Labor and Cultural Mobility in Three Early Modern City Comedies

by

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DEDICATION

For Dad,

Your years of labor and labors of love made this work possible.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a critical analysis of the lives of working-class, or as Patricia Fumerton has argued "unsettled" early modern Londoners. Specifically, this dissertation builds on the work of scholars such as Jean Howard in describing the connection between class disparity and mobility both physical and social. The project analyzes how segregating groups of people by neighborhoods, workplaces, and other physical locations is directly tied to social mobility, and how this works to keep some individuals in a disadvantaged position. However, the project also points to places in the plays in which, through various means such as disguising plots or occupation, some characters manage to cross those boundaries and find social mobility. The dissertation begins with a critical reading of Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, a play which utilizes some of the trappings of medieval morality plays to tell the story of an inept demon who finds himself forced to serve a greedy and foolish master. The demon Pug's plan to capture a soul for hell is destroyed as he comes to realize that the fate of "strangers" in London is a slow crush of capitalistic greed worse crueler than the devil himself. In studying *The Devil is an Ass*, my project thus begins with a critical discussion of the importance that was placed upon being connected to a community of some sort for early moderns. The second chapter focuses on another of Jonson's plays, *Bartholomew Fair.* Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* is a city comedy which presents its audience with a collection of vignettes in which characters from different occupations and social classes weave in and out of each other's lives. The play asserts that

assumptions about occupation and physical space contribute to and work to blur the boundaries of both physical and social mobility. Finally, the dissertation ends with a reading of Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* [*The Gentle Craft*]. *Shoemaker's Holiday* states a clear message about the value of labor and the message that the way to move past social boundaries is to invest in the community of laborers. Dekker builds a world around guild labor and the solidarity of the working class that emphasizes the meaning of physical labor and the value of working bodies. Utilizing what Matthew Kendrick has called "an artisanal worldview," Dekker differentiates a framework which centers labor and community from the frameworks of aristocracy and emergent mercantilism/capitalism.

City comedy is the genre of drama most capable of representing the actual lived experience of being a working-class person, a category expanded upon in the dissertation as being quite broad and comprehensive, better than any other genre. In this project "working class" or "lower class" refers to those eking out a living day-to-day, those without connections or disposable income to fall back on. The project ultimately finds that "working class" is a broad, dynamic class of individuals whose relationships with community, labor, and sometimes clever manipulations of the system of aristocracy and mercantilism is deeply tied to both their physical and social mobility. Ultimately, the dissertation argues that by better understanding the connection between class dynamics and mobility, it is possible to break through harmful social barriers and achieve a more equitable society.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an exploration of those subjects of early modern London that we might call "the laboring class," and how they struggled, thrived, reveled, schemed, loved, and ultimately lived within the space of the city. Despite the harsh realities of economic inequality and the injustices of poverty, my research has led me to the conclusion that early modern literature, especially the city comedies studied in this dissertation, do not relentlessly portray common subjects as suffering victims. Rather, writers such as Ben Jonson and Thomas Dekker express a certain respect for labor and laborers, often portraying them as clever, enterprising individuals. As such, this project is intended to be both a study and a celebration of the lives of laborers, those common subjects who keep the city moving, in early modern London. To achieve this, I have selected three city comedies, Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* and *Bartholomew Fair* as well as Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* [or *The Gentle Craft*]. Within these three comedies, I analyze the representation of common subjects through the lens of what Patricia Fumerton has called the "culture of mobility," in early modern London.[1] In other words, I utilize historicist literary scholarship to better understand the movement of common subjects in terms of where they worked, lived, socialized, and otherwise occupied space.

As Matthew Kendrick pointed to in *At Work in the Early Modern English Theater*, "In the field of early modern literary studies, the system of working-class perspectives manifests as a

working-class lives in early modern drama must move past simply posing questions of finance. My guiding questions include: How can the lives of the poor and working classes be better understood by the way they are represented as inhabiting space within the city of London? Rather than simply talking about what the poor and working classes of early modern England experienced in terms of monetary value, might it be more productive to look at how those people were regarded in terms of where they were physically concentrated and why? Where were the poor allowed to exist, and from where were they barred?

I use terms such as "common subjects ," "commoners," and "working class," and "lower class" to refer to the individuals with whom I am primarily concerned. I mean by this those who conducted manual labor for a wage. This definition is obviously quite expansive given that "labor" can refer to an enormous array of occupations. Some characters discussed in my writing will be household servants, others skilled craftsman, still others alehouse keepers, peddlers and pickpockets. These characters are distinguished from the aristocracy with their land and titles, or even from the "middling" merchant class who could afford a more luxurious lifestyle. The character whose lives I am tracking are those eking out a living day-to-day, those without connections or disposable income to fall back on. I utilize this variety of terms because there really is no single, stable definition for the early modern "working class." Adam Fox, Paul Griffiths, and Steve Hindle make this expressly clear in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*. The authors insist that it is not useful to try and find one single "lower order identity," but rather to embrace the great variety of individuals who were "making do." They state that "the ideas and actions of a single individual group might alter greatly according to situation" and that most people could undertake "multiple identities," thus defying any attempt to establish a single, static definition or "working class" in the period.[2]

I have chosen to work exclusively with city comedy because of its unique ability to speak to the physical space of early modern London and the individuals who inhabited it. My project utilizes city comedy as the vehicle for finding the lower classes of early modern London and establishing a vision of what their lives were like. I will look to such issues as the experiences of immigrants into the city, the treatment received by household servants, and the riots incited by unequal distribution of wealth and resources. I have chosen city comedy, a genre which may initially seem like an unlikely candidate, because of its deep connection to the actual places and spaces which existed in the city of London.[3] City comedies are not set in the past or future, nor are they set in foreign countries or made-up kingdoms. They are set in the real neighborhoods, markets, jails, taverns, and even theaters of early modern London.

Much of the work of this dissertation began with reading Jean Howard's riveting study of London comedy *Theater of a City.* Howard pushes what were once generic boundaries of city comedy and extends them even as she "finds the notion of English comedy set in specific London locales a useful way to understand the "synergy between the city and the theater" in the first half of the seventeenth century."[4] Howard studies several early modern comedies and discusses how the use of specific locations such as the Royal Exchange or Bedlam Hospital, or the Counter Prison established better cultural understandings of those locations for subjects of London. While Howard studied Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* in depth, I begin my project by critically analyzing Jonson's lesser-known play *The Devil is an Ass.* As some of the first dialogue spoken in the play is a Vice character named Iniquity taking another character on a verbal tour of London, it occurred to me that for audience members watching the play, hearing those places spoken through the mouth of a devil could have some influence over understanding

them as dens of vice. As such, my work draws deeply on Howard's theories of location and cultural meaning making.

City comedy has been regarded as a genre that never quite reaches the lofty subject matter of tragedy because of its focus on the day-to-day activities of the city. It is typically true that tragedies deal with the nobility and the pitfalls of fighting for positions of power while comedies focus their energy upon the antics of the poor and middle classes. Scholars of renaissance drama sometimes say that tragedy deals with the upper half of the body while comedy deals with the lower. Yet I will argue that while city comedy is largely engaged with the lives of lower-class subjects, generally using those of the upper classes as examples of foolish behavior, city comedy does not address material that is any less serious than that of tragic drama. In fact, the direct interface that frequently takes place between those of means and the laboring class makes room for a contemplation of class relations which does not always exist in tragedies.

As city comedies are the primary genre of analysis, I question what the city of London as a space does to the lives of poor and working-class characters in these plays. Part of this involves looking at who is presented as migrating into and out of London and why. More than this, the space of the city itself and where groups of people live will be a key element of looking at physical location as a means of class control. This dissertation contributes to the understanding of how groups of people are marginalized by the spaces in which they are placed, and how being "kept in one's place" is much more than a figure of speech. There are numerous examples to be found in the plays of Ben Jonson, such as Mosca's place as a "parasite," a creature associated with uncleanliness as well as sloth. Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* takes a surprising tack in creating a world turned upside down in which the devil is a weary immigrant into London who finds himself without friend or penny to his name and must endure the hardships of servitude and

abuse. *Bartholomew Fair* is the tale of one day in the city and the enormous potential for deconstructing physical and social "place" when characters from different class stations meet in one central location.

To consider the places in which the poor and working classes are found is also to question the living and working conditions of those people and places. As Paul Slack points out in *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England,* mistrust and fear of the poor often influenced the development of political and social policies which dictated the lives of the most vulnerable members of society. This frequently had to do with concerns regarding who was "faking" poverty and disability, and who was truly deserving of public aid.[5] Somewhere along the way, the idea began that rather than being dirty and unwashed because of living and working conditions, those of the poor and working class are inherently uncleanly and disheveled, and for this reason they live and work in awful conditions.[6] Asking what it smelt and felt like to live in a lower-class neighborhood is one important way to get at the matter of why certain groups of people are forced into and kept in particular physical spaces. This leads me to consider the sensory experiences to be found in lower class neighborhoods. Bartholomew Fair is a play preoccupied with the visceral physicality of its characters. Excessive sweating, eating, drinking, vomiting, and other acts of consumption and expulsion are carefully dissected by Jonson as his characters wander through the fair in Smithfield.

Thus, by necessity, the methodology of this dissertation will incorporate some sociology of literature. As Franco Moretti has stated, "society, rhetoric, and their interaction is the only real issue of literary history."[7] Environmental criticism has established that in any work of literature, setting is so much more than a static backdrop. Materialist criticism has revealed that the objects which exist in any text are alive in that text and perform work which goes so far beyond taking

up space. What great potential then exists for fusing these two dynamic fields of work and formulating questions that neither have quite managed to satisfactorily reach? In other words, how does literary fiction theorize social experience? One answer offered by David Alworth is "by transposing real sites into narrative settings and thereby rendering them operative, as figures in and of collective life."[8] Alworth notes that for Frederic Jameson, as described in his *The Political Unconscious*, literature expresses the history, politics, and ideology of the society from which it has emerged. Noting the strain between understandings of what constitutes "society" for Bruno Latour and Emile Durkheim, Alworth is really asking what it means to reassess the idea of putting literature in social context, and to instead advocate for "finding the sociology in literature."[9] Alworth thus points to what he terms "sites," which are meetings of persons and objects, as that which will allow for fresh questions concerning what it means to be social.
I see the value in what Alworth call sites and will look for such meeting places in my chosen texts. Whereas Alworth explores novels as the place in which sites are most productively assessed, I argue that the city comedies of early modern England bring even more complex possibilities for questioning what it means to be social. This dissertation focuses upon the lives of the poor and working classes in early modern England as expressed in instances of satirical literary texts.

Sociologists Michelle Lamont and Virag Molnar have extended this line of inquiry in their study of boundary making, a topic that will be raised throughout this dissertation. Lamont and Molnar claim that a renewed interest in the concept of boundaries, as distinguished from recent popular interest in borders, offers fruitful ground for observing where distinctions and hierarchies based on race, gender, class, ability, and more are made and what creates them. They draw a distinction between symbolic and social boundaries stating, “Symbolic boundaries are

conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality."[10] Symbolic boundaries are therefore the constructs that we build and agree upon together as a society. Social boundaries on the other hand are the actionable principles that set our societal institutions.

> Social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioral patterns of association, as manifested in connubiality and commensality. Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social boundaries, i.e., translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social exclusion or class and racial segregation.[11]

Social boundaries are the lines that we draw between groups of people which have very real impacts on their life outcomes. I turn to these definitions from Lamont and Molnar because they are useful in defining the patterns of boundary building that I see represented in the city comedies that I study. When I talk about the symbolism of the phrase "stay in your place," place referring to social station, I am at the same time pointing to the reality of being physically being kept in place by relegating individuals to certain neighborhoods, workplaces, gathering places, etc. based on social and economic class.

Questions about how people are located on the social hierarchy and how they are located in physical spaces are inseparably tied together. Dekker's and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*

features a dynamic character named Moll Cutpurse, immediately identifying her as both a sex worker and a petty thief. In a scene set on the streets of London, Moll Cutpurse offers up her vast knowledge of criminals and "low lifes." When speaking with two characters called Sir Thomas and Lord Noland, Moll informs them

> In younger days, when I was apt to stray,
> I have sat amongst such adders, seen their stings,
> As any here might, and in full playhouses
> Watched their quick-diving hands to bring to shame
> Such Rogues, and in that stream met and ill name.
> When next, my lord, you spy any one of those,
> So he be in his art a scholar, question him,
> Tempt him with gold to open the large book
> Of his close villainies, and you yourself shall cant
> Better than poor Moll can, and know more laws
> Of cheaters, lifters, nips, foists, puggers, curbers,
> With all the devil's black guard than it is fit
> Should be discovered to a noble wit.[12]

Moll Cutpurse is a character who moves between social classes. Her role as a sex worker has put her in contact with wealthy men, but she is also an intelligent and capable woman who knows much about life amongst the poorer classes. Yet she is still a woman, and her life as a sex worker keeps her somewhat limited in her ability to ever integrate into middleclass or high society fully.

While I will not explore *The Roaring Girl* in depth in this project, I reference it here because I believe the words of Moll Cutpurse offer an important insight into how physical and

social boundaries are depicted in city comedies. The play is a rich humanistic study of how certain kinds of labor allow a person to move between social spaces. This is a topic that will be talked about at length in *Bartholomew Fair* as the character Ursula the Pig Woman and her cohort of petty criminals weave in and out of social spaces.

The first chapter of this project is a study of Ben Jonson's hybrid city comedy/devil comedy *The Devil is an Ass.* Premiering in 1600, Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* satirizes the social and economic disparities in early modern England. In a city comedy framed by elements of medieval morality plays, an inept demon named Pug proves incapable of striking a devil's compact with his would-be victim and finds himself an abused household servant. Pug's dilemma is caused by his vulnerable position as a stranger in a city that was often suspicious of those unattached to a community, a poignant sentiment that also points toward the contemporary moment. Jonson constructs early modern London as a rapidly expanding capitalist economy, and he emphasizes the socioeconomic inequalities symptomatic of such a system.

In studying *The Devil is an Ass*, my project thus begins with a critical discussion of the importance that was placed upon being connected to a community of some sort for early moderns. I do not wish to claim that community and connections are no longer valuable resources and regarded as a sign of trustworthiness, but a distinction must be made. The early modern period was one in which a failure to have some sort of social connection in a community which one entered was not only considered quite suspect but could be grounds for imprisonment. Those unattached to a parish, an employer, or other members of the community could be subject to punishment.[13] Patricia Fumerton offers the very inclusive term "unsettled" to describe those subjects who were unhoused, itinerant workers, beggars, and even housed poor who were always living on the edge of poverty and potential displacement.

> Tramping the streets of London (within or without the walls), speculating in a range of affective, social, and economic roles, and this continually remaking the spaces he or she inhabited, the dispossessed made of the city itself, in Michel de Certeau's words, "an immense social experience of lacking a place."[14] And, of course, this unlocalized social experience, which extended to other urban and country spaces as well, was also for such unsettled subjects a psychological experience, a state of consciousness that existed from place to place and thus was everywhere and nowhere at once. The inability of itinerants to name many of the towns they passed through, as we have seen in cases of peddlers arrested for vagrancy, underscores such unplaceable nowhereness.[15]

Thus, when the demon Pug leaves hell for the human world and is forced to adopt the body of a recently hanged cutpurse, he finds himself thrust into the role of a vagrant, a stranger. In this role he finds himself mistreated, swindled, jailed, and ultimately fails at his mission to win a sinner's soul for hell.

This concept of "unsettledness" is central to my understanding of early modern boundary making and breaking. Fumerton's definition of "unsettled" applies to characters in each of the three plays studied in this dissertation. Some characters are vagrants and criminals, some are peddlers, some fall into the category of the housed poor who are always at risk of a slight alteration in their circumstanced resulting in unhousedness. Even in this wide category of unsettledness there is still a distinction between what Paul Slack refers to as "shallow poverty" and "deep poverty." Shallow poverty applies to the housed poor or tradesman's apprentices who had employment but were always just on the edge of sinking into deep poverty. Deep poverty, on the other hand, is the kind of poverty that threatens an individual accessing the necessities of life.

