The Affects of Critique: Women and Satire in Early Modern England

by

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To my teachers

Acknowledgements

Academic work provides opportunities for joy: for me, these have included the pleasures of reading, writing, and discussing the ideas that keep me awake at night; the satisfaction of articulating conceptual relations with precision; the shock of looking back on old questions and realizing that I have answers; the delight of reanimating the writers whom I study, as well as their characters and plots, through my own prose. There are opportunities for joy, but it can be challenging to remember what a privilege it is to do the kind of research and writing that a doctorate entails when one is immersed in the realities of competing obligations and deadlines for the better part of a decade. As my dissertation suggests, however, if the problem is a matter of outlook or attitude, then the trick is to resist immersion in one's own experience by triggering a more distant, metacritical perspective. There are many friends, mentors, family, and Wits whom I would like to thank for triggering my metacritical perspective over the years, and for helping me recollect (or find) the joy in this work.

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The friends I have made in the UM English Department are some of the most brilliant and thoughtful people I have ever met. Elise Nagy, my partner in EGG, has shaped the way I think about organizing and advocacy, friendship, and objectivity (it doesn't exist!!). Elise is the

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I dedicated this dissertation to my teachers. It is abundantly clear to me how my interest in pursuing a PhD and my capacity to engage doctoral-level research were shaped by the educators who invested in my learning. My first thanks go to Vic Gallerano, who was – you guessed it – my sixth grade English teacher. "Mr. G" introduced me to Shakespeare; he formed a middle school Shakespeare troupe that enabled students to gain familiarity with the sound and feel of early modern language through performance. And perform we did: thanks to the Folger Shakespeare Library's public education programming, my first experience of Shakespeare was an onstage performance at the Folger's model replica of an Elizabethan theater. This embodied experience brought Elizabethan drama to life for me in a way that classroom learning had not; the strange immediacy that this experience lent to early modern language and sentiment animated my subsequent encounters with Shakespeare's works, preparing me for the incredible literary education I received – first at the Maret School with Tim Emerson, Claire Pettengill, Tracey Hughes, and Monica Lewis, and then at Northwestern University with Susie Phillips, Helen Thompson, Jeff Masten, Will West, Wendy Wall, Kasey Evans, and Martin Mueller. The experiences I had in these educators' classrooms changed the ways that I read, perceive, analyze, appreciate, and critique. I have saved their syllabi, which I keep near my desk and reference for my own lesson planning. I owe these teachers everything. I want to thank Martin Mueller in particular, whose advocacy for undergraduate research and scholarship gave me my start in the text-mining, data-janitoring corner of the digital humanities. Thank you for investing in young researchers, and for providing me with an avenue back to the Folger, albeit in a scholarly rather than performative capacity.

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Kristen Abbott Bennett came into my life by way of the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA) Annual Conference, for which she organized a popular seminar on early modern "Satire/Satyre." It is not overstating the case to say that my life changed (forever!) when I signed up to participate. Kristen helped me develop my conference paper into my first article, now

published in a satire-focused special issue of *Explorations in Early Modern Culture*, for which Kristen served as edition editor. Kristen opened my eyes to a new, precise, but far less belabored mode of writing than I had previously engaged, one that prioritizes simple syntax and centers my own voice; she helped me build my writerly chops and my confidence through this process, and has been a dear friend and mentor ever since. Thank you, Kristen, for believing in me, and for encouraging me to trust my critical instincts. Thank you for encouraging my commitment to the academic job market, which was really a commitment to myself! Thank you for the beers in Minneapolis, DC, and Maine; for the kayak-based tour of Spruce Head, and the Elvis Costello immersion that followed. Thank you for your friendship. I am so excited to continue working with and learning from you over the coming years!

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My love of literature came from my family. My brother, Henry, and I were raised by a

poet and a filmmaker who filled our world with stories. My parents, John and Jacqueline, read to

me every night until the day I realized I could do it myself; "Let's look it up!" was a frequent

refrain in our household, followed by definitional skirmishes between my parents' preferred

dictionaries; my mother took me to the Smithsonian's free exhibits, films, and theater on muggy,

DC summer days, and I developed my earliest critical capacities by talking with her about what

we had seen; my dad's dinnertime stories remain my paradigm for bewitching storytelling, the

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Abstract

"The Affects of Critique: Women and Satire in Early Modern England" analyzes how early modern dramatic satire contributed to the theater's production of social knowledge by articulating social difference through ironic ridicule. Examining how London's satiric theatrical tradition sought to manage fears about changing gender and sexual norms, I argue that dramatic satire assigns meaning to epistemologically ambiguous performances of gender by staging critical orientations toward them. These orientations are affective in nature: through ironized ridicule, satirical texts enact attitudes and hyperbolic affects toward characters who do not conform with expectations of their gender-based roles. I examine these satiric figurations of gender to identify how they reify widespread cultural beliefs about women's speech and embodiment, as well as how satire's self-critical mechanisms trouble the ideologies that uphold gendered categories in the first place. Using a rhetorical-affective framework to examine satire's meaning-making mechanisms, I develop a model for discerning implicit meaning by attending to the tensions that satire constructs between *what* is said (rhetoric) and *how* it is said or performed (affect). This model involves theorizing satire's diegetic and metacritical levels of meaning. I also bring a historicist-feminist framework to my analyses: while attending to historical structures of social inequality in satirical texts, I analyze how social categories are formed, how individuals become associated with particular categories, and how those categories are differently empowered within their staged hierarchies. My historicist-feminist framework acknowledges, in particular, the centrality of misogynistic rhetoric to early modern discourses of urbanization, knowledge, and status formation.

By combining feminist methods with theories of rhetoric and affect, I identify how misogyny functions as a feature, rather than a byproduct, of satirical texts.

"The Affects of Critique" identifies four primary mechanisms through which dramatic satire produces affective orientations toward the objects of its critiques: ironic distance, or the tonal quality that flags a text as mocking; abstraction; categories of identity (stereotypes); and the text's metacritical awareness, which enables it to comment on its own form and content. Chapter 1 examines how ironic distance and abstraction produce satiric meaning, and argues for a reconsideration of *Ado* and *Shrew* as satiric comedies. In its first section, this chapter examines how *Ado*'s Beatrice and *Shrew*'s Katherine undermine their associations with *gendered* stereotypes by ironically deploying their conventions; in its second section, the chapter examines how the plays undermine their associations with *generic* type by parodying the central conventions of romantic comedy, especially marriage. Chapter 2 examines categorization as a satiric meaning-making mechanism in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman*. By analyzing how Jonson employs intersecting beliefs about gender and status to produce three, hierarchized categories of urban identity, I argue that *Epicoene* presents social mobility – which involves a crossing of status categories – as an epistemological issue related to characters' knowledge and enactment of gender norms. Chapter 3 more closely examines the mechanisms that construct urbane, "witty" masculinity, the social category that tops the social hierarchy in the previous chapter. Chapter 3 identifies epistemological strategies – including suspicion and stereotyping – that witty figures use to access the metacritical awareness that enables them to articulate *Epicoene*'s satire and claim privileged, masculine status within their milieu.

Chapter 1 Introduction

On September 26, 2019, Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA) began the first impeachment inquiry against former US president Donald Trump with a controversial opening statement. One month prior to the inquiry, a whistleblower alleged that Trump had attempted to enhance his odds of reelection by soliciting foreign interference in US election proceedings: Trump had called and pressured the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate specious allegations against Trump's political opponent, Joe Biden, and Biden's son Hunter. The 2019 Congressional inquiry aimed to assess whether to bring charges against Trump, in part for "abusing the power of his office" by illegally "solicit[ing] foreign interference in our democratic elections" (*Politico*).[1] Thus, the inquiry needed to achieve two objectives: to demonstrate that Trump took illegal action by soliciting Zelenskyy's aid and to persuade the House of Representatives that Trump's action was worthy of official sanction. Unlike the formal trial proceedings that are brought to bear on illegal action undertaken by civilians, the calculus for determining whether to pursue formal sanction for a sitting president is not exclusively a matter of law, but also one of personal opinion, and thus of personal feeling. In an effort to bring the US Congress and the American public around to the shared feeling that impeachment was the right and obvious course of action, Adam Schiff sought to communicate the "essence" of the call between the two presidents. Rather than read directly from the transcript of the conversation, however, Schiff chose to satirize it.

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[1] Politico Staff, "Read Adam Schiff's Opening Argument at Senate Impeachment Trial."

To convey what he perceived as the "sum and character" of Trump's words, Schiff performed a slightly exaggerated version of the former president's lines that was, he later clarified, "at least in part, in parody" (PBS NewsHour, 5:10-5:12).[2] "[I]t reads like a classic, organized crime shakedown," Schiff begins, framing Trump's rhetoric in terms of the recognizable character type of the mob boss: "*We've been very good to your country. Very good*," Schiff intones, imitating Trump's repetitive speaking style (3:58-4:17). "*But you know what? I don't see much reciprocity here*," Schiff continues, mimicking the vaguely threatening, quid pro quo style that he attributes to a "crime shakedown": "*I have a favor I want from you … and I'm going to say this only seven times, so you better listen good*" (4:19-4:32).[3] Even if a listener were unfazed by the comparison between a US President and the leader of an organized crime syndicate, the absurdity of repeating a demand "only seven times" registers Schiff's hyperbole. Schiff undermines Trump's authority as President by first associating him with the character type of a crime boss, and then using exaggerated rhetoric to suggest that Trump fumbled his "shakedown" efforts. When Schiff concludes his parody, he articulates both the feeling and the opinion that he intends his satire to evoke in his audience: "It would be funny if it wasn't such a graphic betrayal of the President's oath of office. But as it does represent a real betrayal, there's nothing the President says here that is in America's interest after all" (5:17-5:30).

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[2] PBS NewsHour, "WATCH: Rep. Adam Schiff's Full Opening Statement on Whistleblower Complaint: Director of National Intelligence Hearing."

[3] Without access to the call's transcript, which the US government has not released in full, Schiff's inclusion of the number "seven" could refer to anything – perhaps Trump actually reiterated his demand of Zelenskyy seven times, or perhaps Schiff is simply mocking Trump's circular speaking style. Trump declassified a "Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation" – i.e. a non-verbatim recollection of the call from witnesses to the call, which includes a note cautioning readers that "A number of factors can affect the accuracy of the record, including poor telecommunications connections and variations in accent and/or interpretation" ("Telephone Conversation with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine"). The Memorandum can be accessed on the White House website: https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Unclassified09.2019.pdf.

But House Republicans did not find it funny. In fact, Schiff's satire appears to have shored up each political party's preexisting attitudes toward the prospect of impeachment: while all but three Democrats voted to bring charges against Trump, every Republican representative voted against that proposal. There are other likely reasons for this distribution of votes, but ultimately, Schiff's satire failed to garner either the feeling – amusement, bemusement, betrayal – or the opinion – that Trump's action constituted an impeachable offense – that Schiff attempted to muster. In fact, Schiff's satire triggered a flood of outrage so great that 183 members of the Republican caucus signed Resolution 630, a motion to formally censure Schiff for his parody. The motion claimed that Schiff's speech "misled the American people" through an "egregiously false and fabricated retelling" that had "no relationship" to Trump's call (2).[4] By claiming that Schiff's rendition had "*no* relationship" to the original call, rather than an ironic one, the motion refused to acknowledge the speech as satire, and instead accused Schiff of falsifying rather than ironizing information. Resolution 630 claims that in doing so, Schiff "made a mockery of the impeachment process, one of this chamber's most solemn constitutional duties" (2). With great but unintended irony, Resolution 630 accused Schiff of the very things that Schiff sought to highlight in Trump's conversation with Zelenskyy: Schiff attempted to shed light on *Trump's* efforts to mislead the American people – efforts that, Schiff strove to demonstrate, "made a mockery" of Trump's "constitutional duties" as a President and a steward of US interests.

