performance, Authorship, and the Assimilation of the Stage Clown in Early Modern English Theater, 1588-1673*, Dissertation.

range in topics that would interest the apprentices paying groundling fees to the more philosophical and legal topics that might interest a scholar at Inns of Court.

While Kempe gathered public voice from the commentary of his audience, Armin accrued “public voice” through his observations as a flaneur in London. This difference in attention to the public voice leads to a different mode of access, one which does not (as Preiss argues) lead to containment. As Nora Johnson points out, the “quip format of the text itself establishes Armin as a figure for communal production.”¹⁵⁹ Rather it incites the opposite reaction and allow the audience to take this reworked voice into the London streets post performance. A London-centric text that nonetheless draws attention to Armin’s place as a transplant, his book of quips flirts with numerous genres: interlude, dialogue, call and response, and riddles. Yet this chiaroscuro of genres beckons the reader or audience to take part. For Nora Johnson, this attention to the audience signals that “Armin emphasizes his own witty power to dominate any situation verbally, that is, he also represents himself as speaking with a collective voice.”¹⁶⁰ But I want to posit that Armin, in fact, takes the collective voice, reworks it and releases it back to the collective where it can be wielded to criticize but cannot be commodified. His quips observe the streets, articulate their social issues, and become released back into the streets through the audience’s quoting or recirculating. Armin’s *Quips* create an interstitial space that allows bring up a topic critical to audiences and allows them to explore it before responding with an (often moralizing) example.

In these quips, Armin plays all the voices. For Preiss, this ventriloquism leads to the illegibility of the book itself. Preiss points out that the Globe “retained the custom of versified

¹⁵⁹ Nora Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 34.

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 29.

‘themes’ volleyed between clown and crowd. Armin compiled them as *Quips upon Questions*, a book whose narrative illegibility reflected (or effected) a routine wherein he dummied all the voices himself, turning spontaneous participation into a discipline of audience containment.”¹⁶¹ Arguably, the audience most likely found Armin’s quips legible. Early modern England remained less socially stratified. London, as a cosmopolitan hub, would invite figures, such as Armin, who would bring their dialects and sayings with them to their apprenticeships. Rather than produce an obscure stage act, his quips would resonate among his audience, who would be accustomed to codeswitching between various regional language tics. When divorced from their culture and cultural wordplay, jests, humor, and acts become almost impossible to discern what was funny or their meaning. While certain more humanist leaning quips may have risked boring certain audience members, the simplest bawdy jokes would readily be understood by audiences in the seventeenth century and today. Certainly not as bawdy as some jestbooks and fools’ wordplay, Armin’s quips pair the explicitly sexual with critiques of social mores. One of his quips asks, “*What’s near her?*” If the double entendre of “nothing is nearer” and “we conclude together” becomes lost, the ending couplet of the quip leaves little unclear: “*Yes one thing’s nearer than her smock or skin,/ Of which I speak not, but I’ll keep it in*” (6-8).¹⁶² An earlier quip questions the import and anxiety of a woman’s virginity in early modern culture. And “*Why jettes she?*” critiques the fate of poor maidservants who augment their wages through thieving or prostitution.¹⁶³ Rather than creating illegibility, Armin replays these voices to the audience.

¹⁶¹ Richard Preiss, *Finite Jest*, 5.

¹⁶² Robert Armin, “What’s neare her?” in *Quips upon Questions* (London: Printed by W. White, 1600).

¹⁶³ Armin, “Why jettes she?” in *Quips upon Questions* (London: Printed by W. White, 1600).

Methodical, Armin published two fools' texts, one which describes the six "sorts" of fools and a book of quips reflecting on the verbal processes of fooling and Armin's career as both fool and guildsman. Wiles aptly describes Armin as "an intellectual, a Londoner, and as well attuned to Renaissance notions of folly as to the English folk tradition. As an actor, Armin's skills lay in mime and mimicry, skills which could easily be adapted to a theatre based on satire and the mimesis of manners."¹⁶⁴ Indeed, Armin observes the Janus-faced position of the fool at the praxis of folly and wisdom as judge, critic, and educator. However, Armin observes the distinctions in each fool's style: "True it is, he playes the Foole indeed/ But in the Play he playes it as he must."¹⁶⁵ Armin's verbal performance as fool, far from voluntary, becomes obligatory to each fool he performs. Each fool shapes and frames its individual critique.

As such, Armin builds a space for critiques and discussion within the audience. As a speech act, the quips enact a spacial possibility for the audience and fools based upon the shared knowledge in the quip. This interstitial space continues after performance's end where the roles shift:

Yet when the Play is ended, then his speed
Is better then the pleasure of thy trust:
For he shall haue what thou that time hast spent,
Playing the foole, thy folly to content.

He playes the Wise man then, and not the Foole. (1-7)¹⁶⁶

When the performance concludes, the fool's "speed" (or abilities to body forth a speech) becomes more important than the audience's trust or pleasure. As with proverbs, the audience, nonetheless, assumes an active role in the act. They spend time to be educated for the fool to

¹⁶⁴ Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*, 136.

¹⁶⁵ Armin, "He playes the Foole," in *Quips upon Questions* (London: Printed by W. White, 1600).

¹⁶⁶ Armin, "He playes the Foole."

address and placate their “follies” in this speech act. This process, Armin emphasizes, becomes imperative to heal the public body. Without “a goodly jest,” their woes will not heal, for “*Patience a plaister that may cure this sore,/ But patience vvil ne'r helpe him to it more*” (63-64).¹⁶⁷ Patience, a contentment with the political status quo, may provide a temporary relief, but it cannot stop the chronic issue. A jest provides relief for such chronic issues because it provides an interstitial space of protest.

If we return to the end line from “He playes the Fool,” we learn why the process works. As Armin points out, the roles shift: the fool becomes wise and the audience takes on the role of the fool—a fool that speaks its mind and critiques the political body. This reversal of roles, or transfer of power, speaks to the humanist understanding of the body within the politic sphere. And within this movement of power, Armin dissects the concept of subjecthood in a “free” state. Quentin Skinner points out that humanists organized the public into two categories, that “of the *civis* or citizen, whose standing they like to contrast with that of the *subditus* or subject.”¹⁶⁸ Their relationship towards power and law differentiate the categories, for “humanists think of citizens as prescribing laws onto themselves, while *subditi* are merely subject to laws imposed on them by kingly overlords.”¹⁶⁹ For Armin’s speech act, the move to transfer power to the audience no longer allows them to merely occupy the space of a subject, or one who patiently adheres to the confines of law constructed by others. Instead, it imparts with it “a life of *negotium*, of active participation in civic affairs, and not of *otium* or [Aristotelian] contemplative withdrawal.”¹⁷⁰ For

¹⁶⁷ Robert Armin, “Who is the Foole now?” in *Quips upon Questions* (London: Printed by W. White, 1600).

¹⁶⁸ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Renaissance Virtues*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 6.

¹⁶⁹ Skinner, *Visions*, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Skinner, *Visions*, 6.

the fool, such civic engagement develops through the outcomes of its speech acts amongst a common audience. Unlike the sanctioned Lord of Misrule tradition, however, the fool's circulation of power extends beyond the carnival season and cannot be commodified since they are culturally authored and recirculated.

As such, Armin's fixated obsession—"common men are so curious"—offers a humanist examination of such voices and their concerns. Armin's position falls outside of power structures, for the "freedom given to an allowed fool consists precisely in the fact that he is allowed to stand outside social hierarchies."¹⁷¹ Outside the social stratification, Armin can address issues that cut across social classes as well as this that are intrinsically part of human nature. Like, Donne, Armin takes up seemingly taboo topics, such as when suicide might be ethical, which underscores the deep humanist tradition of folly and truth. Beneath jesting, the deeper anxieties or "curiosities" manifest. These curiosities, to use Armin's term, are the "ayles, [that] cannot be tolde with tongue" (6).¹⁷² Yet the fool, as Armin points out, remains able to censure ("wiser men then I may censure wronge") even the wise, as only the fool can broach these ails in articulation, precisely because the fool understands that no singular tongue can attempt to articulate them with any accuracy (5-6).¹⁷³

Initially, the cultural authorship of fool's speech acts appears as conformity. The audience can quickly dissemble and blame the licensed speaker. But it actually remains more complicated. Scott points out:

seductiveness of theories of hegemony and false consciousness thus depends in large part on the strategic appearances the elites and subordinates alike ordinarily insert into the public transcript. For subordinates, the need for protective integration ensures that, once

¹⁷¹ Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*, 158.

¹⁷² Robert Armin, "Why looks he angry?" in *Quips upon Questions* (London: Printed by W. White, 1600).

¹⁷³ Armin, "Why looks he angry?"

they come under scrutiny from above, the Lollard becomes an orthodox believer, the poacher becomes a peaceful respecter of gentry property, and the tithe evader a peasant ready to meet his obligations.¹⁷⁴

Both fool and audience can claim to quote the culturally authored, allowing them to dissemble into more civil participants whose only crime seems to be going to the theater. However, Scott observes that these strategies appear in the public transcript. All members of the public, regardless of class and property, author the public transcript. For Scott, the private transcript remains difficult to ascertain. Yet the fool's speech acts, at times obfuscating, offers a somewhat clearer indication of what might be in such a private transcript if the collective wrote it. The fool's acts publicize such private transcript. While Armin certainly recognizes the slipperiness of words and how to dissemble within them, he also demonstrates the ways of embedding difficult truths with speech acts. He notes, "When I next see him, Ile make his braynes bleed: /And with like question nearely in affiance" (16-17).¹⁷⁵ His question will cause a physiological reaction with its engagement. Its difficulty garners trust on the one hand, but its obscurity requires physical engagement by the audience on the other. This engagement within the space forms an early form of democratic protest.

The concept of protest, as we understand it, arises with industry in the nineteenth century. Its espoused organized and collective principles and demands seem an anathema to the early modern period's civil discord, which flared up in gunpowder as assassination attempts, uprisings

¹⁷⁴ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 89.

¹⁷⁵ Armin, "Are You with Your Bears?" in *Quips upon Questions* (London: Printed by W. White, 1600). See "Bears," in *Oxford English Dictionary*. The dictionary notes:

are you there with your bears?: an expression of exasperation or surprise, esp. at a person's persistence with a topic or notion; 'are you at it again?'. Obsolete.

[Explained in Joe Miller's *Jests* (1739) 28 as originally the exclamation of a man who, not liking a sermon he had heard on Elisha and the bears (2 Kings 2:23–4), went next Sunday to another church, only to find the same preacher and the same discourse.]

(such as the Pilgrimage of Grace), revolts and revolutions. We tend to only recognize protests as mass gatherings, such as the liberal Women's March or the conservative Covid-19 protestors, and not mass print debates or satiric statements delivered on public stages. The present notion of protest offers demands either via explicit verbal chants or implicit signs. Gathering in Lansing, Michigan, protestors brought copies of the Constitution, nooses, Confederate flags, and assault rifles to contest the Covid-19 shelter-in-place orders. In a simultaneous masquerade of rebel violence and political devotion, they marauded the capitol building. Its conflicting narrative made it a display of self-mockery. Any power wrested by the racist and violent display became quickly commodified as a mainstream opposition via news and liberal condemnation. Yet I suggest we see these organizing principles within quips, such as Armin's collection. Its critiques resonate within and generate a collective audience and presents a space for public demands in its critiques. Unlike The Peasants' Revolt, the fool's quips cannot be reintegrated into the structure because the collective never becomes one singular body, but instead, it forms an undercurrent of readers and theater-goers that take part in unpacking the quip and disseminating it. This process of unpacking and reusing allows it to thrive in spite of later anti-theatrical pressures. Instead, pamphleteers used the fool's quips to counter these very pressures.

By 1640, the stage fool's speech acts still created a powerful space for public voice and protest. As such, antitheatrical pressures specifically target the fool's speech acts and their effects. Prynne specifically picks on stage fools for their attachment to such secular words and deeds: "But there are many secular businesses. As to be a jester or actor of any filthy word or deed (as is the Clown in Stage-plays) to love a secular jest, to affect dice-play, etc. All which wee interdict to Ministers of the Altar; exhorting them not to suffer any worldly or filthy jests or

playes to be made before them.”¹⁷⁶ Prynne loosely uses the term clown, here, as a pejorative to include any jester, fool, or clown. Yet despite his loose terminology, Prynne seems attuned to the power of the fool’s word and deeds. Concerned with the secular, the fool’s speech acts oppose religion. Barish aptly describes Prynne’s book as a gargantuan collection of all abuses against the theater. While Barish addresses Prynne’s repetitions and lack of nuance, Prynne becomes quite coy here.¹⁷⁷ But more specifically, Prynne seems vexed that these acts and words “affect dice games.”¹⁷⁸ Gambling and theater going often accompanied each other in sermons on vice. However, Prynne seems to pair the vices for a different purpose than pointing out their commonality or moral failing. For Prynne, the danger of the fool’s speech acts stems from their power to enact change and resist commodification. Games of chance were permitted on the sabbath and other holidays, as *The Actors Remonstrance* extols.¹⁷⁹ But Prynne refers to the chance or fate of such a game and the fixing of it. He insinuates that the fool fixes the outcome. Rather than divine interaction, the fool remains a distinctly human endeavor that collects secular voices to enact change. Because the fool’s jests use the public, secular concerns to alter this fate (or state), the fool’s work remains worldly and tainted. By extension, the plays that feature the fool, too, become public facing, secular objects that all ministers should avoid—at least, according to Prynne.

These antitheatrical and court pressures eventually prompted the fool to become redefined by Caroline playwrights to slip beneath the notice of political intelligencers.¹⁸⁰ Yet the

¹⁷⁶ Prynne, *Histriomastix*, 595.

¹⁷⁷ Barish, *Anitheatrical Prejudices*, 83.

¹⁷⁸ Prynne, *Histriomastix*, 595.

¹⁷⁹ *The Actors Remonstrance* (London: Printed for Edw. Nickson, 1643), 5.

¹⁸⁰ As I argued elsewhere. See Nikki Roulo, “‘A fool upon record:’ The Redefinition of the Caroline Stage Fool.”

fool's speech acts remained ever more capable of "affecting chance;" the interstitial space they created for audience engagement remained dangerous. And it becomes one of the central reasons for Parliament's ban on the theater. The official edict notes that "Public Sports do not well agree with Public Calamities, nor Public Stage-plays with the Seasons of Humiliation, this being an Exercise of sad and pious Solemnity, and the other being Spectacles of Pleasure, too commonly expressing lascivious Mirth and Levity."¹⁸¹ According to Parliament, public entertainment must adhere to the state of the nation. Public theater presents itself as too prideful for the austere crisis of civil war. Private performances (those "other Spectacles") offer too much mirth and levity, in part provided by the fool. However, even the actors of the time questioned this reasoning. While Parliament banned plays, they permitted puppet plays. The fool's quip in *The Players Petition to Parliament* (better known as *The Rump's Song*) offers one such reason:

You meet, plot, talk, consult, with minds immense,
The like with us, but only we speak sense
Inferiour unto you; we can tell how
To depose Kings, there we are more then you,
Although not more than what you would; then we
Likewise in our vast Privilege agree,
Only yours are the longer ; and controules,
Not only Lives and Fortunes, but mens Souls.¹⁸²

The quip puts Parliament and actors into dialogue as two forms of the same system. Like the Parliamentarians, who revolted against the monarchy, the actors also take part in meetings of "minds immense." In other words, they, too, trade in theories of power and sovereignty. The fool, and by extension the theater, affects change, including "deposing of kings" and power

¹⁸¹ "September 1642: Order for Stage-plays to cease," in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, edited by C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911), 26-27.

¹⁸² *The Players Petition to Parliament*, in *Rump: or an Exact Collection of Poems and Songs Relating to the Late Times* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1662).

structures. The quip in the song highlights the vast privileges of the theater and of Parliament, as two opposing but balanced institutions. Whereas the Parliament, now head of church and state, remains responsible for the physical and spiritual welfare of its constituents, the theater remains secular.¹⁸³ Early modern religious anxiety towards the theater saw it as a ritual that brings what it enacted into actual being. However, the quip counters that the theater cannot damn souls by leading them to commit regicide. Instead, the quip relies on its audience's prior knowledge of the former plays, particularly *Macbeth*. Its audience would recall that the witches only told Macbeth that he would become king; the method by which he "inherited" the Scottish crown remained unarticulated. The theater's power comes from suggestion and the audience's conscious interpretations of the fool's speech acts.

Moreover, the power of the fool and theater focuses on those "lives and fortunes" of its constituents. Rather than leading their audience to commit an act, actors, and particularly the fool, articulate the public undercurrents upon the stage, casting and critiquing them in such a way that the public may recirculate them. Franco Moretti notably blames dramatic tragedy for the English civil war, noting that "Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy contributed, more radically than any other cultural phenomenon of the same period, to discrediting the values of absolute monarchy, thereby paving the way, with wholly destructive means, for the English revolution."¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile, David Kastan complicates Marotti's argument and suggests that the theater's culpability for the civil war actually remained a matter of symbolism. He notes, "In setting English kings before an audience of commoners, the theater nourished the cultural

¹⁸³ See Simpson, *Permanent Revolution*.

¹⁸⁴ Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London: Verso, 1983), 27.

conditions that eventually permitted the nation to bring its king to trial.”¹⁸⁵ While these arguments offer a compelling view of the theater’s involvement, the limitation to tragedy and representation of monarchs does not cover the whole account of the theater’s responsibility, nor can one use one cultural institution as a scapegoat for the war. Parliament clearly feared even this performative focus of the theater for more than its levity, as such “levity” arguably resulted in the “public humiliation” of government.

However, Parliament’s specific word choice of “levity” and “mirth” in their edict suggest that the theater in all its genres produced a rebellious force. Yet many of the people who would later support Cromwell also took pleasure in the theater (including John Milton), many actors would later side with the Royalists. A pamphlet protesting theaters’ closures suggests that Parliament reconsidered opening them, if only to keep actors from siding with Charles I. For if Parliament reopened the theaters and sanitized the plays, the pamphleteer notes, “Captaine Trig, and the rest of the Players which are now in service, would doubtlessly returne to their callings, and much lessen the Kings Army.”¹⁸⁶ And at least one actor who played a fool, William Robbins, served as a captain in Charles’ army.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the culpability of the theater cannot easily be demarcated along political lines.

And the fool—more so than tragedy—also helps stir political tensions and the fool’s use of quips and other speech acts certainly transfers power and political critique. Focusing on individual human condition, the fool promotes a dedication to the self as civiti and treating the decision to comply with laws as a matter of intellect: one trained by a knowledge of history and

¹⁸⁵ David Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York: Rutledge Press, 1999), 111.

¹⁸⁶ Anon, *Certaine propositions offered to the consideration of the Honourable Houses of Parliament* (1642).

¹⁸⁷ *The Players Petition to Parliament*. See John Southworth, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 1998).

the arts. In its interstitial spaces created by its speech acts, the fool teaches its audience to question the justice in laws. Hobbes recognized the ways the fool's speech acts provoked individual politicking: "The Foole hath fayd in his heart, there is no such thing as Justice; and sometimes also with his tongue; seriously alleaging, that every mans conservation, and contentment, being committed to his own care, ...and therefore also to make, or not make; keep, or not keep Covenants, was not against Reason, when it conduced to ones benefit."¹⁸⁸ If one should pursue what is good or works for oneself, then the decision to make and follow laws becomes subject to those whims of contentment. For Hobbes, this individual politicking and approach to political law defies reason and promotes a certain flavor of atheism since to follow or not follow political law only remains one step away from defying or denying divine laws.¹⁸⁹

The fool's acts provide space to question justice and form a revolutionary-leaning protest. Hobbes observes the fool "questioneth, whether Injustice...may not sometimes stand with that Reason, which dictateth to every man his own good; and particularly then, when it conduceth to such a benefit, as shall put a man in a condition, to neglect not onely the dispraise, and revilings, but also the power of other men."¹⁹⁰ If the fool's speech promotes such spaces that explore a form of self-governance, then in situations of "injustice," it leads to the challenging of the authority of other men's power. What beyond the self determines when to break covenants or laws? And to what, if not law or monarch, is the self responsible? Those questions of self government troubled not only Hobbes, but also those people who supported a trial of Charles I. In his belated response to Hobbes, John Whitehall pithily asks: "And suppose a Sovereign prove

¹⁸⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, n.p.

¹⁸⁹ See Psalm 14:1, in Geneva Bible, 1599. Here, Hobbes also alludes to this Psalm, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God: they have corrupted, and done an abominable work: there is none that doeth good."

¹⁹⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, n.p.

a fool?”¹⁹¹ Indeed, while Hobbes and Whitehall refer to the fool pejoratively in their political treatises, their description shows the extreme humanist side effect of the fool’s quips.

In his tongue (or speech acts), the fool enables a certain form of political protest and delivers certain individual power to its audience through collective voice. Yet, this statement, too, only offers a glimpse of a more nuanced narrative. For almost every instance of subversive political critique that the fool offers, it also provides a verbal remedy whether through defusing the tensions prompting the critique, offering a mode of protest for its audience, or a particular exercising of the audience’s place within the body politic. As we see with Armin’s quip, the fool offers a plaster for unarticulated ails and suffering with the political body. Thus, it can be a revolutionary figure, but at the same time, it teaches a civic life and negotiation between citizen and subject. Without such negotiations, the tensions within the cultural environment (from which the fool draws its material) would erupt. Rather than promote outright anarchy or promoting overthrowing the monarchy, the fool’s speech mitigates such revolutionary tensions. But as Simpson notes, “Fear of linguistic performativity in all its forms produces, in part, those putative specialists at performative language.”¹⁹² Indeed, Parliament’s fear of the theater stemmed from the performative language and particularly that of the fool, but that fear spawned even more interest in the fool and its linguistic prowess.

During the theater’s closure, various fools’ texts circulated, including a pamphlet that discussed the state of the fool via the quips exchanged between two fools. In *The Stage Player’s Complaint in A Pleasant Dialogue Between Cane of the Fortune, and Reed of the Friars* (1641), the dialogue between the two fools observes two styles of fooling—that of the verbally skilled

¹⁹¹ John Whitehall, *The Leviathan Found Out: Or the Answer to Mr. Hobbes’ Leviathan* (London: Printed by A. Godbid, 1673).

¹⁹² Simpson, *Permanent Revolution*, 204.

fool and that which relies upon physical performance—and reflects upon the state of both fools in the theater closure. The tête-à-tête features Andrew Cane and Timothy Reed, both known for playing the fool in their respective theaters. Prior to the theater’s closure, Cane became one of the principal actors in the infant Charles II’s company and like Armin, remained part of the Goldsmiths’ Guild after his apprenticeship ended. As actors and tradesmen, these men would also be seen in the streets and leading civic lives. Known for his acerbic satire, Cane accrued infamy for his attention to politics. The pamphlet opens with particular attention to both fools’ verbal capabilities:

Cane. Stay Reed? Whither away so speedily? What you goe, as if you meant to leape over the Moon now? What's the matter?

Reede. The matter is plain enough: You incuse me of my nimble feet; but I think your tongue runnes a little faster, and you contend as much to out-strip facetious Mercury in your tongue, as lame Vulcan in my feete.

Quick. Me thinks you're very eloquent: Prithee tell me, Don't Suada, and the Jove-begotten-braine Minerva lodge in your facundious tongue: You have without doubt some great cause of alacrity, that you produce such eloquent speeches now. Prithee what is't?¹⁹³

The pamphlet overtly attaches the theater to Roman mythology and, as with the early seventeenth-century histories and tragedies, invites its readers into a space that views England as Rome, particularly the Roman Republic. Cane, who becomes Quick in the pamphlet, possesses a tongue that attempts to “outstrip” Mercury, the Roman god of thieves.¹⁹⁴ His speech, thus, resembles such a figure: quick, nuanced, cunning, and sharp.

Quick’s quip argues for plain and direct discourse, setting it at odds with the consequences of Cane’s actual acting. His quip requires his readers to be aware of Roman

¹⁹³ Anon, *The Stage Player’s Complaint in A Pleasant Dialogue Between Cane of the Fortune, and Reed of the Friars*

¹⁹⁴ This connection of the fool to thievery is not the first. See William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, in *Norton Shakespeare* (New York: WW Norton Publishing, 2012). Consider *The Winter’s Tale* and Autolycus, whose very name connects him with thievery and who delights in pickpocketing. I will discuss this topic further in the next chapter.

mythos and Suada as a figure of persuasion, but simultaneously Quick also tells Reed (later in the pamphlet known as Light) to drop the persuasion from his speech, which muddies the logic. Even when the fool loses control of his tongue, it becomes all the more “eloquent.” On the one hand, the quip counters the claims of vulgarity leveled at the fool, but on the other they toy with the Renaissance notion of wise folly. Hobbes demarcates wise folly into two uses: “For words are wise mens counters, they do but reckon by them: but they are the mony of fooles, that value them by the authority of an Aristotle, a Cicero, or a Thomas, or any other Doctor whatsoever, if but a man.”¹⁹⁵ Hobbes taunts the audience ask the question, “who is the fool?” as many early modern thinkers valued Ciceronian and Aristotelian rhetoric. The question becomes an interstitial space where readers would recognize the implication of the quip, “Don’t Suada,” and recognize it as odd in the context of valued early modern rhetoric and in light of Cane’s public reprimand in 1637. Cane’s actual discourse led to his arrest at the Bull Theatre in 1637 for his satire, which targeted particular politicians.¹⁹⁶ However, the records of a trial remain scant, suggesting Cane escaped unscathed with a pardon.¹⁹⁷ The pamphlet suggests, then, that such free and overt discourse remained necessary for judging society and leveling critique for its audience (the very definition, according to Jonson, of how a fool functions).

While the theaters closed, the pamphlet still argued that the fool remained needed and ever active in its wordplay. The pamphleteer aligns the fool with an abject economic position, but one that can survive the ramifications of governmental collapse. While “Monopolers are downe, Projectors are downe, the High Commission Court is downe, the Starre-chamber is

¹⁹⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, n.p.

¹⁹⁶ See Jane Milling, “The development of a professional theatre, 1540–1660,” in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, edited by Jane Milling and Peter Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 150–151.

¹⁹⁷ Privy Council Record, (TNA: SP 16/429 f.92 from the Privy Council).

down, & (some think) Bishops will downe,” the fool navigates the collapse of such structures because its attention to the collective voice.¹⁹⁸ The catalogue of systemic collapse asks the reader to consider the fool’s promotion of individual justice within the collective and offers the only route through civil war. While bishops and high court judges may overlook plebeian concerns, the fool’s quips specifically take up and try these issues as ministers. The fools’ verbal acuity remains important for explicating the individual within political systems and to open a space for collective participation in such critiques of these systems. In his panic over the theaters’ closure, Light admits that they cannot conjure or body forth what is not present within culture:

Light How? Cause of alacrity? S’foot I had never more cause of sorrow in my life: And dost thou tell me of that? Fie, Fie!

Quick. Prithie why? I did but conjecture out of your sweet words.

Light. Well! I see you’le never be hanged for a Conjurer. Is this a world to be merry in? Is this an age to rejoyce in? Where one may as soone find honesty in a Lawyers house, as the least cause of mirth in the world. Nea you know this well enough, but onely you love to be inquisitive, and to search the Nature of men.¹⁹⁹

Here, we see once again a response to the religious tensions of the theater “conjuring” or embodying certain aspects staged. The fool cannot provoke revolutionary or self-governing queries if those tensions are not already circulating within the culture. Despite antitheatrical accusations, including Prynne’s connection of the stage fool with the devil, the fool dabbles not in magic but in human nature. Its inquisitiveness and conjectures interrogate man’s nature, but not for malicious purposes. In the speech act, Light underscores the social context that frames the fool’s body. Its discourse lies within human nature and the politics that govern that nature. It does not extend into spiritual concerns. These counters to antitheatrical complaints commonly circulated elsewhere in various pamphlet and dramatic responses. But the pamphleteer’s quip on

¹⁹⁸ Anon, *The Stage-Players Complaint in A pleasant Dialogue betweene Cane of the Fortune and Reed of the Friers*, n.p.

¹⁹⁹ Anon, *The Stage Player’s Complaint*.

honesty in a lawyer's house combined with the litany of governmental collapses underscores that the typical laments and issues in early modern English life no longer remain as pressing. The fool knows this, but still remains driven to still "search" and articulate human nature. This articulation needs no stage to thrive. In spite of the closed stage, the fools' speech acts extend beyond the stage in everyday life. Even as Parliament tried a king and sought to eliminate fools, who provided spaces for collective questioning of civic negotiation within their speech acts, they still found a public stage in print. Cane and Reed's dialogue, made public through printing, still remained persuasive and powerful in street conversations without the support of theaters. Starved of dramatic performances and deprived of their favorite actors, early modern audiences sought out such texts that featured fools or their jests.

Decades of theater-going experience prefaced that the audience respond to the fool's dialogue. Even without its physical performance, the audience knew to intuit its speech acts. If we consider past reactions to the theater, we often think of applause or the occasional rotten apple lobbed at an actor whose performance falls short of expectation. In spite of generalizations of groundling audience as profane and inept at appreciating higher art, the audience specifically reacted to the language of the play, and the fool—like Armin's persona in *Quips*—would encourage a call-and-response style word play. By the 1630s, the stage became infamous as a site of interlocution. In a poem to Charles Diodati, John Milton recorded his experience of going to the Caroline theaters in London. He opens with his rustication from Cambridge and fleeing his tutor's "hard menace." The theaters along the Thames in the warm summer offered more than an alternative education from the university along the reedy Cam. Instead, it demanded an active response from its audience. Milton recounts:

Tempora nam licet hîc placidis dare libera Muis,
Et totum rapiunt me mea vita libri.

Excipit hinc fessum sinuosi pompa theatri,
Et vocat ad plausus garrula scena suos.²⁰⁰

Fleeing from Cambridge, Milton's Ovidian freedom entails pursuing his Muse and books; when he tires of them, he goes to the theater. Circling (*sinuosi*) theaters perform garrulous scenes. Yet Milton underscores both the circling rhetoric and interlocutions and the required response to its language. The theater requires its audience to quickly parse and unpack the wordplay, which enlivens the astute listener and offers an interstitial space of interaction. This response trained the audience to do such sophisticated linguistic unpacking of proverbs, catalogues, and quips, so that even when Parliament shuttered the theaters, the fool's critiques still flourished, circulating unchecked in manuscripts, jestbooks and poems and rearticulated on the street by every man to judge, hold accountable, and challenge the notion of unquestionable monarchical power. While the Justice in the 1607 engraving ignores the rout, the fool's seemingly treasonous encouragement of a collective, culturally authored, and unchecked voice brings its own form of justice for the rout. The fool's speech acts create a space of protest and critique. It forms a more extreme humanist notion of Justice: feared by Prynne and Hobbes as atheistic; dreaded by Charles I as rude and indecorous; and ruded by Parliament as enlivening a revolutionary collective.