Deep poverty risks exposure and starvation. These distinctions are important for my project as I consider who, among the unsettled, nonetheless possessed the means to potentially cross boundaries from the lower class to the upper or middle? class. *The Devil is an Ass* takes a creative approach to dissecting dangers of strangerhood and risk of unemployment. Even though Pug wants to find a soul to drag to hell, and therefore becomes a servant in the household of a man named Fabian Fitzdottrel, he also *must* do so because to be unattached to any kind of institution or authority made one vulnerable to punitive measures.

I move on to Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair,* a raucous comedy about individuals from all walks of life (each of them more colorful than the last), coming together at a fair in the city and experiencing all manner of ludicrous events. Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* is a city comedy which presents its audience with a collection of vignettes in which characters from different occupations and social classes weave in and out of each other's lives. The play asserts that assumptions about occupation and physical space contribute to and work to blur the boundaries of both physical and social mobility. This is informed by scholars such as Paul Slack and E.P. Thompson but pushes past the recovery of working-class early moderns to suggest that physical mobility and social mobility are intricately tied to one another. When occupation and disguise allow for the crossing of physical boundaries, social boundaries begin to break down. *Bartholomew Fair* is an excellent example of how serious social critique can be embedded in comedy and revelry. The social critique is not the heart-wrenching variety found in tragedies, but rather an acerbic satire that critiques everyone and everything equally. No character is left spared by Jonson's wit.

One very important element of observing class mobility and the role of boundaries in early modern London is the issue of disguising. Disguising is a recurring theme in each of the plays studied in this dissertation and also features heavily in the work done on rogue pamphlets by scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt in "Invisible Bullets," Elizabeth Hanson in *Discovering the Subject*, Paola Pugliatti in *Beggary and the Theater in Early Modern England*, perhaps most of all, William C. Carrol in *Fat King, Lean Beggar*.[16] Much of this work on rogue pamphlets centers around Thomas Harman's A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds (1566, lost edition; 1568, two editions; and 1573). Harmon writes stories about Nicholas Jennings, a vagrant/itinerant worker who was known to take on many roles such as a crank (feigning epilepsy), a mariner, a hatmaker, a serving man, a rogue, and many more. Within his pamphlets, Harman has much to say about vagrants, pointing at times specifically to peddlers who he believed to be the most problematic.

> These stand in great awe of the upright men, for they have often both wares and money of them. But forasmuch as they seek gain unlawfully against the laws and statutes of this noble realm, they are well worthy to be registered among the number of vagabonds, and undoubtedly, I have had some of them brought before me when I was Commission of the Peace as malefactors for bribing and stealing. And now of late it is a great practice of the upright man, when he hath gotten a booty, to bestow the same upon a pack full of wares, and so goeth a time for his pleasure because he would love without suspicion. [17]

In my study of *Bartholomew Fair* I find that the character Justice Overdo aligns in many ways with Harmon and his disdain for vagrants and itinerant workers. Yet Jonson is cleverly subversive in his choice to make Overdo the central disguised character in the play as he tries to

spy on and catch criminals in an alehouse. The *Devil is an Ass* is heavily involved in a central disguising plot as Pug attempts to navigate the human world all while trapped inside the body of another individual. Later, in *Shoemaker's Holiday,* I will explore the character of Ralph as he disguises himself as a Dutch shoemaker in an attempt to avoid being sent to the war in France. My work therefore, though not drawing directly on rogue pamphlets, nonetheless contributes to the discussion about disguising plots and their deep ties to anxieties and vagrants and rogues in the period. This concern about disguising thus comprises a large part of my exploration of boundaries and the early modern culture of mobility. It would seem that individuals such as Harman and Justice Overdo worry deeply about certain "types" of people being able to cross class boundaries and occupy spaces not meant for them. This is a theme that comes up over and over again across all three plays studied in this project.

The third play addressed in this project is Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* [or *The Gentle Craft*]. *Shoemaker* highlights the concept of social mobility as one of its central themes. The play begins with a discussion between two men about the love between their nephew and daughter, and how they feel the match cannot end in marriage because of the class discrepancy between the young couple. *Shoemaker,* like so many works of early modern drama, utilizes this love plotline to launch into explorations of much larger issues. At the heart of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a clear message about the value of labor and the message that the way to move past social boundaries is to invest in the community of laborers. Dekker builds a world around guild labor and the solidarity of the working class that emphasizes the meaning of physical labor and the value of working bodies. Utilizing what Matthew Kendrick has called "an artisanal worldview," Dekker differentiates a framework which centers labor and community from the frameworks of aristocracy and emergent mercantilism/capitalism. I look at the

differences between the reception of strangers in *The Devil is an Ass* where Pug has no social connections, and *The Shoemaker's Holiday* in which a disguised Dutch shoemaker is immediately accepted into the community because of his connection to the Shoemaker's Guild. Thus, The Shoemaker's Holiday is also deeply tied to the guild history of the theater.

The work of this dissertation is to examine how our social relationships, cultural intuitions, economic system, and overall way of life here in the West is informed by class systems which build boundaries between groups of people. I will explore what happens when complex situations such as criminality or clever disguise allows those boundaries to breakdown and admit those who are not typically allowed to tread in certain spaces. Ultimately, I am setting out to discover what city comedy can tell us about what it meant to occupy space and location as a member of the unsettled classes in early modern London.

[1] Patricia Fumerton. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

[2] Matthew Kendrick. *At Work in the Early Modern Theater.* p. x

[3] Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle, introduction to The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 7.

[4] Wells, Susan. "Jacobean City Comedy and the Ideology of the City." *ELH* 48.1 (1981).

[5] Jean Howard, *Theater of a City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 215

[6] Paul Slack. *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England*. London: Longman, 1988.

[7] Reinarz, Jonathan. *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell*. (University of Illinois Press, 2014).

[8] Franco Moretti. *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature.* London: Verso Books, 2013.

[9] David Alworth. *Sit* society, rhetoric, and their interaction is the only real issue of literary history *e Reading: Fiction, Art, Social Form.* p. 2

[1] Alworth. p.4

[1] Michele Lamont and Virage Molnar. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," Annual Review of Sociology, 28 (2002). 168.

[1] Lamont and Molnar, 168

[1] Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton. *The Roaring Girl.* Folger Shakespeare Library.

[1] Roberte Henke. Poverty and Charity in Early Modern Theater and Performance. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015). 23

[1] De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 103.

[1] Patricia Fumerton. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. 71

[1] Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" in Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 21-65 (Harman is central to the discussion for Greenblatt); Hanson, *Discovering the Subject*, ch. 3; Pugliatti, *Beggary and Theater in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 139-52; *Carroll, Fat King, Lean Beggar*, 70-96

[1] I quote from Arthur F. Kinney's modern edition of *Caveat.* Kinney, ed. *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Pres, 1990.

CHAPTER I

From Hell and Back: The Stranger's Struggle in *The Devil is an Ass*

> Say now the king
> (As he is clement, if th' offender mourn)
> Should so much come to short of your great trespass
> As but to banish you, whether would you go?
> What country, by the nature of your error,
> Should give you harbor? Go you to France or Flanders,
> To any German province, to Spain or Portugal,
> Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England, −
> Why, you must needs be strangers (2.4.105-113).[18]

The above lines are delivered by an actor portraying Sir Thomas More in a play written c. 1601-1604 and titled *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore*.[19] In the play, Thomas More makes a plea for refugees, or *strangers* as they are here called, coming into England. More attempts to persuade an angry mob that they ought to show humanity and decency toward refugees by pointing out to them that they could someday find themselves in similar circumstances. The longer speech from which these lines are taken is often called "The Stranger's Case," and it exemplifies the risk of being a stranger in the medieval and early modern periods. Attitudes

in the book of Matthew "for I was naked and ye clothed me," which meant that it was a duty to show toward charity toward a vagabond who might be Christ.[i] The early modern period saw a change in which it was no longer considered to be one's Christian duty to care for the poor who were often those displaced by the beginnings of land enclosure. As individuals migrated into cities looking for work, they found themselves in a place with few familial or social ties and in which obscurity left them isolated in a sea of people.[ii]

It is with these circumstances in mind that I come to analyze Ben Jonson's lesser-known satire *The Devil is an Ass.* Criticism about this play has been largely focused on it as an example of Jonson's "dotages" and its rather messy organization and hanging ending. However, I believe that this play has very important insight into the world of the early modern poor, especially those forced into poverty due to being "strangers" in an urban jungle. Jonson cleverly crafts a plot which pulls from medieval devil comedy but updates it to speak to early modern London in the way that only city comedies can. As usual, Jonson criticizes every character equally, leaving his audience with no real hero. I refer to the play as a "devil comedy" in the sense that its staging involved the use of set pieces such as a hellmouth that would be recognizable from a medieval morality play. The *Devil is an Ass* is no simple satire or devil comedy, it is a play in which Ben Jonson criticizes the entire social and economic system which leaves the poor and obscure with no safety net and exacerbates the problem of inequality. As the hierarchy of the spiritual and religious world begins to crumble in the play, i.e. the relationship between heaven and hell, so the social and economic hierarchy in London only strengthens.

In act 1, scene 1 of *The Devil is an Ass,* a young demon named Pug entreats Satan to allow him a month in London. The small fiend is eager to prove himself worthy of a higher position in the court of Hell. As a persuasive tactic, Pug attempts to inveigle Satan by proposing

that he bring a Vice along on his quest to ensure that he is able to perform his duties as an emissary of hell. Pug thus summons the Vice Iniquity, a figure recognizable from medieval morality plays, who details his own mastery of the fine art of sin. While Pug is delighted by the prospect of being introduced to the excitement and sin of London, Satan is quick to chastise him for putting any faith in Iniquity. Satan proclaims Iniquity nothing more than an agent of random chaos and completely ineffective in a world that demands ever more determined effort at championing evil. Satan specifies precisely why he believes Iniquity to be an injudicious choice of companion.

> But Pug,
>
> As the times are, who is it, will receive you?
>
> What company will you go to? Or whom mix with?
>
> Where canst thou carry him? Except to Taverns?
>
> To mount up on a joint-stool, with a Jewes-trump,
>
> To put down Cokeley, and that must be to Subjects ?
>
> He ne're will be admitted, there, where Vennor comes (1.1.90-94).

Filled as it is with references contemporary to London in 1600, Satan's objection points to an enormous flaw in Pug's plan to visit London. Satan's questions, "who is it, will receive you?" and "What company will you go to?" resonate with Thomas More's "whether would you go?" In creating an inverted devil comedy about sin run out of control, Jonson presents a biting social commentary about the treatment of the poor and obscure in London.

Ben Jonson was a playwright often noted for his willingness to be combative with the audience, and this adds an element of brutal honesty to his work which elevates his satire.[iii] I therefore do not argue that Jonson's comedy becomes tragedy because of the serious nature of its

content, nor do I categorize the play as a tragicomedy. On the contrary, it stands strong as a comedy precisely because of satire's ability to bring awareness to social issues by forcing the audience to face their role as part of the problem. Satire is a genre which, when done well, causes some self-realization for its audience. As the viewer laughs at the actors on stage, it becomes apparent that they are also laughing at themselves. Robert C. Evans, in "Contemporary Contexts of Jonson's 'The Devil is an Ass'" remarks that examining evidence about the specific historical moment during which *The Devil is an Ass* was composed and performed "will reveal how tightly the play can be tied to its own time and place and thus how many resonances it may have had for its original audience."[iv] This essential tie to time and context is one of the hallmarks of satire.

For instance, another of Jonson's plays, *Every Man in His Humour*, begins with a prologue from the playwright in which he prays that his audience be content to see a play which contains no dramatic chorus, no kings or nobles, and no awe-inspiring special effects, but rather one which focuses upon

> deeds, and language, such as men do use,
> And persons, such as comedy would choose,
> When she would shew an image of the times,
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes.
> Except we make them such, by loving still
> Our popular errors, when we know they're ill (21-26).[v]

Jonson immediately alerts his audience to the fact that this play will not concern itself with the upper echelons of society but will instead give its attention to the world of common folk. *Everyman in His Humour* and *Volpone* both feature shrewd servant characters, respectively Brainworm and

Mosca, who represent the kind of cunning which the wealthy characters in the play simply cannot grasp. Despite a system of strict social stratification that left wealthy persons with better resources and connections, Jonson shows the lower classes as those who, though their behavior is at times delinquent, are nonetheless the force that sustain the economy, the culture, and the life of London through their labor. It is into this bustling urban life that Pug finds himself dropped. Still, satire is about more than just contemporary social context.

Satire relies upon the use of irony to achieve its goal of social critique. Ben Jonson creates in *The Devil is an Ass* an inverted devil comedy which relies upon the idea that London has become hell, and that Satan himself could not do worse than the subjects of London. What Pug discovers when he gets to London is that he never had a fighting chance against the avarice, dissembling, and outright evil of the people and social structures of London. Pug's character also fills an unexpected role. He was never simply a demon in this play, rather he was always a representative (however flawed a being he might be) for the displaced and vulnerable.

In her landmark study, *Theater of a City*, Jean Howard specifies that her book "will focus on those plays that most directly address the urban milieu, namely, London comedies."[vi] Howard demonstrates how the word "foreigner" came to include an expanding number of people. According to Howard, the OED as early as 1413 defined *foreigne*r as one born in another country or nation. By 1640 the term also encapsulated those born in the British Isles but from counties or parishes outside of London.[vii] Howard recognizes the importance of this expanding definition and uses it to conduct an analysis of how the London stage cast rapid economic exchange and the social movement which came with it. Howard explores specific locations inside of London, such as prisons, bawdy houses, and the royal exchange and how they are represented by early modern playwrights as places of social importance and upheaval. Jonathan

Haynes and Adam Zucker likewise consider city comedy a genre that so accurately recreates the urban spaces of London.[viii] For them, it is imperative that city comedy be recognized for the wealth of knowledge contemporary to early modern London which it possesses.[ix] I intervene in this scholarship to analyze how one particular play utilizes the wealth of city comedy to create an inverted devil comedy which becomes a critique of the human cost of social and economic expansion. I focus on the inherent irony of satire and how that irony allows for familiar genres such as devil comedy to be inverted into a robust satire of London's social ills. By reframing devil comedy as city comedy, Jonson has allowed for inverse movement between hell and earth.

Drawing upon court records from English townships in the early modern period, Andy Wood shows the clever rhetorical manipulation utilized by poor individuals who brought litigation against their social superiors over issues such as access to fuel and food. The self-described "poore men" rhetorically prostrate themselves before the court magistrates in order to argue that they are being taken advantage of because there is an enormous disparity of power. The most common rhetorical tactic was to argue that their noble overlords were "moche Frended and allyed," whilst they were "poore men, strangers unknowen and wtout Frendes."[x] Strangerhood is directly tied to social disadvantage as well as a lack of access to essential resources. These poor men point to a serious problem of economically disadvantaged individuals everywhere. They are vulnerable. They have no money or powerful connections to help or protect them. The challenge of vulnerability is precisely what Jonson puts on full display through Pug.

Numerous laws and social networks existed in medieval and early modern England that both helped and hindered the poor. For Pug, the hindrance of having a human body makes him subject to the laws and stipulations placed upon humans. He therefore discovers the hindrance of

being required to work as a servant and the vulnerable position which that post forces him into. Lynn Hollen Lees' *The Solidarities of Strangers* explores the English Poor Laws and their direct impact on the people who were both obliged to give and receive aid under them. Lees walks through some of the complexities of applying for welfare in early modern England, and the conditions that might render an individual ineligible for public aid, many of which were discriminatory against newcomers to a community.[xi] Lees explains that access to public aid largely came in the form of alms from the community parish, and one typically had to be established as a member of the parish in order to receive financial aid – "The poor laws created the effective boundaries of their communities. Those who did not 'belong' could be literally excluded through vagrancy laws and settlement laws, or they could be marginalized more subtly through denial of relief or implied threats of removal."[xii] Belonging was not simply a matter of community membership but was also about having reason to be in a place. Newcomers to a town had to be able to provide notice of the time of their arrival in order to apply for relief.[xiii] The Poor Laws were a juridical manifestation of social and religious values which found a biblical entreaty to serve the poor, but which nonetheless maintained reservations about how far that charity should extend.[xiv] There is a great deal of irony in the idea that biblically based poor laws should need to account for a demon such as Pug. Yet the satire of the play makes it so that Pug is living as a human, and as such he should potentially be able to receive aid from a church. Once again, the satirical inversion of devil comedy makes it so that Pug's existence as a human defines his life on earth far more than his identity as a devil.