Schiff's use of satire to inform Congressional and public attitudes toward the question of Trump's impeachability, and the refusal of Resolution 630 to recognize his speech as satire, raises a question at the heart of satire studies, both contemporary and historical: namely, the question of what satire attempts to accomplish. What purpose was Schiff trying to achieve by

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[4] House Resolution 630, "Condemning and censuring Adam Schiff."

satirizing Trump's call instead of, say, reading from the transcript? What did his satire *do*? How did his parody better support his aims than a more forthright mode of commentary? And why did it fail?

The question of what satire *does* has dominated satire studies for the better part of the last 400 years. Writers and scholars often respond to this question by acknowledging that satirical writing *critiques*, and that through criticism, which involves tonal and other affective dimensions, satire attempts to persuade. However, scholars often collapse important distinctions between satire's internal persuasive activity (*what it does*) and satire's external, social impact (*what it affects*), looking beyond the text – to an audience's reaction, to its social or political consequences – for its significance. This elision often results in studies that argue for satire's role in promoting forms of social change.[5] While this is a claim that many satirists make about their own intentions, the connection between hoped-for exposure and actual social change seems tenuous in its lack of evidence; in fact, historical evidence such as Resolution 630 suggests that it is more common for satire to trigger forms of censorship than social transformations. Furthermore, debates about satire's social function tend to train critical focus on the intentions and ideology of the writer, leaving open the question of *how* satire achieves its supposed aim.[6]

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[5] See William R. Jones, *Satire in the Elizabethan Era: An Activistic Art*; also Mark Knights and Adam Morton's Introduction to their edited collection, *The Power of Laughter and Satire in Early Modern Britain 1500-1800*. See also *Jonson, the Poetomachia, and the Reformation of Renaissance Satire,* in which Jay Simons takes seriously Ben Jonson's claim that he writes satiric excoriations of early modern culture to "purge" social ills from English society.

[6] See Leonard Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire*; and Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. More specifically, as this Introduction later discusses, these debates often culminate in the question about whether satire – either the form writ large or a specific instance of it – is inherently conservative (critical of change) or inherently revolutionary (critical of the status quo). "Conservative" and "revolutionary" here refer to platonic ideals of tradition/stasis versus change. Within this paradigm, Schiff's explicit intention for his parody of Trump's call with Zelenskyy is aligned with the conservative perspective: he intends to use his satiric parody to persuade Congress that Trump's behavior is a dangerous deviation from the norms of US governance that needs to be curtailed. In effect, however, if indeed it had any effect, Schiff's speech appears to have entrenched, rather than changed, preexisting attitudes toward the significance of Trump's call.

This "how" is the topic of my dissertation. "The Affects of Critique: Women and Satire in Early Modern England" examines the primary mechanisms through which early modern dramatic satire produces satirical meaning. While I maintain a keen interest in the social dimensions of satirical literature, I shift the critical focus away from questions of authorial intent or social impact and back to the text itself to identify the specific rhetorical and affective moves through which satirical literature figures, codifies, and critiques the social phenomena that it represents. For instance, if we bracket questions about the success of Schiff's project and focus instead on *how* Schiff satirizes Trump's call, we can identify the rhetorical and affective devices – such as Schiff's tonal irony, rhetorical exaggeration, and use of cultural stereotypes – through which his speech interprets, or produces meaning that was not explicit in, the original call.

My dissertation argues that satire, in addition to taking generic and modal forms, is itself a critical methodology. By this I mean that satire is a way of producing knowledge by constructing meaning out of confusing and troubling social phenomena. More specifically, satire is a way of apprehending epistemologically ambiguous relationships and experiences by performing critical, oppositional orientations toward them. "Orientation" is a term that Sara Ahmed uses to describe the affective, spatial, and social relationships between subjects and objects.[7] By claiming that satire produces *critical* orientations toward its objects through the act of critique, I suggest that satirical texts construct particular ways of thinking and feeling about their targets that amount to a type of criticism, ridicule, or other evaluation of the object. The critical orientations that I examine are affective in nature: through mockery or other forms of ironized ridicule, satirical texts enact critical *attitudes* toward their objects, which can range from gentle forms of amusement to more vicious forms of contempt. Schiff's use of "the crime boss"

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[7] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*.

works in just this way: the stereotype indexes negative attitudes toward organized crime and the people involved in its operations, which Schiff implicitly draws on to characterize Trump as a criminal. Regardless of its impact on readers or audiences, by presenting critical, affective orientations toward its objects, a satirical text attempts to resolve whatever epistemological tensions, complexities, and uncertainties that it registers, which might otherwise complicate interpretations of that object. For instance, by performing an amused, if derisive, attitude toward Trump's call with Zelenskyy, Schiff constructed a clear, if apparently unpersuasive, way to apprehend a complex socio-political phenomenon.

My project is more concerned with the strategies with which Schiff constructed his critical orientation than the fact that Republican representatives did not adopt Schiff's orientation as their own – indeed, this example illustrates the gap between satiric intention and effect alluded to earlier. Specifically, in what follows I identify four of the primary mechanisms through which early modern satirical drama produces affective orientations toward the objects of its critiques: ironic (or critical) distance, or the affective quality, often allied with a stance of detachment, that flags a text as mocking;[8] abstraction, or the effect of apprehending an idea or phenomenon independently of its context; categories of identity or "types" of personhood, including stereotypes such as the cultural trope of the crime boss that Schiff invokes; and the text's self-conscious (metacritical or metadramatic) awareness, which enables it to comment on its own form and content.

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[8] As Chapter 1 explains in more detail, Anne Lake Prescott describes ironic distance as "difference," "distance," "detachment," or some other form of "fiction" that clues the interpreter into the fact that something more is being said than the literal meaning of the words one apprehends (220). See Prescott, "The Evolution of Tudor Satire."

1.1 Satire's Social and Critical Contexts

These four mechanisms appear consistently throughout satirical literature written in diverse times and spaces. Religious, political, and cultural authorities tend to pay critical attention to satire during periods and in places of pronounced social and political instability, in part because satire is perceived as a threat to the structures and people it critiques. Our current time is one of those moments; so, too, was London at the turn of the seventeenth century.[9] As early modern England continued its slow shift from a feudalistic, agrarian society to a capitalistic one, London, the country's primary locus of trade and migration, experienced significant cultural changes, including rapid urbanization, an expanded market for expensive and affordable goods, and the emergence of a monied but largely untitled merchant class.[10] These cultural changes placed pressure on Londoners to serve new, or newly significant, social functions in commerce, business, the law, household management, and other spheres – social functions that sometimes came into conflict with the ideal forms of their social roles as, for instance, husbands, wives,

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[9] A Google Ngram search of the term "satire" – British spelling, insensitive to case, including six of its linguistic variations: satiric, satirical, satirist, satyre, satirize, satires – between 1500 and 2000 shows that the second-highest frequency of the term occurred between 1593 and 1603 (peaking between 1596-1600), rivaling the nineteenth century for frequency of use. The early modern peak is precisely aligned with my period of focus: Shakespeare's *Shrew* is believed to have been written just prior to this peak, between 1590-1592; *Ado* is believed to have been written between 1598-1599; and Jonson's *Epicoene* was first performed in 1609, at the tail end of the frequency period. When adjusted for US spelling, the Ngram suggests that the early modern period far exceeds the nineteenth century in terms of the frequency of the term "satire," peaking between 1599 and 1608. It is worth noting that Google Ngram normalizes its data according to the number of books published in a given year, presenting ratios of term frequency to quantity of new books; however, it includes only digitized literature in its frequencies. Thus, because a significant amount of early modern literature was unpublished (i.e. in manuscript form) and has been lost to history, because a significant amount of early modern literature did not circulate in book form, and because there are extant early modern texts that have yet to be digitized, there is a great likelihood that the early modern period features additional references to satire that are not represented in the Ngram graph. Those interested in my search terms and results may view them here: https://shorturl.at/efOX9. See Jean-Baptiste Michel, Yuan Kui Shen, Aviva Presser Aiden, et al, *Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books*.

[10] For more on the urbanization of early modern London, see Phil Withington, "Urbanization"; also Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580-1650*. For an overview of the London markets see David Harris Sacks, "London's Dominion: The Metropolis, the Market Economy, and the State." For more on England's merchants and mercantile culture, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England,* and Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*.

fathers, and mothers. As these examples suggest, in early modern England, social roles were, in their ideal forms, also gendered: men were authorized to exchange coin, chattel, land, and titles through their roles as fathers and husbands; women, who were largely prohibited from owning property, were enjoined to attend to the function and propriety of their households in their roles as wives, and to perpetuate family wealth by bearing heirs in their roles as mothers. As Amy Erikson, Christine Churches, Julie Crawford, Frances Dolan, Wendy Wall, and others have demonstrated, however, the practical realities of early modern city living – the cost of living, the presence and perpetual threat of disease, changing fashions, the uneven distribution of resources and responsibilities across homes and families, etc. – yielded a social economy in which the parameters of social roles and the norms of gender performance were shifting in conspicuous ways.[11] The transgression of gendered social norms was an explicit feature of everyday life that Londoners noticed, wrote about, and critiqued in a broad swath of texts, from sermons and homilies to conduct books, legal records, and the period's satirical literature. These texts articulate beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and other forms of knowledge about the forms of social difference that they observe, which provide a granular record of how early modern writers came to understand their changing world by articulating social difference through categories such as gender and social roles.

Satire was the genre, mode, and methodology that many early modern writers turned to in order to make sense of their mutable social worlds.[12] By the end of the sixteenth century, satire

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[11] See Christine Churches, "Women and Property in Early Modern England: A Case Study"; Julie Crawford, *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England*; Frances Dolan, "Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England"; Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*; Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance*.

[12] For commentary on the ways in which satire not only critiques, but also attempts to establish an order for social and political instability, see Kristen Abbott Bennett's introduction to the special issue of *Explorations in Early Modern Culture* on "Early Modern English Satire/Satyre" (2022). In *The Difference Satire Makes* (2001), Frederic

had become a particularly prominent literary style in England: pamphlets, poems, mock-hornbooks, mock-encomia, plays, and other satirical forms proliferated.[13] The theatrical tradition also featured a wide array of satirical elements – characters, subplots, and scenes dramatizing critique – across its comic, tragic, and historical genres. Like other early modern satirical traditions, dramatic satire ridiculed the transgression of social norms and circulated highly partisan, chauvinistic interpretations of people and practices that were commonly viewed as transgressive, such as domineering wives, cuckolded husbands, cosmetic artistry, crossdressing, non-reproductive sex acts, ornate or foreign styles of dress, and other forms of self-representation that challenged the parameters of normative, gendered notions of social roles, relationships, and functions. For many Londoners, the theater was a location of communal gathering, where they could see national history, everyday dramas, and fantastical alternatives staged in various forms. The theater was a site where social knowledge – news, lore, beliefs, attitudes, and other ideas about gender, status, and other elements of the social world – was not just represented, but synthesized and produced.[14]

"The Affects of Critique" explores satire's function in the theater's production of social knowledge. In order to describe *how* dramatic satire produces beliefs and other forms of knowledge about the problems of the early modern present, it examines how satirical drama

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Bogel takes a slightly different approach, challenging the formalist presumption that satire is an instrument of moral order to claim that it is, rather, a "poetics of disequilibrium" (124); however, Bogel does not consider how satirical texts might present that disequilibrium in their own terms and order. Scholars working from various methodological perspectives have observed how satire presents and organizes supposedly disordered social phenomena: from the early formal analyses of Robert Elliot (*Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, and Art*) and Leonard Feinberg (*Introduction to Satire*), to Mark Knights and Adam Morton's recent anthology (*The Power of Laughter and Satire in Early Modern Britain: Political and Religious Culture, 1500-1820*), the historical social and political contexts of satire have remained central to critical readings of the mode.