²⁰⁰ John Milton, "Elgerium Liber Primus," in *The Complete Shorter Poems*, edited by Stella Ricardo (Blackwell Wiley Press, 2012), 25-28.

II.
Remixes and Mashups: Early Modern Ballads and Quodlibets

*But when I have done so,
Some man, his art and voice to show,
Doth set and sing my pain;
And, by delighting many, frees again
Grief, which verse did restrain.
To love and grief tribute of verse belongs,
But not of such as pleases when 'tis read.
Both are increased by such songs,
For both their triumphs so are published,
And I, which was two fools, do so grow three;
Who are a little wise, the best fools be. —John Donne, “The Triple Fool”²⁰¹*

The status quo approach to the poetry of John Donne divides it into two camps: the secular and the religious. Yet Donne never shies from mixing these two antithetical concepts. In his poem, “The Triple Fool,” Donne blends secular love with a grieving ritual, but he mediates this mixing through the fool. In fact, his persona inhabits not one but two fools in the opening lines: “I am two fools, I know,/ For loving, and for saying so/ In whining poetry.”²⁰² The verse and musical composition blended together publishes such love and the dissemination of this music creates more fools. Donne points out the capability of the speech acts of a fool to produce more fools, and, more specifically, for the fool’s use of music to produce an unlimited number of fools. As Donne seems to caution, such effect only amplifies, rather than diffuses, the grief expressed in the original statement.

Such quick publications of music, as Donne describes, cannot be called back nor quashed easily by censors. In the same vein as flash mobs or songs sung across balconies amidst

²⁰¹ John Donne, “The Triple Fool,” in *John Donne Collected Poetry*, edited by Iona Bell (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 12-22.

²⁰² John Donne, “The Triple Fool,” 1-3.

pandemics, music creates a spontaneous interactive community that transmits its content. And indeed, music's rapid oral transmission allowed it to publish the libels and satires that technically the Bishops Ban of 1599 sought to block. I use the word technically here because (although as Shuger points out, "the single most sweeping act of censorship during the entire period from 1558 to 1641") its efficacy remains questionable.²⁰³ Shuger and Patterson both observe instances in which the law operated more as a law of convenience, unevenly applied.²⁰⁴ As such, ballads often trade in satire, libel and other transgressive material. Moreover, the entanglement of popular music and the fool's satire remained commonly recognized within early modern culture. Even Samuel Pepys likens ballads to libels.²⁰⁵ And indeed, both claim a certain modicum of cultural truth pertaining to individuals and actions.

As documents of popular voice, ballads and their close generic cousin, quodlibets, become key speech acts enacted by fools, who remix them to disrupt and reconfigure a public voice. Due to their oral and material natures, ballads cross the class and the literate divide and could be consumed on the street, in plays, or via broadsheets. Easily accessible for purchase from London to tiny village squares, ballads offered a democratizing platform through using the narrative and reading practices that such genres demanded and instilled a form of schooled memory in their audience.²⁰⁶ Music formed a public exchange that crossed over all social boundaries. It performed rumors, issues, and critiques far more quickly even to the illiterate.

²⁰³ Debora Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 76.

²⁰⁴ See Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor Stuart England*. See, too, Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 8.

²⁰⁵ See Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1893).

²⁰⁶ See Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695-1870* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 153-160.

However, I do not glibly correlate the open access of ballads to an immediate transgression of geographical and class boundaries. While ballads objectively required little literacy from its audience, they still required a tonal and musical knowledge. One needed to know the tune “Cook Laurel” to overlay the lyrics. Ballads from London took time to reach rural towns, and until they trickled into popular discourse, the ballads specific to certain plays required at least a pence and a journey to a London theater. Sometimes, these plays’ first performances occurred at court or Inns of Court, limiting the audience to intellectuals, courtiers, and lawyers. While ballads offered a democratizing medium, they still required a modicum of time to reach those listeners with far fewer points of access. However, their accessibility makes them well suited as a medium for social and political critique.

Bruce Smith and Patricia Fumerton’s studies of the ballad within the early modern oral culture of the theater call for a renewed consideration of the theater’s sounds and music. Smith’s *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* breaks ground by persuasively pointing out the sounds (and external sounds) that impacted stage plays.²⁰⁷ Ross Duffin’s compendium of *Shakespeare’s Songbook* attempts to trace their indebtedness to other contemporary songs and tunes.²⁰⁸ Critics also established a relationship between the narratives of stage plays and ballads. Lori Humphrey Newcombe, Michelle M. Chan, and Hilary Gross et. al point out the remediation process intrinsic to both plays and ballads, which survive as texts but also require performance. In exploring this remediation, they observe that “The two genres were also linked more substantively, when early modern dramatic plots were remediated into ballad narratives and vice versa, in a practice that may once have been widely familiar, although we

²⁰⁷ See Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: UChicago Press, 1999).

²⁰⁸ See Ross Duffin, *Shakespeare’s Songbook* (New York: W. W. Norton Publishing, 2004).

have only a few such ballads extant.”²⁰⁹ Put more simply, ballads also staged plays’ narratives while plays also adopted ballads’ narratives into its plots. In addition to the recycling of plots, the observations of recycling also extend to the material. Most recently, Katherine Landers charts the recycling of woodcuts on the ballad’s broadsheets and the implications of this recycling.

However, these important studies largely overlook the purposeful mixing of ballads and tunes by the fool. Seemingly arbitrary, the mix of tunes actually forms a conversation that the fool uses to school its readers in concepts and applications of truth and justice, neither naturally derived nor legally mandated. This chapter argues that this remixing and mashups of ballads and quodlibets produce a *modus operandi* of disruption that allows the fool to redraft justice in a public voice that becomes amplified by publication and (re)circulation. As I cautioned in the first chapter, such speech acts do not necessarily promote anti-establishment or rebellious ideologies. In fact, these acts quell a rash anger towards injustice. As Pamela Reinagel observes in her recent study of the neurological effects of ballads on human psychology, “Singing ballads involves sustained, controlled deep breathing and therefore may have (and historically may have had) similar therapeutic benefits. Moreover, recent studies have identified a specialized neural pathway in mammals that links somatic calming signals to social communication mechanisms.”²¹⁰ Such “soothing” provides both a therapeutic release and a more rationalized critique, one that operates within the singer and audience.

²⁰⁹ Lori Humphrey Newcombe, Michelle M. Chan, Hilary Gross, Kyle R. Johnston, Sabrina Y. Lee, Kathryn E. O’Toole, Michael J. Ruiz, and Stacy Wykle, “Shakespeare in Snippets: Ballads, Plays, and the Performance of Remediation,” in *Ballads and Performance: The Multimodal Stage in the Early Modern*, edited by Patricia Fumerton (2018): n.p.

²¹⁰ Pamela Reinagel, “Ballads on the Brain: A Neurological Hypothesis,” in *Ballads and Performance: The Multimodal Stage in the Early Modern*, edited by Patricia Fumerton (2018): n.p.

Interrogating Mopsa's belief in the truth value of ballads in *The Winter's Tale*, Frans Dolan suggests that Mopsa's belief may not be so ludicrous, as "ballads document popular knowledge, widely used language, and tenacious associations."²¹¹ These "tenacious associations" become the targets of the fool's remixing as it combines ballads, tunes, historical figures, and distiches into song. In some cases, this remixing seems to produce nonsense. Seemingly arbitrary, the mix of tunes actually forms a conversation. David Baker aptly observes that nonsense in the ballad form and its "seeming randomness, allowed it to serve as a commentary on what counted as 'reason' in the period and to articulate otherwise unvoiced insights into English society."²¹² For Baker, this random nonsense inherently challenges what one might consider reason in early modern England. Moreover, this nonsense can be purposefully manipulated by figures such as the fool. While Baker does not examine this deliberate manipulation of such "nonsense" within music upon which the fool capitalizes, this chapter precisely seeks to explicate how the fool deliberately manipulates ballads and quodlibets into a speech act.

"Ballads undone:" Balladeers, Their Audience, and Fools

The collections of ballads and the tunes tagged (on occasion) to the broadsides offer us some indication of how balladeers expected them to function. In *Rump*, a collection of ballads from 1630-1660, the address "To the Reader" offers a specific method of encountering ballads and understanding cultural authorship and material existence: "THou hast here a Bundle of Rodds; not like those of the Roman Consulls, for these are signes of a No-Government. If thou

²¹¹ Francis Dolan, "Mopsa's Method: Truth Claims, Ballads and Print," in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 79 no. 2 (2016): 175.

²¹² David Baker, "Dangerous Conjectures: Ophelia's Ballad Performance," in *Ballads and Performance: The Multimodal Stage in Early Modern England*, edited by Patricia Fumerton (2018).

read these Ballads (and not sing them) the poor Ballads are undone.”²¹³ The ballads must be sung for their existence to manifest and their efficacy to impact the audience. Without such articulation, the ballads cannot spread as rapidly among Royalist-leaning and moderate publics. Moreover, the address makes clear the ballads offer a form of biblical retribution, for the rods do not stem from the Romans. Instead, the address alludes to the “bundles” of rods in the Old Testament, and more explicitly evokes 2 Chronicles 10:11, which states “my father hath chastised you with rods, but I will correct you with scourges.”²¹⁴ Rather than scourges, the address presents the ballads as instruments that chastise and correct, placing the balladeer in the place of priest, judge, and tutor. Moreover, while subject to a certain trickery or nonsense, the ballads’ forms of deceit or underhand dealing maintains a permissiveness as the pedagogical implications justify the results. The ballads in *Rump* illustrate this subject as they use the profane and outlandish fallacies to stringently critique and educate Parliament and sway those of the audience trapped politically in the middle. Because of “no government,” readers require such rods to transform and demonstrate the injustice produced by Parliament’s “revolt.” And some of the ballads, such as “The Devills Arse a Peake,” include instructions for the delivery of such chastisement—to “be said or sung very comfortably.”²¹⁵ Without such delivery, the ballads become “undone”—their disruption, their effectiveness, and materialization of public criticism.

²¹³ Anon, *Rump, or, An exact collection of the choicest poems and songs relating to the late times by the most eminent wits from anno 1639 to anno 1661* (London: Printed for Henry Brome and Henry Marsh, 1662), n.p.

²¹⁴ See 1 Chronicles 10:11, in *The Geneva Bible*, 1599. Genesis 30:36-38, in *The Geneva Bible*, 1599. See also Exodus 7: 12, in *The Geneva Bible*, 1599. In Genesis 30, Jacob uses rods to influence the coloring of the lambs, so he could increase his flock. In Exodus, Aaron’s rod devours the other rods. Ballads, as rods, consume or subsume other sentiments for the profit of the writer.

²¹⁵ Anon. “The Devills Arse a Peake,” in *Rump*.

Due to their nature as cheap print and the finite number of tunes, ballads, and quodlibets already recycle music, woodcuts, and infamous figures. Readers of the printed ballad collections, nonetheless, distinguished the multiple hands that composed them: “They came not hither all from one Author; (thou wilt soon perceive the same hand held not the Pen) [...] You have many Songs here, which were never before in Print: We need not tell you whose they are; but we have not subjoyned any Authors Names; heretofore it was unsafe.”²¹⁶ In the address, the writer terms this collective a “monster,” yet necessary to ensure the safety of the writers. This monstrous collective includes not only these anonymous balladeers, but the audience who performs the ballads that share similar tunes (and whose narratives become evoked and enmeshed in the narratives of these ballads). Many of the ballads in the collection circulated much earlier orally to avoid censorship or printed as cheap broadsides, which could be quickly sold, tacked to walls and nearly impossible for censors to gather all copies to suppress them. As broadsides, ballads also maintained a portability and imperialistic drive. Carried in pockets, displayed on walls, used as safeguards against ills, ballads provided entertainment, decoration, a modicum of relief from worry, and a powerful antagonism against censors.

However, early modern audiences remained far more comfortable with the fragmentary and assembling a narrative from fleeting notes. Early modern audiences not only encountered this remixing in their popular music, but they enacted forms of it in their reading. Adam Smyth documents the mode of reading practices for commonplace books, which “flourished as a crucial component in the humanist educational system, and as the principal technology for retaining, organizing, and epitomizing a large body of information.”²¹⁷ Not only did the practice of keeping

²¹⁶ Anon, *Rump*.

²¹⁷ Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 125.

a commonplace book contribute to active reading, but it also prepared the early modern reader to encounter and create mashups and remixes. This process cultivated “a willingness to rework material; a tendency to cut, add, or alter text...the creation of non-linear, non-narrative compositions that encourage cross-referencing and a multiplicity of ways of being read or navigated.”²¹⁸ Put simply, early modern audiences worked with the fragments and read or interpreted in multiple ways. We see this mode of reading even within certain famous literary tracts. Consider Milton’s inclusion of Edmund Spenser’s palmer in *Areopagitica*. In the tract arguing against licensing and censorship, Milton claims the palmer accompanies Guyon on his journey through the cave of Mammon whereas in Spenser’s *Faerie Queen*, Guyon journeys through the cave alone.²¹⁹ Collecting such material from a text and repurposing it for one’s own argument existed outside of the academic spheres. Early modern audiences used such commonplace material in epistles, essays and other writing, inscriptions, and legal cases.

This multiple, nonlinear method of assembling and combining narratives formed almost a reflexive way of working with material. Simone Chess observes that the self-reflexivity within Shakespeare’s commentary on ballads within his plays underscores “the adaptability and individuality of ballad themes, even as it reduces the work of the ballad author to that of a

²¹⁸ Smyth, *Autobiography*, 128. For more on commonplace books and reading practices, see Harold Love, “How Personal is a Miscellany? Sarah Cowper, Martin Clifford and the ‘Buckingham Commonplace Book,’” in *Order and Connexion: Studies in Bibliography and Book History*, edited by R. C. Alston (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997); Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695-1870*; Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

²¹⁹ John Milton, *Areopagitica: A Speech of Mr. John Milton* (London: 1644), n.p. Milton states:
our sage and serious Poet Spencer, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher then Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guion, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bowr of earthly blisse that he might see and know, and yet abstain. Since therefore the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human vertue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely, and with lesse danger scout into the regions of sin and falsity then by reading all manner of tractats, and hearing all manner of reason?

milliner doing piecework.”²²⁰ Adaptability and individuality seem incongruous upon first glance, as to occupy an individual space essentially eschews universality that adaptability seemingly requires. However, by stitching together the individual with universal experience the balladeer enables both a linear narrative while enabling a nonlinear narrative created or “authored” by each audience member. In the same vein as intertextuality, the balladeer’s control and success of this nonlinear narrative relies upon an audience familiar with its references. This point becomes particularly salient when we look at how the fool uses ballads and quodlibets as speech acts.

In a similar vein to commonplace books, the fragments in ballads and quodlibets bring together snippets of voices. For Smyth, the commonplace book as a fragment collection creates “a private (or semi-public) text through the appropriation of public texts (whether printed, manuscript, oral); a consequent idea of literary creativity resistant to post-nineteenth-century expectations of ‘originality’, ‘imagination’, ‘self-expression’, ‘voice.’”²²¹ Smyth importantly underscores the liminal space of these fragments in commonplace books, which I apply to ballads—a privately authored text purposely stitched together with public texts, each encompassing its own voice. This composite of voices forms a culturally authored text, but it also encourages such recycling of ballads into other texts. In the mouth of a fool, the ability to remix certain ballads and evoke earlier ballads that shared the same tune enables a manipulation of the public voice within the ballad. Terming this phenomenon as residual memory, Patricia Fumerton persuasively demonstrates how the ballad “Roger” calls to mind the past of Autolycus, from *The Winter’s Tale*, for the early modern audience.²²² This residual memory

²²⁰ Simone Chess, “Shakespeare’s Plays and Broadside Ballads,” in *Literary Compass* (2010): 777.

²²¹ Smyth, *Autobiography*, 128.

²²² Patricia Fumerton, *The Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England Moving Media, Tactical Publics* (Philadelphia: UPenn Press, 2020), 368-369.

operated on a much larger scale across early modern English ballads. Many Royalist ballads, for example, include the music tag, “To the tune of Cook Lorrel,” evoking other past ballads as listeners learned the new lyrics. Moreover, the fool can bring the narrative of one play into another via singing additional stanzas to the same ballad as we see between Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*. While an audience prepared for a play suspends its recognition of the actor’s body, accepting that he plays a new part in a new narrative, the same tune and stanzas to the same song shatter that suspension.

However, unlike some modern readers, the early modern consumers of scuttlebutt understood how to decode any truth from the plethora of fake news. The tag lines alerted readers to certain hyperboles and ironies within the ballads. In some instances, the shared tune tags instruct how to sing the song, and these instructions normally further underscore the irony of the song. For example, many Royalist ballads relating to Parliament share the “Tune of Cook Laurel,” which to a modern ear, sounds like a nursery rhyme. One such ballad, “The Devills Arse a Peake or Satans Beastly Part, or in Plain Terms, of the Posteriors and Fag-end of a Long Parliament,” alerts the reader that the lyrics should “be said or sung very comfortably to the Tune of Cook Laurel.”²²³ Certainly, for a modern audience, singing such a ballad comfortably seems like a near impossibility. However, to an early modern audience, the statement that one can perform such a song comfortably undercuts the worry over censorship in the collection’s opening address and alerts the early modern audience to the lyrics’ satire, if they overlooked the “plain spoken” title. Such a piece sung comfortably to an audience would encourage the aforementioned audience to join in after one or two stanzas. The allowance for saying versus

²²³ Anon, “The Devil’s Arse a Peake, or Satan’s Beastly Part, or in Plain terms the Posteriors and Fag-end or Parliament,” in *Rump, or, An exact collection of the choycest poems and songs relating to the late times by the most eminent wits from anno 1639 to anno 1661* (London: Printed for Henry Brome and Henry Marsh, 1662), n.p.

singing enables the ballad to assume a chant-like form. A ritualizing performance, the tune produces a satirically-minded benediction upon the Parliament that it condemns. Such a benediction evokes the twinned institutions of ritual: religion and the theater.

Sometimes printed and advertised with their tunes, ballads required their audience to overlay new lyrics to a known melody. It is worth mentioning that even today, the finite number of chords produces songs that can sound similar. And balladeers could play with this notion in a similar vein to mashups (or the musical spoofs by The Piano Guys or Sir Mashalot), which exploit our associations and recognitions of certain tunes for their argument—and by effect producing a certain humor. With similar tunes, misremembering lyrics becomes an easy mistake to make. While early modern audiences clearly built a skill set of mapping new words over familiar tunes, it seems also plausible that one might mix the words and thereby, the narratives together. The fool, I argue, capitalizes on this fallibility to disrupt and critique. In doing so, the fool places the onus on the audience to fashion this critique. To modern readers, it might seem bizarre to propose without much study that an early modern audience read between the lines of these remixed ballads and quodlibets from initially hearing them in a tavern or in the streets.

Shakespeare's Balladeers: *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear* and *The Winter's Tale*

In Thomas More's *Utopia*, the Cardinal's dinner features a jester, who "counterfeited the fool so naturally that he seemed to be really one; the jests which he offered were so cold and dull."²²⁴ Playing the fool, the jester baits the Friar into an argument, during which they start quipping bible verses. The Cardinal intervenes and tells the Friar, "in my opinion, it were wiser in you, and perhaps better for you, not to engage in so ridiculous a contest with a Fool."²²⁵ The

²²⁴ Thomas More, *Utopia*, translated by Clarence Miller (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), 21.

²²⁵ More, *Utopia*, 21.

implicit statement of futility outlines the fool's verbal prowess and the fool's act of "turning the table" on the friar, whose folly becomes highlighted throughout the verbal sparring. Enraged, the Friar retorts, "that were not wisely done, for Solomon, the wisest of men, said, "Answer a Fool according to his folly."²²⁶ While early modern England played with the inverse form of the biblical fool, the question of folly—and more particularly the right response to folly—plagued early modern law. Whether ignoring or legislating, most attempts to moderate decorum and dictate the terms of acceptable folly encountered problems. Given the proliferation of ballads and their transmission and reading practices, how does one answer a fool's ballad?

On February 2, 1602, however, Feste, the fool from William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, told the audience of Middle Temple and Olivia, from *Twelfth Night*, "You must permit the Vox."²²⁷ Performed on Candlemas, the audience likely consisted of London elites, including John Manningham, who commented on the performance.²²⁸ Rather than specifically target the English monarchy in his chastisement of Olivia, Feste's comment addresses the governing body

²²⁶ More, *Utopia*, 21.

²²⁷ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will*, in *Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012). The Bishops Ban of 1599 responded to the satire and print war between Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey, but it also echoed the earlier Star Chamber decree on licensing and printing. These responses to the "folly" in print remained ineffective at best. Over the course of the seventeenth century, banning, suing, overlooking, and hiring writers to counter certain texts offered an answer to certain forms of dangerous "folly." See "The newe Decrees of the Starre Chamber for Orders in Printinge," in E., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1557-1640*, vol. 2 (London: n.p., 1875-94): 807. The decree notes:

Item that no person or persons shall ymprynt or cawse to be ymprynted, or suffer by any meanes to his knowledge his presse, letters [type], or other Instrumentes to be occupied in pryntinge of any booke, woork, coppye, matter, or any other thinge whatsoever, Except the same book, woork, coppye, matter or any other thinge, hhath been heeretofore allowed.

²²⁸ See John Manningham, Harley MS 5353, in *The British Library*. John Manningham's Diary notes: wee had a play called Mid 'Twelve Night, or what you will'; much like the commedy of errores, or Menechmi in Plautus, but most like and neere to that Italian called Inganni. A good practise in it to make the Steward beleewe his Lady widdowe was in love with him, by counterfeyting a letter as from his Lady in generall termes, telling him what shee liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his appaile, &c., and then when he came to practise making him beleewe they tooke him to be mad. Neither the fool, ballad, nor the plays many subplots are referenced. It does, however, offer some insight on how some viewers may have been comparatively analyzing this play in addition to others that they viewed.

as a whole. Even before the execution of Charles I, early modern audiences knew a monarch's power remained finite and subject to the sways of influence. Manningham's own diary describes such accounts: "The Queene would sometymes speake freely of our King, but could not endure to heare anie other use such language. The Lord of Kenlosse, a Scott, told our nobles, that they shall receive a verry good, wise, and relligious King, yf wee can keepe him soe; yf wee mar him not."²²⁹ Manningham's statement implies a certain censorship, or protection from the "injurious" speech towards James, by Elizabeth. But more importantly, the account also points out the limitations of the monarch's power on this account. The Lord of Kenlosse's statement recorded by Manningham insinuates the power of aristocrats to keep a monarch moral and wise and to "mar" a king. In effect, the government—as a whole body that includes the monarch—fell prey to answering follies as they deserve. If the governing body cannot answer follies "as they deserve," such that the age-old maxim instructs, how then should they respond to the rampant fool's "abuses" of speech? Within these texts, the fools themselves offer one such response.

In particular, the fool's ballads serve as a case study. In the mouths of fools, ballads, such as those found in Shakespeare's plays, often disrupt such censorship and center instead upon the interruptions and remediation of censoring and free discourse. Returning to Feste's comment, then, it remains important that he does not isolate simply the monarchy for his statement of free speech. His comment chastises Olivia, on behalf not only of her stewardess and Feste's performance of Malvolio's state, but on behalf of the "universal madness" of public voice. This chastisement extends beyond the play's confines and the walls of Inns of Court, London's centric intellectual and judicial hub. It was carried into the streets and courts of Whitehall in 1606.

²²⁹ Manningham, Harley MS 5353.

To complicate matters, the early modern stage offered a further level of physical reading across plays and bodies, in the same vein of ballads overlaying one narrative set to a tune to another narrative set to the same tune. Apart from the visual woodcuts shared across the ballad corpus, the performer's body also became a sight of reading, as the same performer sang multiple songs across several plays, even building upon or ameliorating past songs.²³⁰ In particular, Feste's swansong in *Twelfth Night* makes for an interesting case study. As Act V concludes, Feste's swansong traces the coming-of-age narrative of a boy in early modern England. Lear's Fool, played by Armin too, extends the song—initially an interruption and distraction for those audience members who heard it at Middle Temple or on the streets. The initial distraction occurred both orally and physically. Early modern audiences repeatedly experienced the practice of doubling and its puns in plays. Actors performed multiple characters in a play and in other plays for the same company. Yet the physicality of the actor carries the performance of one play, one song, into the next.

Certainly, questions of *who* precisely holds some culpability in such remediation plague current criticism on Shakespeare and the influence of his company. Catherine Henze argues that Armin likely amended Feste's song for *King Lear*.²³¹ Whether Armin or Shakespeare wrote the lyrics remains of little interest to me or to the central premise of this chapter, but what Armin did through his bodily presence on stage and his speech act offers a glimpse into the fool's use of ballads to form resistant narratologies that promotes a popular voice. By resistant

²³⁰ See Fumerton, *The Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England Moving Media, Tactical Publics*. While Fumerton persuasively applies the term, "intermodal" to ballad reading practices, I suggest that the fool's use of ballads exacerbates such modes so much so by including the physical performance in multiple plays.

²³¹ Catherine Henze, *Shakespeare's Performed Songs* (New York: Routledge, 2017). See, too, Bart van Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013). Meanwhile, Bart van Es adopts the opposing side and finds it ludicrous that Armin would collaborate when Shakespeare knew his company well and wrote parts specifically for certain actors in the first place.

narratology, I mean that he uses the aesthetic limits of narrative song to meld these bodies and promote an unmediated popular voice. This resistant narratology challenges the way we read or watch each fool in narrative isolation and instead, demonstrates the ways in which the fool's acting and ballads read similarly.

In the role of both fools, Armin sings the same song [When that I was a little and tine boy], adding a stanza in *King Lear*. However, this stanza offers a radically different (and perhaps, less than innocent) experience than doubling characters, leaving the stage in a history play to re-enter in comedy. Armin "doubles" as Feste and Lear's Fool, but he remediates a song from *Twelfth Night*. This remediation complicates conventional understandings of Shakespearean narratives by asking us to consider one character in the context of another.

Shakespeare's fool(s) draw specific attention to this action of overlaying one narrative into another through the language of the song, in particular the pronouns. If the audience needed prompting to consider the oddity of this song, they only need to consider the shifting pronouns of the stanzas. For most listeners of music, the actual chord progressions, the polyphonic rhythms, and the prosody subvert the content of the accompanying lyrics. The lyric "I" (the body and its narrative experience) remain subliminal and immaterial. Here, I follow Barbara Herrnstein Smith, who notes that the lyric "I" inhabits "the context of a fictive utterance ... understood to be historically indeterminate."²³² For example, my students often sing along to Kendrick Lamar's "Fear," yet most of my students never grew up with abusive mothers.²³³ Likewise, when they sing, "Voices inside my head / Echoes of things that you said // Jump jump jump," most likely, they do not have the same "voices" inside their heads as The Police, and ideally, the voices that

²³² Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature to Language* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1978), 33.

²³³ Kendrick Lamar, "Fear," in *DAMN*, 2017.

echo in their heads do not tell them to “jump.”²³⁴ Certainly, these examples call into question the issue of co-opting experience and mood modulation, but for the purposes of this chapter, they underscore the specific narrative spaces within songs. Yet the notion of entering an occupied space— assuming the body and experiences of the lyric ‘I’— remains a cognitive enigma for music aficionados and one that prompted early modern writers to portray music as simultaneously divine and diabolical. Katrine Wong notes that such “divarication makes music an essential and versatile dramatic device on the Renaissance stage.”²³⁵ This divine and demonic dichotomy colors the binaries—of both material and immaterial and of performance and affect— presented within the music of the early modern stage.

While the association of fool (Feste in this case) and devil as moral corrupters certainly course through anti-theatrical discourse (including Prynne’s *Histriomastix*), Feste’s association with the devil vis-à-vis music often glosses over the physical effects of his speech act. To an early modern audience, music may cure or poison. The effect of such music to elevate the soul, or produce mirth, acts as a curative for melancholy and a preventative for death, for as Francis Beaumont points out, “tis nought but mirth/ That keeps the body from the earth.”²³⁶ However, the material effects of songs upon the body extends beyond simply curing melancholia. In *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton describes the material and immaterial binary within music as “so powerfull a thing,.../ corporall tunes pacifie our incorporeall/ soule, sine ore loquens, dominatum in animam exercet, and carries/ it beyond it selfe, helpes, elevates, extends

²³⁴ The Police, “Voices Inside My Head,” in *Zenyatta Mondatta*, 1980.

²³⁵ Katrine Wong, “A Dramaturgical Study of Merrythought’s Songs in ‘The Knight of the Burning Pestle,’” in *Early Theatre: A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama*, vol. 12 no. 2 (2009): 91-116.

²³⁶ Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613).

it.”²³⁷ While even his title evinces a form of corporeality (that melancholy possesses bodily structures that serve a biological function), Burton’s description underscores how the materiality, or corporeality as he terms it, of the tunes extends the immaterial self. In the fool’s mouth, music as a speech act gives public voice a remediated body, free from the censorial dictums and regulation upon folly and decorum.

Indeed, when freed from such regulations, the process of *being* in early modern England becomes less than glorious. However, this being cannot be ameliorated through the fool’s speech acts alone. Depicting a quiet life of desperation, Feste’s song offers a commentary in permitting *vox*. When, in *Twelfth Night*, Feste sings the play’s swansong:

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.²³⁸

The song’s narrator moves from childhood to adulthood, during which his responsibilities must be met even among daily tragedies. Shakespeare’s pun on estate simultaneously references the body coming into both manhood and property, which one must protect “[g]ainst knaves and thieves.”²³⁹ As property, the body, too, must be impervious to corruption. In the following stanza, the lyric “I” of the song notes that “[b]y swaggering could I never thrive.”²⁴⁰ And, here, the division between Feste and the lyric “I” becomes more pronounced. The body, or “estate,”

²³⁷ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London: John Lichfield and James Short, 1621).

²³⁸ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, (5.1.376-383).

²³⁹ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, (5.1.382).

²⁴⁰ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, (5.1.386).

bars knaves—an insult often used in reference to the fool—and cannot survive on the excessive verbosity that comprises a fool’s acts. Hence, the fool and lyric “I” remain two distinct bodies, and the fool sings of another body and experience: a body cannot thrive on self-governance and free discourse alone.