The concept of the stranger carried a great deal of weight for early moderns. An individual who was a stranger to a community was often eyed with suspicion as a vagrant, and therefore a possible criminal. Numerous long-lasting laws were put in place to try to control the

problem of vagrancy. Vagrants were frequently young people drifting from place to place in search of work.[xv] Whether vagrancy/strangerhood was a common occurrence or not, it was used to call an individual's integrity and motivations into question. Even if migrants were useful for their inexpensive labor, there was suspicion hovering around those who were unattached to any one place. The fact that Pug so easily becomes a migrant suggests that not only is hell losing its standing as the place of ultimate evil, but perhaps even its status as a place of permanence. According to Christian teaching, hell is a place of *eternal* torment where the souls of the wicked go to meet an endless fate. However, London is now hell, then hell is actually a place of ceaseless change and shift. Pug's fate as a migrant and his ability to leave hell so easily brings out a certain irony about hell as a place from which its demons may become displaced as easily as humans are displaced from their places of origin.

Valuable work has been done by scholars in exploring this play's debt to medieval devil comedy and in assessing its place in Jonson's canon of work.[xvi] Rather than view the elements of devil comedy in the play as peripheral material, I argue that this material is key to interpreting the cultural work performed by this drama. Much like Larry Champion, I do not dismiss this play as one of Jonson's "dotages."[xvii] *The Devil is an Ass* is more than Jonson's attempt to curry favor with a crowd that likely enjoyed devil comedies. The frame narrative in hell that both opens and closes the play is far more than an awkward dangling fifth act. I regard it as not only a morality play integrated into a social critique of unequal wealth distribution, but as an exposition on the distrust of strangers that created many situations of poverty in the first place.

The Devil is an Ass considers the cultural, economic, and social disadvantage experienced by those moving to the city in search of livelihood. The play does not stop at simply mocking the upper classes. It unflinchingly declares the presence of individual suffering in a system that

benefits the well-born and well-connected. It forces its audience to look directly at the strangers that they have been trained to simultaneously ignore and despise. Jonson does not accomplish this by painting Pug as a saint who deserves nothing but sympathy. After all, Pug is a demon plotting to damn his master. What Jonson accomplishes so brilliantly is asking why someone in Pug's position, a stranger and servant, must take courses of action that might be considered unsavory or disreputable. The play can be taken at face value as simply putting forth the sort of acerbic wit expected of any satire, but if one pays attention to who is on the receiving end of injustice, the implications of this play are quite devastating. Pug is a true stranger in a foreign land, and because of this he is easily manipulated and taken advantage of.

Pug is constantly portrayed through this dialect of displacement. He tries to persuade Fitzdottrel to sell his soul in exchange for wealth and power, thus damning the man to hell, but he is unsuccessful in this quest. The problem for Pug begins with Satan's conditions for Pug's release from hell. Before allowing him to embark, Satan tells Pug that he will have to enter into a human body when he gets to earth. Specifically, he will have to use the discarded carcass of a hanged thief because Satan is incapable of creating a new human form for Pug. Having come to London with nothing to his name but a second-hand body and suit of clothes, Pug must take on work as a servant in the household of a man called Fitzdottrel. Fitzdottrel's immediate reaction is to deny Pug's application for work, exclaiming that he already has a household servant. However, when Pug offers to work for nothing save room and board – the most basic of human necessities – Fitzdottrel agrees to take him on.

While Pug is attempting to navigate London, Satan is in a state of panic over the impending downfall of his kingdom because he and his demons are being put out of work. The denizens of hell are falling into obsolescence and scrambling for a way to survive because humans can now

rely on the system of capitalism to breed the sort of suffering and misfortune that demons once supplied. Satan's fear bears a fascinating similarity to the plight of laborers in an indifferent economy who find themselves replaced by less expensive, more efficient means of production and development. In an England grappling with the problems of enclosure and displacement of agrarian workers, Satan's fear that his labor is no longer needed mirrors that of workers at the lower levels of the economy.

In the opening lines of the play, Satan expounds on the changing face of human villainy in London

> …they are other things
> That are receiv'd now upon Earth, for Vices;
> Stranger and newer: and chang'd every hour.
> They ride 'em like their Horses off their Legs,
> And here they come to *Hell,* whole Legions of 'em,
> Every week tyr'd. We still strive to breed,
> And rear 'em up new ones; but they do not stand,
> When they come there: they turn 'em on our hands.
> And it is fear'd they have a Stud o' their own
> Will put down ours. Both our Breed and Trade
> VVill suddenly decay, if we prevent not (1.1.102-111).

Satan's lines read as a lament over his losing a livelihood. He casts himself as being run out of business by fierce competitors who are able to offer better products. Satan tries to dissuade Pug from going to London by telling him that hell does not send out many demons these days since the old vices seem largely ineffective; they are not able to "keep us up in credit." Credit can refer

here to reputation, but also of course to the economic system of credit. Tales of the devil who forges contracts in exchange for souls are here connected with the economic system of business contracts and property. Satan's speech serves to integrate the unique "supernatural" frame of this play into the typically strict focus upon London society found in city comedies. More importantly, this narrative component corroborates the central satirical point of the play in that there is almost no distinction between hell and London in quality of sin.

This hellish city emerges in Pug's subsequent journey. After Pug begs him insistently, Satan finally relents and agrees to let his eager underling loose. Satan instructs Pug about what physical state he will be in when he gets to London. While Satan can certainly tempt and mislead humans, he does not have the power to create life. He instructs Pug:

> But you must take a body ready made, Pug,
> I can create you none: nor shall you forme
> Your selfe an aery one, but become subject
> To all impression of the flesh, you take,
> So far as human frailty. So, this morning,
> There is a handsome Cutpurse hang'd at Tiborne,
> Whose spirit departed, you may enter his body (1.1.137-142).

It is not that Satan *will not* make a human form for Pug, it is that he *cannot* do so. The passage also divulges that Pug does have the ability to take an "aery" form and can exist as immaterial. But his potential for immateriality is only mentioned as a means of highlighting his transformation into a human body. He *must* take a human body to be seen by, and to interact with, the humans around him. Inhabiting the body of a criminal both aids and hinders Pug in this early modern world.

"Frailty" and "impressions of the flesh" foreshadow what is to come for Pug. The audience is faced directly with how vulnerability and precariousness of this little demon's situation. He will have the physical experience of human flesh, coming to grips with how easily humans can be injured, and what physical pain feels like. He can feel things such as hunger, the stench of a vastly populated city, the filth of a prison cell, and the pain of being beaten. Later, Pug laments the dulled senses and reflexes of his human body. "Frailty" refers to how easily humans can be physically harmed, but it can also mean the sort of vulnerability that Pug experiences as a stranger. It can refer to the sort of desperation felt by the poor going without food and shelter. These impressions of the flesh create a complex problem for Pug. While his disguise allows him to move about the human world, it also eliminates that which would distinguish him as a demon to Fitzdottrel. Pug and the cutpurse do have one genuine and important quality in common - poverty was their particular brand of frailty. Even before coming to earth, Pug was not a demon of high position, so he does in fact know what it is like to have spent his time low on the social ladder, and once he comes to London he experiences the desperate situations in which one might find oneself when afflicted by poverty. In this, the cutpurse and Pug do have a shared familiarity with frailty.

Jonson's London was experiencing economic change very quickly. While propertied aristocrats began to realize that they would incur less expense by enclosing lands and using them for raising animals, the husbandmen now displaced from raising crops on those lands moved to London in droves attempting to find work.[xviii] Families of the growing merchant class gained prosperity and found servants among these "lower class" newcomers to the city. Jonson critiques the plight of the lower class when Pug unwittingly becomes the servant of the man whose soul he has come to claim. Pug's place as a servant is inextricably tied to the human form that he has

been forced to adopt. He blends in with the poor too well for his mission. Pug's human form automatically implicates him in London society because he will be read by those around him as a fellow human. However, that fellowship does not cross class barriers.

Pug's ragged, second-hand clothing marks him as poor, as does his position as a household servant. Jonson demonstrates how seriously appearance is taken as an estimation not only of a person's place in the social order, but of their value as a person. What Pug looks like and how he is dressed are used to evaluate whether or not he is entitled to respect and dignity. Since Pug does not look the way that Fitzdottrel believes a demon ought to look, Fitzdottrel does not fear or appreciate him. He is considered useful for the purpose of performing menial labor, but nothing beyond that. Due to his inflated ego and general foolishness, Fitzdottrel understands class because it is that which allows him to look down on the poverty stricken such as Pug. However, Jonson displays how a self-important dolt such as Fitzdottrel cannot understand the idea of worth. He is capable of seeing a poor man and understanding that he is poor, but he cannot fathom that there may just be more to a poor person than their condition of poverty.

The ability to disappear into the crowd by means of social obscurity or purposeful disguising is a cornerstone of city comedy.[xix] Attempting to identify others means estimating their character based solely upon that which can be observed from the exterior, i.e. clothing, visage, mannerisms, and expressions. Since this method of identification is far from reliable, as Matthew Hunter has noted, individuals are called upon to look for what they believe to be more distinct factors. In particular, Hunter points to *style*.[xx] This is a powerful weapon of classism, one which places Pug at a disadvantage because he is immediately assessed by Fitzdottrel as fit for nothing better than an unpaid servant's position. Once he becomes a servant, the other characters will also view him as nothing more than that. Anna Bryson has argued that "plebian

critique of their social superiors was often focused on the body as an emblem of class society: in clothing, odour, decoration, health, height and girth the rich were known from the poor."[xxi] Pug is being tossed into a space in which his body and his clothing determine his class status, and as such, his access to resources and social circles. Pug possesses the ability and power that Fitzdottrel is seeking, but he is not able to use it because he has been tossed aside as nothing more than a poor servant.

Though familiar with hell's hierarchy, Pug is unaccustomed to human behavior and social stratification. Pug struggles to understand both the vulnerability and the opportunity bestowed upon him by his position as a servant. He is displeased at being relegated to a service position, but he nonetheless believes that he will be able to achieve his goal. However, he fails to achieve that goal directly because he has no understanding of how to survive as a human. He lacks the cunning of *Volpone's* Mosca, and therefore is unable to realize that as a servant, he is privy to his master's weaknesses and habits. This prevents him from taking full advantage of his potential to manipulate his master. He sees that Fitzdottrel has a weakness for luxury goods that will drive him into debt, but he never manages to use that information to his advantageOnce again, Fitzdottrel's obsession with appearance, with the shallow and expensive, render him incapable of finding potential or value in that which is not shiny or indicative of status. His desire to see the devil ought to make Pug a being of incredible value to Fitzdottrel, but Pug's shabby clothes and appearance as a poor man make him practically invisible to Fitzdottrel.

Being a poor stranger was no small matter in London. Anxieties about unknown individuals intruding upon settled communities were quite high. Ian Archer describes what he sees as the crisis of violence and outrage toward strangers in early modern England: "Anti-alien feeling in particular was significant in stirring discontent since strangers provided a suitable

scapegoat for all the ills that afflicted Londoners: they were responsible for inflation and increase in housing prices; they took away jobs which might be performed by the English; they were poor and disease flourished among them."[xxii] This attitude toward strangers fuels the chain of events which leads to Pug's torment and defeat. It is with this attitude of suspicion that Pug is received by his would-be victim. It is impossible not to recognize the parallels between *The Devil is an Ass* and the contemporary moment. With debates about refugee crises and border walls raging, Pug's misfortune may serve as a timely reminder to current readers that the cruelties of xenophobia are far from relics of the early modern world.

There are important implications in Jonson's making a demon represent the poor stranger. Jonson is likely playing with a literal portrayal of the ways in which strangers are demonized in the public attitude. Yet there is something more taking place in the exchange between Fitzdottrel and Pug. If Pug were a tavern keeper or a hobby horse-maker, he would still be subject to the inequalities experienced by commoners, but he would be identifiable to those around him. Jonson has leaned into the belief that demons possess human bodies to create Pug's comedic dilemma of being trapped in a corpse. He inhabits the body of a dead man, and as such is moving about the world as a person that in the truest sense has no place in it. As he appears at Fitzdottrel's door, the audience sees a demon, one who should have the power to collect servants for Satan, forced to ask for a position as a servant. Pug's trip to London twists from a quest for vice to the journey of a stranger, both physically and spiritually, to an unknown place; it becomes clear that one of the specific evils besetting the devil is the cruel vulnerability of those forced to live among the poor in an unfamiliar land. Right away, in their first interaction, Pug finds himself unable to convince Fitzdottrel that he is a devil, trying desperately to tell the man, "I am that I tell you." However, Fitzdottrel is immediately suspicious of, even hostile toward this

claim, telling Pug "Nay, now you lie," and "You cannot cozen me." The problem is not just that Pug looks like a man rather than a devil, he also lacks the social station Fitzdottrel expects. Why would the devil choose to come as a man of low station when he ought to be able to come with great power?

Per Satan's order, Pug targets for damnation Fabian Fitzdottrel who has been trying to conjure a demon for months. Yet upon viewing Pug, Fitzdottrel refuses to accept his true identity because of his disguised form. The irony is thick as Pug's attempt to enter into a compact that will allow him to eventually claim Fitzdottrel's soul ends in his being contracted as Fitzdottrel's footman. Following a long speech expressing his desire to meet a devil, Fitzdottrel hears a rapping on his door. Fitzdottrel shortsightedly refuses to believe that Pug is a demon due to his appearance. When Pug insists that he is a true devil, he is received only with the comment,

> Fitz.: ay, now you lie:
>
> Under your favour, Friend, for I'll not quarrel.
>
> I look'd o' your feet afore, you cannot cozen me,
>
> Your Shooe's not cloven, Sir, you are whole hoof'd (1.3.38-41).

Fitzdottrel anticipates a "true" horned and hooved demon, and the substance of Pug's body marks him as something other than the expected. Fitzdottrel assumes that the devil has a definite body and is "supposed" to look a certain way. Fitzdottrel is not necessarily making a spiritual judgment. Indeed, the cavalier attitude with which Fitzdottrel speaks about the devil reveals that he is making a social judgment based upon the physical signs that mark Pug as a stranger. The ragged clothing and lack of any signal of social distinction negate any possibility of power. This is deeply connected to Satan’s lament at the beginning of the play in which he proclaims that hell

has fallen in reputation and respect. Just as Pug cannot be distinguished as a devil from his human form, so hell can no longer be distinguished from London.

The initial appearance of a devil also occurs in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. It is difficult to imagine that Jonson did not have Marlowe at least partially in mind when he penned this play. When Faustus first encounters Mephistopheles he remarks that the demon is aesthetically displeasing and commands him to return in a different form,

> I charge thee to return, and change thy shape;
>
> Thou art too ugly to attend on me:
>
> Go, and return an Old Franciscan friar
>
> That holy shape becomes a devil best (3.24-26).

Faustus knows that devils can shape shift and that appearance does not determine the presence or absence of a demon.[xxiii] Faustus is also clear about the terms of his relationship with Mephistopheles. The demon will secure for the conjurer whatever he desires, but at the end of their contract, Mephistopheles will get Faustus's soul - the demon's wages are not monetary, but spiritual. Of course, Mephistopheles is not living amongst humans and taking part in human institutions. It is in this detail that Pug's problem is fully realized. He is not a human, but he is forced to appear as one. No one knows or recognizes Pug in this city, and strangers are not regarded with warm welcome. Indeed, Pug is absolutely exploited by Fitzdottrel, who agrees to take Pug on as a servant solely because he agrees to work for room and board only.