[13] See Prescott, "The Evolution of Tudor Satire"; Eugene Kirk, *Menippean Satire: An Annotated Catalogue of Texts and Criticism*; also Knights and Morton.

[14] See Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*; Jean Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*; Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*; Allison Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England*.

represents ambivalent attitudes and hyperbolic affects toward forms of gendered difference.

Gender is a useful place to investigate satire's social role in early modern London not only

because it is a flashpoint for social conflict during this period, but also because gender is a social

category laden with cultural beliefs and attitudes that satirical drama brings to life onstage.[15]

Early modern English society was organized by patriarchy, a system of legal and social

infrastructure that empowers men to control the rights and privileges afforded to people within

that society: not only were the national faith and government controlled by men – and, when

Elizabeth I took the throne, by a woman who often masculinized her authority to justify her

reign;[16] men were also further empowered to control the women in their lives through the laws of

coverture, which legally categorized women as the property of their husbands or fathers and

attempted to prevent women from owning wealth or property themselves. However, while the

patriarchal ideal undergirded English culture, in London, the practical realities of urban life

enjoined women to work in larger numbers in public spaces outside the home and to adopt roles

and forms of authority that challenged patriarchy's passive ideals of women's gender

performance. Early modern writers observed this discrepancy between the culture's patriarchal

ideals and the realities of urban gender performance. In their attempts to understand,

characterize, and critique the early modern present, writers of prescriptive literature, sermons,

and plays frequently articulate misogyny, the hatred and assumed inferiority of women, which is

both a byproduct of and a tool for enforcing patriarchy.

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[15] See David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England;* and Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex & Subordination in England 1500–1800.*

[16] See, for instance, Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power,* especially the "Introduction" (1-9) and "Elizabeth as King and Queen" (121-148); and Janel Mueller, "Virtue and Virtuality: Gender in the Self-Representations of Queen Elizabeth I."

Misogyny was a particularly prominent feature of the early modern period's satirical literature, which frequently found occasion to criticize London's changing social and economic structures through the framework of gender, drawing on the period's patriarchal ideals to critique women as particularly visible and transgressive agents of such change. Satirical texts often figure gender and marriage as vehicles for larger critiques of foreign goods and people, a shifting class system, and national diplomacy, mobilizing misogynistic cultural attitudes and beliefs about women and gender relations to ridicule these broader social phenomena via their staged analogs. I examine these satirical figurations of gender to identify how misogyny operates and circulates in the period's dramatic satire in the form of attitudes and hyperbolic affects, how these attitudes and affects reify widespread cultural beliefs about women's speech and domestic labor, as well as how satire's self-critical mechanisms – ironic distance and metacritical or metadramatic awareness – trouble the cultural beliefs that uphold gendered categories in the first place.

Drama sits at the heart of my analyses for three reasons: first, it explicitly stages social *relationships*. Satiric plays codify forms of social difference as elements of character that inform how staged personae dramatize their thoughts and feelings about others. Interpersonal tensions, conflicting viewpoints, and instances of ridicule – all staples of early modern drama more generally – provide opportunities to examine the forms of knowledge and feeling that characters articulate as they attempt to understand unfamiliar or disorienting performances of gender, status, and social roles. Second, as this dissertation suggests, satire itself is an inherently performative mode, and the action on stage enables my effort to characterize the mechanisms of satire's production of meaning, which, as I've indicated, include metacritical and ironically distanced perspectives on the text. By "performative," I mean that satire levels its critiques by *enacting* an object of ridicule in self-conscious ways that draw attention to its constructedness or equivocality

and thereby undermine straightforward interpretations of that object. We can think of this method of critique in theatrical terms: satire produces meaning – meaning that is always ironic, often implicit, and often made equivocal by the possibility of other interpretations – through a dialectical relationship between the diegetic and the metacritical levels of significance. In dramatic satire, the diegetic level is the world of the play, where the drama unfolds; it is the level at which characters speak and act, and where the behavior that a play satirizes often occurs. The metacritical (sometimes metadramatic) level represents an outside view of the social and ideological structures that organize the staged action;[17] it is often aligned with an audience's perspective and typically entails an awareness of social contexts that is withheld from characters who are confined to a diegetic perspective. Thus, the metacritical level of significance can bring broader systems of meaning – cultural beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives beyond the text – to bear on staged issues. From the metacritical vantage, an interpreter may perceive *how* other characters perform their identities and pass judgment on those characters' enactments of self.

While ridicule articulated from a metacritical perspective *can* proclaim a play's overarching satire, it is risky to assume that satiric meaning resides exclusively at the metadramatic level of significance – or, for that matter, exclusively at the diegetic levels of significance. Rather, satiric meaning is produced through the dynamic interplay of those scales when they are positioned in ironic tension – i.e. tension between *what* a text says (diegetic level) and the tone or social context in which it says it, which is often only legible from the metacritical

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[17] In contrast to the term "metacritical," which represents a perspective that is accessible to the audience and, sometimes, knowing characters, as Chapters 2 and 3 discuss in more detail, I use the term "metadramatic" to refer to outside or distanced perspectives on staged behaviors and social relations that recognizes them as literal performances. The metadramatic perspective is often available to audiences but rarely to characters within the play-world; Chapter 3 discusses one character in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman* – Dauphine – who gains privileged access to a metadramatic perspective.

perspective.[18] For instance, at the diegetic level, one character might compliment another

character's style of dress. While their explicit language might appear to be admiring, however,

the character's tone, punning rhetoric, or allusions might draw metacritical attention to the

meaning of their language in ways that undercut its flattering significance. This metacritical

irony might, then, invite an alternative interpretation of the complimentary character's words as

an instance of ironic social critique. However, based on tonal or contextual information that is

available at the metacritical level, the would-be complimentary character might also become

legible as the object, rather than the speaker, of the scene's critique for the ignorance or

hypocrisy that their mock-compliment conveys. In its synthetic uptake of the diegetic and

metacritical levels of meaning, this alternative, critical interpretation, I submit, represents the

satiric level of significance, where satiric meaning is created and resides.[19] I examine how

dramatic satire's rhetorical and affective mechanisms produce tensions between the diegetic and

the metacritical levels of significance, which, in their intersections, produce meaning at the level

of satire.[20]

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[18] The tensions that dramatic satire constructs between the diegetic and metacritical scales of meaning produce occasions for dramatic irony; through dramatic irony, satire implicates the audience in the drama of the stage by implicitly asking viewers to assign meaning to its layers of ironic ambiguity.

[19] Certain characters gain privileged access to this synthetic interpretive space in the period's plays, using asides, direct address, puns, and other devices to influence metacritical interpretations of their housing fictions from within their dramatic structures. This capacity to mediate between the staged and extra-theatrical worlds, to articulate a play's satire on its behalf, often constitutes a form of *social* privilege for such characters within the dramatized world (as Chapter 3 demonstrates). As such, the metacritical perspective offers a theatrically-specific way to assess a character's function within a play's satirical apparatus.

[20] In the field of sociology, the terms one might use to characterize what I have termed the diegetic, metacritical, and synthetic/satiric levels of meaning are the micro, the macro, and the meso. These terms are typically used to describe analyses of individuals (micro); of society (macro); and of groups, communities, and institutions (meso). In my study, a macro-level analysis would examine the social, generic, and ideological structures that organize a play's social world; a micro-level analysis would examine the ways in which individual characters experience those structures; and a meso-level analysis would examine the relationships, categories, and constructs that are produced through interactions between the structural (macro) and experiential (micro) scales. Joseph Gamble introduced these sociological levels of scale to the field of early modern literary studies in *Sex Lives: Intimate Infrastructures in Early Modernity*.

The third reason I center dramatic satire as the focus of my project is that the genre is under-examined within the field of satire studies,[21] and I seek to provide some guidelines to support its continued analysis as a component of social and epistemological production. Those who do work with satirical drama tend to focus on the plays and literary status of individual writers, aiming to identify their contemporary and historical influences.[22] This important work enables us to understand the literary and intellectual legacies in which certain early modern satirists participate, but it generally leaves open questions about how dramatic satire participates in contemporary discourses of social difference. As I discuss below, the plays that I consider to be satirical, though under-examined in the context of satire studies, have been productive sites of inquiry in other fields, including performance history, urban social history, feminist criticism, affect theory, and sexuality studies. My study bridges these fields by considering how satirical plays organize the forms of gender, sexuality, and other social categories that they stage, while drawing metacritical attention to the fact of their own constructedness.

Examining how satirical stage plays articulated and sought to manage fears about changing gender and sexual norms, "The Affects of Critique" argues that dramatic satire socializes its readers and audiences to accept misogynistic stereotypes by teaching critical ways of feeling and thinking about women, their speech, and their labor in London's changing social

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[21] Dramatic satire has been acknowledged in prominent accounts of the period's social and theatrical history, such as inHoward's *The Stage and Social Struggle* and *Theater of a City*, but is under-examined not only as a tradition of satire, but also as a dramatic subgenre or mode with distinct characteristics and relationships to social issues within the early modern theatrical tradition (and performance history). For instance, in her survey of "The Evolution of Tudor Satire," spanning 1500-1600, Ann Lake Prescott attends only to examples of verse and prose satire. One site where early modern dramatic satire has been examined in depth is the "Poetomachia" – also known as the "Poets' War" or "War of the Theaters" – wherein satirical playwrights – primarily John Marston, Thomas Dekker, and Ben Jonson – wrote each other into their plays in order to mock the others' rhetorical and dramatic styles. See Simons; Rebecca Yearling, "The Poets' War Revisited"; Maria Teresa Micaela Prendergast, *Railing, Reviling, and Invective in English Literary Culture, 1588-1617: The Anti-Poetics of Theater and Print*.

[22] See Rebecca Yearling, *Ben Jonson, John Marston and Early Modern Drama: Satire and the Audience;* Margot Heinemann, "Drama and Opinion in the 1620s: Middleton and Massinger"; Simons, *Jonson, the Poetomachia, and the Reformation of Renaissance Satire*.

environment. To facilitate my analysis of how dramatic satire's formal structure – particularly the four mechanisms that produce the often-equivocal meaning in satiric plays (ironic distance, abstraction, stereotyping, and metacritical awareness) – draws on extratextual attitudes, stereotypes, and other social contexts to animate its critiques of staged figures, I employ simultaneously two frameworks. The first is a rhetorical-affective framework: a method of discerning implicit meaning by attending to the discrepancies between what is said (rhetoric) and the tone through which it is said or performed (affect). This analytic involves theorizing and historicizing rhetorical and affective devices, such as exaggeration, dramatic irony, affective detachment, suspicion, and stereotyping.