Furthermore, the actor’s body, portraying the fool, cannot be forgotten. Schoenfeldt aptly points out that “[a]lthough therapeutic gains have been enormous, one cannot help but feel that something was lost as well as gained when the body became primarily a machine.”²⁴¹ The focus on the actor’s body reminds the audience that they witnessed this actor elsewhere and bring in such memories of the performance. Such a machine unravels actor from character in the final stanza:

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that’s all one, our play is done,
And we’ll strive to please you every day.²⁴²

Feste abandons the lyric “I” for the plural first person, and as such, the song’s speaker seems to disappear. Armin no longer sings as Feste, whose role as the play’s fool ends with the play, but as himself, the actor in a company. These concluding songs and jigs “returned the order of the play to the noisiness of everyday life in a spectacular whirl of increasing disorder.”²⁴³ While certainly the singing and noise provide disorder, the disrobing of character from the actor reinstates everyday order: the audience no longer watches a consciously performative self and body. More importantly (and peculiarly), it abandons the desolate image of an everyman in early

²⁴¹ Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, 11.

²⁴² Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, (5.1.380-383).

²⁴³ William Worthen, “When the Jig is Up—and What is it Up To?” in *Locating the Queen’s Men, 1583-1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing*, edited by Helen Ostovich and Andrew Griffin (New York: Routledge Press, 2009), 214.

modern England and tenaciously, claims “that’s all one,” as if to impose a triviality upon such a situation.²⁴⁴ But this triviality blurs the demarcation between the fleeting performance and the triviality of the state of common men.

While the bodies remain separate and the narrative of the song remains apart from Feste’s own narrative, Shakespeare uses the narrative space of the song’s narrator to extend the immaterial self of his character. David Mann posits that Shakespeare “creates layers of commentary and oppositional meaning in *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, and with Falstaff and his cronies; he is able to use music to indicate a mind in stress.”²⁴⁵ While Feste steps into the narrative space of the song’s speaker, he uses the narrative to indicate a particular mental state. Put simply, Feste uses the material body and experience of the song’s narrator to evince an immaterial mental state that, otherwise, slips from the audience’s notice. Recall my earlier example of my students singing Lamar’s song. While they never experienced the narrative, they step into this narrative space and sing the lyric “I” to indicate a particular feeling or state both subliminally to themselves and to whoever listens. Thus, while the narrative body within the song remains materially distinct from Feste, it lends a corporeality to an immaterial state—an extension of the self.

Four years later, Shakespeare’s company performed *King Lear* at Whitehall Palace. It remains probable that a portion of the audience saw Armin perform Feste a few years earlier. So, when Armin steps upon the stage as Lear’s Fool, those audience members would recognize the actor’s body and recall his prior role as Feste. This recognition seems further exacerbated in Act III of *King Lear*. When other characters seek shelter, the Fool stays beside Lear and remixes

²⁴⁴ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*.

²⁴⁵ David Mann, “Reinstating Shakespeare’s Instrumental Music,” in *Early Theatre: A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama*, vol. 15 no. 2 (2012): 69-91.

Feste's song by singing an additional stanza. Feste ends the narrative of his song with the toss-pots still drinking before refocusing the lens to the stage. On the heath, Lear's Fool expands the song's original narrative to the morning after where

He that has and a little tiny wit—
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,—
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
For the rain it raineth every day.²⁴⁶

Here, the Fool responds to Lear's prior statement about "wit turning" while continuing the song's narrative. While he seems to focus upon the "wit," the Fool emphasizes physical shapes by describing the size of this wit as both "little" and "tiny." Moreover, the stanza redacts the attempt to please the audience. Instead, the stanza suggests that one's wit must make contentment because vulnerability plagues the body every day. He observes that men with marred wits must accept the consequences of their actions, but he fails to finish the song. In *Twelfth Night*, Feste traces the speaker's coming-of-age; while Lear's Fool expands the lyrics to include the folly of adulthood, he omits any reference to old age and the conclusion to the seventh stage of humanity: death. As we see from Jacques' earlier speech in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare never shied from addressing death, specifically the mortality of all governing figures, so the omission from the song asks listeners to question the immortality of the everyday body, or *everyman*. Such a voice outlives all specific individuals: monarchs, aristocrats, barristers, servants, and guildsmen.

Moreover, the emphasis upon physical and bodily imagery in the song solicits the audience to consider the physical and textual bodies being staged and to consider bodies' vulnerability. This vulnerability, especially when viewed as permeable to all external forces,

²⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, in *Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), (3.2.72-75).

suggests an inherent need for resistance.²⁴⁷ Here I would like to narrow this question and ask us to consider how the vulnerability of the fool's staged bodies produces a resistant narratology. For instance, by invoking Feste's song, the Fool yokes together *Twelfth Night* with *King Lear*. When Lear's Fool adds a stanza to the song on the heath, he evokes Feste and the actor. Ephemeraly, Feste enters the resonances of the tragedy. Tiffany Stern notes:

The song breaks down the boundaries that separate play from play, reminding the audience that it is watching a character it has seen before: one that can die or disappear in one play, and live again in another. On one level this lessens the tragedy of tragedy and the comedy of comedy...on another it extends the stories into the world of the audience setting up a series of questions about the relationship between reality and fiction.²⁴⁸

While Stern reminds us that the porous boundaries of a play modulate the genre and reality of a dramatic performance, she overlooks that this porousness serves as more than a mood modulator and nexus of fiction and reality. Through the transposal of Feste into *King Lear*, the audience experiences more than simply a blending of artifice and comedy. We experience a resistant aesthetic (or an aesthetic that challenges popular practices of consuming art). Resistant aesthetics demands resistant reading or viewing practices. By this, I mean Shakespeare invites us to read Lear's Fool in the context of Feste, rather than as a continuum of a developed character. We read characters in isolation from one another or (in the case of Prince Hal and several other Shakespearean characters) as a series. In the moment of song, Lear's Fool encapsulates Feste, the actor, and the lyric figure embedded within the song. Thus, the extension of the common man that Feste brings with him transfers to Lear's Fool where they become reconfigured and thematically applicable to Lear's sudden concern towards human needs.

²⁴⁷ Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay, Introduction, in *Vulnerabilities in Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 1. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay question "what in our analytic and political frameworks would change if vulnerability were imagined as one of the conditions of the very possibility of resistance."

²⁴⁸ Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Play* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), 74.

Yet how do we know a reading enters the realm of truth or "reality" given the evidence of text and stage with such individual, interstitial reading practices? For an early modern audience, the pastiches, intertextuality, the layering of lyrics over another and the mashing of popular texts and ballads would commonly occur throughout everyday life. Shakespeare's Autolycus, from *The Winter's Tale*, uses these reading practices specifically to offer one such critique of how truth functions within such distinct practices to curate an audience who knows how to read rightly this layering. In a later play, Shakespeare sets the trend of staging two foiled mischiefs: Autolycus and the Clown. Yet what transpires from the foiling cannot merely be simplified to a country and court binary. The clown remains static throughout, neither reflecting upon experience nor conversations with interlocutors. On the other hand, Autolycus exercises a certain hierarchy in his tenure: first, a courtier, then a cog in the legal system, and then an errant pickpocketing balladeer to finally return to court. Predicated upon others' reports of his behavior and certain knowledge accrued, he returns to court as an asset, one who certifies the truth of the matter. In turn, he asks the audience to simultaneously serve as jurists in his case. In fool fashion, Autolycus enters the play late and already excised from court for his misdeeds. Recalcitrant, he wanders the roads, sells ballads and, occasionally, gulls and pickpockets the play's fallible figures, including the clown. Clearly a reference to Archibald Armstrong, Autolycus shamelessly sells his stolen goods to the naïve shepherds. As Fumerton succinctly puts it, "Autolycus is something of an extension of the artifacts he peddles. He is, like broadside sheets, flexibly and sometimes randomly made up of reassembled parts (or, in Autolycus' case, 'roles') of words, music, and visuals."²⁴⁹ Along with the stolen goods, Autolycus advertises his ballads both by the

²⁴⁹ Fumerton, *The Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England*, 351.

tunes to which the composer set the lyrics and by their truthful news value, and by doing so, he sells part of his own epistemologies of truth.

Autolycus' use of ballads as equivocations mirrors the reading process. Autolycus maps on the allusions to *The Odyssey* in his own quest to return to court. A seeming vagabond, Autolycus nonetheless attempts to earn his reinstatement at court. Though George Chapman's English translation of *The Odyssey* would hit the stands in St. Paul's Churchyard a few years later, Shakespeare's audience would recognize the name of Odysseus' grandfather as well as his role as a petty thief. As the son of Hermes, Odysseus' grandfather possesses the art of "swearing (not out of the hart,/ But by equiuocation)" and of oration and music in general.²⁵⁰ In *The Odyssey*, Autolycus names Odysseus and allows him to stay as a child. Therefore, the cunning orator imprinted his skills upon the epic's hero. Playing with the connotations of his namesake, Autolycus gulls the clown and others with such equivocations, but this gulling also carries a pedagogical import. Instead of simply playing a comedic ruffian, Autolycus' use of equivocal language and ballads encourages the audience to consider the value and role of such "imperfect" mediums.

The performance of the ballad selling scene also makes the audience as culpable and fallible to the conceit. Before leaving the King's Men in 1611, Armin likely performed Autolycus, and as Lucy Munro cogently points out, the fools that he performed "voice a satiric perspective that is wryer and knowing than that of Kemp's characters. Some of Armin's lower-status characters, such as Abel Drugger in *The Alchemist*, also present a pathos that is rarely invoked by Kemp," or John Shank, who took over as the lead comedic actor of the King's

²⁵⁰ George Chapman, *Homer's Odysseys* (London: Rich Field and W. Jaggard, 1615).

Men.²⁵¹ As a balladeer, Armin brought to the role life experience that generated a certain knowing and pathos within the role. It seems plausible to make the leap that Armin likely engaged with his audience in interlude style, particularly with the audience at Whitehall. The 2018 Globe production of *The Winter's Tale* explored this possibility; Autolycus rode in on a Pride cart, selling flags and other souvenirs while plucking wallets and cell phones from the groundlings. (All of which were deposited at the stage's edge for collection.) Moreover, as a balladeer himself, Armin knew not only the sensationalized ways in which ballads sold on the streets but also the unique publishing process and demand for such texts. And therefore, when Autolycus cites the ballad tunes, Armin likely rattles through his own repertoire of tunes and stock narratives. He invokes, therefore, tunes and ballads known to the crowd.

While this ballad selling practice would commonly occur throughout London both on the street corners and the stage, the emphasis on the news' truth value and Autolycus' equivocations provide the audience with something more than simply a common sight and display of folly. Instead, his speech acts place the audience in the position of certifying truth and justice. Ballads, often suspect for their "truthiness," invoke truth claims and tease out the notion of justice within a monarchical system. And often these critiques come from the entity who violates the system in some way. In "A lamentable Dittie composed upon the Death of Robert Lord Devereux, late Earle of Essex," for instance, the balladeer gives the lines to the condemned Earl of Essex: "And send her to raigne,/ True Justice to maintaine."²⁵² In the ballad, Essex acknowledges that Elizabeth I must condemn him to uphold an important judicial role as God sent her to perform through her position as monarch. As monarch, she enacts some form of truth in relation to the

²⁵¹ Lucy Munro, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: The King's Men* (New York: Arden Shakespeare, 2020), 30.

²⁵² Anon. "A lamentable Dittie composed upon the Death of Robert Lord Devereux, late Earle of Essex," 1601.

punishment earned by rebellious aristocrats. Autolycus complicates locating truth as monarchically or divinely certified by locating himself as the ethos when the purchasers question the validity of the ballads: “Why should I carry lies abroad?”²⁵³ The question in response to a question shifts the focus of who authorizes truth. Autolycus elides the effort of bringing news from abroad with the truth of the ballads and use of the bearer. In doing so, Autolycus demands his audience to certify the truth of the news or account.

“Bearing his part” as the fool, Autolycus instructs his audience in skeptic questioning of authority and the certification of justice when doled out or applied.²⁵⁴ In a line often missed, Autolycus offers us his resume of jobs since being whipped out of court, including a “Processe-server (a Bayliffe).” As a bailiff, Autolycus knew all too well the judicial punishment for his crimes were he ever caught, and he would be aware of the biases within the court structure. So, when he responds that “Five justices’ hands at it” to Dorcus’ question regarding the truth of a ballad, the irony further underscores what Simone Chess points out as “a kind of truth.”²⁵⁵ Yet in a play so preoccupied by “justice” and “desert,” Autolycus’ equivocation points to something beyond just the “truthfulness” or “truth value” of a ballad or ballads as a genre more broadly.

We can see this in particular in the legal contexts of early modern England. The legal court system of Stuart England remained in flux, oscillating between models of conscience and equity. As Dennis Klinck points out:

Stuart theory of monarchy added fuel to the fire being stirred by those who did not like prerogative courts, especially such courts governed by what might appear to be a subjective and arbitrary quasi-juristic notion like ‘conscience’. Moreover, this period witnessed the controversial tenure of the last ecclesiastical Lord Keeper, Bishop John

²⁵³ Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*.

²⁵⁴ Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*. Autolycus states: “I can bear my part; you must know ’tis my occupation; have at it with you.”

²⁵⁵ Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*. See, too, Chess, “Shakespeare’s Plays and Broadside Ballads,” 773-785.

Williams (1621–25), raising even more questions about the relationship of the sacred and the secular and perhaps calling for more explicit limitation of religious incursions into the civil sphere. Part of this concern was focused on the localization of ‘conscience’ in state authority.²⁵⁶

Legal prudence in the civil sphere often inflected with subjectivity and certain religious leanings failed, too, at obtaining a notion of “truth” or “justice” in cases. So Autolycus’ claim that five justices attempted to certify its “truthiness” may not sound so absurd to an audience living within such a justice system. Certainly a moment of satire, Autolycus’ response primes the audience to consider how to obtain or judge for themselves the “truthfulness.”

A “processe-server,” or what as Autolycus defines as a bailiff, serves as a specific intermediary step in the judicial process to collect, distribute and serve legal documents for the court. A legal courier often would know the import of the papers carried and delivered and engaged with both the formal legal powers and the people. Neither the official legal court nor the court of public opinion detached themselves from one another, and fool figures operated within the enmeshment of both spheres. Garthine Walker locates the focal point of the connection between legal and public in the notion of early modern English justice:

Justice, too, invoked notions that complicated its relationship with judicial administration and the exercise of power. It was measured upon a scale of conformity to truth, fact and moral righteousness. These were slippery concepts. No single criterion existed whereby one might gauge the nature of justice. After all, the infliction of punishment might lead the victim of a crime and the judiciary to believe that justice had been done, yet the convicted person might not share this view.²⁵⁷

While certainly the justices exercise a certain power, the ways that they would measure justice and the power given to them to adjudicate in no small part stemmed from the public outside the

²⁵⁶ Dennis Klinck, “The Conscience of Early Seventeenth-Century Equity,” in *Conscience, Equity and the Court of Chancery in Early Modern England* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 141. See, too, Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

²⁵⁷ Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 210.

legal system. Even though justices may issue a verdict, the people informally judge whether or not this verdict seemed a fair court *performance* justice. As a legal courier, Autolycus facilitated the transactions of certain forms of legal justice, but the verdict and certification of such resides both with the justices and (as Autolycus knew all too well and manipulated to his own ends) the court of public opinion.

Natural reason and the legal system within the early modern period remained fraught, and Shakespeare's fool locates himself within that tension. Refined throughout the seventeenth century, natural reason collided with the efficacy of and exacerbated friction between the political and religious states. Theologians, including Hugo Grotius, thought themselves compelled to defend and trace the connections of innate moral values and the world with its human created (though divinely inspired, as early modern religious writers claimed) legal systems. While critics spill much ink over Grotius' responsibility for exporting Arminianism to England, his earlier works on law and politics highlight this tension between natural reason and the legal systems. To circumvent this polarity, Grotius uses religion as the dispositive through which natural reason and earthly legal precedents converge:

First, the Community of Minds, which is call'd RELIGION, and that is the chiefe community, which is the very Soule of Policy, & the shield of Naturall Justice: and it is the great Tye that links man to God, and man to man, whence Religion hath its name, à Religando.²⁵⁸

For Grotius, religion (as the embodiment of theologians' minds) places itself as the soul of the legal system. (Hobbes would contend that "sovereignty is an artificial soul" for the body politic.) Religion preserves justice through natural reason and serves as the connector of all channels of

²⁵⁸ Hugo Grotius (?), *Politick Maxims and Observations Written by the most learned Hugo Grotius, translated for the Benefit of the English States-Men* (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1654). The source text of this translation cannot be traced; thus, while it is uncertain whether Grotius authored such a maxim, it remains safe to posit that such maxim circulated London, and that people considered it Grotius' maxim.

interaction: human and divine. Jacobus Arminius' writings no doubt influenced Grotius' shaping of natural reason, but also important to Grotius' understanding of natural reason within the legal system remains privacy: "It is dangerous to call in a stranger to the administration of justice, as the Florentines used to do; for this is a symptome of dissention amongst the Natives."²⁵⁹ Autolycus (and by extension, Shakespeare) demonstrates the notion of applying justice privately impossible.

Despite the Enlightenment claim to untangling natural reason from legal proceedings, refining natural reason and the issues with using it in legal prudence arose much earlier, and I suggest Shakespeare explored such debates through Autolycus. The separation of natural law (synonymous at times with divine authority) and man's law appears throughout early seventeenth-century writings, including Donne's "Satire III:" "Fool and wretch, wilt thou let thy soul be tied/ To man's laws, by which she shall not be tried/ At the last day?"²⁶⁰ While Donne discusses "right religion" in these verses, he also reminds readers that the final judgement functions on natural (or divine) law and not "man's law." In 1607, Sir Edward Coke pushed to overturn the monarch's ability to try cases, as legal cases do not follow natural reason. The idea that natural reason, alone, cannot give one the authority or knowledge to adjudicate plagues Renaissance humanist writing and Autolycus' discourse. How, indeed, does one create the parameters for "justice," "truth," or "morality," if not by natural reason? For Autolycus, truth and information remain in flux, as does the natural morality (or laws) of divulging certain truths and who should be privy to such truths, as seen in his refusal to tell the king of Florizel's elopement.

²⁵⁹ Grotius (?), *Politick Maxims and Observations Written by the most learned Hugo Grotius, translated for the Benefit of the English States-Men*.

²⁶⁰ John Donne, "Satire III," in *John Donne Collected Poetry*, edited by Iona Bell (New York: Penguin Press, 2012).

The deluge of information to which Autolycus becomes privy and the public ways in which he tries the clown's gullibility push back against the notion that justice must be private and unconsciously implicit and that those states of political power naturally apply such justice. Both the accusatory language directed at Autolycus when selling ballads and his own role as advocate (in a legal sense) to the shepherds demonstrate the follies of natural reason. Autolycus tells his audience: "How blessed are we that are not simple men!/ Yet nature might have made me as these are,/ Therefore I will not disdain."²⁶¹ Both Autolycus' defense of the validity of the ballads and his justification for defending the shepherds before the monarch both rest upon his nature—and by extension the natural reason (morals thrust upon him by the divine and Christian culture), but these statements demand the audience to consider the question, "Why not?" That Autolycus' elevated state makes him a reputable advocate, particularly giving his less-than-respectable proclivities towards theft throughout the play, undercuts the assumption that those of noble birth naturally dole out justice or should advocate for clemency on the behalf of the public.

If natural reason cannot serve as a marker of justice, how should justice be applied or conceived? Here, Autolycus offers a nuanced use of mapping narratives and reading rightly to be exercised through ballads to establish legal precedent and ethos. I contend that Shakespeare complicates what seems like Autolycus' Machiavellian manipulation of court and public. Autolycus' raising the question of who enacts or certifies truth and justice within the play as he performs a form of justice himself specifically demands an audience to also consider their place within adjudicating forces.²⁶² Certainly, he plays into the "Lord of Misrule" tradition by

²⁶¹ Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*.

²⁶² See Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 113–14. Mullaney applies the term "theater of apprehension" to point out the phenomena of the stage to produce the same subjects within its audience. He also notes that it precluded royal "powers of containment and control."

exchanging garments with Florizel, but instead invites his audience to consider the exchange of clothes as in effect an entrance into a narrative and a mapping of his old self. Autolycus reassures both himself and the audience:

Whether it like me or no, I am a courtier. Seest thou not the air of the court in these enfoldings? hath not my gait in it the measure of the court? receives not thy nose court-odor from me? reflect I not on thy baseness court-contempt? Thinkest thou, for that I insinuate, or toaze from thee thy business, I am therefore no courtier? I am courtier cap-a-pe; and one that will either push on or pluck back thy business there: whereupon I command thee to open thy affair.²⁶³

His nature as a courtier never left when he “toazed,” or teased out, the conceits of the aristocrats, the clown and others. The tune, or nature, of his actions still retained the air of a courtier in spite of picking pockets and cozening travelers, as his namesake also imparts. Both narratives still remain active and applicable, and like a ballad, may be written over and amended, introduced to new contexts and remembered by the flavor of wordplay. Because Autolycus possesses a certain nuanced understanding of ballad’s practices and the effects of learning such ballads, he complicates the seemingly simple binary between truth and untruth. Instead of locating natural reason as a mode of reading rightly—interpreting truth from untruth, just from unjust—Autolycus demonstrates that such judicial faculties stem from the culture and knowledge practices produced through cultural consumption. The location of morals and justice, therefore, must be explicitly publicly applied or certified. Autolycus produces more than a mirrored copy of himself among the audience in these equivocations: he creates and underscores the import of a certain citizen, who may rightly read and adjudicate or certify levels of truthiness within the

²⁶³ Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*.

context or framework. Thus, Autolycus fosters the type of citizen who can differentiate the just from unjust of legal prudence.

“For a man to speak truth of the heads of the state:” Royalist Ballads and Fools

As with strolling along the Thames today with the buskers and fire-eaters, one would encounter such music and entertainment along the walk on the north and south sides of the river near St. Paul’s churchyard. Harold Loves points out that “London and through it the nation had, indeed, possessed a single, vast clearinghouse for news and opinion in the form of Paul’s walk—the central aisle of the cathedral—to which every Londoner with the itch for news would go in person every day to tap into what had been delivered by rumor, gossip, or personal witness.”²⁶⁴ Such gossip and personal witness form the truth claims we see in ballads. The platform for news (a pejorative term that Jonson mocks in his 1625 play, *The Staple of News*) appears ideal for spreading anti-government critique. While ballads spread the most recent “gossip” and political sentiments, these narratives varied in veracity and both monarchical and republican leaning sentiments circulated. Despite the truth claims of ballads, even their early modern audience treated them suspect. In 1624, the recusant Catholic Thomas Rogers told his jailers that he “respected the English bible no more than a ballad, for it is false throughout.”²⁶⁵ This denouncement asks us to consider why ballads became political expressions at all, given their notoriety for hyperbole and “untruths.”

Although Parliament banned theater, popular music and ballads still flourished in the streets and taverns. In the wake of the theaters closing, many skilled artisans and merchants that

²⁶⁴ Harold Love, “How Music Created a Public?” in *Criticism* 46 no. 2 (2014): 257.

²⁶⁵ David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious and Treasonous Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

relied upon the stage for income turned to freelancing their services. As one pamphleteer noted: “Our Musicke that was held so delectable and precious, that they scorned to come to a Taverne under twentie shillings salary for two houres, now wander with their Instruments under their cloaks, I meane such as have any, into al houses of good fellowship, saluting every roome where there is company, with *Will you have any musike Gentlemen?*”²⁶⁶ Certainly underscoring the poverty and difficulty of earning a livable income, the pamphlet points out that the theater’s music—a component of the levity so decried by Parliament in stage plays—becomes accessible in the taverns. Open access to the ballads performed on stage calls to mind the plays in which they were performed. As such, we can see how, in the reverse, ballads also evoke the plays in the same vein that *Autolycus* evokes ballads by their tunes.

While one might assume the *modus operandi* of distracting and remixing that the fool uses with ballads maps on well to the civil war, once again we see a more complicated approach. Many of the extant ballads, including the *Rump* collection, skew towards or support the Royalist and monarchical government. While the collection known as *Rump* skews Royalist, certain anonymous ballads (which on occasion use the *Rump* motif) offer a more moderate condemnation of Parliament. In particular, these balladeers use the fool as *personae* to skewer the ruling body, disrupt its notions of justice, and in its place inscribe the illogic of natural reason. As a *persona* staged in the ballad, the fool calls attention to the connection between ballads and the theater. Such a connection, nonetheless, remained suspect even among supporters of the theater. *The Actors Remonstrance* predicted that if theaters remained closed, “it is to be feared, that shortly some of them [writers]; (if they have not been enforced to do it already) will be

²⁶⁶ Anon, *The Actor’s Remonstrance* (London: Printed for Edward Nickson, 1643).

enticed to enter themselves into *Martin Parkers* societie, and write ballads.”²⁶⁷ Though not all playwrights would garner the popularity of Martin Parker, they could eke out a living from composing such songs and as a result, produce more cheap print to “fear.” In other words, the pejorative reference claims playwrights degrade their art by producing such narratives, and Parliament suffers as more critical material circulates more rapidly through the consuming public.

Pejorative or otherwise, the connection between ballad and stage play remained more closely entwined. By using this elision between play and ballad, singers could place themselves in certain stock roles, including the fool. Balladeers still peddle their wares, and such performances connect ballad singing with stage plays. Bruce Smith points out the relationship between ballads and plays extend much further than players singing them on stage. Ballads and plays shared ur-texts. Moreover, the boundary between a ballad and soliloquy or play maintains a nimbleness of slipping between communal and private performance and between subversive banned figures and a legal shared song performance. Smith points out the pronunciation of ballad sounded similar to ballet.²⁶⁸ This flexibility of ballad sliding into play certainly helped bypass the “purge” of fools from the stage. Importantly, too, it kept the fool and their speech acts in the minds of their audience.

In some cases, balladeers adopted the role of the fool. Alexander Brome’s “The Safety” illustrates the reasons for such adoption:

Since it has been lately enacted high Treason,
For a man to speak truth of the heads of the state
Let every wise man make use of his reason,

²⁶⁷ Anon, *The Actor’s Remonstrance*.

²⁶⁸ See Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending the O-Factor* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1999), 170; 200.

See and hear what he can, but take heed what he prate.
For the proverbs do learn us,
He that stays from the battail sleeps in a whole skin,
And our words are our own, if we can keep 'um in.
What fools are we then, that to prattle begin
Of things that do not concern us?²⁶⁹

A lawyer, Brome knew all too well the implications of “enacting” a case of law rather than trying it. While certain laws forbidding satire and libel existed, these laws implicated writers’ impropriety rather than a state offense. Certainly, the new license order, *An Ordinance for the Regulating of Printing* (1643), and the imprisonment of writers, including John Lilburne, certainly might dissuade a less petulant or careful oppositional writer.²⁷⁰ In addition to banning libel, Parliament’s Order banned the plethora of alleged “many false, forged, scandalous, seditious, libellous, and unlicensed Papers, Pamphlets, and Books to the great defamation of

²⁶⁹ Alexander Brome, “The Safety,” in *Songs and Other Poems by Alexander Brome* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1664).

²⁷⁰ See Anon, *An Ordinance for the Regulation of Printing, London (1643)* in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, 3 Vols. (London: HMSO, 1911), 184. This same order Milton defied in publishing *Areopagitica*. The Ordinance notes the punishment for disobeying the order:

And the Master and Wardens of the said Company, the Gentleman Usher of the House of Peers, the Sergeant of the Commons House and their Deputies, together with the persons formerly appointed by the Committee of the House of Commons for Examinations, are hereby Authorized and required, from time to time, to make diligent search in all places, where they shall think meet, for all unlicensed Printing Presses, and all Presses any way employed in the printing of scandalous or unlicensed Papers, Pamphlets, Books, or any Copies of Books belonging to the said Company, or any member thereof, without their approbation and consents, and to seize and carry away such Printing Presses Letters, together with the Nut, Spindle, and other materials of every such irregular Printer, which they find so misemployed, unto the Common Hall of the said Company there to be defaced and made unserviceable according to ancient Custom; And likewise to make diligent search in all suspected Printing-houses, Ware-houses, Shops and other places for such scandalous and unlicensed Books, Papers, Pamphlets and all other Books, not entred, nor signed with the Printers name as aforesaid, being printed, or reprinted by such as have no lawfull interest in them, or any way contrary to this Order, and the same to seize and carry away to the said Common Hall, there to remain till both or either House of Parliament shall dispose thereof; And likewise to apprehend all Authors, Printers, and other persons whatsoever, employed in compiling, printing, stitching, binding, publishing and dispersing of the said scandalous, unlicensed, and unwarrantable Papers, Books and Pamphlets as aforesaid, and all those who shall resist the said Parties in searching after them, and to bring them afore either of the Houses or the Committee of Examinations, that so they may receive such further punishment, as their Offences shall demerit, and not to be released until they have given satisfaction to the Parties employed in their apprehension for their pains and charges, and given sufficient caution not to offend in like sort for the future.

Religion and Government” that proliferated in the wake of the Stationer’s Office closure.”²⁷¹ It also cracked down upon the “corner” (unsanctioned) presses that produced “in such multitudes, that no industry could be sufficient to discover or bring to punishment all the several abounding Delinquents.”²⁷² More importantly, though, the order’s language remains vague regarding the exact punishment of these delinquents: “not to be released until they have given satisfaction to the Parties employed in their apprehension for their pains and charges, and given sufficient caution not to offend in like sort for the future.”²⁷³ The caution for keeping one’s word to oneself seems warranted.

However, Brome offers a solution to the issue of censorship by adopting the voice of a fool at times to “begin/ Of things that do not concern us.”²⁷⁴ In his collection of drinking songs, he hauls the fool back onto the stage in songs, bringing it “back into fashion,” as he observes.²⁷⁵ His collection of drinking songs offers a playbook for Royalist resistance. At first glance, the collection appears to oscillate between advocating for the self-medication of sack and lamenting the inability to ameliorate the issues of state. While seemingly arguing for inaction, the collections use of the fool calls attention to the place of the fool’s ballads as a (correct) mode of resistance—one that allows the singer and composer to escape the wrath of censors. In part due to adopting the fool’s voice, Brome manages to live quite comfortably through the civil war. Raymond Anselment notes Brome's ability to adapt to life as a royalist in the Interregnum:

²⁷¹ Anon, *An Ordinance for the Regulation of Printing, London (1643)*, 184.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Brome, “The Safety.”

²⁷⁵ Alexander Brome, *Songs and Other Poems by Alexander Brome* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1664).

“While [Richard] Lovelace lost his estates and languished in prison, Brome pursued a successful legal career, taking time to write in varied voices.”²⁷⁶ For Brome, the adoption of the fool’s voice calcifies a liminal space in which he may continue to practice law and enact a certain form of justice under Parliament’s regime, but he may also criticize the “Machiavil a fool with his plots.”²⁷⁷ The fool’s voice, thus, enables a certain form of royalist treason and sovereignty.