When he agrees to work as footman for Fitzdottell asking only for "my meat," he is informed that "If yo' offend me, I must beat you" (1.3.41). At several points during the play, Fitzdottrel makes good on this threat. In those moments, a tension forms between the play's designation as a city comedy, and the reality of the events on stage. The physical and

psychological abuse of Pug throughout the play troubles his role as a comic character. The audience knows that Pug is a demon, but what appears on the stage is the form of a man being beaten by his master. Though a staple of slapstick comedy, there is something more sinister lurking behind the laughter. Jonson almost never creates a completely likeable character in his city comedies, and so it may not be terribly troubling to think of Pug being punished, but what of the servants being beaten in reality? What if Pug were a real person living at the mercy of a master? In agreeing to the condition of physical abuse in a servant's contract, Pug demonstrates the vulnerable position of those desperate for work who cannot afford to advocate for themselves. The irony comes from the fact that the contract between Pug and Fitzdottrel is not one of service in exchange for a soul. It is simply one of service as any common born person might have. This again resonates in a modern context. In an economic system built to prey on the most vulnerable populations, it is too often the case that the poor are forced to agree to unfair working and living conditions out of sheer necessity. Like the worker in a corporate warehouse, on a factory floor, or picking produce in a field, the stranger must yield to the wealthy and the well-connected in order to fulfill their most basic needs. This too often comes at the price of their quality of life and their dignity.

Herein lies the answer to a pressing question. Why would a demon such as Pug be sent to earth in such a disadvantaged position in the first place? Surely, Satan ought to be capable of a better show of power. Yet this is not so in Jonson's London. In fact, the central idea of this play is reliant upon the image of hell as falling to pieces. The famous gate to hell described by Dante is rusted and falling off of its hinges. When Satan exclaims that he fears the impending obsolescence of hell, he is revealing the reason that Pug is sent to London with no wealth or resources. Hell is out of power. He is, as Satan says, "subject to all impression of the flesh."

There is no all-powerful devil in this play – only the crumbling remnants of the stronghold of evil. This decline in power is reflected in Pug's need for work as a servant. In order for Satan to have any authority over humans, they must respect him as a force of evil, one which can offer them what they truly desire if they are willing to pay the price. They must fear and revere him as a strong force in the world. It would seem that the humans in this play have replaced their belief in spiritual sin with a desire to do whatever is necessary, by their own means, to get ahead. Wealth and influence are not things that one must get by bartering with Satan. They can be achieved if one is willing to step on one's fellow man to acquire them. Greed is no longer considered a sin, but rather a way of life.

Pug exists in the body of a character also deserving of compassion. This play allows a glimpse of a dead cutpurse, and so the audience is never privy to the man's manner of speech, clothing, or other markers of social class. However, one key to understanding this play lies in its use of disguise as a means of moving through the world. For humans such as Fitzdottrel, disguise is often a matter of being able to pass as a member of a higher social class than one's actual station. The audience can see this in Fitzdottrel's ridiculous ploys to gain extravagant clothing so that others will see him and think him a fine gentleman. This is exacerbated by the fact that Pug is disguised as a poor man, to whom no one cares to listen. Were he in the body and clothing of a wealthy man, he might be able to command the attention he is looking for, but his class markers bar him from such attention.

As Pug prepares to journey forth, Satan has one last edict for him. Suddenly a heavy emphasis is placed upon the clothing which Pug will wear once he enters into the body of the cutpurse. Clothing is mentioned twice in very close succession in this scene with directives from Satan “For clothes, employ your credit with the hangman (1.1.134)” and later “You shall see

first, after your clothing" (1.1.144). This clothing later becomes a major plot device as it thrusts Pug into an accusation of theft and leads to his arrest. The incredible resurrection of a dead body by the spirit of a demon is overshadowed by a need for clothing. Perhaps to "employ your credit with the hangman" involves asking the hangman to give him clothes from one of the dead men. Whatever the meaning, it is clear that Pug has no money. He is a stranger without resources who has not enough even to clothe himself. Not only does Pug enter as a stranger into the city, his first action is also to put himself in debt. He has no money, no family or friends to help him, and so he immediately must rely upon credit, one way that individuals found themselves in debtor's prisons. Satan cannot make a body for Pug. He cannot even give him clothes, and so the small demon begins his journey immediately at a disadvantage. Hell's circumstances are looking quite grim. The unexpected powerlessness of hell only grows in scope as Satan continues to speak.

When Satan first issues his order to Pug, he tells him that he will have to "take a body." Harold Skulsky remarks with regards to Jonson's Volpone, "Possessing something is coming to have it. If being a person is being what can or does 'have' a body, then a demonic possessor is famished for personhood."

[1] The cutpurse owned the body, and Pug is only borrowing it. The term demon possession is subverted because Pug does not possess this body. He is only occupying it. Yet the body is already dead, and Pug's potential for evil seems undercut by the fact that there is no soul in this body for him to seduce into sin. Jonson thus creates a situation in which Pug is stripped of one of the classic capabilities of a demon. Jonson's demon is ironically possessed, even owned, by someone else. Pug *himself* is possessed in a sense by both Satan, his master in the underworld, and Fitzdottrel, his master in London.

Emissaries of hell can only borrow or try to replicate the trappings of human life. The play depicts a world of fools who constantly borrow money, getting themselves deeper and deeper into debt. This borrowing is a means of making themselves appear to occupy a higher social station than they actually do. As a borrower, Pug becomes implicated in this economy of greed. This is not only due to his borrowing of a body, but also because of his indebtedness to Fitzdottrel and the hangman from whom he received his suit of clothes. Pug, like any debtor, is trapped. Pug gets his taste of the hell which humans have created while caught in Jonson's colorful depiction of a world founded on vanity and the accumulation of possessions. The "frailty" that Pug deals with stems from his lack of possessions in a world where possessions are the only things that matter. He is working for room and board only. He likely could have persuaded Fitzdottrel to strike a deal if he had any riches with which to present him; however, as he showed up with empty hands and pockets, he received no respect at all. Because he is a lowly servant, one without any money or even the most basic property, he is easily suspected of criminal activity, and is thrown into prison at the end for allegedly stealing an expensive ring. He is mistreated, has his labor exploited, and is profiled as a criminal, and all while having no one to turn to for help or any means of defending himself. Truly, Pug finds out what it feels like to be a member of one of the city's most vulnerable populations.

While this complex web of (dis)possessions unravels, Fabian Fitzdottrel's obsession with seeing the devil is couched in terms of economic exchange. In Act 1, scene 4, two young gallants, Manly and Wittipol, the latter of whom is attempting to woo Fitzdottrel’s wife, share a jocular conversation upon encountering Fitzdottrel. They discuss what they already know of him.

Manly is helping Wittipol carry out a scheme to offer Fitzdotrel a lavish cloak in exchange for a conversation with his wife, Lady Francis Fitzdottrel. The two men profess their certainty that Fitzdottrel cannot pass up the temptation to make a spectacle of himself. Wittipol assures Manly:

> Yes, that's a hired suite, he now has on,
> To see *The Devil is an Ass*, today in:
> He dares not miss a new play, or a feast,
> What rate soever clothes be at; and thinks
> Himself still new in other mens old (1.4.23-27).

In utilizing the play's namesake, Jonson makes his audience the butt of the joke. Any of them could be this man. Fitzdottrel is without a doubt the classic gull character. He is narcissistic, foolish, and at times petulant. He has no real redeeming qualities and is not a character that an audience is likely to warm up to.

The words "hired suite," and "other men's old," run parallel to Pug's occupation of a borrowed body, a hanged man's old. This is one of multiple places in the play at which Pug and Fitzdottrel are implicitly compared to one another in their pretending to be something that they are not. Pug the devil, technically endowed with the ability to damn a soul, is presented in the play in a ragged second-hand body and suit of clothes. He is wearing the uniform of a poor man, and in the world into which he has stepped, his appearance dismisses him as one not worthy of respect or attention. Fitzdottrel is also an object of scorn, but in a different way than Pug. He has delusions of grandeur which cause him to behave unwisely, but his access to some amount of

material wealth (no matter how poorly managed) does afford him the opportunity to be Pug's master. Pug and Fitzdottrel stand next to one another as pretenders, involved in a similar activity of disguising.

A penchant for borrowing on credit makes a complete fool of Fabian Fitzdottrel. Pug wishes to enable and encourage Fitzdottrel's greed in order to claim him for hell, and the best chance at accomplishing this is to forge a contract with Fitzdottrel and exchange possession of wealth for his soul. In order to borrow on credit, one must first have established relationships with those who can lend money. Unlike Pug, who is a complete stranger, Fitzdottrel is able to borrow on credit because the scheming projectors know him well. They know him specifically as an easily targeted gull. He simply cannot stop himself from taking the opportunity to show off. Thus, when Lady Fitzdottrel begs her husband not to spend his time making a spectacle of himself in rich clothing, he replies,

> Here is a cloak cost fifty pound, Wife,
> Which I can sell for thirty, when I ha' seen
> All *London* in't, and *London* has seen me.
> Today I go to the *Black-Friars Play-House*,
> Sit i' the view, salute all my acquaintance,
> Rise up between the *Acts*, let fall my Cloak,
> Publish a Handsome Man, and a rich Suit (1.6.31-37).

Fitzdottrel obsesses over style because he wants fame and recognition, and he believes that extravagant style is the way to secure it. He is precisely the kind of individual that Thomas

Dekker describes in his *Gull's Hornbook*. Gulls are men so ridiculous, so self-obsessed that every place in the city from playhouse to church is treated as a fashion show.

Fitzdottrel displays the complications of recognition and how it is both necessary and dangerous. In order to have economic resources such as credit, one must have relationships with others. One must be recognizable in the sense that one must be known by others in the city. One's name and reputation can determine whether one has access to economic resources such as credit and lending. In Fitzdottrel's case, he is recognized by the people around him, but only as a fool who is prone to pursuing distinction and falling into debt. Recognition can therefore also mean fame. This is the type of recognition that Fitzdottrel seeks. All of the ways in which Fitzdottrel is tied up in the game of recognition stand opposed to the lack of options that Pug experiences precisely because he is not recognized by anyone.

Fitzdottrel elsewhere speaks of a desire to spend time with the devil as one would a companion. He wants to see the devil, mostly because he believes that making such an acquaintance will bring him prestige - as if knowing the devil were similar to befriending a powerful nobleman. He admits that he has instead paid others who professed to be magicians and conjurers to bring forth the devil for him. He says specifically, "The best artists of Cambridges, Oxford, Middlesex and London, / Essex, and Kent, I have had in pay to raise him,/ and yet h'appears not these fifty weekes" (I.II.22-25). Though he expresses faith in the devil, he chooses to lay his fate in a market exchange. The idea of the contract which is so important to the plot of Faustus and other tales of conjuring gone wrong is mediated through an exchange between

customer and service provider. In this ferocious portrayal of a capitalist economy, everything is reduced to dollars. He later says,

> Were hee a kinde devil,
> And had humanity in him, hee would come, but
> To save ones longing. I should use him well,
> I sweare, and with respect (would hee would try mee)
> Not, as the Conjurers doe, when they ha' rais'd him.
> Get him in bonds, and send him post, on errands (1.2.20-26).
> …
> I would so welcome him, observe his diet,
> Get him his chamber hung with *arras*, two of 'hem,
> I' my house; lend him my wives wrought pillows:
> And as I am an honest man, I thinke,
> If he had a minde to her, too; I should grant him,
> To make our friend-ship perfect (1.2.33-38).

To Fitzdottrel's mind, the best way to pay the Devil is not with a soul, but with pleasures of the flesh. His lines turn on the assumption that the devil will have a physical body which can interact with "arras," wrought pillows," and women.

Fitzdottrel imagines himself as serving the devil if he were ever to meet him. He would pamper the devil as if he were an important house guest. He gushes over this imagined friendship as if he were talking about hosting an important nobleman in his house. He would go to great

lengths to impress and accommodate his powerful friend, going so far as to allow him to have his wife. It is strange that Fitzdottrel should say that he would make no request of the devil as this defies the familiar plot of the conjurer who trades their soul for some favor from the devil. Even witches supposedly receive a kind of supernatural ability in exchange for their service to Satan. This also means that Fitzdottrel has not thought through the implications of making it known that one is good friends with the devil. His delusions of grandeur obscure what little judgment he possesses. In fact, if Fitzdottrel recognized Pug for the devil that he is, he would willingly make Pug his master. As Pug lives in his house, Fitzdottrel is in fact already "entertaining the devil," but his inability to see beyond appearance prevents him from understanding this.

One intriguing turn of phrase is Fitzdottrel's assertion that the Devil would show himself if he "had humanity in him." The devil, or perhaps his realm, has humanity in him/it as a mouth consumes food. However, Fitzdottrel now suggests that the devil might possess the qualities of human compassion and mercy. It is almost as if Fitzdottrel does not see the devil as any different than himself, the irony of course being that he himself possesses neither compassion nor mercy. He therefore unknowingly employs a demon as his footman and does indeed "Get him in bonds, and send him post, on errands." Fitzdottrel's expectation that interacting with the devil will be exactly like interacting with a powerful man means that Pug's ragged appearance and unemployed state make him unrecognizable. He is a complete stranger and therefore is only able to secure work as a servant.

Act 4 scene 4 marks the point in *The Devil is as Ass* at which Pug's doomed time on earth begins to close in on him. The sense of the impending clock is another hint at an inverted

Faustus narrative. Indeed, Pug is dragged back to hell at the end of the play just as the clock strikes midnight. Fitzdottrel is swindled by the projectors, Merecraft and Everill, who have been leading him toward bankruptcy with their constant promises of huge opportunities and riches. They embody an economy of greed. They convince Fitzdottrel that a fine Spanish lady has come to London and has opened a finishing school. In hopes that his wife will learn courtly manners for the time when he surely becomes a duke, Fitzdottrel insists upon gaining a place for his wife in the Spanish Lady's school. As advised by his consultants, Fitzdottrel secures an expensive ring as a persuasive offering for the Spanish Lady. Pug is chosen as Fitzdottrel's servant to keep the ring safe but is swindled out of it by the projectors who have plagued Fitzdottrel throughout the play. Pug temporarily gains riches but never manages to gain the one thing he's after – Fitzdottrel's soul. Pug's naiveté leaves him vulnerable to the deceptions of the humans around him. He is focused on the objective for which he came to London but fails to realize that he is being circled by sharks who will do whatever is necessary to gain more wealth. Pug's inability to comprehend the evil around him and recognize the people he meets for what they really are stems from the fact that he has never been exposed to such rampant sin and vice. As Satan fears, London has become the new hell, so much so that demons cannot wrap their heads around how to survive a day in the vile city of London.

Pug notably does not lay the blame upon the projectors themselves, but rather upon the flesh that he is in. Pug speaks, "My devilish chief has put me here in flesh/To shame me! This dull body I am in/ I perceive nothing with!" (4.4.122-124). Pug has suddenly changed his tune and now proclaims that all of this mayhem is Satan's fault. Of course, the audience knows that it was

Pug who begged Satan to allow him this journey, and that he agreed to all of the conditions therein. It would seem that Pug may have made a trade of his own without realizing it. He was expecting that his status as a demon would give him some advantage over humans, but after transitioning to earth in the flesh and realizing that one cannot simply exist in society without money and resources, he is bested by the crushing weight of a cruel capitalist system and the people better prepared to survive that cruelty. He is experiencing the cruelty and ostracism inflicted upon strangers in a society where being an outsider, being an "other," meant being unwanted.