My attention to rhetoric and the specific affects involved in its production is supplemented with a historicist-feminist framework. By historicist-feminist, I mean not only attending to historical structures of social inequality, but also analyzing the ways in which social categories are formed, how individuals become associated with particular categories, and how those categories are differently empowered within their fictionalized hierarchies. In my study, a historicist-feminist analytic acknowledges, in particular, the centrality of misogynistic rhetoric to early modern discourses of urbanization, labor, and status formation – precisely because satire studies have long engaged formalist reading methods that accept misogyny as a largely uncomplicated, if embarrassing, byproduct of the form: satire studies have long construed misogyny as an epiphenomenal, rather than a central, component of early modern satire's method of meaning-making.[23] By using feminist methods, combined with historicized theories of

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[23] In her discussion of the influence that classical satirists had on the evolution of Tudor satire, Ann Lake Prescott suggests that because misogyny was "impelled by several cultural energies" in early modern England and its historical antecedents, "laughter at female sexuality, craft, or ambition" was a convention of the form, "a social game and, on one level, lightly meant" (222). My dissertation contests the idea that satiric misogyny was "lightly meant" on any level; misogyny is, I argue, an indispensable mode of satiric production in this period's dramatic tradition. See Prescott.

rhetoric and affect, I identify how misogyny functions as a feature, rather than a byproduct, of satirical texts. This analysis contributes to our understanding of satire's inflated prominence in times of rapid social change, as well as the role that satire plays in creating and perpetuating gender-based stereotypes.

1.1.1 Satire Scholarship

Readers and critics of satiric literature written across time and place have long struggled to define satire's parameters, to identify its relationship to earnestness and irony, and to distinguish it from other forms of literature and criticism. I suspect that one of the reasons that dramatic satire has garnered less focus by early modern satire scholars is that even within the field of satire, its parameters are difficult to define. Whereas the genre of verse satire has been well-established, both by satirists' commentary about the form and intended functions of their own poems, as well as by scholars' collations of its conventions, when satire functions as a mode that infiltrates other genres, it is a fundamentally slippery thing to identify, let alone define. Formalism fueled much of the scholarly interest in satirical literature in the early parts of the twentieth century. The desire to classify particular texts under the generic rubric "satire" yielded neat results: through this lens, generic satire was recognized as a poetic form, and only occasionally as a subgenre of prose known as Menippean satire.[24] Few of these early formalists ventured into the murky waters of Menippean satire, preferring to read and evaluate satirical verse based on more established poetic aesthetics. As a result, poetic satire has been the prevailing focus of early modern satire studies, and the formalist methods used to examine them have dominated the field. These early formalist analyses focused on the Classical roots of the

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[24] See Mary C. Randolph, "The structural design of the formal verse satire"; Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse* (1959); Elliott; Feinberg; and Prescott.

Renaissance satirical tradition, tracing tone, authorial personae, structure, and imagery back to precedents set by Juvenal, Horace, Lucilius, and other satirists whose works were taught and studied in early modern schoolrooms. Indeed, many early modern satirists – Ben Jonson, John Marston, Thomas Dekker, John Weever, and Everard Guilpin prominent among them – deliberately modeled their craft after these ancient poets.[25]

Like the Classical models, early modern verse satire justifies itself through an ethic of public exposure of private vice. In these poems, the tone can be eviscerating like Juvenal's or gently amused like Horace's. Following the examples of Horace and Lucilius, who were themselves parodying Socratic dialogues, early modern verse satire often represents negotiations between a wise, virtuous poetic persona and a foolish or allegorical vice figure. These poems dramatize the interplay between vice and virtue, or sense and nonsense, which the satiric personae attempt to represent in clear delineations – and which formalist critics seem to take at face value. These readings tended to contribute to debates about whether satire as a whole, extrapolated from particular poems, was a "conservative" form – that is, whether satire mocked change and deviations from tradition – or a "revolutionary" one – whether it called for changes to outdated modes of governance, social norms, or other forms of social organization and authority.[26] More recent scholarship demonstrates how quickly the clarity implied by formalist readings can muddy, however. Not only do early modern satires usually incorporate Horatian wit *and* Juvenalian bite, offer contradicting opinions about preserving or destroying tradition, and confuse the authorial voice with that of the satirical spokesperson, but they also feature satirical

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[25] Using "activism" as an analytic, William R. Jones examines the relationship between early modern and classical models of satire in *Satire in the Elizabethan Era: An Activistic Art*.

[26] See Jones; Kernan; Feinberg; Elliott.

personae, uniformly male, who often reveal their own implication in the worlds they rail

against.[27]

Like the formalists, early modern satirists – and its contemporary critics, who tried to

purge satire from literate society – viewed satirical poetry as its own genre. However, even

during the sixteenth century, playwrights, pamphleteers, and city censors recognized that other

types of texts operated under a satirical rubric. We can see this when, in 1599, Richard Bancroft,

Bishop of London, and John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, signed their names to a ban of

all satirical literature,[28] but faced difficulty offering a clear delineation of what counted as

"satire": the entry in the stationer's register begins with a list of offensive "*Epigrams and*

Satyres," established examples of the poetic genre, before moving on to associate satire with

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[27] Robert Elliott is often attributed with first describing this phenomenon as the "satirist satirized" in *The Power of Satire*. In his more recent study of satire that is written in the Juvenalian tradition, Ralph M. Rosen notes that the satirist "paints *himself* into the portrait of the character he is supposed to be attacking," exposing his own involvement in the qualities he ridicules (225). See Rosen, *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire*. See also Wendy Wall's "Introduction to *Microcynicon: Six Snarling Satires*."

[28] The text of the Bishop's Ban calls for the burning of additional books of poetry, plays, and prose satires than I mention above:

> *Satyres* tearmed Halls *Satyres viz virgidemiarum, or his toothles or bitinge Satyres* /
> *Pigmalion with certaine other Satyres* /
> The scourge of villanye /
> *The Shadowe of truthe in Epigrams and Satyres* /
> Snarlinge Satyres /
> Caltha Poetarum /
> Davyes *Epigrams*, with MARLOWes *Elegyes*
> The booke againste woemen, viz, *of miarriage and wyvinge* /
> *The xv ioyes of marriage*
> That noe *Satyres* or *Epigramms* be printed hereafter
> That noe English historyes bee printed excepte they bee allowed by somme of her maiesties privie Counsell
> That noe playes bee printed excepte they bee allowed by suche as haue aucthorytie /
> That all NASSHes bookes and Doctor HARVYes bookes be taken wheresouer they maye be found and that none of theire bookes bee euer printed hereafter /
> That thoughe any booke of the nature of theise heretofore expressed shalbe broughte unto yow under the hands of the Lord Archbisshop of Canterburye or the Lord Bishop of London yet the said booke shall not bee printed until the master or wardens have acquainted the said lord Archbishop, or the Lord Bishop with the same, to knowe whether it be theire hand or no /
> JO[HN WHITGIFT] CANTUAR
> RIC[HARD BANCROFT] LONDON
> Suche bookes as can be found or are already taken of the Argumentes aforesaid or any of the bookes above expressed lett them bee presentlye broughte to the Bishop of London to be burnte

See Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers, 1554-1640.*

particular writers, banning (and suggesting the burning of) "all NASSHes bookes and Doctor HARVYes bookes." The ban does not stop with poetry or the works of known satirists; it also outlaws the printing of unapproved "English historyes," seems to find this insufficient, and broadens its generic scope to decree that "noe playes bee printed" except by the express authority of "her majesties privie Counsell." Uninterested or unable to identify a single organizing principle for the offending satires, the censure concludes with its broadest and vaguest descriptor yet: a blanket ban on "any booke of the nature of theise heretofore expressed." The Bishops' Ban implies that early modern satire constitutes more than a poetic genre; it is more, too, than the corpus of an author or a series of verse, prose, and dramatic genres. Rather, there is a satirical "nature" that can be "expressed" in "any booke."

In alignment with the Bishops' Ban's attention to a satirical "nature," the critical conversation about satire shifted in the wake of the historicist wave of the 1980s from a desire to classify texts according to strict generic definitions to an interest in classifying texts according to shared *methods* of commentary. Such an approach necessarily broadens the definition and import of satire beyond its status as a recognizable genre. Scholars such as Frederic Bogel, Kirk Combe, Brian A. Connery, Dustin Griffin, Ashley Marshall, Andrew McRae, Claude Rawson, and others began pushing for satire's consideration as a mode (that is, as a style or manner of expression) rather than a genre, a move that enables us to see a wider array of texts and genres contributing to the satiric tradition.[29] The genre vs. mode debate dominated satire studies for around two

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[29] See Frederic Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron*; Claude Rawson, *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*; Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (1994); Brian Connery and Kirk Combe, "Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction"; Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England*, *1658-1770*; and Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*.

decades, gradually evolving into a more nuanced perspective that avoided the either/or formulation and accepted satire as *both* a genre and a literary mode.[30]

Treating satire as a literary mode broadens the number and types of texts considered to be satirical; but even with this greater flexibility, the focus is still on what types of texts "count" as satire, which tends to center particular rhetorical styles as a determinant of satiric conventionality, often at the exclusion of other formal or social conventions. I view this focus as a limit to a fuller understanding of satire's role in literary and social history. Accordingly, my dissertation conceptually reframes satire as a *critical methodology*, in addition to a genre and a mode. A critical methodology suggests that satire can be a strategy for apprehending information and constructing meaning that can appear in any genre and energize any discursive or literary mode. In contrast to the ways in which satire scholars have used the concept of the satiric "mode" to identify shared stylistic conventions through which scholars may aggregate a broader range of texts under the satiric umbrella, I use the term "strategy" (or "critical methodology") to focus instead on how texts *use* those shared formal conventions to produce meaning about staged and extra-textual social phenomena. Thus, in order to characterize the satiric "nature" in more specific terms than the Bishops of London and Canterbury could, this dissertation describes the functions of its central meaning-making mechanisms.

1.1.2 Dramatic Satire in Early Modern London

Certain plays and theatrical styles, such as those associated with early modern London's private theaters, cultivate their satiric meaning through explicit, metacritical commentary on diegetic events. This commentary is often voiced by individual characters who inhabit the

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[30] Prescott's article, "The Evolution of Tudor Satire," is a useful example of this broader sense of satire's generic and modal parameters.

privileged position of satirical speaker – that is, the spokesperson for the play's satirical critique. Through the satirical speaker's position as both participant in the literary action and as critic of the same, they gesture toward the processes through which identity and authority are negotiated and produced in satirical texts. These satirical speakers are uniformly witty – rhetorically nimble, waggish, knowing, and critical of the social issues that they perceive in their playworlds – and these "Wits" have special status in their plays precisely because they can articulate a metacritical perspective on the diegetic scenes in which they are situated. From that lofty perspective, which is often aligned with the audience's view of staged events, they not only comment on, but sometimes manipulate, the social dynamics that the plays hold up for audience scrutiny. Satirical plays that feature witty characters as their satirical spokespeople often dramatize social disorder that, through various machinations often choreographed by the Wits, shuffles characters into emergent social hierarchies based on the Wits' interpretations of social difference – typically with the witty characters at the top of the social ladder. These social hierarchies crystallize particular ways of feeling and thinking about the types of ideas and people that satirical characters are staged to represent, by depicting them in clear relations to power.

Because the price of admission at public theaters was not prohibitive for many Londoners, these stages catered to a broader swath of viewers than the private theaters.[31] Whether playwrights feared legal consequences for criticizing governing bodies before large audiences, recognized that strong critiques of shared cultural phenomena might put off, or fail to entertain, key stakeholders in their public audiences, or some other reason, the satirical elements in public plays were generally subtler than those written for private theaters. While public plays might feature jesters, fools, malcontents, or other figures who occasionally voice criticisms of

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[31] See Howard and Gurr.

social phenomena, these characters are typically marginal to the play's focus on the plot's "main characters"; overall, public plays tend to imply, rather than directly express, their satirical meaning. Without a designated main character acting the part of satirical speaker, plays that maintained a satirical component made use of other structural elements to generate the critical distance needed to ironize or comment on its own content. For instance, through subplots that parody the main plots, and through self-referencing allusions, asides, postures or attitudes, or other tonal devices that draw attention to their own critical function, satirical texts can produce alternative ways of interpreting the scenes that they stage.