Yet Brome’s depictions of the Machiavel fool center upon its outward inaction and verbal moderation. I use the term “verbal moderation” because the song collection certainly promotes various other excesses. Once again, Brome’s songs play with the familiar early modern dichotomy of fools: the early modern fool and the biblical one. In “The Satisfaction,” he notes “[a]nd we that are fools do do no more.”²⁷⁸ Those Royalists playing the fool should content themselves with sack to live quiet lives. In Brome’s drinking songs, fools depicted in action transgress foppishly:

'Tis the fools-cap that maintains the City.
If honour be air, 'tis in common, and as fit,
For the fool and the clown, as for the champion or the wit.²⁷⁹

The biblical fool, a prodigal, becomes an everyman. Nothing particularly noteworthy distinguishes him, yet he runs the city. Casting action as pejorative, Brome stresses that in adopting the Machiavel fool’s voice, Royalists can navigate the middle road between complacency and outright rebellion. Instead of “medling with matters of State,” Cavaliers should

²⁷⁶ Raymond Anselment, *Loyalist Resolve: Patient Fortitudes in the English Civil War* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 127.

²⁷⁷ Alexander Brome, “Out of Anacreon,” in *Songs and Other Poems by Alexander Brome* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1664).

²⁷⁸ Alexander Brome, “The Satisfaction,” in *Songs and Other Poems by Alexander Brome* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1664).

²⁷⁹ Alexander Brome, “The Royalist Answer,” in *Songs and Other Poems by Alexander Brome* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1664).

avoid the folly of scribbling and prating.²⁸⁰ Brome himself escaped unscathed, apart from a penchant for the bottle, with his career intact. This public political avoidance—combined of course with the required amount of alcohol to make this life possible for many—becomes the life of what Brome terms the murmurer. Such a murmurer only shows wit through “silence, and thinking.”²⁸¹ The act of silence or thinking pushes back against a glib reading of inaction seemingly promoted by the ballad and leveled against Brome by fellow Royalists.

Instead of pursuing an active form of resistance, the fools’ voice allows the Royalist to remain to jest and sing. Moreover, as Brome highlights, this position diverts Parliament’s attention to other contentious groups (allowing them to serve as a sacrificial scapegoat). Brome advocates:

And not shew our wit
By our prating, but silence, and thinking,
Let the politick Jews
Read Diurnals and News,
And lard their discourse,
With a Comment that's worse;
That which pleaseth me best,
Is a song or a Jest.²⁸²

Here, he suggests that the fool’s voice offers a better tool to condemn Parliamentarians. He highlights the distraction—in the form of comments made by Jews reflecting on the country’s state and news—and the proper form of resistance through the medium of jests and music. With Parliamentarians too distracted by the deluge of subversive print, Royalists’ songs using the fool’s voice could circulate through the city taverns and houses both orally and in print. By resisting inflammatory jibes and favoring thoughtful treason instead, the Royalist, in adopting the

²⁸⁰ Alexander Brome, “The Murmur,” in *Songs and Other Poems by Alexander Brome* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1664).

²⁸¹ Brome, “The Royalist Answer.”

²⁸² *Ibid.*

fool's voice wrests a certain sovereignty from Parliament—a modicum of free speech and the power to resist and protest without incurring punishment.

In the vein of Donne's catalogue title, Royalist-leaning balladeers frequently used the fool to explore its position of power and its position in Parliament. One such ballad, "A New Ballad called a Review of the Rebellion, in three parts," stages the debate between Parliament and the theater. The familiar antagonism between the theater and more stringent Puritans (who increasingly gained ground in Parliament), exacerbated by Prynne and other antitheatrical writers, would strike a familiar chord with the early modern audience. However, the ballad disrupts the expectation of its audience by casting members of Parliament as certain stock characters. This disruption almost glosses an important place in government. Since Parliament closed the theater, the ballad suggests, "the Two Houses may Act alone."²⁸³ The line places the theater as a counter governing body to Parliament. As such, each "Member with so much art,/ Playes ye King, ye Lord, Knave, or Fooles part."²⁸⁴ Each representative in the House of Lords and Commons must play all the stage parts, including the fool's role. While certainly Royalist-leaning, the ballad provides cautionary advice for Parliament to govern. To overhaul an entire system, one must fulfill all the roles left vacant. John Whitehall responded to Hobbes specifically with the question of what to do if the monarch occupies the fool's role. Monarchs must retain and not transfer sovereignty unless abdicating its role. To play both the fool and king presents, thus, an incongruous dilemma: how can one simultaneously keep and transfer power? And sanction voice while also possessing a license to speak freely? Such a position seems impossible in a single legislative body, especially keeping in mind *The Ordinance for Regulating Printing*.

²⁸³ Anon, "A New Ballad called a Review of the Rebellion, in three parts," (London: s.n. 1647).

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

Such a position, though, becomes more tenable in a Hobbesian notion of the body politic. Though the fool affects the governing body, the political body produces (at least the need for) the fool. One of the ballads, “The Parliament’s Pedigree,” explicitly traces this feedback loop:

The Round-head got a Citizen,
That great Tax-bearing Mule,
The Mule begot a Parliament Asse,
And he begot a Fool:
Some say the Fool got Warwick,
And Rich gave him his whole Land,
In zeal Lord Rich got God knows who.²⁸⁵

By taking citizenship and the importance of *civiti* to the extreme, Parliamentarians produce a populace that just panders to its representation. In turn, Parliament then begets the fool. Punning on the trope of biblical genealogies, the balladeer professes the monstrous birth that politics produces, including the fool. Unlike fools’ typical sterility, the ballad’s fool produces Warwick.²⁸⁶ Here, the balladeer plays with the name of Lord Robert Rich and his son, also known as Robert Rich. Lord Rich senior (“Warwick”) supported the Parliamentarians and enabled his son, a Royalist, to escape Parliament’s fine relatively unscathed. Newly landed gentry, the Warwicks represented the nouveau aristocrat. The fool’s verbal acts, thus, generate a new form of political player, whose political influence and market strategies earn them a landed position. Yet even these political players possess a fallibility. In bailing out his son, both Rich and his son’s credibility and support of either side become suspect. A Parliamentarian begets a Royalist, yet who does a “reformed” Royalist beget?

²⁸⁵ Anon, “The Parliament’s Pedigree,” in *Rump*.

²⁸⁶ Most fools flit in and out of plays and songs with few personal connections. When Peregrine (arguably a fool) heals in Richard Brome’s *The Antipodes*, his impotency—a symptom of his foolery—disappears.

Cast pejoratively, the fool's role in this zealous propagation appears at first to subvert its ability to craft a "proper" citizen. But if we consider how ballads work, through distraction, disruption, and reification in remixing and mashups, then by calling attention to the fool, the balladeer calls attention to his space as a satirical punster and fool. Its distractive entrance onto the "stage" brings with it the prior place of its stage form. Moreover, the genealogy highlights the fool's role in the transfer of power, but the balladeer disrupts the simple elision of the fool's place as judge and pedagogue. Instead of always crafting the ideal citizen, the fool may also produce something monstrous and not clearly generative. If the status quo structure produces monstrosities and untenable political choruses, then how should this genealogy continue and what roles should figure in it, such as the taxpayer or the fool play? The theater itself, shuttered by Parliament, no longer provides a space of political and social critique. In attempting such a political engagement of *civiti*, Parliamentarians created the same self-perpetuating, and hypocritical political hierarchies (such as the newly landed Warwicks) that they decried. It calls into question the place of the balladeer as a fool and enacting a fool's speech act. Ripped from the stage, the fool's speech acts become ripe for reworking within other mediums to cauterize such political ineptitude and circles.

"Unripe ears:" Quodlibets and the Fool's Remix

Around 1707, Johannes Bach composed a new wedding song that juxtaposed secular love poetry and folk songs with the sacred tones of a church service. The "Wedding Quodlibet, BWV 524" places itself both within the humanist tradition of folly and in the musical tradition of mastering the combination of the sacred and secular. Such seemingly profane and irrelevant mashups actually marked a mastery of the composer. Quodlibets (or "whatever pleases") mix the secular and sacred in a light, comedic musical mashup of notes or verse. This mixing forms a

conversation between the larger narratives of each component. Mashups test the listeners cultural capital of the period.²⁸⁷ These mashups of content or style provide mirth to those who recognize the tune(s) or verses, but they also disrupt. Listeners recognize one tune, only for another tune to interrupt. Like a fool's entrance in a stage play or masque, the interruption echoes Mercury's sentiments in Thomas Carew's *Coelum Britannicum* that such interruptions "disturb/ The great Affair with your rude scurrilous chat."²⁸⁸ On one hand, this "rude" interruption offers an initial distraction from the first tune or verse, and thus, disturbs such content or affair. With quodlibets, the writer stitches two or more tunes or lyrics together. It actually forces the listener to consider why the musician or writer put these two tunes or verses in conversation with one another. It keeps such tunes and verses from becoming *Muzak*, or commodified background music.

Due to its rude interruption and blending of cultural authorship, the use by some authors, such as Robert Hayman, of the genre in its speech acts comes as no surprise. Judgements of law and society disrupt the status quo to set precedent. The fool figure in Hayman's *Quodlibets* remixes tunes and verse specifically in quodlibets to interrupt the understanding of "justice" within early modern society. The genre combines familiar manifestations of justice to create an unfamiliar form within public voice and culture. Robert Hayman's text becomes an interesting case study for three reasons: 1.) detached from the London trends fueled by Charles I's court and the city's more stringent Puritan writings, the book does not kowtow to anti-theatrical pressures and calls to remove fools for their "barbarism;" 2.) it acknowledges performance as a tool in part due to Newfoundland's rich cultural interactions as the colony attracted Portuguese fishermen and Jesuit missionaries who used theater performances both for entertainment and conversion;

²⁸⁷ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital, in Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson (New York, Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.

²⁸⁸ Thomas Carew, *Coelum Britannicum* (London: Printed for Hum. Moseley, 1651).

3.) it also incorporates John Owen's epigrams written under James I as translation. Thus, the book feels outdated when read alongside contemporaneous London texts.

Dedicating his compilation to Charles I, Hayman's self-styled *Quodlibets* mixes the sacred with the secular, the political with various Protestant reforms, the new world with the old, and, most importantly, the theater with redemption and the fool with treason. A seemingly dated read for his London audience (in no small part due to the translations of older texts), Hayman's work quickly injects Jacobean sensibilities into Caroline haute couture of court and government composition. He describes this blending as "some vnripe eares of corne, brought by me from the cold Country of Newfound-land."²⁸⁹ Ironically, a few years later, George Herbert's *The Temple* would be censored for his allusions to the church in the new world.²⁹⁰ But these ripe ears, which do allude to the church in the New World, "testify" to the ability of poets to produce excellent, witty pieces. But his *Quodlibets* challenge the decorous, insular image of court, which Charles attempted to craft, and Hayman stages a fool as a persona.²⁹¹ This staging of the fool as persona disrupts and restores the court image. In his dedicatory poem in the collection, George Withers notes:

If any Tyrant, you, or yours abuses:
For these will follow you, and make you mirth,
Eu'n at the furthest Angles of the Earth,
And those contentments which at home yee leese,

²⁸⁹ Robert Hayman, *Quodlibets lately come ouer from New Britaniola, old Newfound-land Epigrams and other small parcels, both morall and diuine. The first foure bookes being the authors owne: the rest translated out of that excellent epigrammatist, Mr. Iohn Owen, and other rare authors: with two epistles of that excellently wittie doctor, Francis Rablais: translated out of his French at large. All of them composed and done at Harbor-Grace in Britaniola, anciently called Newfound-Land* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

²⁹⁰ George Herbert, *The Temple and Other Private Ejaculations* (Cambridge: Printed by Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel, 1633).

²⁹¹ See Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

They shall restore you among Beasts and Trees.²⁹²

According to Withers, the New World's freedom "leased" in the quodlibets produces a mirth and a return to a natural state, free of the abuse of tyranny. Withers advertises Hayman's quodlibets as a levity that follows one after the reader finishes them. However, we see counter impulses in how *Quodlibets* use nature and a natural state of man. Furthering this notion of restoration, William Vaughan addressed Hayman's effort: "You digge new grounds, and roote vp Trees and Mosse./ You shew the meanes to cut off suites and strife;/ Meanes for good men, to leade a pleasant life."²⁹³ Hayman's *Quodlibets* uproots and transplants its readers in order to eradicate the strife. Hayman's quodlibets addresses the polarized views towards the fool's form of justice—it eliminates strife and teaches a "pleasant" life, but it must uproot something natural in order to enact it.

These dedicatory poems demonstrate more than the "richness" or return to nature that the New World provides. The New World possessed its own mixings and interruptions of familiar soundscapes, both linguistically, musically, and performatively. Native American music and language blended with the Portuguese and French fishermen's shanty songs and performances. The British newcomers encountered an already established set of communicative patterns that the British colonialists needed to learn and added to with their own soundtracks from England. The Newfoundland colony—always a problem for England—maintained a tenuous but close relationship with its London corollary. Hayman himself would die abroad in South America in search for more resources in 1629.

²⁹² George Withers, "To the Louers of the Muses, vpon these Quodlibets," in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

²⁹³ William Vaughan, "To my deare Friend and Fellow-Planter, Master Robert Hayman," in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

The code-switching between such soundscapes would be imperative for the governor of the colony or the fool interplaying between the two cultures. This act of translating between cultures adopted new resonances in the New World. Joanne van der Woude defines two common forms of translation in New World texts, *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*. For van der Woude, Hayman follows *translatio imperii*, which “is a genealogy of power that casts New World riches as the direct result of Old World knowledge and rule, which comes to suffuse colonial literary production in both subtle and obvious ways.”²⁹⁴ This *translatio imperii* certainly stages such literary production as a byproduct of and gift to the Old World. However, translation “had multiple meanings since its first appearance in English among them, the kinetic process of transporting objects, peoples, or plots. Hayman's idea of paraphrase, composition, and translation as gestural action is thus not new.”²⁹⁵ And in the act of composing or transporting people and ideas kinetically, Hayman raises the question of Old World traditions in the New World as a challenge to the paradisaical idea of the New World as a religious and political utopia. For Hayman, it provides a method to disrupt and examine the freedoms of the New World against the backdrop of Old World justice in order for the audience to deduce the best course of justice in the New World.

Labeled a “facetious epigrammatist,” Hayman’s quodlibets blend verses, but they offer more than the typical libel. These verses occupy a space somewhere between music, poetry, and performance. Hayman notes, “[t]hough my best lines not dainty things afford/ My worst have in them some thing else then words.”²⁹⁶ Neither the well wrought poetic feet nor their meaning

²⁹⁴ Joanne van der Woude, “The Migration of the Muses: Translations and the Roots of Early American Poetry,” in *Early American Literature* 45 no. 3 (2010): 501.

²⁹⁵ Woude, “The Migration of the Muses: Translations and the Roots of Early American Poetry,” 506.

²⁹⁶ Robert Hayman, *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

completely depend upon words, even in their most ill-formed state. In a liminal state between words, the reader can attempt to ascertain meaning between the two juxtaposed verses. But the practice remains far from comfortable. And Hayman discloses his purpose to provoke and incite his readers. In an address to his readers, he notes his brief style in contrast to the copia that dominated discourse. Hayman claims, “If breuity my *Reader* doe displease./ I vse it more for his, then for my ease.”²⁹⁷ Rather than write in a form comfortable or *typical*, Hayman underscores the purposefulness (“more for his”) of displeasure in the pithy, *jabbing* statements. Such statements alert the reader to Horatian satire, but also to the fool’s play. Facetiously, Hayman acknowledges his self-awareness of playing the fool throughout the collection. In one quodlibet, “Youths conceits, and Ages knowledge,” Hayman writes: “I thought my selfe wise when I was at *Schoole*,/ But now I know, I was, and am a *Foole*.”²⁹⁸ The wisdom acquired from years at school offers on one hand pretense and on the other, the self-consciousness of knowing how little one knows and yet the capability at pointing out the folly in others and oneself. The danger, of course, remains overextending oneself within this verbal play, attending to others’ states while overlooking one’s own. Hayman compares the fool, whose “bonds for others,” makes the role akin to the drunkards “gulping [to] others healths.”²⁹⁹ By performing for others, the fool risks its

²⁹⁷ Robert Hayman, “To the Reader,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

²⁹⁸ Robert Hayman, “Youths coceit and Ages knowledge,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

²⁹⁹ See Robert Hayman, “To a kinde Foole,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

11. To a kinde Foole.
Oft into Bonds for others thou hast runne,
But by those Bonds, thy selfe thou hast vndone.
No luggler euer show'd vs such a cast,
To be vndone by being bound so fast.
So Drunkards doe with a like Iugling tricke,
By gulping others healths, themselues make sicke.

verbal freedom while instructing others' sovereignty. A fragile line between safety and duty, the verbal word play disrupts and causes unease in its recipients and reorients certain social and political aspects. It becomes a mechanism of play, which Hayman puns on throughout the collection.

Disconnected from the anti-theatrical push in Caroline and Civil War England, Hayman refers to performance and play both as an action and a genre. For example, Hayman quips: "Lawyers doe call Plaintifes Defence, their Plea:/ It rather might be called Lawyers Play."³⁰⁰ Here, Hayman combines the familiar practice of law with the act of playing a game. It disrupts lawyers' practice and asks us to consider it a performance. Thus, it becomes important to understand the complexity of theater in the early colonies. While Hayman's *Quodlibets* circulated as a text, it remains particularly concerned with performance and the theater and its power to disrupt. While generalizations of early American culture paint it as stark and anti-theater-leaning due to the influx of staunch, more zealous Puritans fleeing the pomp and ceremony of the Anglican Church, the place of performance and theater in the colonies actually remained quite complicated. On the one hand, more zealous leaning Puritan settlers railed against the theater. Yet an equally compelling archive suggests that early colonizers also railed against more zealous Puritans and contested the staunch antitheatrical rhetoric in some sects of Puritans. Moreover, as Claire Sponsler points out, Humphrey Gilbert's 1583 crossing brought various props for festivities.³⁰¹ The toys and Morris dancers brought over to the colony served more than to bait Native Americans. And Heather Nathans points out the divide as a culture war:

³⁰⁰ Robert Hayman, "Lawyers profitable pastime," in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

³⁰¹ Claire Sponsler, "Medieval America: Drama and community in the English colonies, 1580-1610," in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28 no. 2 (1998): 454.

“Prior to the [Revolutionary] war, resistance to theatrical activities had been largely subject to debate between factions who objected to the theater for religious reasons, and the elite groups, who supported the theater as a link with “civilized” British culture.”³⁰²

Although declared an English colony, Newfoundland provided a home to the French and Portuguese ships, which frequently docked in its ports. Claire Sponsler notes the correlation between the medieval mystery plays and records of Jesuit performances.³⁰³ It seems likely, therefore, that colonial performances were affected by this style of theater. In my prior chapter, I noted that the pamphlet, *Certain Propositions Offered to the Consideration of the Honourable Houses of Parliament*, advocated a reopening of the theaters, if only to diminish the size the Royalist army. In that same pamphlet, the anonymous pamphleteer suggests a return to mystery style drama:

there must be some entertainment whether you will or no. You would be pleased to declare yourselves that you never meant to take away the calling of Stage-playes, but reforme the abuse of it; that is that they bring no profane plots, but take them out of Scripture all ... It would not be amiss too, if instead of the Musicke that playes between Acts, there were onley a Psalme sung for distinction sake.³⁰⁴

Whether or not Parliament wishes, entertainments will still take place. But more importantly, the pamphleteer makes evident that Parliament does not want to be on the wrong side of history when it comes to banning entertainments. Instead, the writer suggests putting on mystery style plays. It suggests that the colonial notions of performance formed by encounters with Jesuits impacted later seventeenth-century notions of performance.

³⁰² Heather Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.

³⁰³ Claire Sponsler, “Medieval America: Drama and community in the English colonies, 1580-1610,” in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 28 no. 2 (1998): 454-478.

³⁰⁴ Anon, *Certain Propositions Offered to the Consideration of the Honourable Houses of Parliament*, n.p.

Performance offers Hayman a lens for disruption. In order to disrupt the Old World notion of justice, Hayman makes clear that his quodlibets how a fool works as a justice that disrupts. In his fourth quodlibet, Hayman, in the guise of Old Lelius, invites Scipio:

Let us sit downe and by the fiers light,
Let our discourse be without saucy spight,
Wee'll tell old tooth-lesse tales, which cannot bite,
Whilst yong Fooles to talke Treason take delight.³⁰⁵

Clearly invoking the loyalty of the friendship between Lelius and Scipio, Hayman claims such discourse and tales between the two cannot “bite” because of their toothless position. However, the last line disrupts the claim of “toothlessness” with a claim of interpretation—the inability to “bite.” Hayman notes that fools take “delight” in such tales, as they offer talking points for treason. While these tales seem innocuous and sans spite, in the mouth of a fool they become treasonous. The fools who take pleasure in talking treason also take delight in the tales.

However, Hayman pushes this connection of treason further. At first, the last line seems to distract from the first lines of camaraderie in the mashup. Yet Hayman specifically focuses on a particular friendship and one that extends beyond patronage. It calls into question the dedication of the book. He dedicated the collection to Charles I, whose conflicted relationship with Parliament became infamous. If Hayman adopts Lelius as a persona, then Scipio stands in for Charles. This identification of Charles as Scipio, on the surface, may seem innocuous. But most early modern readers would be aware of Cicero’s link of Scipio with discussions of tyranny. In *De Republica*, Cicero also stages a conversation on political philosophy between the old friends. In Cicero’s account, Scipio notes:

when the king begins to be unjust, that form of government is immediately at an end, and the king has become a tyrant. This is the worst sort of government, though closely related

³⁰⁵ Robert Hayman, “Old *Lelius* to his wise friend *Scipio*,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

to the best. If the best men overthrow it, as usually happens, then the State is in the second of its three stages; for this form is similar to a kingship, being one in which a paternal council of leading men makes good provision for the people's welfare. But if the people themselves have killed or driven out the tyrant, they govern rather moderately, as long as they are wise and prudent, and, delighting in their exploit, they endeavour to maintain the government they have themselves set up.³⁰⁶

A somewhat more structured account of what would happen during the Civil War (and later the American Revolution), this political diatribe describes such a coup as a political stage. As a result, the people invest more in trying to establish and maintain their own right to rule. However, we must be careful not to hastily assume Hayman advocates for this stage of government. Returning to the quodlibet, Lelius and Scipio may discuss political philosophy as “old toothless tales,” but in the mouths of those licensed to speak freely (a.k.a fools), Cicero becomes a tool for treason.

Hayman, however, does not cleanly parse the fool as a voice of anarchy nor one of unstoppered ignorance. Rather than garrulous and disloyal, the fool seems to have become one of John Milton's company. Indeed, those people who opposed Charles' monarchy, including Milton, identified with Cicero. David Norbrook aptly points out that radical humanists considered Cicero the epitome of Roman eloquence.³⁰⁷ However, as Susan Wiseman cogently demonstrates, Cicero could (and was) claimed by both monarchists and “republicans.” Examining a later text, *Cicero's Prince*, Wiseman describes the early modern notion that “Cicero represents a source, a ‘rich mine’ from which two, distinct political discourses can be drawn and even (momentarily at least) held in juxtaposition.”³⁰⁸ Hayman, thus, sets his book as fireside

³⁰⁶ Cicero, *De Republica*, translated by Clinton Keyes (Boston: Loeb Classical Library, 1928).

³⁰⁷ David Norbrook, “Marvell's ‘Horacio Ode,’” in *Literature and the English Civil War*, edited by Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 150.

³⁰⁸ Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 78.

advice for a king, who a year later would stop calling Parliament, but he also reminds the king and readers that his work, like the words of Cicero in the mouth of Scipio, can be used to support an opposition. Instead of clearly demarcating the fool as a supporter of monarchy or a republic, Hayman points out the ways that the fool's acts work by appropriating and transferring or translating power—the very act of Hayman's quodlibets.

However, Hayman also inherits the fool's translation of power vis-à-vis the act of translating John Owen's epigrams. From the New World, Hayman translates Owen's epigrams produced in England under Elizabeth and James I. The past wit and the emerging New World politics disrupt the Caroline court. The collection's woodcut of an iguana, neither native to England nor Newfoundland, indicates the product of mixing Old and New World discovery and forms while claiming to cause no harm. But these forms ossify into a singular composition. As a collection, *Quodlibets* advertises its mixing and reconstituted forms that incorporate Owen's epigrams and Rabelais' letters: "old Newfound-land Epigrams and other small parcels, both morall and diuine. The first foure bookes being the authors owne: the rest translated out of that excellent epigrammatist, Mr. John Owen, and other rare authors: with two epistles of that excellently wittie doctor, Francis Rablais."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ Hayman, *Quodlibets*.

The collection, thus, offers work composed in the New World, but a Welsh epigramist, and a

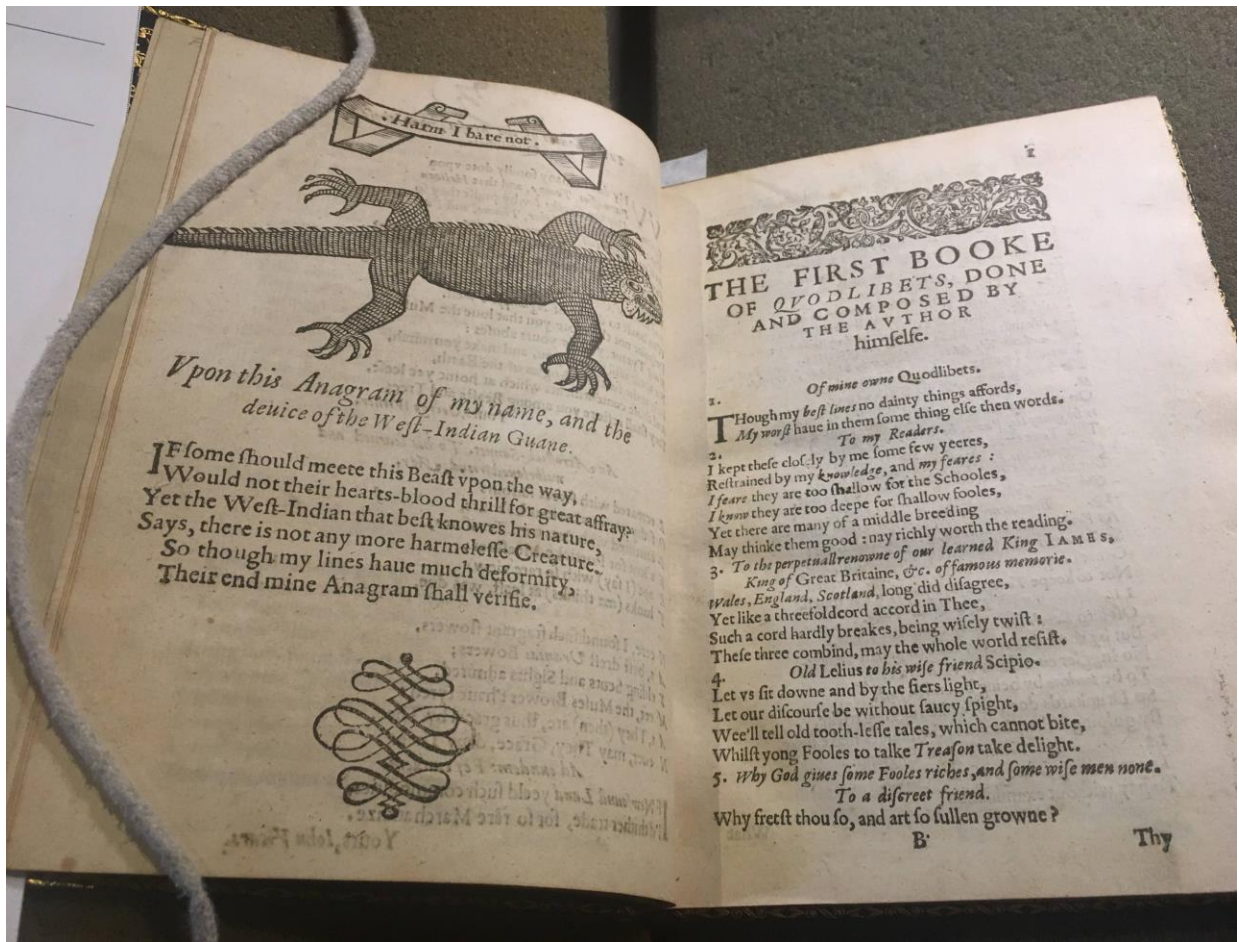


Figure IV: “Harm I bare Not,” in *Quodlibets*

French monk. Yet the acts of judiciously selecting, translating and compiling also entail an act of authorship. Hayman specifies his own epigrams but fails to alert the readers as to which specific books from which he selects Owen’s epigrams. Instead, Hayman “chuse[s] some fine flowers of the best,/ To make himfelfe a Poesie at the least,” or in other words, he selects the epigrams to translate that best enable his “poesie.” However, Hayman quickly adds “if such fauour may be found,/ Intreate some Slips, to set in his owne ground:/ So fares it with me, when

in Owens booke.”³¹⁰ With the favor of his readers, such compilation generates its own singular literary production. By producing a singular literary production, Hayman remains as culpable for the fool’s disruption within the collection.

While claiming no harm, the collection certainly intrudes upon the English political and judicial status quo. Hayman’s translation uses the fool in his speech act to pass judgement upon political advisors, specifically through disruption. This disruption takes on a radical humanist ideal and juxtaposes it to those more conservative intellectual figures. The quodlibet reads:

If Archy should one foolishly aduise,
And it speed well; he shall be iudged wise:
If wise aduice should come to an ill passe;
Though Cato's 'twere, he should be iudg'd an asse.³¹¹

Cato disrupts the quip on Archy. Hayman puts two interconnected figures of the court fool and the Latin pedagogue into conversation. Archy’s infamous personality garnered him favor with the English and Spanish alike. Taught in grammar schools, Cato’s distichs often circulated in jest books. Fools, too, used and quoted these distichs, as evidenced by the dedicatory epistle in Armin’s *Quips*, in which he quotes Cato: “*Legere et non intilegere, neclegere est.*”³¹² Yet Hayman puts them into conflict. As long as his advice quickly proves apt, Archy “shall be judged wise,” whereas this person of Cato’s company who learned their Latin, quickly receives the opposite judgment, if his advice “come to an ill passe.”³¹³ And Cato’s legitimacy and symbol

³¹⁰ Robert Hayman, “A Praemonition to all Kinde of Readers of these Translations of John Owens Epigrams,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

³¹¹ Robert Hayman, “Euery thing is as it takes,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

³¹² See *Distichs of Cato*; “*Legere et non intelligere, new legere est.*” The phrase translated reads: “As good not [to] read, as not to understand.” It seems to be a common inscription. See the title page of Robert Crawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall* (London: Printed for W. I., 1607). Yet Armin most likely knew the association with Roman stoicism and suicide, which makes the last line read more as a threat.