As the members of the audience leave the playhouse, jostling past other theater goers and pouring out onto the stones of London's streets, they are left to turn the play over in their minds. Does the grinding machine of a city which rewards the wealthy and punishes the poor render the actions of characters in city comedies inevitable, or is the city an unforgiving cesspool because of the way that people behave? City comedies work to answer these questions by exploring the places and reasons that individuals dwell in a city, the activities in which they work and participate, and the social and economic milieu which they encounter. For Fitzdottrel, living in London means having access to crowded public spaces in which to ostentatiously display himself. For the swindlers, London is a place ripe with individuals to gull into parting with their money. Though not particularly likeable characters, they all have a recognizable place in London society. The swindlers, however shady their dealings, have a way to make a livelihood and to survive in the city. Fitzdottrel is a foolish gull, but he does have some money to his name and access to credit for the time being. For Pug, dwelling in London without friends or resources to

rely upon makes him an outsider, a stranger in a foreign land, and because of this he finds himself left vulnerable to the abuses and injustices heaped on those occupying the lowest rung of society. At the beginning of the play Satan asks Pug "Who is it, will receive you?" By the end of the play the audience knows that the answer to Satan's question is *no one* and that this truly is the stranger's case.

[1] Patricia Fumerton. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

[2] Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle, introduction to The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 7.

[3] Wells, Susan. "Jacobean City Comedy and the Ideology of the City." *ELH* 48.1 (1981).

[4] Jean Howard, *Theater of a City* (Phildelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 215

[5] Paul Slack. *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England*. London: Longman, 1988.

[6] Reinarz, Jonathan. *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell*. (University of Illinois Press, 2014).

[7] Franco Moretti. *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature.* London: Verso Books, 2013.

[8] David Alworth. *Sit* society, rhetoric, and their interaction is the only real issue of literary history *e Reading: Fiction, Art, Social Form.* p. 2

[9] Alworth. p.4

[10] Michele Lamont and Virage Molnar. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," Annual Review of Sociology, 28 (2002). 168.

[11] Lamont and Molnar, 168

[12] Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton. *The Roaring Girl.* Folger Shakespeare Library.

[13] Roberte Henke. Poverty and Charity in Early Modern Theater and Performance. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015). 23

[14] De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 103.

[15] Patricia Fumerton. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. 71

[16] Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" in Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

Press, 1988), 21-65 (Harman is central to the discussion for Greenblatt); Hanson, *Discovering the Subject*, ch. 3; Pugliatti, *Beggary and Theater in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 139-52; *Carroll, Fat King, Lean Beggar*, 70-96

[17] I quote from Arthur F. Kinney's modern edition of *Caveat.*
Kinney, ed. *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Pres, 1990).

[18] Originally written by Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle, the play was later revised by Heywood, Dekker, and Shakespeare following the death of the Queen. The manuscript, held in the British Library, is one of the only documents believed to contain Shakespeare's actual handwriting.

[19]Anthony Munday, Edmund Tilney, Henry Chettle, *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore*, c. 1601-1604.

[i] Robert Henke, *Poverty and Charity in Early Modern Theater and Performance (*Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015): 17.

[ii] Henke, 27

[iii] Victor Lenthe, "Ben Jonson's Antagonistic Style, Public Opinion, and Sejanus," *Studies in English Literature* 57.2 (2017): 349-368.

[iv] Evans, Robert C. "Contemporary Contexts of Jonson's "The Devil Is an Ass"." *Comparative Drama* 26, no. 2 (1992): 140-76. Accessed December 4, 2020.

[v] Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour,* ed. Robert N. Watson (London: A & C Black, 1998): 1.

[vi] Jean Howard, *Theater of a City* (Phildelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 2

[vii] Howard., 8.

[viii] Adam Zucker, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy* (Cambridge, UK, 2011), 23.

[ix] Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater* (Cambridge, UK, 1992), 32.

[x] Andy Wood, "Fear, Hatred, and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England," *Journal of Social History* 39.3 (2006): 61.

[xi]Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers*, 32. See also A.L. Beier, *The Problem of the Poor in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Metheun, 2004): 46.

[xii] Hollen Lees, 32.

[xiii] Hollen Lees, 48.

[xiv] Kate Crassons. *Claims of Poverty: Literature, Culture, and Ideology in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, U.S.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010): 28.

[xv] John Pound, *Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England* (London: Routledge, 1986): vii.

[xvi] Annemarie Faber, *Contemporary Life and Manners in Ben Jonson's Comedies: Every Man in His Humour, Every Man Out of His Humour, Volpone, Staple of News, and The Devil is an Ass* (Salzburg: Institut fur Anglistik and Amerikanistik, Universitat Salzburg, 1985): 46.

[xvii] Larry S. Champion, *Ben Jonson's "Dotages" a reconsideration of the later plays* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2015): 34.

[xviii] Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982): 133.

[xix] Lena Liapi, *Roguery in Print: Crime and Culture in Early Modern London* (Woodbrige, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2019): 27.

[xx] Matthew Hunter, "City Comedy, Public Style," *English Literary Renaissance* 46.3 (2016): 407.

[xxi] Anna Bryson. "The rhetoric of status: gesture, demeanor and the image of the gentleman in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England," in *Renaissance bodies: the human figure in English culture, c. 1540-1660,* ed. L. Gent and N. Llewellyn (London, 1990): 136-53.

[xxii] Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 10.

[xxiii] Marlowe, Christopher, and Gill, Roma. “Dr Faustus.” Book. New Mermaids. London : New York: A & C Black ; WW Norton, 1989.

CHAPTER II

"A Justice in the Habit of a Fool:" The Complexities of Boundaries in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*

Jean Howard's *Theater of a City* begins with a discussion of Early Modern London's Royal Exchange and its place as both a site of commerce and of theatrical significance. Howard writes of the play *Englishman for My Money*, "The function of the Exchange scene, then, can be viewed as an induction into the ways of a monumental, but not intimately known, urban site as much as a confirmation of knowledge already in the viewer's possession. Inviting the audience to peer over the shoulders of English and alien merchants, the scene could function in part as a guide to the unfamiliar, a way to render legible a set of practices not directly experienced by most London theatergoers."[1] As Howard states, English city comedies were closely tied to growing commerce and capitalistic ideals that began to flourish during the early modern period. Playwrights such as Middleton and Jonson are known still for their depictions of London as a chaotic place full of commerce, vice, and vibrant life. Walking the boards of Jonson's stage are gulls, calculating servants, prostitutes, swindlers, stealthy cutpurses, and the occasional supernatural being. The comedic effect of these plays relies on their references to their contemporary moment. While a playwright as erudite as Jonson incorporated Latin and classical references in his work, a current reader of city comedy will likely need an extensive reference guide as the satire is entirely engaged with the events that were taking place in England at the

time of the play's composition. City comedy therefore taps into a communal knowledge held by its audience. City comedy is an ideal case study for ideas that have been explored by many? scholars.

Paul Slack has acknowledged the multidimensional nature of any definition of poverty:"Perceptions of it [poverty] change as assumptions about what is an adequate standard of living change. Hence there can be no universally applicable measure of poverty which is unadulterated by changing social expectations."[1] For Slack, in his numerous works on early modern poverty and class dynamics, the idea of poverty is always shifting. I find this to be most true of the Jacobean period in which Bartholomew Fair was composed as it saw the rapid shift from a clear delineation between the poor and the wealthy to a more nuanced hierarchy. This is recognized by the New Left historian E.P. Thompson in his landmark work of social history *The Making of the English Working Class*.[1] For scholars such as Slack and Thompson, it is imperative that those members of the working class of English society - the vendors, tavern keepers, artisans, guild members, etc. are not lost in the sea of statistics. In his chapter titled "The Experience of Being Poor in Late Medieval England," Christopher Dyer picks up this work by also claiming that scholars attend far too much to the records of the early modern noble and wealthy classes. Dyer insists that an inordinate amount of time and scholarship is given to studying policy and parish records which speak to the treatment of the poor, but that no time is truly given to understanding the lived experience of poverty for early moderns.[1]

Like Slack, Thompson, and Dyer, I also take issue with the lack of scholarship devoted to recovering the world, both physical and social, of the early modern commoner. However, I use a

different approach by taking the idea of class mobility (one long established by sociologists), and analyzing it through the lens of physical mobility. Assumptions about occupation and physical setting contribute to and work to blur the boundaries of both physical and social mobility. The word *boundary* is typically discussed in terms of physical boundary such as the lines dividing neighborhoods in a city, or in terms of social boundaries such as the "glass ceiling" identified by feminist scholars. It is not often that the field of literature explicitly discusses how those two meanings of boundary bleed into one another. Yet the physical boundaries in which one lives and works often inform how high one can rise on the social ladder. One's social mobility is tied to one's physical mobility.

Bartholomew Fair, with a character list containing a justice of the peace, a proctor, and an esquire alongside a hobby-horse seller, a "pig woman," and a cutpurse, puts pressure on this idea by considering what happens when classes of people meet in physical settings together. Smithfield was the site of slaughterhouses, executions, and was notorious for its noise and filth.[1] Jonson's depiction of a day of revelry in this neighborhood questions class discrepancy based on occupation and location.[1] Wealthy persons who come to the fair to buy luxury goods stand right beside characters who have come to sell, cheat, steal, or beg for a living. As a character named "Trash" protests being looked down upon by the tradesmen around him, the audience becomes aware that this person is being kept in her place both by economic and social ostracism. The idea of "being kept" in a specific social position permeates this play and indeed all city comedies, as they highlight the different physical settings in the city and how those locations determine the outcomes of individuals' lives.

Bartholomew Fair depends upon the members of the audience having some prior knowledge of that particular yearly celebration, of the culture surrounding fairs and festival days in general, and of Smithfield, where the fair is held. Without this knowledge, jokes about preachers who rail against Bartholomew Fair or about Smithfield as a place of execution and criminal activity would not resonate for readers. The play appeals to both the social world being depicted on stage as well as the experience of the audience sitting in a communal setting, laughing over jokes which require a mutual understanding of what might be called early modern pop culture. This double utilization of collective social knowledge makes city comedies unique in their ability to question what is meant by "the social" in early modern London. For this play to function as a satire, the audience needs to be aware of the strict class hierarchy which defined English society and kept solid barriers between classes.

Bartholomew Fair is a play about how individuals of vastly different occupations, social classes, and minds can interact in certain settings in London. More specifically, it is about what can happen when individuals are presented with opportunities to disguise their social status and defy the typical order and movement of people through space. This dissertation's interest in boundary making finds an important case study in a play which presents a special occasion, a festival day, in which persons who would not normally spend time together are in the same setting. The upper-class characters in the play find themselves in a neighborhood outside of their typical boundaries and amongst those whom they might consider their inferiors. Class dynamics are reflected in patterns of speech, remarks about cleanliness and criminality, frustrations at

social snobbery, and perhaps most markedly in the need to disguise in order to cross and blur class boundaries.

The play begins with a bit of meta-theater (i.e. a play within a play) and an exchange between a stage-keeper, a bookholder, and a scrivener. The stage-keeper begins with his opening monologue in which he criticizes the play for sacrificing romantic or fantastic elements in favor of focusing on the dirt and mundanity of Smithfield. Following this gripe, the bookholder enters, and angrily demands of the stage-keeper an explanation as to why he is there, to which the stage-keeper insists that the audience asked for his judgment about the play. The bookholder then unceremoniously kicks the stage-keeper off stage with some choice words, "Your judgment, rascal! For what? Sweeping the stage or gathering up the broken apples for the bears within? Away, rogue, it's come to a fine degree in these spectacles, when such a youth as you pretend to a judgment."[1] In this singular exchange between two characters, the exploration of class and community separation in the play has already begun.

The bookholder calls the stage-keeper "rascal" and "rogue" while simultaneously insulting the labor that he performs. Not only then does the bookholder turn his nose up at necessary custodial work, he insinuates that individuals who perform such work are of low station and therefore low moral character. It is upon these grounds that the bookholder tells the stage-keeper that he is not qualified to issue any authoritative judgment about the play, insisting that individuals of the stage-keeper's occupation, social class, and perceived moral integrity do not have claims to intellectual analyses of stage works. Occupation, perceived intelligence, character, and permission to speak are all tied in this instance to social class.

After the stage-keeper has been rudely shooed off stage, the bookholder introduces a scrivener who has come to read the contract that is to be upheld between the author of the play and the audience. One stipulation in particular reads,

> It is further agreed, that every person here have his or their free-will of censure, to like or dislike at their own charge, the author having now departed with his right: it shall be lawful for any man to judge his sixpen'worth, his twelvepen'worth, so to his eighteen-pence, two shillings, half a crown, to the value of his place; provided always his place get not above his wit. And if he pay for half a dozen, he may censure for all them too, so that he will undertake that they shall be silent. He shall put in for censures here, as they do for lots at the lottery: marry, if he drop but six-pence at the door, and will censure a crown's-worth, it is thought there is no conscience or justice in that.[1]

The members of the audience are granted permission to speak, but only in proportion to the price of their ticket. While the idea that a person may only criticize the play in accordance with their financial investment may initially seem to place those with less money at a disadvantage, Jonson builds in some details which work against this idea. It is first of all acknowledged "that every person here have their free-will of censure." Interestingly, it is *not* stated that persons of smaller means have no right to think about the play and make judgment. This is different from the bookholder's claim that the stage-keeper does not have the right to make judgements about the play at all.

The bookholder's class discrimination raises an issue that Ben Jonson himself was constantly in conversation with: what is the space of the theater for? The bookholder would say

intellectual development or lofty artistic expression. The stage keeper's existence in the space is one of labor. He is not there to watch the play but to clean the facility in which it takes place. The bookholder is therefore making assumptions about the stage-keeper's occupation and how that occupation should disqualify him from full participation. As the stage-keeper is shooed away, thus expelling him from the physical space of the stage, his social mobility is denied as well.[1] The bookholder's rejection of the stage-keeper thus contributes to the creation and solidifying of harsh class boundaries. He cannot hope to rise to a position of art or intellect because his occupation is being used to keep him out.

The contemplation of social class and speech is acknowledged as taking place in the space of the theater. Once the events of the play begin, the audience is asked to go to Smithfield and think about these issues in the context of a physical location in the city of London. *Bartholomew Fair* brings characters of varying social classes, occupations, and walks of life together on common ground. One way in which this is observed is in how characters speak. Grammar and spelling, use of profanity and bawdy speech, and topics of discussion, all gesture toward a strong connection between social class and speech.

Bartholomew Fair captures a special strength of city comedies in addressing issues of class dynamics. Its concern with the everyday goings on of the city produces a realism in its use of "common" speech and contemporary references.[1] While there are characters who look down on poor and working-class individuals in the play and who use insults to address those characters, Jonson does not portray individuals of the lower class as repugnant. In fact, the characters who run the various vendor's booths, and even those who perform criminal

occupations, are depicted as the beating heart of the city of London. They are the people who perform the work that keeps the city moving, and they are every bit as important as the aristocrats who visit the fair.[1] In this play, it is the role of the aristocrats and professionals to be humbled, while common characters of Smithfield teach them an important lesson about how the world actually works out amongst the masses.

The play introduces a character larger than life who embodies the best and worst that the common class has to offer. Ursula the Pig Woman, an unflattering title that both plays into the jokes regarding her weight and also describes her occupation, appears on stage in a fit of curses, sweat, and ale. She runs an alehouse that serves renowned pork, and she appears barking orders at her nephew, a young man named Nightingale, who works as her assistant and personal attendant in the alehouse.

> My Chair, you false Faucet you; and my Morn-
> ings draught, quickly, a Bottle of Ale, to quench me,
> Raskal. I am all fire, and fat, *Nightingale,* I shall e'en
> melt away to the first Woman, a Rib again, I am afraid.
> I do water the Ground in knots, as I go, like a great
> Garden-pot; you may follow me by the S.S. I make.

Ursula defies every image of the refined, well-born lady. She is large, sweaty (a reference no doubt to the pigs she raises and serves), swears frequently, uses bawdy language, and is often referred to as unchaste by other characters. Her occupation and class status are equated to her value as a person.