The two writers whose works I discuss, Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare, exemplify these two different theatrical traditions. Jonson, whose dramatic works were written primarily, though not exclusively, for private theaters, was one of the best-known satirists of his time.[32] Jonson's poetic and dramatic works have been prominent sites of examination for early modern satire studies, due to his status as an exemplar of the period's satiric techniques, which his contemporaries mimicked and sometimes mocked, as well as because of the everyday social dynamics that his satiric works featured, which provide useful windows into the period's cultural phenomena and social attitudes. In particular, Jonson's play *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman*, which is the focus of two of my chapters, has been a popular site for recent scholarship due to its satirical depictions of gender,[33] sexuality,[34] marriage, social status, wit and forms of mastery,[35]

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[32] See Simons.

[33] See Simone Chess, "Crossdressed Brides and the Marriage Market: *A Mad World, My Master, Epicoene*, and 'Phylotus and Emelia."

[34] See Ari Friedlander, "Mastery, Masculinity, and Sexual Cozening in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*," in Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 53.2 (Spring 2013): 379-399.

[35] See Adam Zucker, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy*; Friendlander.

discourse,[36] urban social life,[37] and more. Because of *Epicoene*'s centrality to extant scholarship on satirical drama from the early modern period, I adopt the text as a primary site for my analysis of satire as a critical methodology, shifting the critical focus, however, to the play's satiric mechanisms of knowledge production.

In part due to the stylistic contrast that Shakespeare's plays provide to Jonson's, "The Affects of Critique" features this writer for the public stage whose works provide an alternative to the Jonsonian "standard" for early modern satiric drama. Unlike Jonson, Shakespeare has not been readily recognized as a satirical writer, although this is changing as recent scholars begin to register the social, affective/tonal, and narrative tensions that many of his comedies feature as moments of satire.[38] The two Shakespearean plays that I examine include prominent examples of such tensions. *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing* have both been characterized in recent scholarship as "problem plays" – that is, plays that do not fit neatly into the category of comedy, much less romantic comedy, for the ways that they court tragedy and challenge the romantic and comedic premises of their narratives. By including Shakespeare's works in my analyses of satiric texts, I show how he participates in the culture of satiric critique that pervaded the turn of the seventeenth century, while illuminating a mode of satiric production that demonstrates the subtle ways in which satirical meaning-making mechanisms can infiltrate other, established genres and modes of storytelling.

"The Affects of Critique" is organized into three chapters, each of which examines different mechanisms of satiric meaning-making; together, they aim to identify *how* early

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[36] See Hristomir A. Stanev's "Ben Jonson's Eloquent Nonsense: The Noisy Ordeals of Heard Meanings on the Jacobean Stage"; Mimi Yiu, "Sounding the Space between Men: Choric and Choral Cities in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman.*"

[37] See Briony Frost, "O'erwhelmed with Noise": Sound-Houses and Sonic Experiments in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene.*"

[38] See Gary A. Schmidt's *Renaissance Hybrids: Culture and Genre in Early Modern England.*

modern English dramatic satire produces meaning, particularly about gender and social status, and how it teaches audiences how to "know" certain social types. Chapter 1, "Satirizing Genre and Gender: Ironic Characters and Parodic Types in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Taming of the Shrew*," establishes ironic (critical) distance as a primary mechanism of satiric meaning-making. Ironic distance is the tonal or affective orientation that a character, scene, or play adopts toward the phenomena it stages; it is the quality that distinguishes satire from more literal genres like lament, invective, or complaint, such that we register a tone of *mock*-lament, *mock*-invective, and *mock*-complaint in, for instance, a speaker's delivery. This chapter considers how *Ado*'s Beatrice and *Shrew*'s Katherine use ironic distance to bring metacritical social critiques to bear on the misogynistic tropes with which their respective suitors associate them, thereby undermining their associations with those roles. Having shown in the first section how Beatrice and Katherine flag their *speech* as satirical by building ironic distance into their critiques, I use the same analytic in the second section to examine how *Ado* and *Shrew* flag their *generic structures* as satirical by building ironic distance into their deployment of convention. Despite their affiliations with comedy, in their main plots, both plays represent courtships characterized by violence; I argue that *Ado* and *Shrew* ironize their generic affiliations by parodying popular conventions of romance and comedy, such as the tropes of the "obedient wife" and a felicitous, concluding marriage. I show how parody abstracts the misogynistic functions of those conventions, demonstrating how they make narratives of abuse legible as comedy. By analyzing how *Ado* and *Shrew* employ the same mechanisms to cultivate ironic distance at the *structural* level as they do at the character level, I demonstrate how both plays can be read as satirical romantic comedies – that is, as romantic comedies that critique their own conventions by expressing tragic plots through ironized, comedic tropes.

Chapter 2, "Satiric Categorization: Wonder, Knowingness, and Urban Gender-Status," examines categorization as a central meaning-making mechanism in Jonson's *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman*. Strategies of categorization, such as the codification of particular social beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors as stereotypes and other "types" of personhood, involve the application of extra-textual cultural meanings to diegetic manners, behaviors, and speech acts, such that characters who exhibit a particular style of rhetoric – for instance, punning and wordplay – can be understood as a particular *kind* or *type* of person, such as a Wit. This chapter examines how Jonson employs intersecting beliefs about gender and status in London's mutable social environment to produce three distinct categories of urban identity in *Epicoene*'s playworld: elite femininity, urbane, "witty" masculinity, and urban epicenism. In lieu of clearly delineated social order based on strict notions of rank or class, *Epicoene* constructs its social hierarchy from the misogynistic beliefs and social attitudes that these gendered categories of status index, with the Wits at the top of the status ladder as the most sophisticated, socially masterful, and masculine characters. In its suggestion that social status is largely a matter of performing gendered forms of knowledge and feeling, *Epicoene* presents social mobility – the crossing of categories – as an epistemological issue related to characters' interpretations, experiences, and enactments of changing urban gender norms. This chapter argues that two of the play's urbane-masculine characters shift from the speakers of *Epicoene*'s satire to the primary objects of its ridicule due to the manner in which they cross categories.

To provide a more precise account of how *Epicoene* produces the privileged status that enables certain characters to voice the play's satire, Chapter 3, "Satiric Epistemologies: Suspicion and Misogynistic Stereotypes in *Epicoene*'s Model of Wit" takes a closer look at the "knowingness" that bolsters urbane masculinity. This chapter examines the relations of

knowledge and feeling that underpin the witty status that the play's satirical speakers boast, focusing on the metacritical strategies that witty characters use to claim their masculine authority. I identify misogyny as a key component of the witty episteme, and analyze how misogynistic suspicion and stereotypes function as strategies of social striving that enable witty, satirical speakers to assign cynical meaning to novel or confusing performances of gender and status. This chapter demonstrates how *Epicoene*'s witty speakers use suspicion to construct stereotypes and other beliefs about the women in their social milieu, as well as how these constructions enable the Wits to position themselves as critical authorities, both within their play-worlds and to external audiences.

Chapter 2 Satirizing Genre and Gender: Ironic Characters and Parodic Types in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Taming of the Shrew*

Early modern satire delights in the transgression of social norms, particularly those that constellate around social roles and relationships. Whether the satirical target is a Member of Parliament who breaks wind in the House of Commons,[1] a city wife who conflates the domains of public and private,[2] or those "pretenders" who aspire to higher status than they possess,[3] the disruption of social order is a common trope of satirical humor and critique. Amorous lovers, virginal maids, and witty gallants might populate the stages of romance and comedy, but when these genres take a satirical turn, one is likely to encounter battling lovers, scolding maids, and rakish louts feigning gallantry. Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Taming of the Shrew* take these generic tropes and personae as starting points for satirical commentary, dramatizing characters' ironized relationships to the social, romantic, and domestic stereotypes they perform in their respective comedic plots. *Ado*'s and *Shrew*'s engagement in discourses of satire, complaint, and invective, their typifications of staged persons, and their adherence to comedic form despite the violence and tragedy that their plots index offer an opportunity to recognize how these plays figure women and marriage as vehicles for a larger satirical critique of the period's comedic and romantic conventions. The results are comedies that appear to adhere

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[1] Anonymous, "The Censure of the Parliament Fart."

[2] See Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* for a dramatic example, as well as the period's many satirical woodcuts and pamphlets depicting public domestic disputes for a sense of the pervasiveness of this trope.

[3] See Ben Jonson's *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman* and Thomas Dekker's *The Gull's Hornbook* for two prominent examples.

to expectations for matrimonial resolution, even as they challenge the generic function of those marriages to provide affective resolution for the violent narratives they conclude.

The problem of knowing how to identify speech as literal or satirical, as slandering or parodic, as jesting or earnest, or as railing or witty has challenged readers of satire for centuries. Equivocality is one of satire's calling cards: irony, one of satire's primary tools, always points in more than one direction, and satirical subtexts emerge from the ambiguous, dynamic interplay of meanings rather than from the clarity or supremacy of one meaning over another. Irony in its affective, rhetorical, parodic, and dramatic forms provides the interpretive code that enables us to identify speech or writing as satirical. It does so by producing an effect that scholars of satire have identified alternately as "difference," "distance," "detachment," or some other form of "fiction" that clues the interpreter into the fact that something more is being said than the literal meaning of the words one apprehends (Prescott 220). These ironic tensions between what is said and what is meant distinguish satire from un-ironic genres by enabling an interpreter to hear "lament, polemic, or sermon" at the same time that they register a tone of *mock*-lament, *mock*-polemic, and *mock*-sermon in a speaker's delivery (220).[4]

The first section of this chapter provides a fuller understanding of how satirical speakers create (or fail to create) the affective detachment and critical distance that are distinctive features of early modern satire, for it is these postures of distance that enable the satirist to mock their culture from within its structures. I begin by clarifying the role that wit and satirical affect play in manipulating the ironic distance that both reveals and occludes the satirical subtexts in these plays. I then turn to analyze the devices and methods of satirical discourse as they are articulated

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[4] Anne Lake Prescott, "The Evolution of Tudor Satire."

by two Shakespearean women: first, Beatrice, who we might read as the "merry shrew" of *Ado*,[5]

and then Katherine, the titular shrew in Shakespeare's eponymous play. Through comparative

readings of the "flyting" scenes in *Ado* and *Shrew*, I examine how Beatrice and Katherine resist

male control by employing rhetorical and affective forms of irony to distance themselves from

the misogynistic tropes with which their respective suitors associate them. Although they deploy

those tropes ironically, my analysis demonstrates how Beatrice's critical speech comes to be

elevated as witty wordplay in one play, even as Katherine's is reduced to shrewish invective and

complaint in the other. Despite Katherine's continued association with shrewishness, these

analyses demonstrate how both Beatrice and Katherine use irony to undermine their associations

with the social roles that their housing fictions ask them to play. These readings set up the

analysis in the chapter's second section, which moves from a diegetic-level examination of

Beatrice's and Katherine's ironic enactments of gendered social convention, to a metacritical

examination of the plays' ironic enactments of their own romantic and comedic conventions.