³¹³ Hayman, “Euery thing is as it takes.”

of tradition remains suspect. Milton would later use the representation of Cato as an austere but oppressive censor, to juxtapose with the sage pushback from Scipio in *Areopagitica*.³¹⁴ Such disruption of traditional figures in humanist and political thinking percolated much earlier than the civil war. The disruption of Cato, as offering suspect advice, asks one to reconsider expectation and tradition, particularly as they relate to governmental advice.³¹⁵

Such advice might seem more radical, if it were not for the debacle surrounding Charles I's advisors. Several years prior to Hayman's collection, Charles I's snafu with his first Parliament, indeed, called attention to his counselors. David Colclough notes when Charles I assembled Parliament in 1625, he announced the need for "money for war, and he needed it quickly. If Commons needed any further encouragement to be swiftly, he rather tactlessly went on to say, they should bear in mind the current plague epidemic." The tactless ploy exacerbated Parliament so much that when it reconvened, members began "to address the problem of evil counsel that some saw as behind the calling of Parliament."³¹⁶ Hayman's emphasis on wise advice responds to Charles and Parliament's conflicted opinions on advisors. At first, it may seem that Hayman suggests a radical, new turn of advice to a free speaking public. Yet the disruption of Cato and the juxtaposition of traditional advisors with the emerging public voice

³¹⁴ See Milton, *Areopagitica*. The passage notes:

the Stoick Diogenes comming Embassadors to Rome, tooke thereby occasion to give the City a tast of their Philosophy, they were suspected for seducers by no lesse a man then Cato the Censor, who mov'd it in the Senat to dismisse them speedily, and to banish all such Attick bablers out of Italy. But Scipio and others of the noblest Senators withstood him and his old Sabin austerity; honour'd and admir'd the men; and the Censor himself at last in his old age fell to the study of that whereof before hee was so scrupulous.

³¹⁵ For more about countering classical models, Hiram Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance* (New York: Scribner, 1950).

³¹⁶ David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 187. See, too, Milton, *Areopagitica*. Opponents of Charles criticized his advisors for usurping control, acting as censors and for a certain unearned pride. Milton notes: "And men will then see what difference there is between the magnanimity of a trienniall Parliament, and that jealous hautinesse of Prelates and cabin Counsellours that usurpt of late."

asks its readers to consider a new form of an advisory body. Hayman's quodlibets argue for a combination of "traditional" and a "freer" voice of the public. The quodlibet, through its deliberate selection of figures, also pushes back against a demarcation between tradition and the articulation of public voice vis-à-vis the fool. Rather than simply eradicate traditional advisors, the monarch must adjudicate the advice given from "Cato" and "Archy" and embody both. Cressy points out history elides the monarch with the fool, including James I and Charles I.³¹⁷ And indeed, by playing both the sage humanist and the wise fool, the monarch could display a particular sovereignty even amongst his questionable counselors in the public eye.

Hayman uses these dichotomies to remediate, presenting two opposing institutions and ideas as if they were one in the same. Such dichotomies of advice ghost throughout Hayman's quodlibets and translations. This mode of presenting dichotomies keeps with the humanist tradition. Tamara Albertini notes Renaissance humanists often presented two or more opposing views without prefacing one over the other.³¹⁸ As an "advisor" of Charles I, Hayman's use of humanist pedagogy remains unsurprising. Through their disruptions, however, Hayman's dichotomies in his quodlibets stress the seemingly tenuous connections rather than utter incongruity. In response to Alexander Leighton and William Prynne's antitheatrical writings and the general antitheatrical sentiments, Hayman points out the closeness of theatricality and the pulpit. However, this connection also draws readers' attention to the issues with ritualism in religion. This move remains particularly inflammatory with the complaints against Archbishop Laud. Jests on preachers, such as "These nimble Lads are fit for working dayes,/ Their witty Sermons may keepe some from playes," underscore the similar work of preachers and the

³¹⁷ Cressy, *Dangerous Talk Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England*, 91.

³¹⁸ See Tamara Albertini, "Women Humanists in the Renaissance: Paradise and Free Speech in Moderata Fonte," (lecture, Lumen Christi Institute, July 7, 2020).

theater.³¹⁹ The preachers' denotation as "week day" preacher or "working lad" places them within the same category as working actors, who often maintained a profession outside of the theater. The theater and preachers play a co-role in ameliorating sins:

Preachers like Heraclite, mourne for our sinne;
Prayers like Democrite, at our faults grinne:
One alwaies laughs, the other mournes alwaies;
One tells our faults, the other our sinnes wayes.³²⁰

The dichotomy between mock and mourn remains narrow and Janus-faced. The players (represented in the verbal elision of prayers) laugh at the ludicrousness of the sin. While preachers identify and mourn the faults and sins of their parishioners, the theater teaches the characteristics and paths of sins so that they may be avoided. Yet each institution provides a specific knowledge of one's faults and a response to such issues. By eliding the words player and prayer, Hayman points out the ritualized practical employment of the theater. Preaching identifies the sins while the theater exorcises such vice through rote lines, laughter, and the recital of one's sins for observation, dissection, and absolution.

So while Hayman as fool notes that "Saint Paul doth bid vs Pray continually,/ But thou would'st rather Play continually," sins become absolved in either case.³²¹ A "bait of pleasure," to use George Herbert's term, the fool's speech act ossifies the theater's role in offering a different spiritual tonic and appoints the players the rein as preachers. The exception to such a tonic seems to be theology itself. Hayman addresses the Amsterdam Elders: "Though thou maist call my merriments, my folly,/ They are my Pills to purge my melancholly,/ They would purge thine too,

³¹⁹ Robert Hayman, "Neat, quaint, nimble Pulpit Wits," in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

³²⁰ Robert Haymen, "Preachers and Players," in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

³²¹ Robert Hayman, "The Great Gamester," in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan.

wert not thou *Foole-holy*.”³²² A jab at the Synod of Dort and a nod at Erasmus, Hayman also alludes to *A Pil to Purge Melancholy* (1599). Spiritual and medicinal, the fool’s word play enables the resolution and absolution of citizen parishioners, but no such cure for leaders or theologians dictating such systems.

³²² Robert Hayman, “To one of the Elders of the sanctified Parlor of Amsterdam,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan. It remains quite difficult to pin the religious sway of the quodlibets. While Hayman certainly maintains a curiosity towards religion throughout the collection, he freely attacks Calvinists and Puritans (Deep Hypocrites), Armenians (canary birds), Catholics (Papists), and Jews and Muslims (heretics). See, too, Robert Hayman “To Writers of Hereticall, and Keepers of false Books,” in *Quodlibets* (London: Printed by Elizabeth All-de, 1628), William Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan. Hayman lampoons heresy:

When yee before Gods Iudgement Seat shall come,
Out of your owne books, yee shall read your doome:
God need not to produce his owne *True Booke*,
For He doth daily on your *False books* looke.

III.

“Why should I carry lies abroad?”: Prophecy, Vision and Fake News

FOLLY, n. That "gift and faculty divine" whose creative and controlling energy inspires Man's mind, guides his actions and adorns his life.

DIVINATION, n. The art of nosing out the occult. Divination is of as many kinds as there are fruit-bearing varieties of the flowering dunce and the early fool.

—Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*³²³

A passage of *Tarlton's Jest*s recounts the alleged meeting between Robert Armin, a goldsmith's apprentice at the time, and Richard Tarlton, who apparently roomed in the same house as Armin's master. According to the tale, Armin sketched a quip into a tavern wall, which Tarlton later read and replied:

A wag thou art, none can preuent thee,
And thy desert shall content thee:
Let me diuine, as I am, so in time thou'lt be the same.
My adopted sonne therefore be,
To enioy my Clownes suite after me.³²⁴

Tarlton's supposed response traces a lineage of inheritance among professional fools as well as underscoring a prodigal relationship ("so in time"). It also emphasizes the sovereign inheritance of the fool. When Tarlton passes, Armin inherits his "clownes suit," the license and authority with it. The tale continues by noting that Armin "so loued Tarlton after, that regarding him with more respect, vsed to his playes, and fell in a league with his humour, and priuate practise brought him to present playing, and at this houre performes the same, where at the Globe on the

³²³ Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), n.p.

³²⁴ Anon, *Tarlton's Jest*s (London: Printed by John Haviland, 1638), n.p.

Banke-side men may see him.”³²⁵ In the vein of primogeniture, Tarlton’s quip looks into the future to his death. This divination of an apprentice demonstrates the professionalization of the fool in early modern society. As Nora Johnson notes about this scene in *Tarlton’s Jests*, the clown occupies a quasi-mystical space.³²⁶

This space defines itself by time and inheritance delivered by a certain recognizable verbal pattern. In spite of its identification by scholars, few consider the fool’s *use* of prophecy. When we think of the fool’s speech acts, thus far discussed in this dissertation, we notice they work by either applying past traditions to comment upon present conditions, as in chapter one, or they focus on mirroring the present, as in chapter two. In part, this neglect to attend to prophecy (or what may occur) may be due to how we perceive prophecies with the context of a literary work or the broader culture as a whole, often conceptualizing them as apocryphal, statistical (in the case of polls), or as ritual (the act of divining).³²⁷ From satirical prophecies delivered in jests to dreams of damnation, the early modern English fool embraced the Messianic and Greco-Roman traditions of divining fate. The fool’s prophecies, however, possess a distinct revolutionary tone. By revolutionary, I mean a tone that does not demand an overthrow of government but instigates a change in its socio-political or religious dealings. When we consider prophecy, we normally associate it with speculation and prediction rather than action, reality or bodying forth a reality in the same manner as a speech act. However, I argue in this chapter that the fool uses prophecies and fake news to actuate the otherwise inchoate desires of finding truth

³²⁵ Anon, *Tarlton’s Jests*, n.p.

³²⁶ Nora Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 28.

³²⁷ Much ink has been spilled on prophecy and witchcraft in the early modern period. See, in particular, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Scribner, 1971) and Ofer Hadass, *Medicine, Religion and Magic in Early Stuart England: Richard Napier’s Medical Practice* (University Park: Pennsylvania UP, 2018). Certainly, the fool toys and alludes with these associations and connections, the primary interest of this chapter remains semantic and focuses upon the words, delivery, performance and reception of prophecies as speech acts rather than their divination.

within the “new” and to instigate, to control or to read signs into a national future. These speech acts exploit what could be, and by articulating it, bring it into reality as a possibility. In prior chapters, I demonstrated the fool’s drive to instruct the audience in determining and certifying truth from falsehood. This chapter explores the fixed and predicted truths and how the fool uses such truths to challenge its audience. Prophecy itself focuses on the predictions of such truths or what will come to pass in a fixed context. Meanwhile, fake news, false correspondence, and headlines play upon certain already fixed truths within a culture. The chapter examines the ways in which the fool uses both fake news and prophecy to enact certain truths about what could be. But it also puts it into conversation with the fool’s deceptive acts of fake news and information to demonstrate how the fool tests its audience to see beyond seemingly “fixed truths.”

“If you hard this news of/ Eueri-body:” Fake News and Titles

When rioters stormed the Capitol of the United States on January 6th, 2020, they operated under beliefs such as the election results unfairly counted late mail in ballots, that Joe Biden stole the election, and that Democrats tried to suppress the “will of the people.” Such beliefs stemmed from the “news” that came from channels and sources that rioters believed to be true, disseminated through social media, emails, posters, blogs, and so forth. The rioters’ response to this news expressed a certain anti-intellectualist factor about American culture: a willingness to consume without challenge or question. In a standoff that lasted almost half a day, the rioters expressed their “right to assemble” and their “right to free speech.” In these responses, we witness an uncritical response to new information and its digestion in uncensored, violent expression. But while the rioters shocked most Americans, the issues of fake news and its application began much earlier as did the attempt to counter it by critically training its consumers.

While we generally take issue with fake news and consider it a modern phenomenon plaguing nations and social media, early modern writers sought to make a practical application of such an inevitable phenomenon. Moreover, they depended upon social sources for news (hearsay, letters, guildsmen and merchants, ballads, and print stand advertisements) in addition to news pamphlets. In particular, the fool uses fake news in its repertoire of speech acts. Performed before Charles I's court on the heels of his coronation, Ben Jonson's play, *The Staple of News*, offers a warning about the unquestioned reports. While Charles later banned coronatos, unstoppered news from the court and abroad still circulated indiscriminately throughout early modern England. As Joad Raymond notes, "[t]he provision of news in early modern Britain was surrounded by country attitudes of suspicion and desire."³²⁸ In an earlier chapter, I examined the culture of ballads disseminating news rapidly. Yet such ballads carried a blend of truth and fake news. When asked about the verity of his ballads, Autolycus answers, "Why should I carry lies abroad?"³²⁹ Such credibility lies not within the news itself, but within the integrity of the source. If Autolycus appears the sort of spymaster not to deceive his interlocutors, then the news becomes accurate and holds some "truthiness." But not all the consumers questioned Autolycus as a source or considered the "truthiness" of the ballad, only the newfangledness or the new spectacle it claimed to witness.

And such unchecked news without critical engagement proved dangerous. In deciphering fake news from fact, we make certain selections and choose to emphasize certain recognizable facts, ideologies or persons over others. This selection is modulated by our social upbringing, ideologies, and social pressure. Rather than deal in binaries of fake and real, the fool's use of

³²⁸ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 98.

³²⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale* (New York: W.W Norton Publishing, 2012).

fake news underscores certain truths and possibilities amongst the untrue, absurd and factually impossible information. And by articulating them, gives them a liminal reality in the realm of possibility. Jonson's 1625 play calls not for an outright ban, but an examination of what such newfangled information tells us about culture. The fool's speech act calls attention to the measuring or reckoning of unquestioned information. By disseminating fake news, the fool offers its audience a deciphering key to certain aspects of culture and asks them to question their readiness to believe all the news on the street.

If the fool (as I demonstrated in earlier chapters) is so preoccupied with truths and producing a citizen that can adjudicate a version of veracity from the pieces of news and can certify justice, why does the fool also deal in or become referenced in fake news and titles not verifiable by historical archives? One answer to this question would be to consider such moments a test of instruction. However, the archive would suggest a more nuanced illustration of the cultural context in which the fool's prophetic or newsworthy speech acts transpired. The legibility of such fools' prophecies (and acts in general) certainly did not affect their perceived merit or verity. As an anonymous dedicatory poem in James Strong's *Joanereidos* points out, the fool becomes "worthy a fools Coat/ that writes to thee in rhyme or sense."³³⁰ The fact that the fool writes in rhyme or sense earns him a fool's coat. But what does it mean to write in "sense?" To write by faculties or by perception or by speculation? The anonymous writer also notes, "So do I write, enforc'd by no man,/ I know not, nor I care not what."³³¹ Writing without the pressure of a specific agenda, the writer underscores the seemingly free nature of his writing sans constraints, sans forethought, and sans guiding ideology. When the writer claims that fools write

³³⁰ Anon, "To the Author on this never-enough praised Poem," in James Strong, *Joanereidos: or Feminine Valor eminently discovered in Western Women*, (1674), n.p.

³³¹ Ibid.

in rhyme or sense, the writing remains without prohibition and, theoretically, objective. Rhyme complicates meaning and content, and more often than not, muddies the legibility. One must decipher through words not only chosen for reading, but for an oral sense. The implied sense provides a form, an order or perception to what otherwise would remain inchoate. Thus, the fool's prophecies, and speech acts more broadly oscillate between rhyme and sense.

If the verity of the fool's statements need not be considered for sense to arise from such acts, the news from these acts should not be considered mere acts of untruth. Quite the contrary. For fake news to circulate, the viewer must recognize or ascertain one familiar figure or action. If we consider responses to the radio broadcast of Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* (1938) or the footage from the Twin Towers' attack in 2001, the report of Democrats operating a sex ring out of a pizza parlor, or Donald Trump ordering the separation of children from their families when detained for crossing an arbitrary border, we can see how fiction blurs with truths. Pizzagate and the Martian takeover in the radio broadcast of Welles' story are completely fictional, but sex rings, political corruption, and a universe beyond the earth's atmosphere very much root themselves in facts within our culture. On the other hand, disbelief towards the inhuman or irrational automatically generates skepticism that asks us to question the truth of facts. How could one be so inhuman to incarcerate children and isolate them from their families? Why would anyone take over an airplane to fly it into a building? In early modern England, this line between truth and untruth (and who could differentiate truth from falsehood) prompted such an anxiety that laws prohibited fake news. A compendium of early modern justice defines the punishment for fake news:

Contriver, speaker, or teller of false or counterfeit news whereof discord, &c. may arise betwixt the King and his Nobles, or any other false news, lies, or other false things of Prelates, Dukes, Earls, and Barons, &c. whereof discord and slander may arise within the

Realm, shall be imprisoned till he finde out the authour; and if he cannot finde him, shall be punished by the advice of the Councel.³³²

Of course, false news remained impossible to control, and it circulated in the news staples that, towards the end of James I's reign, circulated throughout London.³³³ Andrew Pettegee writes that “[i]t was no wonder in the circumstances that the English government too repeated, if largely unsuccessful, action to prohibit the spreading of rumour and false reports.”³³⁴ The fool, thus, deals once again in a censored genre that mostly slides beneath the censor's gaze due to the proliferation of fake material in circulation.

³³² Anon, *The Complete Justice a compendium of the particulars incident to justices of the peace, either in sessions or out of sessions : gathered out of the statutes, reports, late resolutions of the judges, and other approved authorities : abstracted and cited alphabetically for their ready helpe, and the ease of inferiour officers, and for the generall good of the kingdome* (London: S.I. 1637), n.p.

³³³ Staple often followed a column or list format in which labels of location announced the headlines. See Anon, *Courant newes out of Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Poland, &c.* (Amsterdam: Printed by George Veseler, 1621):

From Prague the 25. herof.

The Execution at Prague over the imprisoned Lords Knights and Cittizens is accomplished upon the 21. of Iune [in] manner as followeth: Diz. The 19. heereof are those of the old and new Cittie caried into the Castle with a strong Convoy or watch and there the Emper. Commissioners reade apart every ones Sentence which beeing done they were caried againe into there Costodie and there (through promission of the Commissioners) went too and fro unto them Dutch and Bohemish Preachers. The twenty heereof are the Prisoners which lay in the Castle caried into the Cittie house of the Olde Cittie where they passed the whole night with singinge and praying untill the Execution began which was at 5 a Clocke upon a Schaffold afore the Cittie house and lasted till 9 a Clocke being al fynisht by the Hangman over these 25. specified persons as followeth: Viz.

- **The Lords of the Cittie-house.**1. The Earle Iochim Andrew Slyke (Dirertor in the Olde Cittie) was first beheaded and the right hand chopt of the which with the head were set upon the steeple by the Bridge and the body buried.
- 2. The olde Lord Mentzell of Budweys was beheaded and his head was sett upon the said steeple.
- 3. The Lord Christopher Harrant (lately Chamber President of Bohemia) was behea ded.
- **Knights.**4. Caspar Kapliers beeing olde 80. yeares and the head sett up.
- 5. Iacob Swersenksy.
- 6. Frederick van Bisan.
- 7. Hendrick Otto van Los.
- 8. William Cornet Clumpsky.

³³⁴ Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2014), 134.

And the fool uses the desire to know the happenings in one's surroundings. Writing at the close of the sixteenth century, John Deacon noted in a commerce tract the craving for news. The desire to know the markets, what sold, what ships come into port, and so forth remained vital information for merchants, who traded in the wares, but also for the guildsmen who depended on such wares. Deacon stages a tete-a-tete between Everybody and the Ingrosser and the Peddler, who are Everybody's "olde acquaintance...[and] euen the welcomest friends of a thousand."³³⁵ Influential members and essential to a capitalist society, Ingrosser and the Peddler take center stage as an everyman's influential world connection, yet they rely upon their connections to every rumor for news of their profits. Right after the salutation exchange, Ingrosser says "Gramercie for that, but what newes abroade I pray thee friend?"³³⁶ To which Everybody responds with surprise at the demand for such news: "men say you haue made your markets as you lyst your selues."³³⁷ The absurdity for such news requests becomes exacerbated when Nobody joins the fray and responds to the Peddler: "If you hard this news of/ Eueri-body, it followeth then, either that/ you also did here the same of your selues/ or otherwais that you your selues are to be accompted as No-body."³³⁸ The absurdity of asking after news that pertains to one's own interests eliminates individuality, producing the generalized figure of Nobody.

The absurdity that one would desire news (and be forced to shift through it for truths) and the proliferation of untrue news prompted the outcry of government figures. "James I

³³⁵ John Deacon, *A Treatise, Intituled; Nobody is my Name, which beareth eueri-bodies blame. wherein is largely laied forth the lawfull bounds of all buying and selling, according to the infallible like of the lawes of the Lord* (London: Printed by Robert Waldergrave, 1587).

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

complained,” Ian Atherton writes, “of the circulation of news verses and sought to command their disuse by issuing his own poem. Charles I is usually remembered for banning corandos, but it should not be forgotten that in the 1620s he oversaw the production of a play discussing news and allowed Buckingham to issue news pamphlets from his flagship off La Rochelle.”³³⁹ The incongruity in these control mechanisms led to the proliferation of news pamphlets and accounts from questionable sources. The broadcasting of news cut both ways; it marked both a stage for nationalism and a platform for political undercutting. Circulating certain fake news at the right time could undercut agendas, publicize certain alleged affiliations, or affect countries’ relations. And the desire for such news (true or untrue) kept news pamphlets circulating.

The fool’s delivery of the news prompts us to consider its veracity. For an early modern English audience, the news’ scale of “truthiness” depends upon how the medium of its deliverance and to whom the message is conveyed. Feste from *Twelfth Night*, for example, underscores this scale when he delivers Malvolio’s letter at the end of the play. In spite of his questionable involvement in the Malvolio plot by playing a curate, Feste brings Malvolio a pen and paper to counter a fake letter claiming Olivia’s love that duped him. The fool takes on a quasi-spiritual role dressed as a priest to counter the deceptive news. And Feste reminds Malvolio, the audience, and the eavesdropping conspirators of his impartiality: “[n]ay, I am for all waters.”³⁴⁰ And Malvolio begs for a trial of the fool’s judgement and dictates the format of such a trial: “make the trial of it in any constant question.”³⁴¹ Through questioning, one may ascertain the truth or scale of truthiness of the information’s state. Put more simply, questioning

³³⁹ Ian Atherton, “‘The Itch grown a Disease:’ Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century,” in *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, edited Joad Road (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 58.

³⁴⁰ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

produces answers that lead to a semblance of truth. But as Feste points out, such truth remains subject to observation and interpretation. Feste declares that “I say, there is no darkness but ignorance; in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog.”³⁴² Equating darkness with ignorance, Feste pronounces his judgment that Malvolio still finds himself subject to the deception of fake news.

For Shakespeare’s audience, however, the problem of fake news lies outside its medium. Fake news stemmed less from the proliferation of print in the period than the lack of education of the populous and the way that vendors marketed such news. When Feste returns to Malvolio’s holding cell as the fool, he says, “[n]ay, I’ll ne’er believe a madman till I see his brains. I will fetch you light and paper and ink.”³⁴³ Rather than playing along with the machinations of the play’s servants to humiliate the hierarchical order and rule keepers, the fool helps deliver a form of truthful news. Here, the written rebuttal serves as a counter to the deceptive news delivered both to Olivia and Malvolio. Rebuttals to deceptive news circulated in seventeenth-century London streets in tandem with fake news, as Prynne’s official catalogue of works demonstrates. To absolve Malvolio’s decisions prompted by the fake news of Olivia’s love interests, Feste offers Malvolio a space for his voice to be heard. Playing upon the fake letter to initiate a humiliating plot, Feste, too, delivers a letter from Malvolio.

I claim “a form of truth” as the fool’s delivery modulates this truth because though “madman’s epistles are no gospels, so it skills not much when they are delivered,” the delivery affects the truth, for one may be “edified when the fool delivers the madman.”³⁴⁴ In delivery, the

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

fool may absolve or create (mis)interpretations. In other words, the fool can sermonize to those with misapprehensions and produce the conditions for truth to arise, or the fool can announce a certain truth within something that would otherwise be entirely fake. When Feste delivers the letter, Olivia asks him to read it. Feste begins: “By the Lord, madam.”³⁴⁵ From Olivia’s immediate denouncement of his reading, it seems reasonable that Feste presented the opening of the letter in some sort of antic state or in a tone which may connote some perplexic semblance. In response, Feste quips, “I do but read madness: an your ladyship will have it as it ought to be, you must allow Vox. [...] [B]ut to read his right wits is to read thus: therefore perpend, my princess, and give ear.”³⁴⁶ The voice must be allowed, even if false, but its delivery and performance denote its deception. The fool, thus, even when delivering a truth or untruth marks it as such in its delivery. While Malvolio was led astray by the fake letter and acted upon it, Feste reads the rebuttal letter by what he determined to be his “right wits” due to Malvolio’s perpetual gullibility (as he also fell prey to the Sir Topas scheme). The absolution of Malvolio’s reputation, thus, becomes also an indictment of such gullibility. Malvolio remains unchanged by the experience of “falling for” fake news. Yet the fool underscores an important critique of censorship: even that which may be fake holds a degree of truthiness and that it should be allowed to circulate to test and train individuals in deciphering truth from falsehood. More importantly, though, one should listen to discourse of news, even if it remains determinedly false, as it contains certain cultural markers of truth. The play’s initial performance at Middle Temple cannot be forgotten. Performed before both barristers who upheld laws, judges who

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

determined truth, and aristocrats who dabble in news themselves, the play uses a fool, who demonstrates the verity within certain pieces of falsehood.

This verbal act becomes more entangled with the fool later in the seventeenth century. A few decades and a new king later, Jonson's play, *The Staple of News* (1625), appears to completely omit a fool. It marks a shift to a new style of comedy. The new comedy, like the news staple and a new king, carries the same pejorative of the suspicion of newfangledness, and (at least in the case of the Staple office selling such news pamphlets) profanity. Ian Donaldson describes the play as clearly exploiting "the powerful attractions of the *now* and the *new* in the London of 1626."³⁴⁷ Whether due to his contentious nature and by this point numerous spats, even with his collaborator Inigo Jones, or the increasingly absurd content of his play, Jonson fell out of favor with Caroline audiences. But his shift to the trend in new comedy suggests he attempted to comply with Caroline culture and morals, or at the very least, *appear* to conform if only to satirize. Performed at court before a new king, the play demands its audience to locate the veracity in the intersections between "now" and "new." Yet as with other Caroline playwrights, including Brome and Carew, Jonson's play not only includes an unidentified fool, but he also connects the Caroline jester with fake news. In particular, Jonson's ghost of a fool publishes a tract that (while false) underscores certain pejorative, but accurate, facets of Caroline religious culture. While Raymond suggests Jonson wittily separates the religious from the secular news sources to demonstrate "producers and conveyers of news manipulated it according to different professions and confessions being catered for," it cannot stop the categories from

³⁴⁷ Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 395.

blurring.³⁴⁸ Barbers pass along religious, tainted news that while not theologically minded, nonetheless captures the intersections between religious experience and politics.

Staging an office of news which would be more familiar to modern audiences than Jonson's contemporaries, the play imagines the selling of news much like the selling of ballads. The news clerk calls out the new story headlines to the eager consumer. But the court jester's involvement remains unclear in its alleged production. In the play, for six schillings, Thomas Barber, representing both the barber profession and the clerk in the office, sells a headline, "The Measuring o'the Temple: A Cabal," apparently "set out by Archie [Armstrong], or some such head."³⁴⁹ The title suggests that the jester engages in some form of whistleblowing on a cabal, or political dissidents. Given the jester's reputation for taunting and inciting particular politicians, including the Duke of Buckingham and Archbishop Laud, it seems within the realm of plausibility that Armstrong might compose such a text. Here, Jonson plays upon a truth value in "fake news" and satirizes it. The unscrupulous production of such headlines for profit and popular consumption demands the audience to unpack its truth value. "Some such head" may refer to an apocalyptic leaning Puritan. It may be "some such head" related to the jester that announces such a cabal. At first, the play seems to open up the possibility for anyone to take on the jester's position to freely call attention to corruption in established religion and by proxy, the court. But it also calls upon the loose slippage between linguistic markers of fool and jester. Used interchangeably in the early modern period, the terms become almost synonymous, but Jonson flirts with the ambiguity. But "such head" suggests a certain kind of wit or view similar to Armstrong, whose Scottish ties might mark him a Presbyter in Jonson's comedy. Barber's

³⁴⁸ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 147.

³⁴⁹ Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*.

headline calls attention to the nefarious actions of certain bishops in control of the new tenor of Caroline politics.

The fake news' title crafted by the fool prophesied that such religious factions and influence within Charles' court lead to apocalyptic judgement. Such judgement may come in the form of writing. While "Temple" simultaneously evoked individual bodies and the ceremonial strain of the Anglican archbishops and the new king, the headline claims to inform the consumer of the measuring, or quantification, of the temple by an unknown political faction. In doing so, it echoes Revelations 11.1: "there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."³⁵⁰ The reed, a tool for writing and measuring, becomes a tool for criticism and judgement. Here, Jonson's play aligns the jester with an apocalyptic judge of organized religion. The jester—representing the fool (who Jonson allegedly eradicated the fool from the play following the turn in Caroline court culture)—provides the words for the Barber. In becoming the fool's mouthpiece, Barber enacts the speech act of the fool, transferring the inner knowledge and freedom of voice to the public vis-a-vis a news clerk. He brings into being a certain form of truthiness, which would not exist otherwise by simply being read and not broadcast to the audience in the performance, for Jonson recognized that "sermons and the stage had precisely what print lacked, the testimony of voice."³⁵¹ Yet its authority derives from the reference to Armstrong. It remains Armstrong's hearsay. The hauntological fool provides a certain recognizable authority and reputation for being at odds with authority. While not necessarily an expert on religion, Armstrong secures a

³⁵⁰ Revelation 11:1, in The Geneva Bible.

³⁵¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 149.

place at court, which gives him credence and a space to observe court circles. The authority and “truthiness,” thus, stem from the name dropping of the fool.