A clever satire such as *Bartholomew Fair* is reminiscent of medieval satire such as Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, also a collection of tales about characters with vastly different backgrounds who come together in one location for the common purpose of a religious pilgrimage. Notably, the characters in *The Canterbury Tales* also come together at a tavern, The Tabard Inn, while the characters in *Bartholomew Fair* come together at various points in Ursula's tavern. However, there is one very important difference between *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Canterbury Tales* that speaks to the changing landscape of early modern England. While the collection of individuals in *The Canterbury Tales* are brought together for a religious pilgrimage, the cast of characters in *Bartholomew Fair* come together for a sort of pilgrimage to a center of commerce. They are all at the fair to buy, sell, steal, or spy. While Chaucer and Jonson both utilize Juvenalian and Horatian satire at various points, switching between lighthearted joking and harsher, more biting critique, their works nonetheless articulate the change in social structure between the medieval and early modern periods. With this in mind, the audience moves forward to meet the large cast of characters that Jonson has created.

Justice Overdo is a high-ranking judge in the city who has decided to patronize the fair in disguise for the day in order to gain a better understanding of the activities of common subjects He is distrustful of officers of the law whom he believes to be corrupt and inept, and he has decided to disguise himself as a commoner in order to see for himself what is happening in the city. Justice Overdo, sitting in the alehouse in disguise as a common subject, says to himself that he is acquainted with Ursula for less than favorable reasons.

> This Pig-woman do I know, and I will put her in,
> for my second enormity; she hath been before me,
> *Punk, Pinnace,* and *Bawd,* any time these two and twen-
> ty years upon Record i' the *Pie-poudres.*[1]

Overdo thus knows her from her various run ins with the law. He calls her a punk, an early modern slang term meaning whore or prostitute. He also calls her a bawd, a term which refers to a woman in charge of a brothel. Is "bawd" that specific at this time? Earlier, it has a broader meaning: a woman who procures another woman for sex—not as organized as a brothel. From the viewpoint of a man such as Overdo who is a magistrate and a member of the gentle class, being a punk and a bawd are terrible offences. This means that Ursula has thrown away the most important asset any woman possesses: her chastity. She is also an alehouse keeper, an occupation generally given to women, but certainly looked down upon as the realm of poor women with loose morals.

However, if detached from the judgment of Overdo and the presuppositions of the gentle class which placed such a high value on women's purity, an audience might see Ursula for what she is: a businesswoman. As Diane Willen has argued in her study of working women, paternalistic early modern society was not truly open to the idea of independent women.[1] Ursula swears frequently and functions in the way that Shakespearean scholars have categorized the common characters in Shakespeare's plays (i.e., she is concerned with the "lower body" rather than the mind). However, the insults hurled at her and the other working women in the play such

as a gingerbread vendor named Joan Trash are aimed at them specifically because they work outside of the home. They earn their own money.[1] This is a threat to a patriarchal system, and so they are disparaged through the use of a very specific vocabulary. Willen draws upon Mary Weisners's *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* to assert, "Moreover, as "masterless" women without a household, they represented a threat to the patriarchal social order. Time and again, the court of Norwich therefore ordered a female "lyvinge idely at her own hand" either to be retained in service, usually within a fortnight, or be committed to Bridewell, where work of some sort would be provided for her."[1] The fact that Ursula and Joan have occupations at all causes their chastity and integrity to be called into question.

This language of cruel insult is a reaction to women who dare to push their way into the vocabulary of business. Joan Trash quarrels with a hobby horse seller called Leatherhead about her property rights as a business owner, while Ursula is firm in her assertion of the prices that she places upon the meat and ale she serves in her tavern. There is something disturbing about these characters to the "well born" men who encounter them, because in fact they have a small degree of freedom as businesswomen.[1] Yet this small amount of freedom does not extend outside the boundaries of lower-class neighborhoods, or indeed outside of their place of business.[1] Their occupations, vender and tavern keeper, are assumed to be beneath members of the aristocratic class. It is assumed that the occupations of these women make them dirty and poor, and this only contributes to the building of barriers between classes. This limits their ability to cross physical boundaries into wealthy neighborhoods or posh neighborhoods, and that

limitation of physical mobility prevents any social mobility. They will never rise through society because they have been marked by assumptions about their work.

Bartholomew Fair next brings its audience to a character named Waspe. Waspe is the cantankerous serving man of Bartholomew Cokes, an esquire who instigates a trip to the fair, insisting that he must introduce his fiancée, Grace Wellborn, to its revelry. It is no easy task to locate the center of this play as there are so many converging storylines. Nonetheless, Bartholomew Cokes and his party are central characters who command one major plot. Cokes travels to the fair with Grace, who is also ward to Justice Adam Overdo and his wife. Cokes is a fool who spends extravagant amounts of money on useless trinkets and gives little thought to his words or actions. Waspe angrily recognizes that though he possesses far more sense than his master, he is permanently relegated to servitude. Waspe, despite his superior intellect and talent, was born into the servant class and therefore lacks the social mobility required to take up a higher profession.

The audience is first introduced to Cokes by way of Waspe's description of his young master. While speaking to John Littlewit, a proctor and another central character in the play, Waspe expresses his disdain for Cokes, insisting that the young man is useless. Waspe declares that Cokes has nothing but "a head full of bees" and learned nothing from his school masters, except singing vile tunes. He later exclaims,

> You do not know the inconvenience, gentlemen, you persuade to, nor what trouble I have with him in these humours. If he go to the Fair, he will buy of everything to a baby there; and household stuff for that too. If a leg or an arm on him did not grow on, he would lose

> it in the press. Pray heaven I bring him off with one stone! And then he is such a ravener after fruit!—you will not believe what a coil I had t'other day to compound a business between a Cather'nepear woman, and him, about snatching: 'tis intolerable, gentlemen.[1]

The insults doled out in these lines are not like those hurled at the stagekeeper. Waspe is drawing attention to Cokes' relatively elevated social position but is using the very trappings of that position to mock and defame him. Waspe mentions that Cokes had many schoolmasters and opportunities to learn, but only bothered to learn how to whistle, sing crude songs, and rabble rouse. Essentially, he had access to education and wasted these opportunities. Cokes is also rich, but is disinterested in learning how to manage his wealth, preferring instead to spend it on unnecessary luxuries. There is an acerbic edge to Waspe's words as he ponders how someone could waste the sort of opportunities for which he would have given anything.

Waspe's manner of using the advantages enjoyed by members of the upper classes as weapons for highlighting their flaws has been noted by scholars of class relations in the early modern period.[1] Andy Wood notes that husbandmen would often acknowledge the elevated positions of the lords who ruled over them, citing social and political connections, as well as wealth and access to education, as proof that these aristocrats were equipped to take advantage of those who worked under them.[1] The carefully chosen language of these common folk was a clever means of accusing social superiors of avarice, scheming, cruelty, and other unflattering qualities.[1] Waspe's words have the same spirit of mockery. As the characters who form the poor and working classes go about producing goods, food, and even performing the skilled work of

smooth criminality, an aristocratic character such as Cokes seems to merely supply entertainment.[1] His spending could also be seen as supporting the lower class makers of trinkets

Waspe is an interesting case because his ridiculing of the upper class by virtue of what supposedly makes them superior does rhetorically blur class boundaries.[1] Waspe is the servant, but he manages to make a compelling argument about why the trappings of aristocracy are precisely what makes aristocrats fools. It is almost as if Jonson is holding up a mirror to certain members of his audience and asking them what exactly it is that these haughty aristocrats contribute to society. Despite making a compelling argument for blurring the boundaries between classes, Waspe nonetheless embodies what happens when assumptions are made about class and occupation. He is a man who would be much shrewder than Cokes in managing an estate, but his social mobility is limited because it is assumed that servants simply do not belong in the same spaces as their masters unless they are performing menial labor. In the end, no matter how much Waspe might argue, his relationship with his master only contributes to the preservation of class stratification.

Act II, Scene I begins with a soliloquy from Justice Overdo in which he describes his determination to disguise himself as a commoner and make his way through the fair to observe for himself the activity taking place. Though the play will reveal Justice Overdo to be prone to misreading situations, his initial statement of intent has a certain integrity about it.

> for alas, as we are public persons, what do we know? nay, what can we know? we hear with other men's ears, we see with other men's eyes. A foolish constable or a sleepy

> watchman, is all our information; he slanders a gentleman by the virtue of his place, as he calls it, and we, by the vice of ours, must believe him. As, a while agone, they made me, yea me, to mistake an honest zealous pursuivant for a seminary; and a proper young bachelor of musick, for a bawd. This we are subject to that live in high place; all our intelligence is idle, and most of our intelligencers knaves; and, by your leave, ourselves thought little better, if not arrant fools, for believing them.[1]

Overdo laments that public servants like himself are in reality quite disconnected from the public. They generally rely upon the word of their officers for their knowledge of city goings on, and this knowledge is frequently incorrect. It was in fact the case that constables, the lowest position in law enforcement were not expected to be trained or educated. Rather, they were chosen from among the subjectry to serve a term.[1] He is of the opinion that the majority of these men are corrupt and utilize their power to terrorize subjects . Overdo recognizes officers of the law for the physically mobile occupation that they hold. While the officers can enter any setting, Overdo recognizes that they spend their time policing those who do not deserve their scrutiny and disregarding those who do.

Overdo points out the falsehood of officers who insist that their occupation makes them virtuous, "by virtue of his place as he calls it," and that his own job as a higher magistrate carries an inherent vice. This vice is the ability to hand down judgment and punishment without having reliable information, therefore possibly destroying lives in a biased fashion. This is not justice. He refers to regular officers as knaves, calling both their intelligence and integrity into question

and suggesting that men of their persuasion are not truly qualified to handle the importance of their position.

When Overdo refers to an officer's job as "his place," he introduces the idea of occupation as having a of location of sorts as well. Just as a physical setting, there are people deemed to belong in a certain job, and others who do not. By Overdo's estimation, the majority of officers currently working in London are occupying a place they do not belong, and this to him is an injustice. He believes even that magistrates like himself are not occupying spaces that they ought to be out amongst the people over whom they have power. The play will reveal that, while Justice Overdo has preconceived notions and prejudices about virtuous vs. non-virtuous commoners, his plan to spend the day undercover has a feeling of responsibility to it. He wishes to be responsibly informed about the city and the residents that he may be sure that justice is being properly served in London.

Justice Overdo is directly addressing the potential problems of gossip and murmuring. While these may be important weapons of the weak for defending themselves against those who would take advantage of them, the same weapon may be dangerously wielded by those in power.[1] Overdo's assertion that magistrates such as himself "hear with other men's ears" and "see with other men's eyes" points to a fraught hierarchy within law enforcement. While officers on the street are doing the actual footwork amongst the subjectry, they are corrupt and unreliable. Meanwhile, it is suggested that the magistrates who do the important work of trying cases and doling out punishments are lazy in their unwillingness to "get their hands dirty." This hierarchy of action is reflected in a hierarchy of speech. In other words, news comes from the officers on

the ground up to the magistrates sitting at the top. Members of the law enforcement career form their own speech community.[1] The speech conducted in this particular occupational community concerns crime and punishment, and therefore has an enormous impact on the lives of the common subjects .[1]

Thus Justice Overdo praises those public servants who choose to bring themselves down into the throngs of commoners and conduct their own investigations.

> Never shall I enough commend a worthy worshipful man, sometime a capital member of this city, for his high wisdom in this point, who would take you now the habit of a porter, now of a carman, now of the dog-killer, in this month of August; and in the winter, of a seller of tinder-boxes. And what would he do in all these shapes? marry, go you into every alehouse, and down into every cellar; measure the length of puddings; take the gage of black pots and cans, ay, and custards, with a stick; and their circumference with a thread; weigh the loaves of bread on his middle finger; then would he send for them home; give the puddings to the poor, the bread to the hungry, the custards to his children; break the pots, and burn the cans himself: he would not trust his corrupt officers, he would do it himself.[1]

Overdo advocates for the practice not only of going out amongst the subjectry to conduct his work as a judge but insists on doing so even to the point of disguising himself as a commoner. He names specific occupations which have particular manners of dress associated with them and

remarks that he would do well to take on those clothes and blend in with the people who do those jobs. He then describes the places to which he would gain access without suspicion if he were dressed as a common worker.

Clothing therefore is also a means of separating social classes. One might imagine that were he to enter an alehouse in a working-class neighborhood in the robes of a judge, he might not be greeted warmly. However, if he were to disguise himself, he would be able to slip in unnoticed. Alehouses were places where commoners gathered for drinking and socializing, the places in which those of the lower class were free to speak and express political and social opinions that might be forbidden elsewhere.[1] Kitchens and cellars were spaces where household servants might be bustling about, and likely talking more freely than they would in the presence of their masters,[1] since distrust existed amongst the members of the working classes toward their social superiors. Overdo thus finds that in order to access working class spaces he will have to go undercover because common folk make assumptions (often well grounded) that those of higher station have the ability to do them harm. Commoners assume that judges and officers of the law are out to get them, and because of this they do not trust them enough to speak openly.[1] Overdo has the opposite problem of characters such as Ursula whose occupation limits her social mobility. Overdo needs to be able to cross the physical boundary into Smithfield and hide his social mobility, and to do this he must hide his occupation.

As Overdo sits in the tavern trying to blend in with the band of criminals that frequent the establishment, he notices a well-dressed young man talking to the ballad singers and roarers. He

asks Ursula's nephew and tavern employee, Mooncalf, about the identity of the polished young man.

> *Moon.* A civil young gentleman, master Arthur, that keeps company with the roarers, and disburses all still. He has ever money in his purse; he pays for them, and they roar for him; one does good offices for another. They call him the secretary, but he serves nobody. A great friend of the ballad-man's, they are never asunder.
>
> *Over.* What pity 'tis, so civil a young man should haunt this debauched company? here's the bane of the youth of our time apparent. A proper penman, I see't in his countenance, he has a good clerk's look with him, and I warrant him a quick hand.
>
> *Moon.* A very quick hand, sir.[1]

Ezekiel Edgeworth is a cutpurse, and he is excellent at what he does. This is verified by the fact that he always has money, but perhaps even more so by easily he passes for a gentleman. Justice Overdo, a man who specializes in law, immediately mistakes a skilled criminal for "so civil a young man" based entirely off of his appearance, his demeaner, and his supposed "generosity."

The "occupation" of a cutpurse requires an ability to blend in with the crowd. Those of higher social standing might be put on high alert, or even the authorities called, if Edgeworth were to carry the marks of lower-class life. He must adopt a more refined speech and dress in clothing that makes him look as if he belongs among the people whose money he steals. Jonson has created a situation in which a Justice of the Peace and a criminal are in a way engaged in the same activity – they're blurring the usual boundaries set between social classes by putting on a

disguise. They are both individuals who move in spaces where it is believed they don't "belong." They blur social norms by finding a way around the boundaries of place and setting

For both of them, their occupation is what prompts the need for disguise. For Overdo, the common characters around him will assume that because he is a judge, he is out to punish them and he therefore will not observe an accurate depiction of what is happening among the masses. He has to hide in order to descend the social ladder and access the spaces of the poor. Edgeworth on the other hand, because he was born a commoner cannot access the places of wealthy people and cannot move up in society. It was assumptions about his status as a commoner which turned him to criminal activity at first.[1] He became a thief in order to survive on the streets, and that occupation has allowed him to blur both physical and class boundaries as he makes his way among the wealthy, taking as he pleases from them. This pairing of Overdo and Edgeworth is the play's greatest example of how social boundaries can become blurred quite easily when space and occupation mix with one another. If Edgeworth can learn the manner of dress and the rules of conduct of the aristocracy, he is in some sense an aristocrat.[1] As Overdo takes on the dress, attitude, and speech of a commoner, he becomes one in that he is participating in the activities of commoners.