Whereas the first section argues that Beatrice and Katherine ironically engage the conventions of

their assigned roles to undermine their associations with those "types," the second section argues

that these plays ironically engage the conventions of romance and comedy to undermine their

associations with those genres. These generic conventions include the social types and literary

roles that protagonists are expected to play in comedic narratives of heterosexual romance, such

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[5] For an analysis of Beatrice's associations with shrewishness in the play, see Claire McEachern's introduction in William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 36. As I discuss below, at various points throughout the play, characters compare Beatrice's harsh criticisms to other, recognizably shrewish forms of speech, even if she escapes full association with the type. See, for example, the moment in 2.1 when, in response to Beatrice's ridicule of Don John, then of Benedick, and finally of men in general, her uncle Leonato explicitly warns her, "thou wilt never get thee a / husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue" (2.1.16-7). While "shrewd" carried several definitions during the early modern period, including "Depraved, wicked" ("shrewd, adj." *OED,* 1a,) and "Cunning, artful" (13b), Beatrice's sharp language and spirit of misandry in this scene seem more aligned with a third definition: "Given to railing or scolding; shrewish" (12a). The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes Leonato's quote as an example of this last definition of "shrewd." All subsequent quotes from *Ado* follow McEachern.

as "chaste maid" and "obedient wife." My readings of the plays' character- and generic-level engagement with satiric irony complicate conventional understandings of *Ado* and *Shrew* as comedy, especially insofar as it is satire that enables us to see how the plays undercut the institution associated with the genre's successful resolution: marriage. I argue that *Ado* and *Shrew* are satirical romantic comedies that employ satirical irony not to rescue their female protagonists from abusive relationships, but rather to critique the conventions of the genre as artificial and narratively unviable resolutions to courtships characterized by gender-based violence and abuse.

2.1 Witty Shrews and Shrewish Wits: Satirizing Gender

2.1.1 Critical Distance and the Mechanisms of Satiric Wit

Throughout *Ado* and *Shrew*, and notably in the flyting scenes, Beatrice, Katherine, and their respective suitors alternately adopt the roles of satirical agents – those who satirize – and satirical objects – those who are satirized.[6] For instance, in *Ado*, Beatrice and Benedick are variously positioned as satirical agents, critiquing the integrity of marriage and courtship while mocking each other as potential romantic candidates. By the end of the play, however, their roles are inverted. The duo become the objects of their own satirical mockery: everything they critique about marriage and courtship in the first few acts of the play, they embrace in the final scenes, trading scorn for mutual affection and embodying the very romantic tropes they once ridiculed.

The satirical speaker's implication in the phenomenon she critiques is not a contradiction of terms but rather a common feature, if not a convention, of early modern satire: satire frequently elides the distinctions between speaker, object, and interpreter, as well as between the

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[6] I use the term "agent" in lieu of the more common "speaker" to underscore the active role these characters take in levying satirical critique against one another as they move within the scene's satire.

diegetic and metacritical levels of meaning, contributing to the mode's perplexing opacity. For instance, a satirical speaker can find that she has become the object of a scene's satire if her critiques of others rather reveal her own foibles.[7] Thus, at stake in satirical critique is the satirist's self-awareness and acknowledgment of the role that she plays in the social systems she ridicules. Unlike *Ado*, wherein Beatrice and Benedick serve as the play's self-aware, satirical voices for most of the play, *Shrew* does not have consistent satirical spokespeople. There are moments in which both Katherine and Petruchio critique one another by way of satirical invective, but they appear to serve the play's satire of heterosexual marriage primarily as its targets: their courtship and marriage represent the antithesis of a happy marriage, characterized by Petruchio's abusive mistreatment of Katherine and Katherine's attempts to survive. Despite the absence of a clear satirical voice, many critics have noted the potential for irony in several of Katherine and Petruchio's speeches, which produce a subtler mode of critique, not always recognized (or performed) as satire.[8]

In a battle of wits, the war is fought on two fields: one of rhetoric and another of feeling. A Wit's most valuable weapons include rhetorical devices – such as irony, allusion, and extended metaphor – that shift the interpretive domain, often by gesturing beyond the context of the battle. Points are won when one's interlocutor feels the stings of one's rhetorical barbs, and when the satirist responds to provocation with ironic detachment rather than (or in addition to) earnest feeling. This chapter participates in a growing scholarly conversation about what constitutes the critical – that is, evaluative – "difference" for which satire is known by identifying moments in which Beatrice relies on her wit to cultivate affective detachment and

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[7] See Ralph M. Rosen, *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire*, especially 225.
[8] See, for instance, Amanda Bailey, "Livery and Its Discontents in *the Taming of the Shrew*"; and Tori Haring-Smith, *From Farce to Metadrama: A Stage History of 'The Taming of the Shrew,' 1594-1983*.

critical distance, and moments in which Katherine's wit falters and her ability to maintain such detachment collapses.[9] I use the terms "detachment" and "distance" to describe affective and rhetorical postures that a speaker may adopt to satirize the culture in which she participates, rather than to suggest that the speaker actually attains such objectivity or dislocation from her social and economic realities.[10] The ability to adopt and perform a pretense of emotional detachment, I will show, enables our witty speakers to be "critical" – that is, to comment and pass judgment *on* the behavior and speech of their interlocutors, rather than (or in addition to) responding *to* these provocations. My analysis centers on the ways in which the speaker's gender, and especially their affiliations with gendered stereotypes, informs their ability to cultivate the critical distance that distinguishes satire from un-ironic discourses like invective or complaint.

The spatial relationship that the term "distance" sets up between the satirist and the object of their scrutiny provides one way to understand interpretive credibility: the suggestion is that a distant, "outside," or metacritical view of society's operations provides an objectivity of perspective and clarity of feeling that one cannot access from within that social milieu. However, while particular social patterns and meanings might clarify at a remove from society, one cannot so easily leave behind the social beliefs and attitudes that shaped one's perspective. In some instances, a satirical agent may perform a posture of "distance" from the objects they critique primarily to enhance their own credibility as a cultural critic.

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[9] In the introduction to their edited volume, *The Power of Laughter and Satire in Early Modern Britain*, Mark Knights and Eric Morton describe "[elements] of fiction and/or fantasy" that satire deploys "as a form of drapery to avoid descent into pure invective" (12). See also Dustin Griffin's discussion of "fiction," "display and play" in *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, and Alvin Kernan's earlier description of critical difference as "tension" between two distinct concepts or perspectives in *The Cankered Muse*.

[10] Michael Shapiro, Adam Zucker, and others have studied the detachment and calculated carelessness that gallant wits cultivate to distance themselves from the material conditions of early modern life that fail to meet an aristocratic ideal, such as debt and underemployment. See Shapiro, "Audience vs. Dramatist in Jonson's 'Epicoene' and Other Plays of the Children's Troupes"; and Zucker, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy*.

Despite my insistence that critical distance is a posture that does not necessarily reflect a speaker's capacity for neutral spectatorship, many early modern satires – poetry, prose, drama, and miscellany alike – go to great lengths to represent critical distance as something real. Some literalize the distance, introducing their satirical speaker as someone who grows cynical of urban life and leaves for the country to critique the city at a safe remove from its vices.[11] In other satirical texts, critical distance may manifest as the speaker's emotional abstraction from the diegetic context of critique, cultivated through postures of disinterest or ironic overinvestment. Some of early modern English satire's favorite stock characters are defined by these emotional orientations: consider, for example, the mock- or exaggerated passions of satirical railers, the melancholy posture of the cynic-outsider, the mustered rage of the malcontent, or the deadpan neutrality of the fool.[12] In city comedy, the witty gallant is another common satirical speaker who signals "critical distance" through a carefully cultivated attitude of urbane indifference to the world around him. Well-educated, wealthy, underemployed, and almost perpetually engaged in battles of verbal one-upmanship, gallants are men who adopt the pretense of being unaffected by the economic, emotional, and material realities of their world.[13]

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[11] For instance, T.M., the narrator of Thomas Middleton's *Microcynicon: Seven Snarling Satyres*, is one example of a satirical speaker who claims to seek refuge from the vice, noise, and activity of the city in the countryside. It is with the benefit of this escape and apparent perspective that he writes his brutal critiques of the city, although his descriptions of urban vice are laden with a degree of vivid detail that only someone with intimate knowledge of the very brothels and taverns he excoriates could know. For a more precise account of this phenomenon, see Wendy Wall, "Introduction to *Microcynicon: Six Snarling Satires*."

[12] Samuel Fallon notes that stock characters of the early modern satiric tradition such as the ones I list here are "unattached, authorless" personae that were "[c]ontinually reimagined, flitting between texts," and "lived on the terms of their seriality" (*Paper Monsters* 6, 2). These figures "point beyond themselves, to a world outside of any particular text," and gain meaning through their recurrence (7). Fallon, *Paper Monsters: Persona and Literary Culture in Elizabethan England*. For more on the literary and social implications of personae, stock characters, and other models of human figures, see Elizabeth Fowler, *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing*.

[13] For an analysis of the gallant's social and cultural contexts, see Theodore Leinwand, "The Gentleman-Gallant."

Satirical agents participate in the cultures they critique, and often adopt postures of affective distance to suggest that they are superior to society, and therefore unaffected by its influence or changes. The privileged status that this projection of urbanity confers to its speakers seems to displace other, more traditional markers of early modern status such as education, gender, economic access, social rank, and embodiment, precisely by suggesting that these mundane aspects of human life have negligible power over one's judgments or desires.[14] The idea that one can outwit the circumstances of one's birth and socialization – for example, that one can transcend the limitations imposed on one because of one's gender – might be appealing, but at first glance, *Ado* and *Shrew* seem to suggest that it is futile. In the final scenes of these plays, characters who have challenged expectations of their social identities are shunted into more generic, stereotypical roles in their final moments: shrews become wives, louts gain gentlemanly fortunes, and marriage appears to put each couple's romantic conflicts to bed. However, as the battles of wit in *Ado* and *Shrew* make clear, if one is able to cultivate a degree of ironic distance from one's assigned role, one can resist and critique that role even *as one inhabits it*.[15] By exploring the relationship between ironic critique and the social contexts that give it meaning, we can observe how Beatrice and Katherine make a mockery of the chaste, silent, obedient, and wifely roles that their housing fictions ask them to play.

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[14] Zucker discusses the witty gallant as a literary phenomenon that illuminates shifts in how social status and cultural authority were conferred and evaluated in early modern London. Zucker troubles the way other scholars have treated the gallants' witty posture of "playful detachment" from "the day-to-day matrices of London Life" as a sign that satirical wit operates outside of the material and social realities of everyday life. "By obscuring the link between wit and other kinds of social and economic relationships," Zucker explains, "claims such as these reproduce … a fantasy" that wit is somehow "above" social or economic relations, when in fact these everyday relations are the source of wit's power (6).

[15] As this chapter discusses below, Amy L. Smith was the first to make this claim in relation to *Shrew*, arguing that both Katherine and Petruchio employ irony to critique their generically-assigned roles from within those roles (Smith uses the term "parody" to describe what I here term "ironic distance"). Whereas Smith uses this claim to argue for a fundamental mutuality in Katherine and Petruchio's relationship, however, I use it to argue for a dangerous power imbalance in their marriage. See Smith, "Performing Marriage with a Difference: Wooing, Wedding, and Bedding in *The Taming of the Shrew*."

2.1.2 Shrewish Wits: **Much Ado About Nothing**

Beatrice and Benedick's witty exchanges dominate *Ado*, providing key character insights, entertainment value, and, through their mockery of gendered stereotypes and marriage, a satirical foil to the even darker courtship of Claudio and Hero. Beatrice and Benedick critique each other as unviable romantic partners through invective and ironic witticisms, framed by alternating discourses of satire and complaint. The duo critiques the social conventions of Messinan society by associating each other with, or by ironically inhabiting, social and comedic tropes such as the sharp-tongued woman and the gallant wit, thereby undermining their associations with these personae and satirizing the personae's romantic viability.