The earlier references to Armstrong in the play connote a certain pedantic everyman figure. His alleged black coat aligns him with the only other black clad figure in the play: the “poor scholar” whom Tattle decries in the same conversation that she would “fainted see a Foole.”³⁵² In spite of Mirth’s response that the play contains no fool, Expectation notes, “[t]hen Everyone is a fool.” But Expectation’s comment remains hampered by Tattle’s association of the fool with the scholar. Thomas’ later reference to Armstrong’s long black coat and the early marginal comment inform us that Armstrong mourns the former king. But the jester also mourns the change in the religious and political climate as an intellectual, one with an examination of the past. While Jonson says that “[w]e hunt only for novelty, not truth,” he nonetheless respected certain methods of pursuing truth.³⁵³ Donaldson states that Jonson viewed the new science with deep fascination, touched with occasional amusement and sardonic prophecy.³⁵⁴ Jonson’s annoyance with newfangledness lay not within this science or intellectual communities, but within the unmediated human desire for new information regardless of the truth of such information. The speech act of the fool, thus, points out the need for examined materials, skeptical observation, and a process of evaluating the *new*. Such evaluations cannot come from the producer but from the consumer. In Jonson’s reworking of the fool, it becomes tied to an “Everyman intellectual:” the black clad scholar questioning everything and everyone and measuring the spiritual and worldly intentions and connections.

³⁵² See Jonson, *The Staple of News*.

³⁵³ Ben Jonson, *Time Vindicated to Himself and His Honors*.

³⁵⁴ Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, 397.

Such evaluations of news also found their way into specific genres used by fools. But the moral pressures from the Caroline court and antitheatrical writers forced writers to rework how the fool taught audiences to evaluate the news. In Thomas Randolph's *Aristippus, or the Joviall Philosopher* (1628), the prologue promises that such comedic plays and fools will not produce deceptive and envious news, alerting the audience to its use in lieu of satire. Later dubbed a "Son of Ben," Randolph followed in his literary father's footsteps in questioning news' validity and how the fool circulated it as criticism. Hoisting the allegorized figure of "Show" from hell, the Prologue claims he arms himself, even as Show is whipped by the Furies. Show assures him: "I make no dangerous Almanacks, no gulls,/ No posts with enuious Newes and biting Packets."³⁵⁵ Certainly a dissenter, Show's offense that condemns her to hell originates in the circulation of false predictions, jabs, and news of discontent. Randolph coyly refrains from delineating what exactly Show represents. For certain, she presents spectacle and awes the audience with falsehood, as her condemned state suggests. For Martin W. Walsh, "when Thomas Randolph conjured up the motley spectre of 'Show' for his Cambridge skit of 1626, he was doing more than just indulging in a bit of theatrical magic ... also betrays a debt to folk drama in its character of the Doctor and in the comic resurrection of its title character."³⁵⁶ An English folk character, Show inhabits the space of the English fool, and "the notion that such shows can only be brought back into circulation by 'conjuring' encourages the idea that there is something dangerous and transgressive about this particular dramatic form – something that it will take a degree of arcane skill to revive."³⁵⁷ In spite of her supposed inoculation, Show presents a certain inbred danger.

³⁵⁵ Thomas Randolph, *Aristippus or the Joviall Philosopher* (London: Printed for Robert Allot, 1630), 4.

³⁵⁶ Martin W. Walsh, "Thomas Randolph's *Aristippus* and the English Mummer's Play," in *Folklore*, vol. 84 no. 2 (1973): 157.

³⁵⁷ Christopher Marlow, *Performing Masculinity in English University Drama, 1598-1636* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 79.

And as Marlowe points out, “no authority can fully police the realm of private allusions and in-jokes that are the lifeblood of intimate satire such as *Aristippus*.”³⁵⁸ Show exists beyond the realm of censor despite her claims and the Prologue’s attempt to present an innocuous form of foolery.

Instead of providing his audience with a certain classification, however, Randolph depicts her as possessing a fool’s repertoire. And she appears to lack the respect and esteem of the court and university audiences. Prologue (an allegorized armed figure) tells her to “appear” as glorious as Comedy, her sister. A bastard sister to Comedy, Show claims not to present Parliament, and instead she claims:

but a Beard and Gowne, for me
May passe for good grand Sophies: all my skill
Shall beg but honest laughter and such smiles
As might become a *Cato*: I shall giue
No cause to grieue, that once more yet I liue.³⁵⁹

Producing honest laughter and a tame scholar’s wit represented by Cato (whose dictums every grammar school boy learned), Show does not govern in a way that she once attempted and instead may present some wisdom. She will not produce the same kinds of deceptive news. Instead, like the fool, she will present herself as an intellectual, one who works in pedagogical and everyday circumstances. In Randolph’s prologue, the fool’s use of news no longer serves such a pedagogical function.

But Randolph’s critique of the fool’s use of fake news is not so easily reducible. A reformed fool, Show presents a satirical war between Aristippus, a philosopher promoting sack

³⁵⁸ Marlow, *Performing Masculinity in English University Drama, 1598-1636*, 80.

³⁵⁹ Randolph, *Aristippus or the Joviall Philosopher*, 4.

as a source of knowledge, and Wildman, the proponent of beer. A school satire, Randolph's play asks us to consider the absurdity of a limited fool, one who cannot use fake news. What we learn from the show (as Show claims the possibility of inhabiting a pedagogical role) remains muddled. Satire without the use of "new," semi-true information devolves into philosophical quibbling; it must possess some (even fictional) current newsworthy tie to be legible and, hopefully, palpable amongst the audience. Yet, the manuscript variant of the play belies Show's claim. The manuscript version of Randolph's play offers enough allusions for two characters for John J. Parry to claim the identities of Wild Man and Medico de Campo.³⁶⁰ With these identities, an intimate audience would recognize a version of the persons presented and the semi-truthful claims to their personalities. Thus, Show does present half-truths, or fake news, about these figures.

Randolph vis-a-vis Show warns of the anti-intellectual skepticism produced via the practices of copia and copying within primary education. If indeed Show used fake news, as I suggest, then her opening tete-a-tete with Prologue is infelicitous. But her deception indicates an uneasiness with the fool and its repertoire of speech acts, particularly fake news. Show's use demonstrates the way that fake news may embed itself within satire so it no longer becomes legible as its own genre. The way that Show prefaces this use of fake news aligns her with Cato, whose sayings spread in part through the grammar school practice of copying. Echoing the Grammarians' War almost a century before, Show demonstrates the problem of this practice: it represents and does not create. In fact, it cuts against how the fool typically operates as a figure that demands critical engagement from its interlocutor. Moreover, the "copy and paste" action disseminates fake news more readily. The act of copying information without question produces

³⁶⁰ John J. Parry, "A New Version of Randolph's Aristippus," *Modern Language Notes*, 32 (1917): 351–352.

an uncritical subject, one who is easily duped by the fake news and passes it forward as a reality. In doing so, this uncritical subject produces a deceptive view of the present that cannot produce or create a future not predicated upon an alternate reality.

“Known also to each minute of an hour:” Prophecy and the Early Modern Fool

At first glance, it may appear odd to discuss the fool and prophecy—let alone the fool using prophecy—if we reduce the fool to a figure of the moment, one who points out the folly in others. Yet as we see throughout early modern writing, the fool quite often delivers prophecies and remains more than capable of working within understood prophetic discourses. And these prophecies both clashed and enabled certain political sentiments and movements. Rather than half-believed in “old wives’ tales,” prophecies held political cache in sixteenth century England and garnered the same suspicions and worry as fake news. Not only did Merlin’s prophecies foster a sense of nationalism as a founding tale and with the promise of Arthur’s return, but as Keith Thomas notes, various rebellions, including Wyatt’s rebellion, used prophecies to maintain devotion to the cause and rally around, even after the court crushed the insurrections.³⁶¹ And the circulation of prophecy also served as a weapon against insurrections, as the government in Marprelate fashion, would circulate pamphlets referencing prophecies. In one such instance, “the government rallied opinion against conspirators by dropping handbills in the street citing Merlin’s prophecy that the aldermen of Troy (i.e. London) would lose their heads.”³⁶² Prophecies supporting and predicting the overthrow of English monarchs circulated in sixteenth-century London and beyond. In the seventeenth century, prophecies and views towards them shifted.

³⁶¹ See Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*.

³⁶² Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 403.

Studying non-biblical prophetic traditions, Tim Thornton observes that “England might have spelt the end for ancient prophecy as an influential political language and set of traditions.”³⁶³ Rather than argue for cultural elimination, Thornton suggests prophecies, such as the Merlin tradition, failed to carry the same gravitas before the English Civil War.

Moreover, fools, theologians, and divining intellectuals found themselves within the same cultural categories because of their use of prophecy in early modern England. For these audiences, the notion of the fool as prophet stemmed from a long biblical tradition. Often, fools’ prophecies become elided with religious zealots. In a footnote, Ariel Hessayon notes Oliver Hill and his “‘strange’ whimsies were disregarded and he was considered a fool and enthusiastic Quaker.”³⁶⁴ Zealotry, apocalyptic fantasies, and dreams brought together discourses by theologians, intellectuals, and fools. At the same time, early modern theologians and religious practitioners approached prophecy with skepticism. Andrew Crome points out that preachers, such as William Perkins, condemned prophecy. In *A Fruitfull Dialogue Concerning the End of the World*, Worldling betrays a “popular interest and excitement in prophecy—finding prophecies hidden on stone walls, in popular ballads and breathless discussion with neighbours, as well as in books dedicated to the subject. ‘Christian’ is unimpressed: ‘I make as little account of these verses as of *Merlin’s* drunken prophecies, or the tales of Robin Hood.”³⁶⁵ The dialogue that Crome cites emphasizes both the quackery of prophetic belief and the misreadings they

³⁶³ Tim Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* (New York: Boydell, 2006), 53. By non-biblical tradition, Thornton, following in the vein of Keith Thomas, defines it as prophecies delivered by ancient figures, who do not belong to the biblical or apocryphal canon. See, too, Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*.

³⁶⁴ Ariel Hessayon, Footnote 282, in “Jane Lead and the Philadelphians,” in *Early Modern Prophecies in Transnational, National and Regional Contexts*, edited by Lionel Laborie and Ariel Hessayon (London: Brill, 2020), 143.

³⁶⁵ Andrew Crome, Introduction, in *Prophecy and Eschatology in the Transatlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by Andrew Crome (London: Palgrave, 2016), 2.

produce (seeing symbols in every worldly encounter), but also the fantastical element produced either by imbibing copious amounts of alcohol or or topsy-turvy social inversion. Here, too, Perking elides the carnivalesque fool (that of Robin Hood and merry Merlin) with the act of prophecy. But those taken by prophecy, for Perkins, fall prey to misreading signs and unable to rely upon faith alone. Kugel points out that “like certain later European poets, biblical prophets appeared to be insane or social outcasts. Constrained to call things as they saw them, they frequently brought upon themselves the undying enmity of authorities.”³⁶⁶ The trope of the biblical prophet undergirds how the fool uses prophecy and elevates its abrasiveness for religious authorities.

The elision, by modern standards, might seem peculiar, but intellectuals including Isaac Newton, dallied in prophecy and often used the language of fools for interpretation. Newton reflected that, “[t]o myself I am only a child playing on the beach, while vast oceans of truth lie undiscovered before me.”³⁶⁷ Such a move—to observe oneself as a child who knows little about the universe he occupies—elides with foolery. Yet the pursuit of knowledge uses the primal questions from childhood: “Why?” “How?” “Where?” Prophecy attempts to offer answers to those questions in regards to spiritual or political happenings for those individuals who know how to read the signs correctly. For Newton, language offered the key to reading the imparted knowledge correctly. In his treatise, *Observations upon Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*, his chapter devoted to the language of prophecy observes: “[t]his language is taken from the analogy between the world natural, and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic.”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Kugel, *The Great Poems of the Bible*, 89-90.

³⁶⁷ Brewster, *Memoirs of Newton*.

³⁶⁸ Isaac Newton, *Observations upon Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Printed by J. Darby and T Browne, 1733), 16.

Prophecy, therefore, resides linguistically between the natural world and politics. It remains unsurprising, therefore, that the language of prophecy and its connotations of impending doom certainly captivated fools in seventeenth century England.

While prophecy may not have held as strong of a rallying point for insurrectionists in Charles I's reign, it nonetheless inflected the political atmosphere surrounding the fool and theaters. Moreover, prophecy held a cache for offering wisdom and seeing a trajectory in universal history. Prophecy was not merely for those overzealous individuals looking for signs of the end of the world. For Francis Bacon, the "modern world had seen the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy when 'the opening of the world by navigation and commerce and the further discovery of knowledge should meet in one place and time.'"³⁶⁹ It comes as no surprise then that the language of the fool's prophecies capitalize upon the apocalypse and the fulfillment of all biblical prophecies. The fool's role in delivering the prophecy also descends from the Old Testament tradition where "[p]rophets frequently came to the king or the royal court with words of reproach."³⁷⁰ Reminding the authorities of doomsday may appeal to a *carpe diem* sense of morality, but the early modern fool often flips the agency. Rather than reproach the authority *du jour*, the early modern fool demonstrates to authority the possible results of their actions, if they should continue. The fool, thus, uses the language of prophecy and the apocalypse to bring into being the anxieties and political machinations of certain political players for the public to judge and oversee the application of that judgement and, in some cases, to actuate that justice.

But such prophecies required a certain system for reading the symbols correctly, and consequently, such prophetic verses posed issues for censors who feared the myriad of

³⁶⁹ Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 20.

³⁷⁰ Kugel, 83.

interpretations. When Nicholas Ferrar attempted to publish George Herbert's *The Temple*, the censors attempted to block its publication due to Herbert's prophetic lines about the church and the commonweal's inability to comply with and depend upon divine law. John Kuhn argues Herbert's "apocalypticism is both more pessimistic and less sectarian than these local polemical readings of it, by both early modern zealots and modern critics suggest."³⁷¹ Herbert's contemporaries, such as Henry Vaughn, certainly read his poems as "prophetic," and his poems with political religious statements garnered the most popularity.³⁷² In the "Church Militant," nature (with its unorganized knowledge of the divine) complies with divine will more than organized religion. For Herbert, God knows:

The smallest ant or atome knows thy power,
Known also to each minute of an hour:
Much more do Common-weals acknowledge thee,
And wrap their policies in thy decree,
Complying with thy counsels, doing nought
Which doth not meet with an eternall thought.³⁷³

Rather than outright ignoring the divine, the Commonweal acknowledges divine law and listens to counsels that interpret such law. Yet Herbert observes later in the poem: "[t]o these diminishings, as is between/ The spacious world and *Jurie* to be seen."³⁷⁴ The jury of the common weal and its diminishing capacity to sustain true religion offers a bleak outlook for England—or rather more specifically, the Church of England—but the prophetic lines that follow read:

Religion stands on tip-toe in our land,

³⁷¹ John Kuhn, "Left Behind: George Herbert, Eschatology and the Stuart Atlantic, 1606-1634," in *Prophecy and Eschatology in the Transatlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by Andrew Crome (London: Palgrave, 2016), 66.

³⁷² Kuhn, "Left Behind: George Herbert, Eschatology and the Stuart Atlantic, 1606-1634," 67-68.

³⁷³ George Herbert, "The Church Militant," in *The Temple*.

³⁷⁴ Herbert, "The Church Militant."

Readie to passe to the *American* strand.
When height of malice, and prodigious lusts,
Impudentinning, witchcrafts, and distrusts
(The marks of future bane) shall fill our cup
Unto the brimme, and make our measure up;
When *Sein* shall swallow *Tiber*, and the *Thames*
By letting in them both, pollutes her streams:
When *Italie* of us shall have her will,
And all her calender of sinnes fulfill;
Whereby one may fortell, what sinnes next yeare
Shall both in *France* and *England* domineer:
Then shall Religion to *America* flee:
They have their times of Gospel, ev'n as we.³⁷⁵

The ever-narrowing space created between the world and the spiritual *jury* allow for impending judgement (and subsequent condemnation). Corrupted by suspicion, Papist ritual, and spite, the Church of England opens its doors to the *Sein*, a figure of strict Calvinism, and *Italie* (or the Pope). As such, true religion becomes perverted by these extremes, and its pure form flees with religious refugees to America. While Herbert's prophecy certainly manifested in the American idealized history that all immigrants in the seventeenth century fled religious persecution, the prophetic lines are delivered by a church militant, a rigorous defender of the church. The figure of the militant should defend the church against such happenstance. Seemingly at odds with one another, the language of militancy and prophecy, therefore become entangled, bodying forth the possibility of a purer church in the new world. That censors condemned the texts speaks to the political and social power of prophecy even within Charles' time.

In the same vein, the fool uses prophecy by bringing into being something that ordinarily might not exist. Playing to an audience already familiar with both apocalyptic language and prophetic symbols, the fool's use of prophecy for the political seems far less radical than it

³⁷⁵ Herbert, "The Church Militant."

would today. When the fool in Shakespeare's *King Lear* delivers a Merlin-esque prophecy before James I, the audience most likely understood it both in the vein of apocalyptic and national prediction. On December 26th, 1606, Armin may have delivered an almost indecipherable satiric prophecy to James I and the audience at Whitehall palace. The prophecy traces an apocalyptic, topsy-turvy political scene. Performing *Lear's Fool*, Armin engaged in satiric wordplay and biting political critiques throughout the play. This performance remains striking for several reasons: a.) the Bishops Ban of 1599 forbade satire; b.) James I's superstitious nature remained amplified due to the prior year's Gunpowder Plot; c.) and by all accounts, Armin's personality appeared more provocative than cajoling. Known as a "pixie" and for having an acerbic tongue, Armin seems the actor least likely to appease kingly superstition while delivering the much needed political caution.³⁷⁶

Yet Armin seems to appease James with his acting. In playing the fool, he manipulates more than the social hierarchy. He toys with his familiarity with James I's character. Shakespeare's fools often use language of familial attachment to instruct and critique the play's ruling bodies and the audience. The instructional role ties the fool to the central political forces within Shakespeare's plays and by extension, to the royal court. To explain this relationship of dominance and affection, Yi-Fu Tuan points out that early English monarchs kept fools as pets.³⁷⁷ Yet as figures of misrules, literary fools manipulate the dominant-affectionate relationship to democratize public voice within political structures. We see the Shakespearean stage fool using language to exploit the dominant and affectionate bounds. By bringing into

³⁷⁶ See Bart van Es, "His Fellow Actors Will Kemp, Robert Armin and other Members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the King's Men," in *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography*, edited by Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), 263-265.

³⁷⁷ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004).

conversation criticism on the early modern fool with critical discourses of censorship, I suggest that Shakespeare's fools, particularly Lear's Fool, manipulate affectionate bonds to perform public voice that otherwise suffered censor—in this case prophecy.

By all accounts, Armin's performance in *King Lear* never prompted a stir. Annabel Patterson suggests that the Quarto's Fool remains more acerbic and controversial than Lear's Fool in the First Folio.³⁷⁸ In the quarto, the Fool even tells Lear, "I am better than thou art now, I am a foole, thou art nothing."³⁷⁹ Aside from emasculating Lear with the slang "no thing," the Fool considers himself "better" than the king. While seemingly topsy-turvy, this moment cannot be trivialized as a fleeting lord-of-misrule comment. The fool certainly takes advantage of the tropes of old Greek comedy that hinged upon the outrageous or implausible. But he also raises the issue of meaning given to power hierarchies and who gives or takes away such power. Without the recognition of Lear as king, his meaning in a political hierarchy becomes near meaningless. Certainly not a new idea, the forthright commentary on this theory (especially performed in front of a reigning monarch) appears quite brash.

Without doubt, the remarks of Lear's Fool fall into a category of verbal offenses. Debora Shuger persuasively points out that English common law followed the Roman concept of *iniuria*, which included "verbal transgression, oral and written, as the counterpart to physical assault."³⁸⁰ These verbal "abuses" socially or legally shamed the recipient. However, no one censors Lear's

³⁷⁸ See Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 64-65.

³⁷⁹ William Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear* (London: Printed for Nathaniel Butler, 1608).

³⁸⁰ Debora Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 78. Shuger also notes that Roman law made exceptions for those who uttered such statements while intoxicated or if they are madmen or children.

Fool or the actor. Lear's Fool demonstrates his deftness at navigating the social demands of the court. He continuously tempers the brashness of his critiques. Explaining his actions to the king, the Quarto's Fool states, "I for sorrow sung, that such a King should play bo-peepe, and go the fooles among, prethe Nunckle keepe a schoolemaster that can teach thy fool to lye, I would fain learne lye."³⁸¹ He defuses the harshness by introducing popular culture. Instead of outright calling the king a toddler, the Fool references a children's game and song. The audience, thus, must consider the game and its rules to fully understand the reference. The king hides from or seeks out his subjects in trivial play with little concern for anything else. The king, thus, becomes a figure under foot. For prophecy to work, as a pedagogical tool, the recipient must listen and know how to read the signs rightly.

The Fool pivots from insulting Lear to asserting his innocence and ignorance. Because the Fool grew up unschooled, he cannot act as a "perfect courtier" and lie. Yet here, he parrots Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*.³⁸² He, therefore, undercuts his statement and suggests that he, in fact, acts as the ideal courtier. Allan Shickman suggests that this pivoting can "best [be] explained as the product of a fool's vacillating wit or else his imperfect mental processes, for such capricious turns of thought recur in his speeches."³⁸³ While certainly this pivoting reoccurs throughout the play, these statements purposely jar the audience, but they often receive affirmation or praise from Lear. While this reaction seems outré, the Fool's pattern of speech and

³⁸¹ Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear*.

³⁸² See Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by Leonard Opdycke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 21. Castiglione notes, "the truth often lies concealed, and I do not profess to have this knowledge, I can only praise the kind of Courtier that I most esteem, and approve him who seems to me nearest right, according to my poor judgment."

³⁸³ Allan Shickman, "The Fool's Mirror in King Lear," in *English Literary Renaissance* vol. 21 no. 1 (Winter 1991): 75.

linguistic prowess elicits affection from Lear and the audience. In fact, the Fool becomes the first character for whom Lear expresses concern.

These calculated statements test and shift the dominant-affectionate bonds. By asking for a schoolmaster, Lear's Fool places the burden of blame on the king. Because he neglected education of the fool, and by extension, his subjects, Lear cannot chide his fool for social improprieties and ignorance. Instead, Lear turns to his fool for instruction. When the Fool asks him if he can differentiate between bitter and sweet, Lear implores him, "[n]o lad, teach mee."³⁸⁴ Instead of repudiation, the Fool receives an implicit validation. Lear trusts the Fool's experiential knowledge. The early modern audience would recognize these trust bonds. In *Twelfth Night*, Olivia asks her father's fool, Feste: "[w]hat's a drunken man like, fool?"³⁸⁵ Feste answers with a short quip that shows Olivia the effect of inebriation.³⁸⁶ This instructional role complicates Olivia's position as the fool's dominant superior. So, if Lear leans upon the Fool to teach him, the prophecy seems odd and certainly out of place as the Fool delivers it not to Lear but to the audience, primed to view the fool as pedagogue. The fool, thus, uses prophecy as an instruction in cause and effect.

In spite of the Quarto Fool's outrageous statements, the Merlin prophecy that Lear's Fool delivers as a soliloquy interestingly does not appear in the quarto. This exclusion remains peculiar as Merlin prophecies circulated more widely around James I's coronation. Moreover, his subjects often considered James as the fulfillment of Merlin's prophecy.³⁸⁷ The well-documented

³⁸⁴ Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear*.

³⁸⁵ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will*.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ See Roberta Florence Brinkley, *Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2015), n.p. Brinkley notes, "There were two editions of the prophecies of Merlin by Alanus de Insulis in 1603 and 1608, respectively: *The Whole Prophecies of Scotland, England, France, and Denmark*." See, too, John Kerrigan,

history of improvisation by actors and fools supports the possibility that the prophecy appeared in the Whitehall performance.³⁸⁸ So, it seems plausible that Armin delivered the prophecy as an improvised interlude between acts in the Whitehall performance.

In either case—whether performed or not in the 1606 performance—the prophecy depicts a corrupt Britain: priests no longer follow their word, spurned lovers burn under heresy charges, and the law remains unevenly applied to cases. This Britain comes “to great confusion.”³⁸⁹ The Fool depicts a neglected political state. The prophecy provokes the audience to consider the nation. Leah Marcus points out, “[w]hen *King Lear* was performed at court during the Christmas holidays of 1606, the Parliament over which James I stormed like Jove with his thunderbolts was in session albeit recessed for the holidays; the Union of the Kingdoms and the neutralization of the Scots were at the center of parliamentary debate.”³⁹⁰ The union of the kingdoms offers one resolution to the deplorable, almost apocalyptic state. As head of the church and state, James possesses the authority to censor law, chastise priests, and model justice.

Yet the Fool’s ending couplets and performance complicates this reading. After Lear seeks shelter from the storm, Lear’s Fool offers the audience a prophecy before he follows the king and Kent off stage. The Fool delivers the prophecy as a soliloquy to the audience. But even with the political backdrop of the Parliamentary debate, the ending couplet of the prophecy appears indecipherable: “[t]hen comes the time, who lives to see’t,/ That going shall be used with

“Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*,” in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, edited by Gary Taylor and Michael Warren (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983), 195-197. Kerrigan claims that the folio amends Lear’s fool, from the quarto version, by increasing the amount of the fool’s needling.

³⁸⁸ See Catherine Henze, *Robert Armin and Shakespeare’s Performed Songs* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 2. Henze persuasively argues that Shakespeare and Armin collaborated on his play’s artificial fools.

³⁸⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*.

³⁹⁰ Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 150.

feet.”³⁹¹ Instead, he points to feet as one method of “going,” or put more simply, progress and travel. Here, he simultaneously puns on poetic feet and a plebeian travel method. Beyond the nuances of “feet,” the Fool does not explicitly connect writing or poetry with the pedestrian. The couplet offers no promise of a utopian state. Instead, the Fool makes space for public thought in political progress. The prophecy, thus, enacts a space for such input from the tailors who

Lear’s Fool quickly turns from plebeian progress to the British founding myth. His next line seems even more peculiar. He sets himself before Merlin, as he claims “this prophecy Merlin shall make.”³⁹² He places Lear and himself before Arthur’s conquest. However, he still aligns himself with Merlin. The British Arthurian myth offers numerous inconsistencies, and among the sundry variances, Merlin’s history resists a singular account and remains indeterminate. Before seeking shelter from the storm, Lear’s Fool delivers a soliloquy and identifies himself as “living before Merlin,” but speaking the words Merlin *will* deliver. Drawing upon England’s founding mythos, Lear’s Fool places himself within the folds of nation-making and claims an ethos to predict the descent of such a nation. Caradoc of Llancarvan’s *History of Cambria* offers an explanation for this bizarre turn of phrase:

There were two *Merlines*, the one named also *Ambrose* (for he had two names) begotten of a spirit, and found in the towne of *Caermarthen*, which tooke the name of him, and is therefore so called, who prophesied vnder King *Vortigerne*. The other borne in *Albaine* or *Scotland*, surnamed *Calidonus* of the Forrest *Calidon*, wherein he prophesied, and was called also *Syluestris*, or of the wood, for that he beholding some monstrous shape in the aire being in the battell fell mad, and flieng to the wood, liued there the rest of his life. This *Merline* was in the time of king *Arthure*, and prophesied fuller and plainer than the other.³⁹³

³⁹¹ Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Caradoc of Llancarvan, *The historie of Cambria, now called Wales: a part of the most famous yland of Brytaine, written in the Brytish language aboue two hundreth yeares past: translated into English by H. Lhoyd Gentleman: corrected, augmented, and continued out of records and best approoued authors, by Dauid Powel Doctor in diuinitie* (London: Printed by Rafe Newberie and Henrie Denham, 1584), 4-5.

Put simply, Caradoc claims two Merlins existed—an earlier Welsh poet and a plainer spoken Scotsman. Interestingly, Lear’s Fool seems to align himself with the Welsh prophet in spite of delivering a prophecy before a Scottish king in Whitehall palace. Perhaps, Archie Armstrong’s presence prompted Shakespeare or Armin, who likely played Lear’s Fool, to identify the stage fool as earlier and from outside the national realms that James I occupied. (Thus, he acknowledges Armstrong as a source of wisdom as well.) In identifying himself as prior to the later Merlin, Lear’s Fool also inherits the namesake of the first Merlin—ambrose, or immortal. The Welsh Merlin predates the Scottish Arthurian Merlin, delivering pithy and arcane prophecies compared to his Scottish counterpart. While Lear’s Fool never tells the audience if his prophecy will be simplified by the Scottish Merlin, he identifies himself with the Welsh Merlin. In short, he delivers a Welsh prophecy to a Scottish king and audience, some of whom themselves identified as Scottish, leaving Armstrong (A Scotsman) to deliver the same political predictions.

The Fool’s prior pattern of language suggests this line tempers the acerbic political statement of the prior lines. The Fool connects himself to the Jacobean court through his reference to the Welsh Merlin. He draws upon James’ connection to his Welsh ancestors. James knew “the importance of establishing himself in the Arthurian-Tudor tradition and of associating himself with British prophecy.”³⁹⁴ This manipulation of language uses both flattering of the king and, more importantly, knowledge of James I’s beliefs. This knowledge allows the Fool to manipulate Lear and the playwright to challenge the dominant bond between subject and king. As the Fool alludes to James’ pride in his Welsh ancestors, he asks the court audience to consider

³⁹⁴ Brinkley, *Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century*, n.p.

history, and more specifically, who records it. If the “going shall be used with feet,” then progress, or traveling forward, will be through pedestrian writing.³⁹⁵

While the Folio omits the local statements of the Quarto’s Fool, the Folio’s Fool remains an avid political commentator.³⁹⁶ Since the First Folio published the play with the prophecy, the Folio’s compilers appear to still consider the prophecy salient. While Scotland and England’s crowns unified under James, his reign still provoked contention. From the complaint of fraud in legal cases to James’ superstition, the prophecy’s complaints thrived in Jacobean England. Lear’s Fool continuously manipulates the dominant-affectionate relationship with his speech to castigate certain aspects of Jacobean politics. The Fool often veils his criticism in satire, but he avoids censor by pivoting to seeming non sequiturs that distract his interlocutors. This word play allows Lear’s Fool to explore particular political issues and makes space for the public. The contention between monarchical control and the public would fester in Charles I’s reign. Thus, the Fool’s Merlin prophecy comments on James’ reign and looks ahead to the consequences that manifest as future political issues, or in the words of Regan, “Jesters do oft proue Prophets.”³⁹⁷

The Merlin prophecies read as James I and his Stuart legacy restoring England certainly did not pan out, according to people’s visions. And Charles I’s moral crackdown at court, his fiscal redress, and his re-release of the newly augmented *Book of Sports* seeded some discontent among the public.³⁹⁸ The last masque performed in the Banqueting Hall, Thomas Carew’s

³⁹⁵ Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*.