One man in particular condemns any blurring of social decorum as extreme sin and cause for concern. Zeal-of-the-Land-Busy is a fervent Puritan. Much like Shakespeare's Malvolio, Busy represents everything that early moderns found distasteful about Puritans, namely, he is a hypocrite.[1] When it is decided that the group of gentles will go to Bartholomew Fair, he declares that he will only try the pork at Ursula's tavern as a way to refute the charges of Judaism that he

insists are leveled against Puritans. This is clearly a thinly veiled attempt to cover his sinful desire for the pleasure of indulgent food. Busy is involved in one very particular type of speech that gets him into a great deal of trouble. He spends his time at the fair indulging, and then railing against bodily indulgence. He refers to the fair as "A Shop of Satan," and yells at people in the market place not to enjoy its offerings. When Dame Purecraft expresses surprise at his loud preaching he tells her

> Hinder me not, Woman. I was
> mov'd in spirit, to be here this day, in
> this *Fair,* this wicked and foul *Fair;* and
> fitter may it be call'd a Foul than a *Fair;*
> to protest against the Abuses of it, the foul Abuses of
> it, in regard of the afflicted Saints, that are troubled,
> very much troubled, exceedingly troubled, with the open-
> ing of the Merchandise of *Babylon* again, and the peep-
> ing of *Popery* upon the Stalls here, here, in the High Pla-
> ces. See you not *Goldylocks,* the purple Strumpet there,
> in her yellow Gown and green Sleeves? the prophane
> Pipes, the tinkling Timbrels? A Shop of Relicks![1]

Busy rails against capitalist trade as a kind of Catholic indulgence in the worship of relics. Ultimately, his angry preaching, and the vocabulary of denouncement and retribution that comes

with it, lands Busy in the stocks at the center of the fair. He does not have a license to preach in the city of London.

As he continues to shriek about the evils of the fair, what he is really doing is condemning the people that live and work in the neighborhood of Smithfield. Like most religious zealots, Busy believes that good Christians ought to remain set apart from the sinful ways of the world. Yet the play suggests that not only is social distance not possible, it is not desirable.[1] Bartholomew Fair is a place in which people of all walks of life convene, and Busy is directly attacking this feature of the fair. Busy makes assumptions that people who work as tavern keepers and sell goods are all evil and damned because they participate in buying and selling. Busy desires to contribute to the building of boundaries and to demonstrate that they permeable. As such, Jonson creates a plot in which individuals like Busy do not fare well because of their lack of openness and willingness to blur religious and social boundaries.

As *Bartholomew Fair* progresses further, it is the characters of the gentler class who came to the fair to shop and experience a day among the common crowd who end up in trouble. Several of the men, Busy, Waspe, and Overdo, find themselves relegated to the stocks after being robbed, accused, and generally outsmarted by their social "inferiors". Interestingly, unlike plays such as *The Alchemist* and *Volpone,* no one is brought to punishment at the end of *Bartholomew Fair*. Even criminals such as the cutpurse Ezekiel Edgeworth are let go, and everyone is invited to Justice Overdo's home for dinner. The mismatched group of criminals, vendors, ladies, gentlemen, professionals and working class alike, continue their strange

camaraderie. They seem to have reached some common language and understanding. Most importantly, they have come to understand how they fit into one another's spaces.

Jonson's last appeal in the play is the typical address to the king. However, this address is worth consideration due to its emphasis on speech and its parallel with the opening meta-theater.

> ***Y****our* Majesty *hath seen the* Play, *and you*
> *Can best allow it from your Ear and View.*
> *You know the Scope of Writers, and what store*
> *Of* Leave *is given them, if they take not more,*
> *And turn it into* Licence: *you can tell,*
> *If we have us'd that* Leave *you gave us, well:*
> *Or whether we to* Rage, *or* Licence *break,*
> *Or be prophane, or make* prophane *Men speak?*
> *This is your Power to judge (Great Sir) and not*
> *The Envy of a few. Which if we have got,*
> *We value less what their dislike can bring,*
> *If it so happy be t' have pleas'd the* King.[1]

Rather than the consideration that Jonson gave in the beginning of the play to his audience's license to criticize, he now casts himself at the King's feet for judgment about whether he himself has stayed within his license. The audience in the beginning of the play is beholden to the playwright for that they've paid to see his play. They can only criticize as much as they've paid. The king, however, has infinite license to criticize the play and its creator. Thus, a play so

concerned with the vast complexity of communities, and in how these communities are separated and brought together, ends.

Bartholomew Fair is a satirical play that pokes fun at hypocrisy, but ultimately refrains from judging any of its characters too harshly. By the final scene of the play, the various plotlines have largely resolved and been brought together. In typical early modern fashion, the love triangles have been settled, and the couples are prepared for marriage. Those characters who have been querulous throughout have now been chastised and humbled. Justice Overdo has observed crimes including illegal street preaching, brawling, and theft. After being mistaken for a criminal and wrongly accused, Overdo himself has spent time in the stocks. Just when it seems that Overdo is going to round up all of those who committed crimes, he instead relents and the play officially ends with all of the characters, regardless of class, being invited to Overdo's home for supper. The Justice insists,

> I invite you home with me to my house to supper: I will have none fear to go along, for my intents are *ad correctionem, non ad destructionem; ad ædificandum, non ad diruendum* [to correct and not destroy; to teach and not deride]: so lead on.[1]

Jonson ends with one final example of blurring and even transgressing both physical and social barriers. It is not the typical place of criminals and members of the lower class to spend time with their "betters" outside the realm of transaction. It is even rarer that those of low birth should be brought into an upper-class home, even being invited to sit at table with those of higher station. When a judge looks out at the world from the stocks rather than down from the bench at

those he will punish, he may conclude that not everyone who commits a crime is evil. When a cutpurse sees mercy from a judge, he may realize that there is sometimes more to well-off people than money. *Bartholomew Fair* argues that it is possible for barriers to be brought down once individuals have stepped into the spaces and places of others and have seen the world from a different point of view, a lesson that seems one for the ages, especially in our current time of civil unrest.

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CHAPTER III

The Laboring Worldview in Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*

Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* was first performed between 1599-1600 in London. The son of Dutch immigrants living in London, Dekker had close insight into the world of migration and urbanization in the city of London. A brief synopsis of the play is as such - *The Shoemaker's Holiday* takes place during the reign of Henry VI as England is heading into war with France. The Lord Mayor of London doesn't want his daughter Rose to marry Rowland Lacy, who is the nephew to the Earl of Lincoln. The two young lovers are not of the same class, despite both being aristocratic, and this means that they are prohibited from marrying one another. However, Rose and Lacy will not agree so easily. Lacy, who is called to war immediately decides not to go and instead disguises himself as a shoemaker and goes to work for a man named Simon Eyre. Lacy plans to lay low until he can get to Rose and marry her against his uncle's wishes. Meanwhile, a young soldier named Ralph, who is also a shoemaker with Eyre, has been sent off to war and his wife Jane awaits his return. When she catches the eye of a rich, but slimy Englishman named Hammon, she refuses to marry him unless he proves that her husband is dead. Hammon produces paperwork that claims her husband has been killed in the war, and she agrees to marry Hammon despite her grief. Ralph returns from war and discovers (through a well-planted pair of shoes) that Jane is marrying someone else, and he and his fellow

shoemakers plan to win Jane back. Simon Eyre has meanwhile become Sheriff of London, and when Lacy and Rose finally sneak away and elope, Eyre uses his new power to ask the King for a pardon. The King agrees to pardon them, and the play ends with characters coming together in fellowship, all conflicts having been resolved and forgiven.

Shoemaker's Holiday shares much common ground with Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* in its embracing of the spirit of riot among common subjects , its use of love plots between characters of unequal social status, and its treatment of class and labor in early modern London. Indeed, both plays feature characters named Rafe who are well loved by the characters around them. *Shoemaker* departs from the more acerbic wit of Ben Jonson in which nothing and no one escapes criticism. Dekker seems dedicated to promoting the genuine value of working people and their place as the driving force behind life in London. As Matthew Kendrick has argued, "In the play, aristocratic and bourgeois attitudes toward labor are displaced by a vision that embraces the laboring body as the source of social and economic value."[1] This is in part accomplished by making the king a fringe character who exists only at the edges of the play. *Shoemaker* tells the story of two young couples, one separated by war and the other kept apart by their families due to unequal social status. These threads are woven together to create the true center of the play in which "the gentle craft" of shoemaking as a trade, and thus labor more broadly craft work in general, are celebrated as central to a thriving society.

Dekker's writing is a departure from Jonson's writing in that it has a merrier, more congenial feeling. Jonson is a master satirist and a masterful playwright, but he is known to have

been quite acerbic in his satire. While I find immense value in Jonson's biting social critiques, it is worth noting that the *Shoemaker's Holiday* immediately has a more light-hearted feeling, and it comes across in the very positive portrayal of labor and laboring people that Dekker paints. This makes it tempting to see the play as a bourgeois fantasy of meritocracy in which characters just need hard work and a little bit of luck to achieve upward mobility and wealth. Despite the lighthearted nature of the play, this reading is reductive and ignores the darker side of the play which does indeed offer a vision of emerging capitalism and the various inequalities that come with it. There are several worldviews at play in *Shoemaker.* One is that of the nobility in which labor is disdained and those born to the upper class are deemed inherently better than those "below" them. Another is the attitude of emergent capitalism in which the acquisition of wealth and power is achieved through commerce. Necessary for capitalism is of course labor – capitalism requires that people give their time and labor in exchange for money so that they too can participate in the capitalist economy and keep from sinking into poverty. An "artisanal worldview"[1] is the third at play in *Shoemaker.* An artisanal worldview rejects mercantile thinking because while capitalism views laborers as simply a necessary workforce for merchants and bosses to become wealthy, an artisanal perspective values labor as a noble craft and a precious resource. By the end of the *Shoemaker's Holiday*, it becomes clear that Thomas Dekker has a certain respect for labor and uses this play to highlight this artisanal worldview. The focus of this chapter will in fact be about the representation and celebration of labor and working-class life in early modern theater as expressed in this particular play. I intend to do this by emphasizing the guild origins of theater groups and how those origins embedded theater, indeed

players themselves, in working class life. This could very well be why Dekker himself was aware of the value of laboring bodies.[1] The importance of guild history is further expressed by Kendrick,

> I contend that the theater's residual guild structure invests representations of labor with an ennobling and humanizing support. In a variety of plays, from Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* to Rowley's *A Shoemaker, A Gentleman*, theatrical techniques like disguise and deception gesture towards vagrancy while also enabling laborers of various stripes to affirm their skillful creativity. Plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* depict theatricality as an act of labor, a craftsmanlike endeavor rather than a commodity or mere function of commercial forces. In doing so, the plays carve out a space of artistic autonomy for the theater while affirming the creative power of labor.[1]

The title of the play is *The Shoemaker's Holiday,* but its alternate title is *The Gentle Craft,* thus suggesting that there is an element of gentility and nobility to trade work. The subtitle as listed in the playscript reads "With the humorous life of Simon Eyre, shoemaker, and Lord Mayor of London."[1] The theme of social mobility is crucial to *Shoemaker* as the central plotline around which every other revolves is that of the well-respected shoemaker, Simon Eyre, being promoted to Sheriff of the city of London. Eyre is a generous man and master to his apprentices and employees who uses his good fortune to elevate his fellow shoemakers. Eyre is the embodiment of the gentle craftsman.

After two merry songs, and a flattering appeal to Queen Elizabeth, for whom the play was performed, the first scene opens on a conversation taking place between Sir Hugh Lacy, the Earl of Lincoln, and Roger Oatley, the Lord Mayor of London about the blossoming romance between the earl's nephew, Rowland Lacy and the Lord Mayor's daughter, Rose Oatley. Interestingly, the conclusions reached by both men seem to indicate that neither thinks their charge is good enough for the other's. The Lord Mayor proclaims,

> Too mean is my poor girl for his high birth,
> Poor Subjects must not with Courtiers wed,
> Who will in silks, and gay apparel spend More in one year,
> than I am worth by far,
> Therefore your honor need not doubt my girl. (76-80)

The Lord Mayor is of the opinion that individuals from different social classes should not be married, and therefore feels that his daughter has no right to marry Rowland Lacy. This could also have to do with his concern that he will not be able to provide a dowry suitable for his daughter to marry a member of the nobility, though these words are never expressly spoken.[1] Rather than agree about class distinction, Lincoln responds by disparaging his nephew as one who is shiftless and wasteful saying,

> Scant had he journeyed through half Germany,
> But all his coin was spent, his men cast off,
> His bills embezzled, and my jolly coz,

Ashamed to show his bankrupt presence here,

Became a Shoemaker in Wittenberg,

A goodly science for a gentleman

Of such descent: now judge the rest by this.

Suppose your daughter have a thousand pound,

He did consume me more in one half year,

And make him heir to all the wealth you have,

One twelvemonth's rioting will waste it all,

Then seek (my Lord) some honest Subject

To wed your daughter to. (90-102)

Lacy and Rose are established here as two tropes that can be found in so much of early modern comedy. Lacy is the wealthy but foolish young man with property and a title who irresponsibly spends all of his money on merriment and vanity, eventually finding himself indebted to creditors. He is Fitzdottrel and Bartholomew Cokes once again. Rose, on the other hand, is virtuous but without title or wealth. Given that her father is the Lord Mayor, she would likely be considered more of the "middling kind," but certainly not a member of the nobility.

While explaining Lacy's actions, Lincoln notes with sarcastic disdain

my jolly coz,

Ashamed to show his bankrupt presence here,

Became a Shoemaker in Wittenberg,

A goodly science for a gentleman

Of such descent (92-95)

Lincoln expresses a certain disgust for the idea of labor and the idea that a person of noble descent would lower themselves to work with their hands. While labor was not ubiquitously looked down on in medieval and early modern England, the aristocracy still largely regarded it as the work of the lower classes. Paul Freedman has argued that the nobility only valued labor because "it produced what was necessary for consumption and display" by the elite.[1]

Richard Braithwaite in *The English Gentleman* displays this aristocratic attitude toward labor, writing that "The aristocrat should not be idle, but he must also avoid giving "too much care to the things of the body," which pertain to manual labor.[1] In his performance of labor, the gentleman represents the "golden meane."[4] Having been "from worldly affections weaned," he will not "slave the noblest motions of the soule to the unworthy bondage of the body..."[1] Thus the attitude of superiority was alive and well within the English aristocracy.

Yet Shoemaker does not promote this attitude at all. While Peter Mortenson has suggested that "Dekker's conceptual notions reflect those of the merchants: wealth is a fixed pie; an increase in one's position depends upon the diminution of another's,"[1] I disagree with this assessment. I contend that in fact *Shoemaker* promotes laborers, in this case the shoemakers, as the glue that holds society together while aristocratic characters overindulge and burden society.

I would argue that this understanding of labor as valuable both in and outside of the mercantile system stems from an understanding among laborers and in the artisanal worldview as a whole of the value of the body as an agent in the world, and as an essential agent in creating and holding communities and social connections. Unlike Braithwaite, the artisanal worldview, and *Shoemaker* celebrate the sovereignty of the body, and therefore of the body's labor. The next scene in the play is yet another display of the value placed on the bodies of laborers and how that value is rejected by a capitalistic and aristocratic system.

Lincoln tells Lacy and his cousin Askew that he is sending them to the war in France. He is attempting to separate Lacy from Rose to break their affection and bribes him with money and the promise that he will won the King's favor if he goes to the war. Lacy agrees, but as soon as Lincoln is out of sight, he convinces Askew to go to the ship alone, promising to catch up with him, which he never does. Just after Askew departs, Simon Eyre, his wife, his man Hodge, his journeyman Firk, a man named Rafe who works as a craftsman for Eyre, and Rafe's young wife Jane all come before Lacy.

> Eyre: Peace Firk, peace my fine Firk,
>
> stand by with your pishery-pashery, away, I am a man of the best presence,
>
> I'll speak to them and they were Popes, gentlemen, captains,
> colonels, commanders: brave men, brave leaders,
>
> may it please you to give me audience, I am Simon Eyre,
>
> the mad Shoemaker of Tower street, this wench with the
> mealy mouth that will never tire, is my wife I can tell you,

here's Hodge my man, and my foreman, here's Firk my fine
firking journeyman, and this is blubbered Jane, all we come
to be suitors for this honest Rafe keep him at home, and as I
am a true shoemaker, and a gentleman of the Gentle Craft,
buy spurs yourself, and I'll find ye boots these seven years. (194-205)

There are many notable moments in Eyre's speech, but first is his overall demeaner of care for his employees. There is comedic banter between Eyre and his wife, though the play as a whole confirms a strong love between the two. He refers to his employees as "fine" and "honest," showing them a certain respect and even affection. The fact that Eyre has come before this aristocrat to try and keep one of his employees from being sent to war and from being separated from his wife Jane speaks volumes about who Simon Eyre is as a person and as an employer. He proudly announces himself as a shoemaker and therefore a "gentleman of the Gentle Craft," showing no embarrassment at all about being a laborer. We thus begin to get a sense of the

community that exists among the shoemakers, and it seems that Eyre is at the center of that community as he tries to keep Rafe among them.[1] Dekker is beginning already to construct an image of workers as a tight knit community who are more invested in collective enterprise than the mercantile model of capitalistic self-determination.