Ado opens by dramatizing a moment of interpretive confusion, in which a stranger struggles to detect the irony in Beatrice's speech. This moment demonstrates the centrality of rhetorical irony to the privileged status that Beatrice claims through her wit. A messenger arrives in Messina bearing news that a battalion of men approaches the town, returning victorious from war. The messenger encounters a small party that includes Messina's governor, Leonato, and his niece, Beatrice. From her first line, Beatrice establishes herself as a vocal critic of her milieu, freely sharing gossip and judgment. Over the course of the scene, we learn that Beatrice's critical attitude is one of merry irony rather than bitter complaint; however, the messenger, a newcomer to Messina and first-time interlocutor of Beatrice's, seems uncertain how to categorize or respond to her speech.

The messenger does not immediately pick up on the irony in Beatrice's speech and responds to her quips as if they are in earnest. When she asks, "I pray you, is Signor Mountanto returned from the wars or no?" the messenger responds politely, "I know none of that name, lady; there was none such in the army of any sort" (1.1.28-9, 30-1). Of course, Beatrice already

knows this: we learn a few lines later that "Signor Mountanto" is her way of referring to Benedick by quipping on a stylistically embellished form of combat.[16] By asking a question that the messenger has no way of understanding or answering adequately, Beatrice does not invite him to share in the joke but rather uses him as a tool to execute it. When Hero reveals, "My cousin means Signor Benedick of Padua," the messenger discovers himself gulled (33).[17] He tries to defend the soldier against Beatrice's "tax[ing]" (43): "He hath done good service, lady, in these wars," he says, employing the honorific "lady," which may double as a reminder of Beatrice's social place (45-6). If his formal address is a tacit form of censure, the "lady" is unfazed and proceeds to mock-compliment Benedick: "he is a very valiant trencherman," she agrees, "he hath an excellent stomach" (48-9). The messenger, either in accord with praise he interprets as sincere or in defense of a man he thinks is being unfairly defamed, replies, "And a good soldier too, lady" (50). "And a good soldier to a lady," Beatrice deliberately misinterprets, "But what is he to a lord?" (51-2). The messenger is riled, unsuccessful in his attempts to corral the "lady's" speech and uncertain if he is once again the object of her ribbing. He blusters: "A lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honourable virtues" (53-4). "It is so indeed," Beatrice returns, responding to the messenger's praise as if it were a criticism: "he is no less than a stuffed man" (55).

Leonato's introduction of "wit" as an interpretive key may shift the way that both the messenger and *Ado*'s viewing audience understand Beatrice's critical speech, allowing one to recognize in her outspokenness the rhetoric of satirical doublespeak, and to reframe her critical

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[16] An editor's gloss suggests that *montanto* was "a fencing term for an upward thrust" that, used in this context, "implies a type of overweening fashionable fencing-room combat (akin to witty banter) rather than doughty soldiership, and perhaps also a sense of the braggart soldier, as well as a sexual innuendo (e.g. both the thrust of a penis and the 'mounting' of a partner)" (*Ado* 189n28).

[17] Since the audience shares the messenger's perspective as newcomers to Messina and the play-world, viewers may find themselves similarly duped and unknowingly complicit in the making of the joke.

attitude as an element of a "merry war" (1.1.59, 58).[18] Prior to Leonato's clarification, this

dialogue between Beatrice and the messenger is riddled with misunderstandings on both sides.

However, whereas Beatrice deliberately misconstrues the messenger's speech for comic effect,

the messenger interprets Beatrice's jesting as un-ironic criticism and complaint. Complaint, a

category of social, cultural, and personal criticism, protest, or lament, can be voiced through a

wide variety of discourses and genres – as Wendy Scase explains, complaint is "a motile,

slippery term, moving between legal, rhetorical, formal, and generic applications, and never

quite settling in use in any of these areas."[19] Like satire, complaint functions not only as a

rhetorical and affective form that can be deployed within other genres, but also as a genre itself.

Complaint's fluidity suits it to satirical modes that ironize critiques of individual or societal

vices. Thus, I do not use the term "complaint" in its strict, generic sense, but rather to refer

broadly to speech acts that express forms of vexation or resistance that are less layered with

irony than is "satirical complaint," including aspersions, insults, and invective.[20] It is possible to

parse satirical and non-satirical complaints, as Beatrice's uncle Leonato shows: "You must not,

sire, mistake my niece," he explains to the messenger, "there is a kind of merry war betwixt

Signior Benedick and her. They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them" (1.1.57-

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[18] In certain productions, it is possible, if not likely, that the viewing audience may already have perceived Beatrice's merry irony through visual cues such as shared smiles between Hero, Beatrice, Leonato, and others in their coterie that the messenger does not apprehend, and which are not written into the script.

[19] Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England, 1272-1553*, 1. For a survey of the wide array of poetic texts and genres that fit under the umbrella of "complaint" in early modern England and Scotland, see Rosalind Smith, Michelle O'Callaghan, and Sarah C.E. Ross, "Complaint."

[20] While "satirical complaint" may convey a greater degree of irony than non-satirical complaint, it should not be assumed that satirical complaint is devoid of earnest feeling; rather, ironic meaning and feeling may be legible in satirical complaint *in addition* to layers of un-ironic meaning and feeling. Linda Hutcheon explains that when one speaks with irony, "meaning is inclusive and relational: the said and the unsaid coexist for the interpreter [...]. The 'ironic' meaning is not, then, simply the unsaid meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or opposite of the said" (*Irony* 12-13). Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. For more on the relationship between satire and complaint during the early modern period, see John King, "Traditions of Complaint and Satire"; and John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature*.

60). From this point, the messenger's orientation toward Beatrice shifts from one of disapproval and censure to one of some respect: "I will hold friends with you, lady," he concludes, agreeing to accept rather than to challenge her critiques (86).

What shifts in the messenger's mind when he learns that Beatrice is a practiced Wit? Prior to this revelation, Beatrice has clearly been accustomed to voicing her views and challenging certain norms of women's speech – namely the expectation for silence, coded as modesty.[21] But while Beatrice may have been legible as an outspoken woman, the messenger was yet unable to determine what *kind* of outspoken woman she is or represents. Leonato's reframing of Beatrice's speech as mirthful and witty rather than strictly complaining invites the messenger and, perhaps, the audience to recontextualize her performance as the speech of a satirical Wit rather than a shrewish critic. In addition, while Leonato's framing may offer useful context, it is Beatrice who playfully manipulates the messenger's rhetoric to rearticulate his praise of Benedick as criticism, without employing more recognizably shrewish forms of speech to make her points. By dramatizing the messenger's interpretive confusion in response to her wordplay, *Ado* introduces Beatrice as someone who can create, shift, and deny meaning through ironic speech.

Known for her clever puns, euphuism, and cutting jibes,[22] Beatrice is an exemplar of satirical wit. Throughout *Ado*, however, Beatrice's rhetoric is often compared to another, less socially acceptable kind of speech: at various points in the play, other characters attribute to her specific qualities – such as disdain, combativeness, and eager criticism of men – associated with

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[21] See below for further discussion of the perceived relationship between women's speech, modesty, and chastity in the early modern period; see also the texts cited in note 29 of this chapter.

[22] See Ian Munro, "Shakespeare's Jestbook: Wit, Print, Performance"; and Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose*. For further analysis of Beatrice's use of euphuistic debate style and its gendered context, see McEachern, "Introduction," 68-77.

"the shrew." And yet, as Claire McEachern notes in her introduction to the Arden *Ado*, "The charges of her shrewishness levied by her uncle and Antonio never really stick," and "Benedick's own allegations about her speech have more to do with the enviable speed and agility of her tongue rather than its mere logorrhoea."[23] Indeed, Beatrice never seems to cross this line to embody the full stereotype of the railing, violent woman, and accusations of shrewishness function largely as "a type [...] to bounce off, or back away from" (36). While the first scene of the play explicitly frames her lines as benign and humorous, Beatrice's speech also retains its witty status by means of her projected carelessness toward the objects of her own critiques – that is, a cultivated posture of ironic distance that keeps the accusations of shrewishness from sticking.[24] I thus turn to the rhetorical methods through which Beatrice cultivates that posture, and demonstrate how her projection of distance deflects her association with the shrewish type.

The initial flyting scene between Beatrice and Benedick is characterized by a significant, overarching tone of irony, which contributes to the "difference" or "detachment" that distinguishes satire from more literal forms of social criticism. The scene opens when Benedick makes a comment directed primarily to himself. Beatrice leaps at this opportunity to needle him: "I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick; nobody marks you" (1.1.110-11). This comment is tailored to embarrass Benedick for speaking to himself, but the sting of the critique is muted by the fact that Beatrice contradicts her own statement by "marking" his words. The irony of this line sets the tone for their ongoing exchange – a tone that Benedick critiques: "What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?" (112-13). Benedick's allusion to the

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[23] McEachern, "Introduction," 36.
[24] McEachern attributes the "intellectual poise and apparent disinterestedness" of the Renaissance Wit to Beatrice and Benedick alike, "Introduction," 69.

allegorical "Lady Disdain" accomplishes two things: first, by alluding to her personification as an attitude or feeling, a trope of medieval satire, Benedick brings Beatrice explicitly into a lineage of satirical speech, further associating her with critical, witty discourse.[25] Its second function, however, serves a less flattering purpose: the line reduces Beatrice to a one-dimensional character type. A personification of disdain is capable of nothing else. Myopic disdain, obsessive contempt, and harsh cynicism are the alleged predispositions of "the shrew," a figure who is prone to adopting these attitudes regardless of circumstance. This is the charge Benedick levels at Beatrice: that she is *always* censorious and that disdain entirely suffuses her identity.

But Beatrice does not rise to Benedick's provocation, nor does she step into the shrewish persona he prescribes for her. Instead, she distinguishes herself from the stock figure so she may animate Lady Disdain's perspective while recusing herself as an only slightly less neutral observer: "Is it possible Disdain should die," she wonders, "while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor Benedick?" (114-15). By employing the third person to advocate on behalf of "Disdain," Beatrice extracts herself from the conflation Benedick proposed. Despite this rhetorical separation, Beatrice does not explicitly refute the charge that Lady Disdain is "yet living." Instead, she shifts the charge to suggest that the impetus for "Disdain" is not the "Lady's" predisposition for scorn, but rather Benedick's inherent contemptuousness: "Courtesy itself must convert to Disdain if you come in her presence," she concludes (116-17). This is a

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[25] Medieval examples of satirical personifications include William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, a text that combines social satire and religious allegory, and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles,* an estates satire written in the form of classical debate and voiced by birds who represent different political attitudes. In his early modern parodies of medieval morality plays, Ben Jonson often includes characters who are personifications of feelings and social attitudes, including "Morose" in *Epicoene*, "Lady Would-Be" in *Volpone*, and "Wellbred" and "Buffone" in his *Every Man* plays. See Langland, *Piers Plowman:The B Version*; Chaucer, "The Parliament of Fowles"; Jonson, *Volpone*, *Every Man In His Humour*, and *Every Man Out of His Humour*. See also William R. Jones's definition of "Satire" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* for a more comprehensive catalogue of satire's "favorite housing fictions" and examples (1255).

significant adjustment: by shifting the onus of disdain from the "Lady's" predisposition to Benedick's behavior, Beatrice challenges his suggestion that contempt is her sole or primary attitude, thereby refuting Benedick's implicit accusation of shrewishness. By simultaneously accepting – or, at least, not rejecting – the "Lady Disdain" persona *and* distancing herself from it by use of the third person, Beatrice activates a sense of irony that flags her critiques as more merry than acerbic, spoken with an attitude of mock-disdain in lieu of unfiltered contempt. By appropriating the abstracted identity "Lady Disdain" as a shield, Beatrice lodges critiques that are decidedly un-shrew-like in their rhetorical complexity and full emotional command.