³⁹⁶ Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*, 94. Patterson provides a persuasive argument that the Quarto’s Fool comments on monopolies and contemporary local politics.

³⁹⁷ Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear*.

³⁹⁸ See Joanne Altieri, *The Theatre of Praise: The Panegyric Traditions in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware, 1986), 83. “Among [Attorney General] Noy’s services to Charles stands the most effective piece of legalistic manipulation of language managed in the effort to firm up Charles’ finances in the thirties: the rewriting of patent and monopoly legislation to skirt the terms and thus the ‘facts.’”

Coelum Britannicum (1634) addressed the Caroline Court by bringing a vision of a legal case, in which Momus as plaintiff brings a case against the king and noting the discord between the king and his people. While a private, commissioned performance at court, Carew's masque nonetheless remained attuned to the local publics. At first glance, Carew seems to respond to court and city antitheatrical tensions by abjuring from clowns, traditional vice figures, or even the acknowledgement of the lord-of-misrule antics amongst the antimasques in his *Coelum Britannicum*. Nonetheless, he includes Momus in the masque. In Caroline culture, the figure of Momus remained contentious. English Epigrammists modified his role for their London audience: Momus could be any critic and any Papist sympathizer. Various early modern epigrams and pamphlets use Momus pejoratively to refer to Catholic- and Spanish-leaning sympathizers. These roles surely affected the court audience's perception of Momus.

As an "Everyman" figure in Carew's masque, Momus openly critiques the court and society without any limitation. As such, Momus articulates the complaints of the public to the governing authority. Here, we begin to see Carew reshaping the fool for the Caroline court. While making Jove frown could aptly be included amongst the list of a Jacobean fool's tasks, an official adjudicatory role certainly extends beyond its purview. Moreover, Momus also claims not only to judge the court but to parse this judgement to the audience. As an Everyman figure, Momus' request flirts with danger. What happens when everyone speaks and judges without limits? Carew critiques Jonson's definition by expanding its application. The fool "is every justice of the Peace," as Jonson claims in his definition, but now, potentially *any* critic serves as a justice.³⁹⁹ Yet Carew makes clear that such a fool needs three faculties: observation, intellect, and an outside perspective. At the beginning of the masque, he connects the court of Jove to

³⁹⁹ Jonson, *The Staple of News*, n.p.

Charles' court, but he also elides the royal court with the Inns of Court through entertainment. Momus tells the audience that "it may appear a sedulous acute observer, may know as much as a dull flegmaticque Ambassador, and weares a treble key to unlock the mysterious Cyphers of your darke secrecies."⁴⁰⁰ Just as a foreign ambassador observes and judges the "intrigues" of the English royal court, any member outside the royal court observes more than the sleepest ambassador. Moreover, their knowledge of the social fabric of English culture gives them the key to the political cyphers. Among the myriad of roles that ambassadors must perform, their positions as influencers both upon their country and their post make them both powerful and dangerous political figures. If such an English fool possesses the cyphers, their role as influencers makes them all the more dangerous.

Licensed to speak freely, Momus played the fool, and with his particolored hair and absurd costuming, inarguably the Caroline Court would have viewed him as the fool. Carew's collaborator, Inigo Jones, clearly envisioned the fool when he designed Momus' costume, but the wreath of porcupine quills, as J. S. A. Adamson points out, also would evoke Sir Philip Sydney's crest.⁴⁰¹ While Adamson suggests the association with Sydney underscores the old chivalric ways presented by Momus, it also draws attention to Momus as a figure of national poetry as well. Joanne Altieri notes the necessity to untangle the poet from Momus so much so that "[i]t [the Caroline masque] is aware not simply of the need to be understood if its case is to be made, but conscious also of its acts of idealization ultimately require of the poet: the dismissal of Momus, the abandonment of the satirical eye that sees and understands prosaically, for the

⁴⁰⁰ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, in *Poems, with a maske by Thomas Carew*, 180.

⁴⁰¹ J. S. A. Adamson, "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, edited by Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford: Stanford UP), 172.

idealizing verse of Mercury and his songs and revels. But Momus has seen and he has spoken.”⁴⁰² For Altieri, the fool permitted on stage and then dismissed serves as a powerful turn in Caroline culture. Yet Momus just does not “see” in Carew’s masque, and words, once spoken, cannot be merely dismissed. The poet and Momus, thus, do not abandon satirical justice for idealization but instead, subvert that idealization by prophesying what will come of it, if not redressed. Thus, Carew uses Momus to present such matters for redress, and his speech enacts a vision of settlement or apocalyptic resolution.

Like earlier Jacobean fools, Momus will not hold his tongue and presides as a social judge. Before Momus gives his name, Mercury identifies him in his order: “[p]eace Rayler, bridle your licentious tongue.”⁴⁰³ Mercury’s use of “bridle” suggests that Momus’ tongue must be controlled and directed rather than curbed altogether. Mercury also questions the relevance of Momus’ “scurrilous chat.” When he protests Momus’ interruption, Mercury asks, “[w]hat doth the knowledge of your abject state/ Concerue Ioves solemn Message?”⁴⁰⁴ Here, Mercury questions the salience of Momus’ state to the governing body. He remains a mere “trifler” and insignificant to royal authority. Yet Momus interrupts the “great affair” with the state of others. For Momus, satire concerns itself with the public, not with the individual. Entering the masque late, Momus introduces himself pompously: “[m]y name is *Momus-ap-Somnus-ap-Erebus-ap-Chaos-ap-Demorgorgon-ap-Eternity*, My Offices and Titles are, The Supreme Theomastix, Hupercritique of manners, protonotary of abuses, Arch-Informer, Dilator Generall, Vniversall

⁴⁰² Altieri, *The Theatre of Praise*, 87.

⁴⁰³ Thomas Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, in *Poems, with a maske by Thomas Carew* (London: Printed for H.M., 1651; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011), 177.

⁴⁰⁴ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, in *Poems, with a maske by Thomas Carew*, 179.

Calumniator, Eternall plaintiffe, and perpetuall Foreman of the Grand Inquest.”⁴⁰⁵ Identifying himself as the god of satire, Momus underscores his affiliation with both Chaos, the Greco-Roman force at creation, and primordial demons. But his name also traces the series of reductions from satire to sleep to darkness to chaos and demons and eternity. Here, we encounter the Christian and classical paradox that ghosts through numerous early modern masques, but Carew puts pressure on the inverse of the paradox. Within a causal reading of his name, he contains certain Christian apocalyptic resonances. But depending on how one translates the Latin preposition, it can be the culmination of creation. This movement across both multiple time registers and religious doctrine enables Momus’ role as the “eternal plaintiff” as he presents his case to the court. His vision, thus, informs the present of the past while threatening to impose upon the future. And indeed, the masque’s opening set depicts “the Scaene, representing old Arches, old Palaces, decayed wals, parts of Temples, Theaters, Basilica's and Thermes with confused heaps of broken Columnes, Bases, Coronices and Statues, lying as under-ground, and altogether resembling the ruines of some great Citie of the ancient Romans or civiliz'd Britains.”⁴⁰⁶ Momus’ slippage with the past brings ruin and the downfall of Rome to the English court.

As “eternal plaintiff,” Momus presents a vision of the present state of the Caroline country among the ruins of a fallen classical empire. Jennifer Chibnall notes the vision within Carew’s masque, suggesting that “[a]s the presiding genius of the antimasques Momus’s function is to purge any critical disbelief by turning it to laughter; to present, and dismiss, those aspects of social reality which could be brought against the harmonious vision the masque is to

⁴⁰⁵ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, 176.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

present.”⁴⁰⁷ While Chibnall aptly points out Momus’ job to present social reality, she overlooks his position as plaintiff; he cannot dismiss social reality. He can plead for certain recompense, but the judge determines whether or not to dismiss cases. In his litany of roles, one office, in particular, stands out: he influences interpretations of law, sits in on all civil and criminal judicature, and yet has no vote. Instead of requesting a vote, however, Momus requests to serve as a co-judge to Mercury and claims to “discourse the politique state of Heaven to this trim Audience.”⁴⁰⁸ He even assures his audience that he possesses no vote in new laws. In Carew’s masque, the fool (a.k.a. Momus) critiques royal authority and ceremonial power in everyday life. Leah Marcus succinctly points out that Carew chastises the king on his release of the new edition of *The Book of Sports*.⁴⁰⁹ But in particular, Carew uses Momus to attack certain elements of political control on entertainment. He singles out the licensing of entertainers, as “Pan may not pipe, nor Proteus juggle” without such license.⁴¹⁰ Momus highlights the ludicrousness by claiming the god of shepherds cannot play the flute in a field of sheep without the king’s permission. Mocking the attempt to establish royal authority by sanctioning work on holidays, Momus laments, “Vulcan was brought to an Oretenus and fined, for driving in a plate of Iron into one of the Suns Chariot-wheels, and frost-nailing his horses upon the fifth of November last, for breach of a penal Statute, prohibiting work upon Holi-days.”⁴¹¹ In order for the sun to continue traveling over the sky, Vulcan’s horses must be shod and the chariot repaired. In other

⁴⁰⁷ Jennifer Chibnall, “‘To that secure fix’d state:’ The Function of the Caroline Masque Form,” in *The Court Masque*, edited by David Lindley (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984), 86.

⁴⁰⁸ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, in *Poems, with a maske by Thomas Carew*, 180.

⁴⁰⁹ Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 15-17.

⁴¹⁰ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, in *Poems, with a maske by Thomas Carew*, 179.

⁴¹¹ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, 182.

words, for everyday life to function, this work must be performed regardless of the day. Momus' lament points out the absurdity of Charles' attempt to display royal authority vis-à-vis intervening in the necessary everyday functions of his subjects. By attempting to regulate the everyday, Charles ritualized the everyman. If the fool becomes every man with an acute observation, then the fool becomes a dangerous point of resistance to monarchical power. But Carew never goes as far to claim the everyman capable of governance, for as Momus claims, he has no vote on *new* laws. In spite of offering a prophetic vision of England, Momus cannot change its course of governance.

However, the fool's prophecy does not merely present a possible apocalyptic situation. Momus presents a path forward that avoids anarchy and civil discontent, and rather than promote a republican solution, he suggests transporting those "riotous" and "infectious" individuals, who opposed the rule. Momus points out: "it is not safe that these infe[.]ous persons should wander here to the hazard this Iland, they threatned lesse danger when they were nayl'd to the Firmament: I should conceive it a very discreet course, since they are provided of a tall vessell of their own ready rigg'd, membarque them all together in that goodship called the Argo, and send them to the plantation in *New-England*, which hath purg'd more virulent humours from the politique body."⁴¹² Shipping out the factious, vocal opponents to oversee plantations in New England provides a way of defusing the civil unrest in England. (Of course, Momus' plan omits the possibility of New England revolting against its rulers.) Unlike Herbert's earlier prophetic verse, Momus, the fool, can promote sending religious and political opponents to their New Eden. In doing so, the king preserves the health of the body politick and reforms those radical members. It provides a vision of a country expelling its political prisoners to the colonies. In

⁴¹² Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, 187.

doing so, Momus' vision brings into the realm of possibility such a solution.

The masque itself provided the fool with its own unique stage for prophetic speech acts. The intimacy of the court offered a politically charged environment, in which the courtier who played Momus delivered prophetic sentences to the king's face upon a stage of ruin. In Momus' dialogue, Carew subtly tucks in a prediction about Parliamentary reception of the king's choice of counsellors. Entreating all to stay for a benediction, Momus addresses the condemned Britain as a Co-Judge and "chuse[s] to lose a word of good counsel, and entreat you be more carefull in your choise of company: for you are alwayes found either with Misers, that not use you at all; or with fooles, that know not how to use you well. Be not hereafter so reserv'd and coy to men of worth and parts, and so you shall gaine such credit, as at the next Sessions you may be heard with better successe."⁴¹³ Almost five years into Charles' private rule without a Parliament, Momus addresses ridicule of Charles' counselors and prophecies (that without reform to Charles' governing): "[t]hat wheresoever you shall chuse to abide, your society shall adde no credit or reputation to the party, nor your discontinuance, or totall absence, be matter of disparagement to any man; and whosoever shall hold a contrary estimation of you, shall be condemn'd to weare perpetuall Motley, unlesse he recant his opinion, Now you may voyd the Court."⁴¹⁴ Unless the court and king reform, the country will remain in decay, no matter if he flees, and all who support him wear "motley" until they recant their support. Momus' prophecy echoes the forerunners of what will transpire during the civil war, but more importantly, it presents a possible outcome from the public sentiments brought forth in the prophecy.

And here, too, the fool possesses the unquestioned power to tell the king when to dismiss

⁴¹³ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, 194.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*.

the court. And at masque's end, Momus takes his own leave. Wearied from the banal pleadings of putting the king and country on trial, Momus tells the audience he will "packe up too and be gone: Besides, I see a crowd of other sutors pressing hither, I'll stop'em, take their petitions and preferre'em above; and as I came in bluntly without knocking, and no body bid me welcome; so Ile depart as abruptly without taking leave, and bid no body fare-well."⁴¹⁵ As his rude, pressing entrance did not garner welcome, he makes a point of claiming he leaves without the king's leave. The fool's power to flit in and out without even the king's say unsettles the sovereignty, but it also anticipates the fool's next unsolicited entrance. Momus claims he will take the petitions of those people courting his wisdom and form of justice on his way out and argue them above. In other words, he takes on the charges of those courtiers who still remain dissatisfied with the adjudication of the masque's matters. Neither the Caroline court audience of the masque nor the broader early modern public knew when exactly the fool would re-enter the masque and the Caroline body politick, bringing forth possibilities for a future predicated on the adjudications of public justice.

It remains unclear whether Armstrong witnessed Armin perform the prophecy in *King Lear* at Whitehall palace or Momus gesticulate the future of the Caroline Court as present events stood. And while Archie Armstrong did not write a tract measuring a cabal specifically, he published his prophetic dream after his rustication from court. In 1603, Armstrong joined the English court as part of James I's retinue. His early life remains muddled in speculation. In one account, prior to becoming James I's Scottish jester, he reputedly stole sheep for his living, which lends credence to his abrasive attitude that flaunted authority.⁴¹⁶ In any case, he

⁴¹⁵ Carew, *Coelum Britannicum*, 202.

⁴¹⁶ See "Archibald Armstrong," in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

accompanied James to the English court where he resided and taunted subsequent subjects of the court. His divisiveness earned him “blanket rides” from the princes (to curtail his speeches) and animosity from the Duke of Buckingham and his arch-nemesis, William Laud.⁴¹⁷ His machinations, though, prompted not only hostility, but also admiration. Armstrong accompanied the royal party to Spain and garnered the favorable attention of the Spanish court.

When Charles I inherited him as part of the court, Armstrong became a two-fold point of contention as he both irritated Laud and failed to comply with the new moral program that Charles attempted to instill upon the court. In addition to outlawing swearing, Charles I issued a series of behavioral restrictions in an attempt to make the royal court a pillar of moral superiority. Intrepid, Armstrong continued to taunt his political nemesis for his height and blessed “little Laud” to the devil. When the Presbyters revolted in 1639, on the 11th of March, Armstrong reputedly asked Laud as he passed in the hall on the way to the council meeting: “doth your Grace not heare the News from Striveling about the Liturgy?”⁴¹⁸ John Rushworth recounts that the question preceded “other words of reflection,” and that Laud “presently complained of the Council, which produced this ensuing Order.”⁴¹⁹ The reprimand that ensued marks one of only a few instances of a fool’s punishment. According to Sharpe, Laud threatened to drag Armstrong before the Star Chamber, which usually adjudicated cases involving aristocrats, for his commentary.

But the ludicrousness of dragging a jester before the high court appeared to be too much for Lord Coventry, who recognized the license of the fool. In his *Advice to a Son*, Francis

⁴¹⁷ See Walter Scott, *Secret History of the Court of James I* (Edinburgh: Printed by James Ballantyne and Co, 1811), 400.

⁴¹⁸ See “Archie Armstrong,” *The Oxford National Bibliography*.

⁴¹⁹ John Rushworth, *Historical Collections: The Second Part* (London: Printed by J.D., 1680), 470.

Osborne provides an account of the incident in his effort to teach his son to back away from quarrels, even with those “inferior:”

And because *Example* receives a more lively tincture from *Memory*, than *Precept*, I shall instance it as a blot in the greatest *Rochet* that did in my time appear in the *Court of England*, or indeed any I ever heard since the Reformation: who [Laud] managed a *Quarrel* with *Archy the Kings Fool*, and *indeavouring* to explode him the *Court*, rendered him at last so *considerable* by calling the *Prelates Enemies* (which were not few) to his *rescue*, as the fellow was not only able to continue the dispute for divers years, but received such encouragements from *Standers-by*, as he hath oft, in my hearing, belched in his face such *miscarriages* as he was really guilty of, and might, but for this *foul-mouth'd Scot* have been forgotten.... Though so far hood-wink'd with *Passion*, as not to discern that all the *Fool* did was but a *Symptom* of the *strong* and *inveterate Distemper* raised long before in the *Hearts* of his *Country-men* against the *calling of the Bishops*, out of whose former *Ruines* the major Part of the *Scottish Nobility* had feathered, if not built their *Nests*. Nor did this too *low placed Anger* lead him into less *Absurdity*, than an endeavour to bring him [Armstrong] into the *Star-Chamber*, till the Lord *Coventry* had, by aquaniting him with the *Previledge of a Fool*, shewn the *ridiculousness of the Attempt*: Yet not satisfied, he [Laud], through the mediation of the *Queen*, got him at last discharged the *Court*.⁴²⁰

Presenting the incident as the most striking case to rock the mid-seventeenth-century courts, Osborne's account emphasizes several critical points about Armstrong's verbal speech acts: they fall within a fool's "privilege," they affect the public and serve to rally the public, they remind and serve as a historical record of the grievances, and they reflect certain truths of the country. Characterized as a "foul-mouthed Scot," the jester rallied across class and political lines to garner backing against Laud. In doing so, he articulated the key discontent against Laud. The response of Lord Coventry indicates the legitimacy of the fool's license, but it also recognizes the need for such speech acts. That it was the greatest "blot" in the court from the 1640s through the Restoration demonstrates not just the absurdity of trying a fool in a high court intended for aristocrats, but it also underscores the political powers of the jester.

⁴²⁰ Francis Osborne "Advice to a Son," in *The Works of Francis Osborne Esq: Divine, Moral, Historical, Political* (London: 1689):125-126.

While the fool presents politically charged visions, it does not focus exclusively on an insular England. Given Armstrong's Scottish ties and his Spanish admirers abroad, the taunts might loosely flirt with treason. But an early modern audience would be accustomed to viewing fools (on and off stage) without national ties per se or with complicated national relations. The court records note Monarcho, one of Queen Elizabeth I's jesters, as Italian. Feste flits between two courts, belonging to neither. Meanwhile, Coryate traversed various countries, including India, and served as an unofficial ambassador for the court. Thus, the fool always inhabits a space outside of the nation. Like Carew's Momus, who has no vote, the external position of the fool and its often pan-European connections offer both protection but also underscore England as a microcosm upon which the world can impose its advice. For Armstrong, this position exacerbated his precarious relationship with several English noblemen and clergy.

In any case, Sharpe also notes that Henrietta Maria, known for her patronage of the arts and acting, intervened on Archibald's behalf. Instead of serving prison time, he was rusticated from court with his fool's coat turned over his head.⁴²¹ Armstrong interpreted this light sentence as an exile and due to his fame abroad: "[w]hy I was exiled from Court having my jesting coate pluckt off, few men are ignorant of, neither doe I much care who knowes of it, in so much as my Antagonist [Laud] hath now no power to apprehend them; if they should vouchsafe a blundering murmour in my behalfe, my name is as famous abroad, as hee infamous."⁴²² His favor with the Spanish court and fame abroad combined with Laud's notoriety offered protection not only to the "sometime" fool but also to his friends. And despite the moralizing turn in the court that would seem to push against a fool, Charles did not eliminate the fool from his court. Shortly afterwards,

⁴²¹ See Archibald Armstrong, *Archie's Dream*.

⁴²² Armstrong, *Archie's Dream*, n.p.

he hired Muckle John, a tamer, less abrasive fool, who by all accounts never irked the Archbishop Laud. This move tells us that the tradition of the fool still powerfully gripped both popular and court culture, but also that something within Archie's speech acts, including his prophetic advice, flirted too much with sedition.

Meanwhile in London, Armstrong bided his time working as a usurer until time "hath brought him (thy adversary, [sic] I meane into farre greater then ever thou wert in. Of vvhom not since thou dreamedst, vvwhich give me licence to declare unto all men vvwhich shall desire to knowv it."⁴²³ From his statement, he never left his trade as a fool behind, however, but he adapts to the Caroline notion of the fool as an everyday intellectual, one who still retains license to judge. Yet this license can no longer shield a fool from retaliation from political enemies. So while Armstrong dreamed of Laud since being rusticated from court, he cannot "declare" such dreams until his adversary becomes less politically fortunate than himself. When Laud fell out of favor and found himself in the tower in 1641, Armstrong penned a pamphlet articulating a strange dream that he experienced, and he tells his readers he lay "prostrated upon his bed, (to take naturall rest)."⁴²⁴ Rather than the product of masturbation or a nightmare, the dream delivered in the pamphlet presents a divination. T. H. Jamieson remarks: "[i]t seems a genuine production of the outspoken Jester, who could not refrain even in his retirement, and when the object of his enmity was powerless and in prison, from venting his spleen against the author of his certainly undeserved disgrace."⁴²⁵ Jamieson's comments do more than authenticate the text and underscore Armstrong's unstoppable mouth. They indicate that the fool never retires and

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ T. H. Jamieson, Preface, in *Archie Armstrong's Banquet of Jestes* (W. Paterson, 1872), xix.

must always play the role. While Armstrong may not officially occupy the role of court fool, he still plays it amongst his public audience.

Assuring us this phantasm occurred during “naturall rest” rather than during sex, Armstrong sets the dream down in the form of both a prophecy and an epic trip to the underworld. As we enter the underworld from the vantage of above, we encounter the figure of Phoebus, but he is a particular *Christianized* figure. He sits on a diocese to judge a case brought by the poor scholar. In the pamphlet, the scholar claims, “I the most unfortunate of the whole tribe of *Levi*, by spirituall assistance, have had the priviledge to declare my grievances which are these. First we are abused by such a flat cap citizen, who if he perceive one of us at one side of the way, hee will be sure to crosse over, on purpose to take the wall of him. Calling the scholler saucy rascall, if he but offer to withstand him.”⁴²⁶ Phoebus, the Greek god of musicians and poets, morphs into a priest, and the scholar turns into a member of the tribe of Levi, in Armstrong’s imagination. Fool proselytizes to priest, and like Momus, the fool here set himself as a plaintiff. As such, he laments that Laud, a flat cap citizen (ubiquitous sign of a Londoner) may abuse those priests and intellectuals who cross him. Armstrong, here, identifies himself with the scholar, one who crossed Laud as a saucy rascal.

Legal recourse appears at first impossible, as the dream demonstrates the fallibility of justice. Allegorizing the Star Chamber (before which Armstrong was nearly brought to by Laud), Armstrong’s dream underscores the fickleness and human error in court. The star drops the first petition, and without such petition, a legal case cannot be brought against Laud. So the scholar brings another draft of a complaint:

First we are abused by such a flat cap citizen, who if he perceive one of us at one side of the way, hee will be sure to crosse over, on purpose to take the wall of him. Calling the scholler saucy rascall, if he but offer to withstand him.

⁴²⁶ Armstrong, *Archie’s Dream*, n.p.

Secondly, those which are able to buy great personages, have them, although they have had never any nurture in an Academy, except out of a library of notes, borrowed of some old clarke, or other, which he in former time had gathered at severall places.

Thirdly if we be not made of cannon prooffe, wee are in danger of Episcopall censure.

Fourthly, vve must not preach more then the Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, *William Laud*, will allowv off. For feare of the forfeiture of our eares. From these and the like greevances, we most humbly desire great Iove to deliver us.⁴²⁷

The complaint reads as most grievances against Laud: that traditional church roles fall to simple citizens, who may buy their way into roles without schooling; that he be contrary and abrades those who cross his pass; that he only permits so much preaching within the confines of a service; that he gathers episcopal knowledge from various places (he, in other words, belongs to not one theological school of thought). The complaint echoes grievances by William Prynne, Henry Burton, among others, and calls upon the king represented in the figure of Jove to right such offenses. In 1641 when Parliament brought Laud up on charges for treason, Prynne recorded them in *The Antipathie of the English Prelacie*.⁴²⁸ Armstrong unlikely knew the official charges before penning his tract, but

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ See William Prynne, *The Antipathie of the English Prelacie* (London: printed by authority for Michael Sparke senior, 1641), 159-161. Prynne recorded Laud's official treason charges:

1. That hee hath traiterously endeavoured to subvert the fundamentall Lawes, and Government of this Kingdome of England, and instead thereof to introduce an Arbitr•ary, and tyrannicall Government against Law; and to that end, hath wickedly and traiterously advised his Majesty, that hee might at his owne will and pleasure, leavie, and take money of his Sub|jects, without their consent in Parliament; and this hee affir|med was warrantable by the Law of God.
2. He hath for the better accomplishment of that his traite|rous designe, advised, and procured Sermons, and other dis|courses to be Preached, Printed, and published, in which the Authority of Parliaments, and the force of the Lawes of this Kingdome, have bin denied; and absolute and unlimited power over the persons and estates of his Majesties subjects maintained and defended, not onely in the King, but in him|selfe, and other Bishops, against the Law: And he hath beene a great protector, favourer, and promoter of the publishers of such false and pernicious opinions.
3. Hee hath by Letters, Messages, Threa•s, and Promises, and by divers other wayes to Judges, and other Ministers of Justice, interrupted and perverted, and at other times by meanes aforesaid, hath endeavoured to interrupt, and pervert the course of Justice in his Majesties Courts at Westminster, and other Courts, to the subversion of the Lawes of this Kingdome, whereby sundry of his Majesties Subjects have beene stopt in their just suits, deprived of their lawfull rights, and subjected to his tyrannicall will, to their ruine, and destruction.

his dream of the charges suggests they reflect the sentiments against Laud that circulated in the streets. No friend of Prynne, Armstrong nonetheless reflects his knowledge of the clergy and lawyers' complaints and presents the case as triable before the king.

Armstrong's dream enacts more than the possibility of trying Laud. It also prophesizes the change brought about by such an act. With Bonner and Wolsey, Laud completes the trio of lowbrow clergy who rose to power to be publicly arrested and condemned by the court of popular opinion to hell. As the dream concludes with Laud's eternal exile from Elysium, Armstrong delivers a prophetic coda:

You which the dreame of *Archy* now have read,
Will surely talke of him when he is dead:
He knowes his foe in prison whilst that hee
By no man interrupted but goes free.
His fooles coate now is far in better case,
Then he which yesterday had so much Grace:
Changes of Times surely cannot be small,
When Jesters rise and Archbishops fall.⁴²⁹

The first half of the prophecy reads as a revenge rhyme: his fame derives from his nemesis' downfall. Confined to prison, Laud cannot touch the jester, and no one pesters or threatens the fool in the streets for what he states. As soon as he mentions his fool's coat, however, the

4. That the said *Archbishop*, hath trayterously, and corruptly sold Justice to those, who have had causes depending before him, by colour of his Ecclesiasticall Jurisdiction, as Archbishiop, High Commissioner, Referree, or otherwise, and hath taken unlawfull gifts, and bribes of his Majesties Su•••• (and hath as much as in him lies) endeavoured to corrupt the other Courts of Justice, by advising, and procuring his Majesty to •ell places of Judicature, and other Offices contrary to the Lawes and Statutes in that behalfe.

5. He hath trayterously caused a booke of Canons to be com |posed, and published without any lawfull warrant, and authority in that behalfe; in which pretended Canons, many matters are contained contrary to the Kings Prerogative, to the funda |mentall La wes, and Statutes of this Realme, to the right of Parliament, to the propriety, and liberty of the subject, and matters tending to sedition, and of dangerous consequence, and to the establishment of a vast, unlawfull, and presumptuous power in himselfe, and his successors: many of which Canons, by the practise of the said Archbishop, were surreptiously pas |sed in the late Convoc•tion, without due consideration and debate: others by feare and compulsion, were subscribed by the Prelates, and Clarkees there assembled, which h•d never beene voted, and passed in the Convocation, as they ought to have beene.

⁴²⁹ Armstrong, *Archie's Dream*, n.p.

prophecy pivots. In spite of being rusticated from court with his fool's coat pulled over his head, Armstrong's role as the fool in fact becomes cemented by Laud's downfall. The ending couplet predicts a massive change in the "times" and systems. These times, he underscores, raise up jesters or fools, who—as the prior chapters demonstrate—use speech acts as humanist explorations of citizenship, justice, and free speech. Despite fools' seeming disappearance as an outmoded figure, Armstrong clearly points out their existence even on the eve of Parliament closing the theatre in 1642. Armstrong's pamphlet demonstrates the conflicting political landscapes of anti-Laudian, but pro-Royalist sentiment. While the clergy fall, the fool's flourishing presence seems to subsume the church's role in these "changing times." As Parliament closed theaters, stripped holiday celebrations, and eliminated the "levity" so inappropriately matched to the time, fools' writings and speech acts became the moral critique and acumen for the public. Armstrong's pamphlet does not predict this movement, but instead, actuates it vis-a-vis the act of prophesying.

The fool as prophet remains a conflicted role, one which many writers sought to strip. Even in *Ran*, in which Akira Kurosawa adapts *King Lear* alongside Japanese legend, Kurosawa refrains from giving Kyoami (the fool) the ability to prophesy to Hidetora (*Lear*) what *will* occur and by effect, bringing it into being as a possibility to be fulfilled. Instead, the fool laments Hidetora's decisions and offers songs and parables to instruct him. This stripping of the fool as prophet remained popular throughout *King Lear*'s production history. While Armstrong's pamphlet prophesied a rising, politically important place for fools and their acts, we encounter opposing impulses from the stage when restored with the monarch. Nahum Tate's adaptation of *King Lear* (1681), for example, completely strips the fool from the play. And Restoration plays largely turned away from staging such folly.