Fumerton's ideas about "unsettled" individuals and how the housed poor were those always close to sinking into poverty in the case of any change in circumstance is reflected in the character of Jane. After Eyre requests that Rafe not be sent to wat, Lacy says it is not up to him,

but to his uncle and turns the group away. They try to plead a last time, objecting that it will ruin Jane if her husband is taken from her.

> **Firk:** Truly master cormorant, you shall do God good service to let Rafe and his wife stay together, she's a young new married woman, if you take her husband away from her a night, you undo her, she may beg in the day time, for he's as good a workman at a prick and an awl, as any is in our trade.
>
> **Jane:** O let him stay, else I shall be undone.
>
> **Firk.** Ay truly, she shall be laid at one side like a pair of old shoes else, and be occupied for no use.

Just like that, Jane is at risk of ending up begging on the streets. The early modern period was one in which it was considered far preferable for women to stay home rather than have to work for a living.[1]As proven by the way that working women were disparaged in Bartholomew Fair, undoubtedly Jane will be looked down upon if she has to work, and certainly if she must beg, which would put her at risk of being imprisoned. Fumerton discusses the "mobile economy" that saw women doing cloth work, vending, and other such casual labor as a way of keeping their families out of poverty, but this work nonetheless brought societal anxieties forward.

> …makeshift work was a cause for great anxiety in the period. Women were the flash point. Not only was women's work often not acknowledged as legitimate labor, but as we shall see (particularly in the studies of Paul Griffiths), women who independently

> engaged in such marginal work – especially when practiced outside the home – were liable to persecution and even arrest for vagrancy.[1]

Unlike Rose Oatley and Eyre's wife, both of whom belong to "the middling kind" and who have men to provide for them, Jane is one of the unfortunate "unsettled" subjects who is not afforded such stability. Eventually, Jane will work as a seamstress, which eventually leaves her vulnerable to the sexual advances and trickery of a man named Hammon who attempts to marry her under false pretenses by telling her that her husband has died, when in fact he has only been injured.

This is also the point at which Rowland Lacy uses Rafe's misfortune to save himself and continue to pursue Rose. Lacy allows Rafe to take his place in the war in France, an incredibly cruel action, and one which only strengthens the rejection of aristocratic and capitalistic perspectives in the play. "By allowing Ralph to take his place in the war, then, Lacy not only betrays the filial, social, and national obligations that define him as an aristocrat, but threatens the fundamental patriarchal integrity of the domestic unit, which was so central to England's basic socioeconomic functioning as to leave "virtually no place at all for the single man or woman taking up an occupation alone."[1] It is Simon Eyre's speech to Rafe before he is sent off to war that reinforces the dignity of labor and attempts to raise spirits and inspire unity among the workers, the members of the Gentle Craft. He tells Rafe,

> hold thee Rafe, here's five sixpences
> for thee, fight for the honor of the Gentle Craft, for the gentlemen
> Shoemakers, the courageous Cordwainers, the flower

of Saint Martin's, the mad knaves of Bedlam, Fleetstreet,
Towerstreet, and white Chapel, crack me the crowns
of the French knaves, a pox on them, crack them, fight, by
the lord of Ludgate, fight my fine boy. (289-295)

This speech gets to the heart of the worldview being elevated in *Shoemaker*. Whereas Lincoln encouraged Lacy to fight for familial honor, hoping that they would get favor and therefore rewards from the King, Eyre instead encourages Rafe to fight for the everyday people of London, even its knaves in Bedlam. Eyre's words are a cry for the unity of the people in defiance of an aristocratic or capitalistic worldview which urges prioritizing one's own fortunes.

After sending Rafe off to war in his place, Lacy decides to hide in London by disguising himself as a Dutch immigrant shoemaker named Hans. He puts on an exaggerated accent and pretends at times to not entirely understand English, playing a caricature which would have undoubtedly inspired laughter from the audience in attendance at the play. This plot point becomes quite interesting when compared with the story of immigration found in *The Devil is an Ass* in which Pug suffers the turmoil of abuse and ostracization experienced by far too many "strangers." Lacy as Hans is welcomed heartily by Firk, Eyre's journeyman, who immediately convinces Eyre to hire Hans as a shoemaker. The contrast between the reception of Pug and that of Lacy/Hans is of course informed by the fact that even though Hans is unknown to the other shoemakers, he is, simply by nature of being a shoemaker, connected to the other craftsmen. Thus boundaries that might in other situations might keep a migrant or itinerant worker from

accessing stability and safety, immediately crumble because of the bond between laborers.[1] The play returns again to the artisanal perspective which prioritizes worker solidarity above all else.

Jane and Rafe are "unsettled" individuals, but unlike the cruelty and isolation that befell Pug, Rafe and Jane have a community who in this scene, and later in the play, do everything they can to help the couple. That help is extended because Rafe is a member of the laboring community, the brotherhood and guild of shoemakers. This community building so deeply rooted in labor and working-class solidarity is a challenge to the idea of boundaries as collective action clears space for social mobility for everyone. This is precisely the point made by the plot surrounding Simon Eyre's appointment as Sheriff of London.

Eyre's appointment to Sheriff of London, and the economic prosperity that he experiences as a result are the great connection in this play to the idea of boundary making and breaking. Despite its positive attitude toward labor and working-class solidarity, the play does, through characters such as Lincoln and Lacy, expose the dark side of capitalism which would have spoken to an Elizabethan London in which many people were struggling economically. Notably, Eyre uses his new found wealth and shares it generously with his workers, to help Rafe and Jane after Rafe comes back injured from war, and even to see that Lacy is acquitted by the King for defying his uncle's wishes and marrying Rose.

Yet the conversation is more nuanced still because even though the shoemakers clearly have a strong bond with one another and a solid community, the early modern period was one of rapid capitalistic expansion, and shoemaker's guilds in particular during the period were

concerned about the "proletarianization" of shoemaking and craftwork in general. In this sentiment lies a certain desire for social distinction and the idea that not just anyone can be a shoemaker. This is true, of course, given that learning a skilled tried takes years of apprenticeship. Shoemakers were thus concerned that their skilled labor would be relegated to the level of itinerant work, or work such as peddling and alehouse keeping. Records show that the shoemaker's guild was fighting hard in the period to maintain emphasis on quality and preserve their reputation as highly skilled labor. The shoemakers' attention to production was largely oriented toward quality rather than quantity, as indicated by the guild's long struggle to regulate the quality of leather being traded in England.[1] Indeed, many of the public records that pertain to the shoemakers deal with their efforts to preserve the high quality of the leather being used in the making of shoes."[1] Some shoemakers feared that rapidly expanding capitalism would threaten the communal aspects of physical labor that had for so long been a touchstone of value to trade guilds.

"The Cobler's Corrant," a late-seventeenth-century ballad by Richard Rigby, "a faithful brother of the Gentle-Craft," characterizes physical labor as the most enduring feature of the shoemaker's identity:

> With contentment I now am crown'd,
> a merry Cobler in my stall;
>
> As he that hath ten thousand pound,
> of Gold and Silver at his Call;

And thus my Life I mean to spend,
If I get but Old Shoes to mend.
Long time I lived in Iceland,

And wrought for many a Noble Peer;
Yet now at length, at your command,
I ready am to serve you here;
For nothing more I do contend,
For then to have Old Shoes to mend.[1]

Rigby presents a romantic representation of the life of skilled laborers, but nonetheless strikes at the feelings of many shoemakers and other guild laborers. Rigby manages to articulate, in especially succinct form, a consciousness which understands physical, skilled labor to possess value and meaning which transcends aristocratic and mercantile class-orientations."[1] The craftsmen find a meaning in their work, and indeed in the laboring community, so deeply rooted in the physicality of the body and its power to work and craft.

They are bound together by their commitment to artisanal work, to being those who create. This bond between artisans is perhaps expressed no more overtly than at the end of the play when all of the characters have gathered together at Simon Eyre's home for a banquet after he has used his power as Lord Mayor to allow Rose and Rowland to marry against their father's

and uncle's will. The king has come into town at the request of a very upset Lincoln and Roger Oatley, and he too gathers at Eyre's home.

King: My mad lord Mayor, are all these shoemakers?

Eyre: All Shoemakers, my Liege, all gentlemen of the
Gentle Craft, true Trojans, courageous Cordwainers,
they all kneel to the shrine of holy saint Hugh.

All: God save your majesty all shoemakers

King: Mad Simon, would they any thing with us?

Eyre: Mum mad knaves, not a word, I'll do 't, I warrant
you. They are all beggars, my Liege, all for themselves: and
I for them all, on both my knees do entreat, that for the honor
of poor Simon Eyre, and the good of his brethren these

mad knaves, your Grace would vouchsafe some privilege to
my new Leaden hall, that it may be lawful for us to buy and
sell leather there two days a week. (2336-2348)

The feeling of camaraderie among the shoemakers is Dekker's final display of the artisanal worldview that concludes the play.

The *Shoemaker's Holiday* explores and draws out several schools of thought, the aristocratic, the mercantile/capitalistic, and the artisanal worldview. The play looks at each of

them in a long cast of characters, but ultimately the play concludes that the only way that early modern English society can achieve true peace and prosperity is to reject aristocracy and mercantilism, and to instead embrace the idea of solidarity among laborers and the communities that they create. These connections with others, and the valuing of labor over the relentless acquisition of wealth or of power consolidation and social snobbery, is the only way that the boundaries that keep members of the lower classes ostracized can ever be broken. As displayed in the character of Simon Eyre, true mobility, both physical and social, is achieved when labor is valued.

[1] Matthew Kendrick "'A Shoemaker Sell Flesh and Blood – O Indignity!': The Laboring Body and Community in The Shoemaker's Holiday" *English Studies* 92(3), 2011

[1] Matthew Kendrick. *Rude Mechanicals: Staging Labor in the Early Modern English Theater* (Doctoral Dissertation/University of Pittsburgh, 2011), 15.

[1] Manheim, Michael (1970). "The Construction of "The Shoemaker's Holiday"". *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*. 10 (2): 315–323.

[1] Matthew Kendrick. *At Work in the Early Modern Theater: Valuing Labor* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015). 3

[1] All references to *The Shoemaker's Holiday* will come from The Folger Shakespeare Library EMED edition

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[1] Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman* (London, 1630), 135.

[1] Matthew Kendrick. *Rude Mechanicals: Staging Labor in the Early Modern English Theater* (Doctoral Dissertation/University of Pittsburgh, 2011) 99.

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[1] Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1995), 228.

[1] Fleck, Andrew (1500–1900). "Marking Difference and National Identity in Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*". *Studies in English Literature*. **46** (2): 349–370.

[1] George Unwin, *The Guilds and Companies of London* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938), 83.

[1] Matthew Kendrick. *Rude Mechanicals: Staging Labor in the Early Modern English Theater* (Doctoral Dissertation/University of Pittsburgh, 2011) 102.

[1] Richard Rigby, “The Cobler’s Corrant.” http://emc.english.ucsb.edu/ballad_project.

[1] Kendrick, 10

Conclusion

Unsettled communities, as Fumerton has called them, are made up of some of the most vulnerable populations of people. That is an undeniable reality. Yet city comedy manages to take that reality, and both critically call it out with harsh satire, while also maintaining the agency of working-class characters. These characters do not have aristocratic or capitalistic advantages, but they are a sea of clever, daring, humorous, sometimes shiftless or even evil individuals. Indeed, their individuality is what makes it impossible, as Fumerton and Griffiths have both pointed out, to define one category known as "working class." I have worked to display this raucous, joyful variety of human experience in this dissertation.

Early moderns came to the playhouses of London for entertainment, but as Jean Howard has argued, they left with so much more. Cultural meaning-making is the work of drama, and the social satire set in the actual places and spaces of London creates personal interest and curiosity about the locations and institutions of London amongst its ever-growing subjectries. Plays such as *The Devil is an Ass* open space for serious discussions about issues such as migration, itinerant labor, the treatment of servants, the taboo of anonymity, and so much more. Pug, ironically enough, serves the role of the stranger in a foreign land, and through him, much can be learned about the plight of the poor and the displaced.

Yet there is much to be said about the duality of characters in all of these plays. Pug may work as a representative for the itinerant upon examination, but he is also a trickster, another familiar character in early modern comedy.[1] This is one revelation about mobility in city comedies. Disguising is one way for the positive outcome of bringing down harmful or discriminatory social barriers to come about. However, we have also seen that disguising is a means for tricksters to slip in and out of locations where they can and will do harm. This anxiety about tricksters is one large contributing factor to the anxiety and sometimes fear directed toward the poor and itinerant. People wanted to be able to discern between the "worthy poor" and those whom they believed to be gaming the system. This comes across in the heavy legislation of poor laws that sought to make it so that every person had to be tied to some institution of some means of gainful employment. In constructing these laws, much good was done in the way of charity, but harm was also done, as we saw in the case of Jane in *Shoemaker's Holiday.*[1]

It in *Shoemaker* as well that we see an almost utopian vision of peace being made between social classes and of the possibility of social mobility. It is surely a romanticized vision of London, but one which nonetheless leaves audiences envisioning what life could be like if we did indeed employ an artisanal framework of thought rather than investing in systems which prioritize personal prosperity and self-promotion. The second to last stanza of the play is spoken by Simon Eyre as he continues his banquet with the other shoemakers and with the king.

I bore the water tankard, and my coat
Sits not a whit the worse upon my back:

> And then upon a morning some mad boys,
> It was Shrove-Tuesday even as 'tis now,
> Gave me my breakfast, and I swore then by the stopple of
> my tankard, if ever I came to be Lord Mayor of London, I
> would feast all the prentices, This day (my liege) I did it, and
> the slaves had an hundred tables five times covered, they
> are gone home and vanished: yet add more honor to the
> Gentle Trade, taste of Eyre's banquet, Simon's
> happy made. (2367-2377)

It is this utopian vision of generosity embodied by Simon Eyre which not only separates Dekker's writing from that of Jonson, who would never write a character so utterly good as Eyre, but which suggests to the audience that perhaps there is another way to think about class and boundaries. Simon Eyre is a member of the working class, though he has now found wealth, he also displays an easy-going nature and love for mankind that puts the aristocracy and wealthy merchants to shame.

My goal in this project has been to contribute nuance and to complicate the ways in which we think about the working class in early modern literature. Who were they, and where and how did they live? Over the course of this dissertation work, my understanding of who the working classes of early modern London were has expanded exponentially. I entered this project with a vested interest in working-class literature, as working-class life is a part of my personal

journey. I approached my initial questions applying our current understanding of the term working class. What I discovered is that I needed broader terms, which writers such as Paul Griffiths, Matthew Kendrick, and Patricia Fumerton helped me find. I needed to think about the guild history of theater companies and why playwrights themselves might have vast personal understanding of working-class life. I needed to gain a better understanding of "middling" people and the merchant class. I believe that I have uncovered these over the course of my dissertation, though of course there is always more to learn.

Ultimately, this project is one near and dear to my heart and mind as I continue to look at literature from the perspective of those frequently pushed to the margins. At the end of this project, I have found a new appreciation for the serious social critique that can come out of comedy and a greater reverence for satirists who can force an audience to laugh at themselves and do important self-reflective work. I believe that the project of identifying, understanding, and deconstructing discriminatory boundaries between groups of people is an ongoing project that should be vigilantly pursued in both scholarship and in activism. Our greatest strength in this life is our connections with fellow human beings, and we can only improve the world by tearing down the barriers that separate us.

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