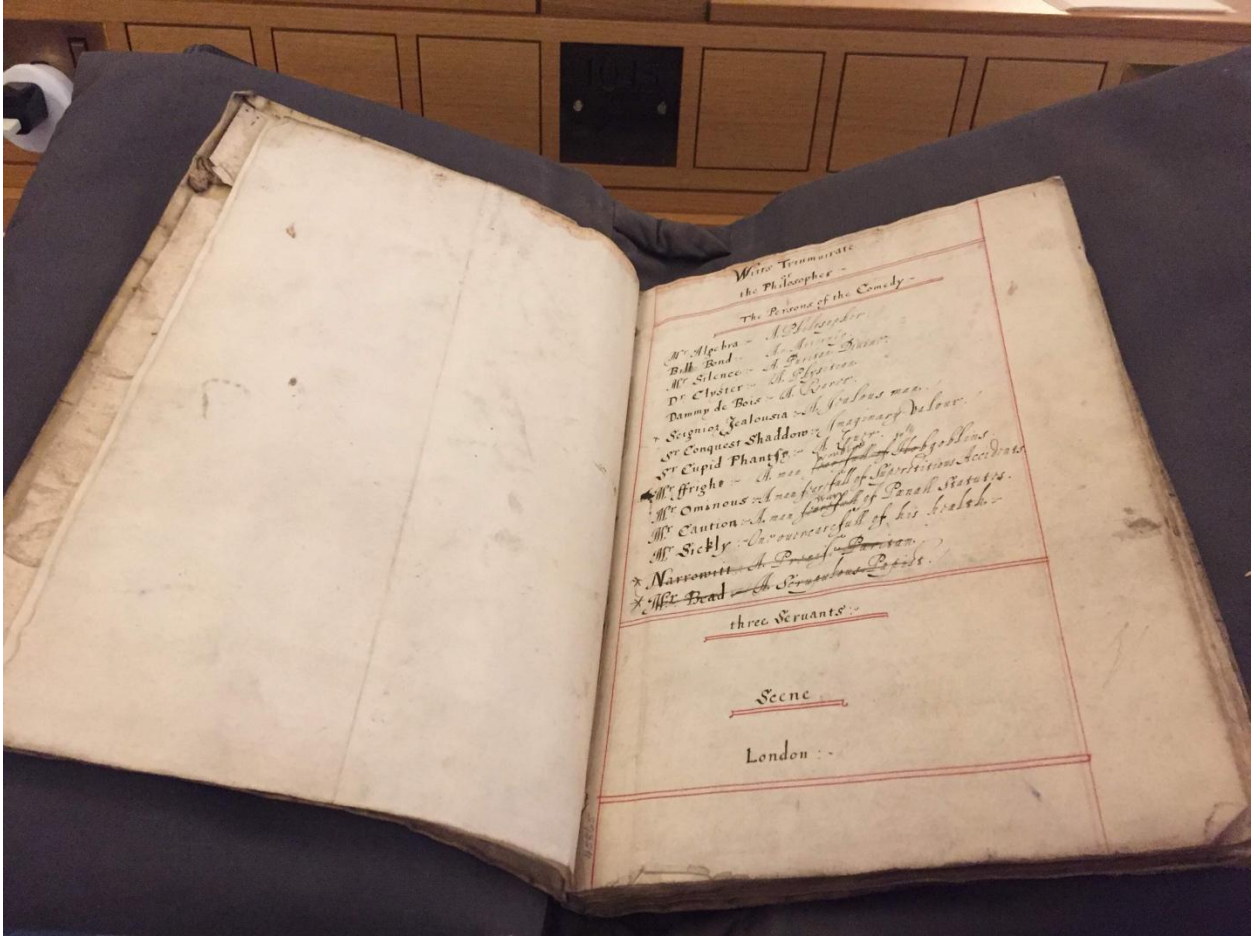


Figure V: Strike-through of Narrowwitt, the play's fool, and Mr. Bead in *Wits Triumvirate*

This dismissal of the fool, especially as prophet, occurred both in literary and everyday commentary. An early reader keeps with Samuel Butler's use of zany in *Hudibras* and refers to a character as zani, rather than fool, exoticizing the role and placing it as foreign: "Tom Jones, a foolish Welchman that could neether write nor read, zany to * Silly the Astrologer."⁴³⁰ Perhaps, the dearth of a fool led Samuel Pepys to conclude the book lacked humor.⁴³¹ Whatever the case, the citizen fool and its speech acts, including prophecy, became too transgressive for the restored monarchical system.

⁴³⁰ Anon, Marginalia, in Samuel Butler, *Hudibras* (London: 1684), 343. William Clements Library, University of Michigan, C21689 BU.

⁴³¹ See Samuel Pepys, "26 December 1662," in *Diary*.

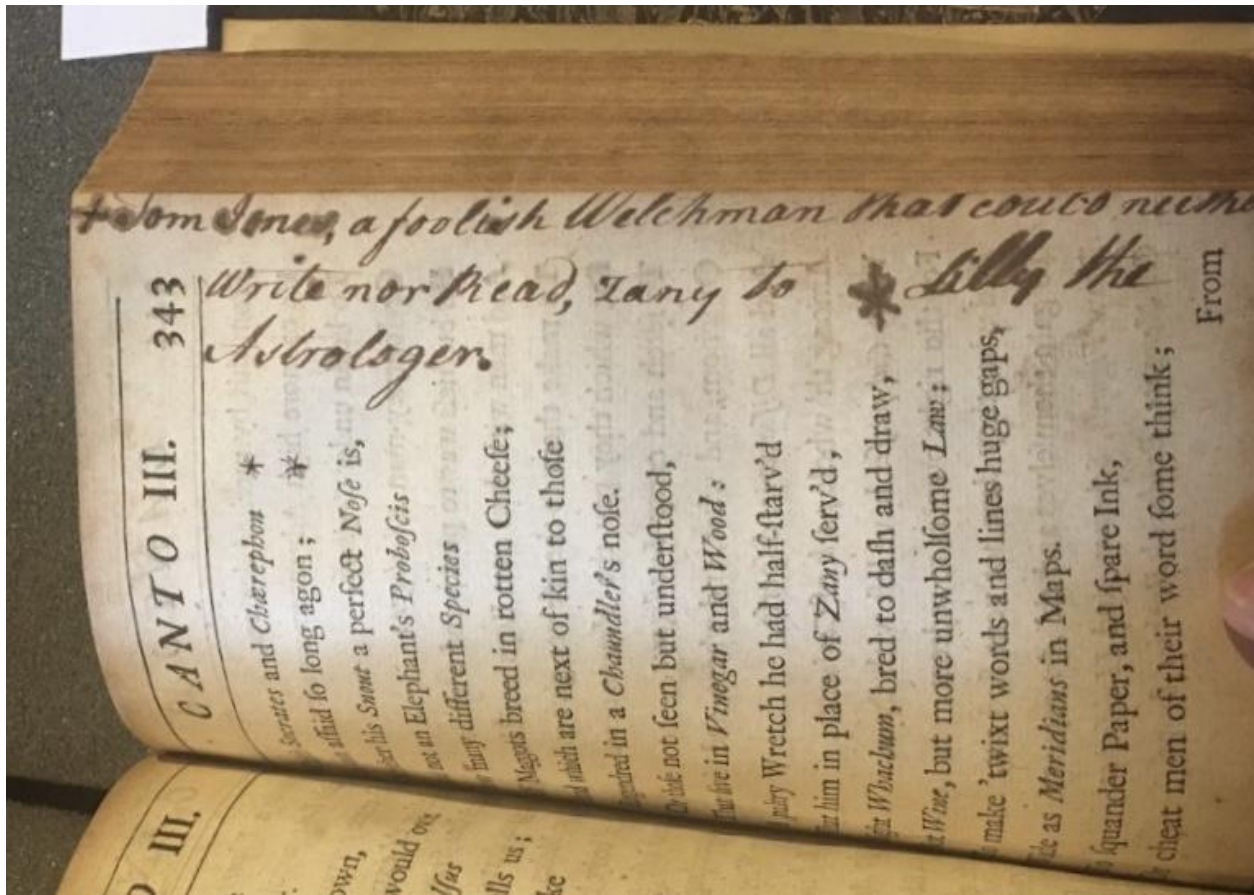


Figure VI: Marginalia in Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*

If foreign, the fake news and prophecy of the fool no longer exist as *internal* strife. In an interpretation of *Aesop's Fables*, a Restoration writer quips:

Unhappy the Nation where Factions are in't
 And Libels and Lies are encourag'd in Print
 Where each Scribbling--Fool, in a fit of the Spleen,
 Dairs Rail at our States-men, or Tutor the Queen.⁴³²

The writer decries the fool for affecting politics with “each scribbling.” The fear of the fool’s scribbles stems not from their content per se, but what they affect and what they stir up into being. Despite restoring the reign of a monarch, the court fool’s role as “queen’s tutor” went

⁴³² *Aesop the Wanderer: or, Fables Relating to the Transactions of Europe; Occasionally Writ since the Late Battle at Bleinheim* (ESTC T067003, 1704), 31.

against Restoration sensibilities precisely because of what the fool's speech acts bring forth. Sharpe notes, "[t]hroughout the reign, there were frequent laments that sacred authorities and subjects were being 'irreverently' handled and that the most common folk were being tutored by print polemicists to intrude into matters of government."⁴³³ The anxiety of an educated public that cannot only intrude into politics but serve as a judge or check flourishes. And we can see this impulse within the reprinted jest books of the period. One such jest book, *A Choice Banquet of Jestes*, claims to be the augmented edition of Archie Armstrong's jests. In a 1660 copy, the owner marked his name as well as practiced his penmanship by copying the alphabet. While certainly not the only book owned by Jeremiah Walker, it speaks to the fool as pedagogue and its

⁴³³ Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013), 650.

verbal acts, in their various forms, as certain forms of instructional truths.

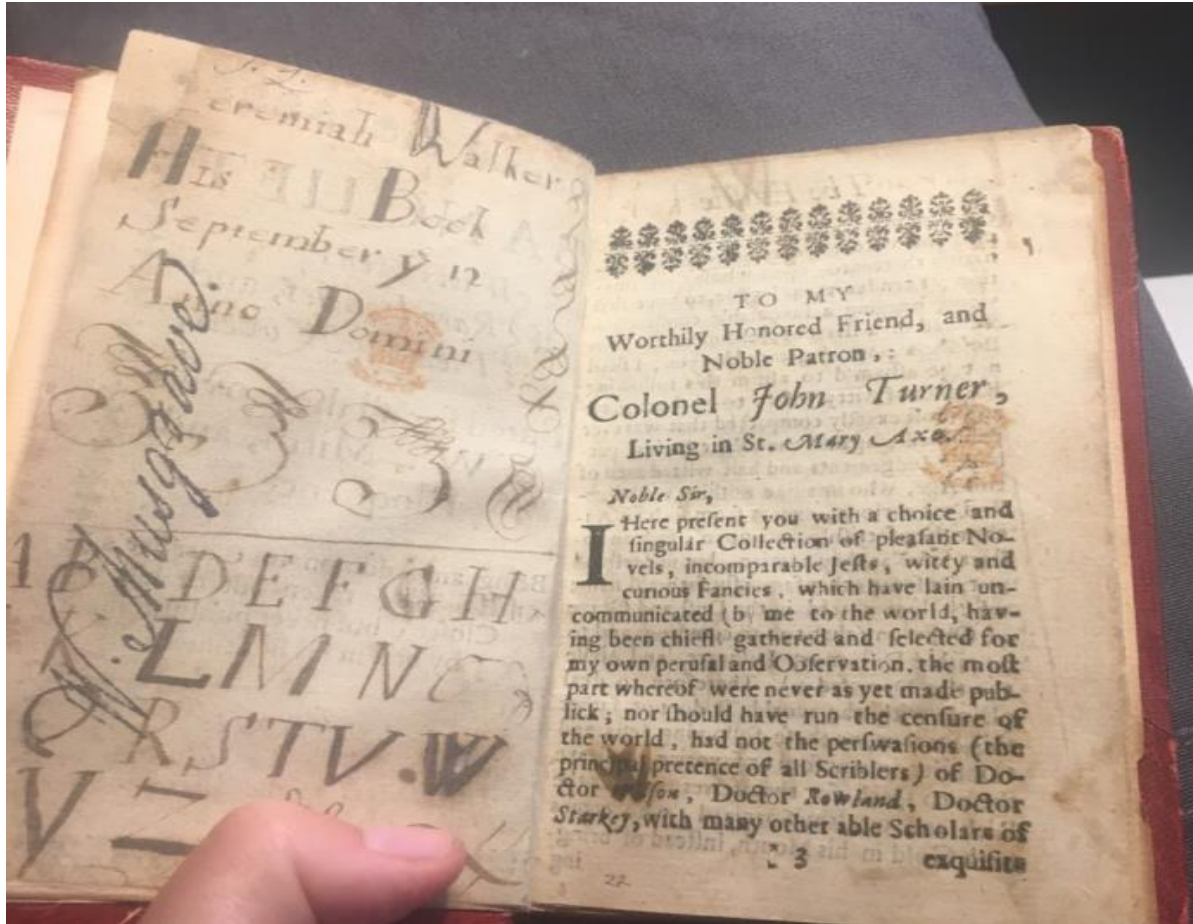


Figure VII: Pen Trials in *A Choice Banquet of Jestes*

An Antidote Against Rebellion decries: “[e]very private person sets up for a judge of matters of state.”⁴³⁴ And the Fool enacted it, and so Armstrong’s prophecy presents a possibility that becomes confirmed as true through historical events: times change when fools rise.

⁴³⁴ Anon, *An Antidote Against Rebellion*.

“Where be your gibes now?” The Fool’s Afterlife

Digging into the churchyard ground, two gravediggers in *Hamlet* toss up several skulls in an effort to make room for what they determined a suicide. Newly returned to Denmark, Hamlet observes the skulls in the dirt pile. The first he considers to be a politician’s skull; the second, a lawyer’s remains. But the play never confirms these speculations. Only the third skull (which most productions stage him grabbing) possesses a physical identity and a memory of encounter with Yorick, the court jester:

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow
of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath
borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how
abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rims at
it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know
not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your
gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment,
that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one
now, to mock your own grinning?⁴³⁵

Yorick, more a father to the prince in his actions of verbal play, life advice, and piggy back rides, impressed upon the prince a certain wit that he carries with him until the play’s fifth act. The unlimited jests and attention in the gibes and songs produced moments of merriment at an otherwise bleak Danish dinner table, but it also instructed Hamlet in self-deprecation. Indeed, the first four acts of the play arguably feature Hamlet as a jester. When Polonius asks the matter of his reading, Hamlet replies with a tangible understanding of the text written (or copied out) upon the page: “[w]ords, words, words.”⁴³⁶ Not until the gravediggers’ entrance in Act V does Hamlet

⁴³⁵ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (New York: W. W. Norton Publishing, 2012): 5.1.171-176.

⁴³⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 2.2.192.

change his motley for the mourning suit of a condemned man. Even Yorick's skeleton offers a mocking, more easily palatable form of mortality.

But why unearth the jester? Surely, the other two skulls could serve as reminders for mortality. Well, that question is central to this book.

In *Hamlet*, those two skulls function only as reminders of mortality, but in addition to serving as memento mori iconography, Yorick's skull serves as a despotif for verbal, political, and emotional powers. Hamlet resurrects possible identities for the remains in the graveyard: a politician and a lawyer. For Hamlet, the *realpolitik* of the courtier and the tricks and equivocations of the lawyer offer no remedy for Hamlet's angst. The oft-cited passage on Yorick's gibes follows a similar preceding series of rhetorical questions about the lawyer's skull:

There's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks?⁴³⁷

His quiddities, or nature as a lawyer, to quibble and verbally play with his audiences' conscience hold no method for Hamlet. Lost in death, the lawyer's identity and nature become lost in time, and his bones co-mingle with the other unknown corpses. Hamlet plays out possible identities, some of which he inhabited during the play: a courtier, playing his part; a lawyer, gathering evidence and arguing his case. But these roles turn to dust, consumed in the pedestrianism of everyday life. Yorick's skull, however, somehow remains identifiable to the gravediggers and Hamlet. Outside of class and social systems, the jester is no one's man. But Yorick's inarticulate jest in death and Hamlet's command to go to his lady's chamber blur, so the comment on mortality actuated in the jester's skull belong neither to the jester or Hamlet. And Yorick's silent gambols still function to bring attention not only to his mortality, but to his role of transferring a

⁴³⁷ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. 5.1.90-92.

certain sovereignty in the form of speech, first to Hamlet and then to the audience. These gibes, thus, remain productive. The knowledge and power accrued through their memory enable Hamlet to quip with Horatio and the gravediggers about mortality. By doing so, these gibes transfer a sovereignty that produces a series of acts that enact certain forms of truth that enable action.

This book unearths the early modern English fool, not merely to resurrect and catechize the older theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Leah Marcus, Robert Bell, and others, but to examine how the early modern English fools transfer sovereignty and methods of doing so, which made it a dangerous figure before the English Civil War and untenable for the Restoration stage. While scholars of American history and the Enlightenment tout the eighteenth century's development for free speech and individual rights and freedoms inherent to men, I suggest we find this drive much earlier in the allowed license of the early modern fool, his "prerogative," and its use to instruct and demand a critical citizen. In doing so, the fool cultivates a citizen who can hold the king and governing authorities accountable. To what extent remained a question for the Civil War and American Revolution. This claim does not insinuate that the fool caused the Civil War, but the fool and its speech acts did contribute to certain facets of cultural expression that enabled a sovereignty among the public and an ability to judge and stage the actions of such authorities.

However, the narrative in this book attempts to chart a much more complex history of the early modern fool, who is often misread as merely a joker and figure of comedic relief. More than gibes and jests, the fool *acts*. When I reference my work on the fool, most interlocutors envision my work entailing a jovial, funny, clownish figure whose buffoonery entertains a jeering crowd surrounding the new public stages. Though I contend that my work engages with a more serious, acerbic humanist topos, their skepticism remains clear. This convention I attest to

the scant recent criticism on the fool. I note “recent” because earlier understandings of “fool,” such as Ambrose Bierce’s *The Devil’s Dictionary*, offer a more nuanced understanding of the fool’s duality and socio-political involvement. Popular culture reflects this critical simplification to the carnivalesque. We see this simplified version of the fool presented in music videos of Boris Johnson as a clown, cartoons of Donald Trump in motley, and films such as *Joker* (2019). The German television show, *The Clown*, mocks Johnson by casting him as a clown. As such, even popular understandings of the fool skew towards the carnivalesque—anti-establishment for the sake of being a safety valve for social and comedic relief, one who diffuses the tensions only to reify the existing power structures in place. This book challenges such a simplified reading by providing a much more nuanced narrative of fools, such as Robert Armin, Touchstone, and Andrew Cane, that tracks its sympathies through its intellectual history. I demonstrate that while the fool challenges power hierarchies in various ways, the power transferred or destabilized remains with its audience. It fails to be commodified, to use Marx’s term, or reified, as in Bakhtin’s theory.

While fools, such as Archibald Armstrong, remained neutral and lived in London for the duration of the Civil War and Interregnum, most actors who played fools tended to side with the Royalists. In the 1640s, Parliament arrested actors, such as Andrew Cane who played the fool, when they performed in closet performances after the theater ban.⁴³⁸ James Wright recounts:

When the Wars were over, and the Royalists totally Subdued; most of 'em who were left alive gather'd to *London*, and for a Subsistence endeavour'd to revive their Old Trade, privately. They made up one Company out of all the Scatter'd Members of Several; and in the Winter before the King's Murder, 1648, They ventured to Act some Plays with as much caution and privacy as cou'd be, at the *Cockpit*. They continu'd undisturbed for

⁴³⁸ In 1650, Andrew Cane faced arrest for performing at the Red Bull theatre, but prior to his arrest, he also flaunted Parliament by producing the old Royalist currency. See Jane Milling, "The development of a professional theatre, 1540–1660," in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, edited by Jane Milling and Peter Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004): 150-151.

three or four Days; but at last as they were presenting the Tragedy of the *Bloudy Brother*, (in which *Lowin* Acted *Aubrey*, *Taylor* *Rollo*, *Pollard* the *Cook*, *Burt* *Latorch*, and I think *Hart* *Otto*) a Party of Foot Souldiers beset the House, surprized 'em about the midle of the Play, and carried 'em away in their habits, not admitting them to Shift, to *Hatton-house* then a Prison, where having detain'd them sometime, they Plunder'd them of their Cloths and let 'em loose again. Afterwards in *Oliver's* time, they used to Act privately, three or four Miles, or more, out of Town, now here, now there, sometimes in Noblemens Houses, in particular *Holland-house* at *Kensington*, where the Nobility and Gentry who met (but in no great Numbers) used to make a Sum for them, each giving a broad Peice, or the like. And *Alexander Goffe*, the Woman Actor at *Blackfriers*, (who had made himself known to Persons of Quality) used to be the Jackal and give notice of Time and Place. At Christmass, and Bartlemew-fair, they used to Bribe the Officer who Commanded the Guard at *Whitehall*, and were thereupon connived at to Act for a few Days, at the *Red Bull*; but were sometimes notwithstanding Disturb'd by Soldiers.⁴³⁹

Wright's account highlights how actors from various competing companies prior to the war came together under the umbrella of one company to stage closet performances. More importantly, though, the account indicates how many actors survived with Royalist-leaning noble patrons. Nicholas Burt and Thomas Pollard, apprentices of John Shank (an actor known for playing the clown), both faced arrest for their illegal performance. Pollard frequently performed fool roles prior to the illegal performance. Between having a "jackal" (one who cozied up to sympathetic aristocrats and carefully delivered the performance information to interested individuals) and bribing soldiers to look the other way, actors managed to continue their trade and resist the Commonwealth. This history problematizes viewing the fool as a figure of anarchy or anti-establishment.

Numerous actors, who played the fool, actually fought for the monarchy during the Civil War. In some cases, they were shot on site during raids. Wright provides an account of the death of William Robbin (also known as Robinson) as a war crime:

⁴³⁹ James Wright, *Historia histrionica an historical account of the English stage, shewing the ancient use, improvement and perfection of dramattick representations in this nation in a dialogue of plays and players* (London: Printed by G. Croom for William Haws, 1699), 8-9.

Most of 'em, except *Lowin*, *Tayler* and *Pollard*, (who were superannuated) went into the King's Army, and like good Men and true, Serv'd their Old Master, tho' in a different, yet more honourable, Capacity. *Robinson* was Kill'd at the Taking of a Place (I think *Basing House*) by *Harrison*, he that was after Hang'd at *Charing-cross*, who refused him Quarter, and Shot him in the Head when he had laid down his Arms; abusing Scripture at the same time, in saying, *Cursed is he that doth the Work of the Lord negligently*. *Mohun* was a Captain, (and after the Wars were ended here, served in *Flanders*, where he received Pay as a Major) *Hart* was a Lieutenant of Horse under Sir *Thomas Dallison*, in *Prince Rupert's*, Regiment, *Burt* was Cornet in the same Troop, and *Shatterel* Quarter-master. *Allen* of the *Cockpit*, was a Major, and Quarter Master General at *Oxford*. I have not heard of one of these Players of any Note that sided with the other Party, but only *Swanston*, and he profest himself a Presbyterian, took up the Trade of a Jeweller, and liv'd in *Aldermanbury*, within the Territory of Father *Calamy*.⁴⁴⁰

Known for their roles as fools, Robbin and Pollard took on roles within the King's Army. Robbin surrendered at the Basing House siege, according to Wright, which was the same siege that resulted in artists, including Inigo Jones, being arrested. In spite of Robbin surrendering, Thomas Harrison allegedly shot him in the head. Wright only records one actor, Eliard Swanston, famous for performing key roles in the King's Men, siding with the Parliamentarians. Wright suggests that his affiliations stemmed less from his profession and more from his religious affiliations. In any case, Swanston appeared to take up another civilian trade to ride out the war. Swanston never played the fool.

But in theater history, scholars often overlooked those figures who acted in performances and never belonged to a formal London acting company. Such actors could (and did) play the fool and support the commonwealth. John Milton remains a prime example. In 1628, Milton led the salting at Christ College in Cambridge.⁴⁴¹ Despite his performance and love of the theater as a whole, Milton sided for Parliament, the Commonwealth, and Cromwell.

⁴⁴⁰ Wright, *Historia*, 7-8.

⁴⁴¹ Saltings celebrated the initiation of freshmen at Cambridge and Oxford.

Arguably playing the part of the fool, Milton presented the freshmen to their “elder” colleagues as rhetorical figures. Invoking Sebastien Brant’s *Ship of Fools*, Milton takes up the fool’s license and addresses the *Saltaturientes* (freshmen). For John Hale, Milton “lets fly with an imposing new Latin word to glance simultaneously at increase of status, at possible hubris (“jumped-up”), at the “dancing” or antics by which they acquire tribal seniority; and then, down at the bottom of the pile of puns, “sal-” (and “salt-” for the monolinguals present) give to the central salting idea a sudden and surprising new embodiment.”⁴⁴² Through his use of the term *Saltaturientes*, Milton capably provides them a new status as self-made, social climbing wits, whose “salt” allowed for them to climb. In doing so, he produces a certain action amongst his audience, to accept a new class of fellows.

If, as this book argues, the fool bodies forth action in its speech acts and if, as I demonstrated, its political allegiances cannot be reduced to predictable binaries, then what is the fool good for? Lear’s Fool offers one such answer: “*Nothing.*”

I had rather be any
kind o' thing than a fool: and yet I would not be
thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides
...
I am better than thou art now; I am a fool,
thou art nothing.⁴⁴³

Lear’s Fool seems to forsake the role of the fool, desiring to be *anything* else. In spite of his forsworn claim, he prides himself in attaining a higher role than the king, who exists as nothing. Lear’s Fool and his wits give him a place. But if the king is nothing, so too is Lear’s Fool

⁴⁴² John K. Hale, “Milton Plays the Fool: The Christ’s College Salting, 1628,” in *Classical and Modern Literature* 20 no. 3 (2000): 70.

⁴⁴³ Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*.

without his wits. By extension, Lear's Fool is everything a king cannot be. So the answer to this paragraph's question is simultaneously "everything."

This disclosure of a nothing/everything dichotomy embodies Lear's Fool's playbook and his importance. As Touchstone laments in *As You Like It*: "[t]he more pity, that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly."⁴⁴⁴ Touchstone cannot merely chide the king or people for their folly. Instead, as this book emphasizes, fools, such as Touchstone, use everyday genres to point out follies and hypocrisies but also to create pedagogical spaces for critique, public sentiment, treason, critical thinking, and a reworking of civitas and the ideal citizen. The use of these genres in Touchstone's mouth body forth actions for informed audiences, primed with certain cultural knowledge, and by doing so, become speech acts that transfer forms of sovereignty to a critiqued audience. And Shakespeare keenly alerts us to this action of the fool in a staged conversation about Touchstone:

JAQUES

Is not this a rare fellow, my lord? he's as good at any thing and yet a fool.

DUKE SENIOR

He uses his folly like a stalking-horse and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit.⁴⁴⁵

Touchstone remains the best actor, capable of anything, and yet dismissed because of his "folly." This folly, as the duke points out, becomes a cover for hunting. Behind which, Touchstone is misread, mistaken, overlooked, and not regarded by his targets. As with any good hunter, Touchstone bides his time quietly before striking with wit. The violent language of a hunt—so common to romances—alerts us to the fool as not only a predator but a consumer. Unlike hunters

⁴⁴⁴ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, in *Norton Shakespeare* (New York: WW Norton Publishing, 2012): 1.2.72-73.

⁴⁴⁵ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 5.4.94-97.

today, the early modern fool would verbally skin and consume its target. In its consumption, the fool takes the sovereignty of its target and transfers it. The final product becomes a processed form of sovereignty (a power to judge and rule) that it delivers to its audience. This precision in its verbal acuity combined with the stealthy rhetoric and commonplace genres of speech create an agitating figure, who in addition to not being stoppered, possesses the license to say anything. It, thus, remains no wonder why the Restoration sought to quash such an uncontrollable, socially and politically liminal, but nonetheless adept figure. And indeed, publicly in print history, the Restoration maintains its anti-fool stance.

In tracing the intellectual history of the fool and its demarcation from the “natural fool” clown, this book demonstrates that the fool produces certain actions and critical thinking amongst its audiences while attending to its social and legal cultures. By doing so, the book offers glimpses into reading and cultural practices amongst an early modern audience. It presents a re-examined theater history of the fool, but it also prioritizes how the fool operates off stage in the discourses of its time. But the importance of this book lies in its disclosures of how the fool facilitates free speech amongst the public and demonstrates that early modern fools possessed it as a right. And that in transferring sovereignty, they transferred this right. This facilitation made the fool a dangerous agent in the Caroline and Civil War eras. Certainly not the cause or the prime mover for the Civil War, the fool contributed by giving the educated public the prerogative to judge the monarch and government. Pushing back against the “safety-valve theory” promoted by Bakhtin and Marx, this dissertation offers a new reading of the carnivalesque overlooked: that which cannot reify or commodify power structures but, in many ways, works against it. Yes, the fool offers comedic relief and a valve of a kind, but that steam, once released, produces an effect.

It oxygenates a certain political understanding within its audience that cannot be distilled into the status quo.

In resurrecting the critical conversation on the early modern English fool, this book hopes to prompt not only a reconsideration of fools, such as Feste and Archie Armstrong, as a more significant player in early modern politics, but to challenge the standard narrative of free speech and print. While early modern critics locate a freer print market during the collapse of the Stationer's Office in the Civil War, this book asks early modern scholars to reconsider locating it much earlier in the license of the fool. However, I am not suggesting the early modern fool facilitates a form of unadulterated free speech or sovereignty. Unlike the insurrectionists clambering over balconies and fences in the Capitol on January 6th, who "champion" uninhibited free speech and individual rights among other beliefs, the early modern fool attempted to shape a certain humanist leaning citizen, who possessed a processed form of free speech and sovereignty to judge within reason and limits. Those limits vary depending on political circumstance, as each chapter discusses, and with certain speech acts, such as prophecy and fake news, the fool bodies forth possibilities and outcomes of such judgements should they be enacted. The early modern fool, thus, releases a form of freer speech and the power to judge with a kind of caution to its audience. So "where be your gibes now?⁴⁴⁶" we may ask, especially in light of seeing free speech and individual rights used as a whipping boy by conservative protestors recently. Examining the skull of Yorick and recognizing even the skull of a fool enacts something that no one else in the play can attempt, we realize that without such caution and wearers of motley, we may be trapped

⁴⁴⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 5.1.175.

in a stasis of uninformed ideology and left hoping Armstrong may indeed be right: “Jesters rise and Archbishops fall.”⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁷ Archie Armstong, *Archies Dream sometimes iester to His Majestie, but exiled the court by Canterburies malice with a relation for whom an odd chaire stood voide in hell*. London, 1641. Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership. 1 Jan. 2021.

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