In leveraging the stock figure of the shrew but refiguring it through ironic detachment, Beatrice maintains the rhetorical control and inventiveness of a witty critic, creating a sense of irony that ultimately casts her "shrewish" critiques as mock-disdain and mock-superiority. Beatrice repeatedly transforms Benedick's jibes accusing her of shrewishness into retorts that scoff at her interlocutor. "Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher," Benedick quips, suggesting that Beatrice habitually defaults to predictable or witless insults (1.1.132). Yet, rather than rise to Benedick's provocation, Beatrice reinterprets his comment in a way that advances her own relative power in their conversation by negating the intended sting of Benedick's barb: "A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours," she replies (133-34). Subverting the accusation of witlessness that Benedick makes by calling her a "parrot-teacher" (132), Beatrice recasts his bird imagery to signify quickness of speech rather than mechanical repetition, and compares his relative reticence to a beast's supposed witlessness.[26] This bold assertion contradicts the more popular advice to women found in conduct books and sermons: that it is better for women to be

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[26] "Wit" and "witlessness" are terms that Zucker delineates in *The Places of Wit*, especially pages 7-11.

silent than chatty.[27] Instead, Beatrice aligns herself with an attitude that, as Pamela Allen Brown

has shown, may have circulated among non-elite women in early modern London: that it is

"better [to] be a shrew" – that is, "audible, visible," standing firm in one's own power – "than a

sheep" – that is, "famously gormless, too passive to protest being shorn or butchered."[28] There

are risks for the woman who takes this stance, such as the accusations of sexual promiscuity that

so often attend women's loquaciousness.[29] However, as McEachern notes, the extraordinary

thing about Beatrice is that her "verbal prowess never seems to compromise her sexual

reputation; it rather only argues for her intellectual parity with Benedick" (38). I would go

further and suggest that, by claiming that "a bird of [her] tongue is better than a beast of [his],"

Beatrice encourages a reinterpretation of her speech that indicates not just parity with Benedick,

but her superiority to him.

The flyting concludes when Benedick bows out prematurely, before either he or Beatrice

has established a clear victory over the other. "I would my horse had the speed of your tongue,

and so good a continuer," he says, acknowledging Beatrice's unrelenting wit, "But keep your

way, / o'God's name; I have done" (1.1.135-37).[30] Benedick's oath, "o'God's name," contributes

to the sense of tonal exhaustion in his earnest concession, but it does not provide a sense of

closure or resolution to this exchange. Their bout ends when Beatrice abandons her ironic

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[27] Primary-source examples include Robert Cleaver and John Dod's *A Godly Form of Household Government* (1598), Robert Snawsel's *A Looking Glass for Married Folks* (1610), and "A Homily of the State of Matrimony" (1623), qtd. in Dolan, "Early Modern Debates." For an analysis of the relationship between the advice offered by conduct books and sermons and the misogynistic conceptions of chastity in *Ado*, see McEachern, "Introduction," 39-43.

[28] Pamela Allen Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England*, 5, 1.

[29] See McEachern, 31, 38-43; and Lynda Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," especially 195. For in-depth studies of the connection between women's speech, writing, and sexual license, see Natalie Davis, "Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe"; and Margaret Ferguson, "A Room Not Their Own: Renaissance Women as Readers and Writers."

[30] It is also possible to see Benedick's comparison of Beatrice to his horse as a final attempt to associate Beatrice with the "beast" in her previous phrase, "A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours" (1.1.133-34).

distance and mirrors Benedick's earnestness, voicing the last word in an literal mode: "You always end with a jade's trick," she complains, comparing Benedick to a lame horse, "I know you of old" (1.1.138-39).[31] While this line demonstrates Beatrice's capacity for vulnerability in its earnest expression of displeasure or disappointment, it also registers her final critique of Benedick. By employing the misogynistic term "jade," which an editor's gloss confirms is "rarely applied to men" (138n), Beatrice doubles down on the sense of gendered inversion, or the "expected order of gender relations" that closes the scene, by using pejorative, feminizing language to describe Benedick's unwillingness (or inability) to match "the speed of [her] tongue" (1.1.125).[32] While Beatrice does not take this inversion to an extreme – she does not resort to shrewish railing or physical violence – over the course of this scene she demonstrates her capacity for critical detachment and euphuistic fluency, abilities that the play attempts to cast as "male banter" or even "verbal masculinity."[33]

This scene's sense of unsettled inversion is underscored by the fact that Beatrice voices the final jibe, to which Benedick offers no defense or counter.[34] When Benedick does respond, it

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[31] Satirical texts often employ a variety of horse and barn terms to mock shrewish women, and "jade" is perhaps the most common. The term "jade" carried several meanings in the early modern period, all derisive: it referred to work horses as opposed to riding horses ("jade, n.," 1a, *OED*); to worn out, lame, ill-tempered, lazy, or "naughtie" horses (see John Baret, *An Alveary or Triple Dictionarie* [1574]); as well as to women in their putative roles as sex workers. The word was also used more generally as a misogynistic "term of reprobation applied to a woman" and only "[r]arely applied to a man" (*OED*, 2a; 2c).

[32] Frances Dolan, "Early Modern Debates," 244. This moment riffs on "the woman on top" trope, a common form of gendered inversion in early modern comedy. According to Dolan, "the woman on top wears the breeches, scolds those who are her social superiors, beats up and bosses her husband, and generally asserts her mastery. Both the domineering wife and her weak husband are ridiculed and censured" ("Early Modern Debates," 244). See also Davis, "Women on Top."

[33] McEachern, 26. In this and other comedies, "verbal masculinity" is synonymous with emotional distance and control. As Carol Cook explains in "'The Sign and Semblance of Her Honor': Reading Gender Difference in *Much Ado about Nothing*": "The masculine, in the world of the play, is the place of speaking and reading subjects, of manipulators and interpreters of signs….both male and female wits in this play use their repartee to disguise a lack or a weakness, a susceptibility or a wound already suffered" (186-190). Beatrice's language affects Benedick, although he hides it in the flyting scene to avoid appearing emotionally vulnerable.

[34] Dolan discusses staged representations of the "woman on top," in which she notes, "Usually but not always, this inversion is corrected" ("Early Modern Debates," 244. David Underdown explains why similar plays usually reverse

is not to Beatrice but to Don Pedro that he reveals the impact of her words: she "huddled jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me," he deplores, "She speaks poniards, and every word stabs" (2.1.226-27). Sidney Sondergard observes that "rhetorical violence is applied to confer an immediacy to textual arguments" (18).[35] Indeed, Benedick's experience of Beatrice's speech as "poniards" that "stab" frames her critique in immediate, embodied terms, as if her language has the ability to cause him physical pain (2.1.226-27). Beatrice's words are not trivial, nor are they harmless. Despite Benedick's attempts to perform his own emotional detachment in Act 1, scene 1, the violent effect of Beatrice's rhetoric may offer an additional explanation for Benedick's tonal exhaustion when he concedes, "But keep your way, / o'God's name; I have done" (1.1.136-37). Ultimately, the couple's mutual vulnerability – the hurt that Benedick feels from Beatrice's "poniards," and the disappointment that Beatrice experiences when Benedick declines to continue sparring with her – collapses the critical, ironic distance that had characterized both characters' speech during their flyting. The fact that Beatrice demonstrates *any* vulnerability, that she does not resort to invective or violence to hide it, and that Benedick leaves the scene *after* Beatrice voices the final line of their flyting, challenges her association with the shrewish stereotype.

2.1.3 *Witty Shrews:* The Taming of the Shrew

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these apparently inverted gender dynamics: "On the stage, as in carnival, gender inversion temporarily turns the world upside-down--but to reinforce, not subvert, the traditional order" (117). See Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England."

[35] Sidney Sondergard, *Sharpening Her Pen: Strategies of Rhetorical Violence*. The material consequences of rhetorical violence are apparent in other satirical texts, too, particularly those that are described as "biting," "scratching," "snarling," or in other terms that enact or threaten violence.

In *Ado* and *Shrew*, a battle of wits is a battle for emotional control. Like Beatrice and Benedick, Katherine and Petruchio attempt to provoke each other into temper (or other emotional response) in the course of their flyting by associating one another with unflattering stereotypes. However, whereas Beatrice and Benedick do not allow themselves to be so provoked – Benedick withdraws before he expresses anything beyond weariness and playful ridicule, and both take cover in the sense of their "skirmish" as a game – neither Katherine nor Petruchio is able to sustain their affective detachment from the barbs that the other hurls. In their flyting scene (2.1), Katherine and Petruchio treat displays of anger as a loss of emotional control, and therefore as a loss of status: Katherine takes Petruchio's anger as a sign of his ungentlemanly nature, while Petruchio takes Katherine's anger as a sign of her shrewish one. However, by using parodic strategies to play within and against the gendered stereotypes that Petruchio projects upon her, Katherine establishes a protective posture of emotional distance from his attacks, a pretense that holds until Petruchio makes a sexually graphic suggestion forty lines into their battle, to which Katherine responds with something other than witty speech. Petruchio's misogyny and the flyting scene's dramatic irony ultimately deny Katherine the ability to participate in affectively-distanced satirical discourse, and she resorts to physical means of communication. While *Ado*'s initial battle of wits leaves us with a sense of two generally well-matched interlocutors, Shakespeare's earlier and, in many ways, rougher play concludes its protagonists' battle with a disturbing power imbalance between Katherine and Petruchio which can be attributed to Petruchio's refusal to acknowledge her critical, ironic detachment.

Katherine and Petruchio's "battle of wits" is framed with a different sort of dramatic irony than that of Beatrice and Benedick, one that ultimately contributes to Katherine's inability to maintain a projection of affective detachment. Given the prior contextualization of Benedick

and Beatrice's "merry war," which clues audiences into their long history of witty, lighthearted skirmishes (*Ado* 1.1.58),[36] audiences know that however sharp their discourse becomes, the exchange is likely to be benign, in large part because the speakers can be trusted to maintain the critical detachment that would flag their speech as ironic – at least until one of them exists from the stage. This detachment is not a security audiences have upon entering Act 2, scene 1 of *Shrew*. Unlike Beatrice and Benedick, there is no precedent for Katherine and Petruchio's meeting. Audience or readerly expectations of this scene are based solely on their knowledge of Katherine's communication style and Petruchio's intent. Prior to the flyting scene, Petruchio explains his scheme in direct address to the audience: "I'll attend [Katherine] here, / And woo her with some spirit when she comes," he explains (2.1.167-68).[37] "Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain / She sings as sweetly as a nightingale," he continues, "Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear / As morning roses newly washed with dew; [...] If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day / When I shall ask the banns, and when be married" (169-79). This passage does more than catalog Petruchio's plan to steamroll the unwitting Katherine into marriage; it also establishes a link between Petruchio and the audience, inviting viewers to share in his understanding of how to anticipate and experience Katherine's conduct in the approaching scene. Petruchio introduces shrew-like behaviors as possibilities to anticipate from Katherine, contrasting them with the gentlemanly persona he plans to adopt: if "she rail," "frown," or "deny to wed," Petruchio explains, then he plans to respond in a manner that might appear gentlemanly,

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[36] *Ado*'s flyting scene is also often entertainment for onlookers. While this might also be true for certain audiences of *Shrew*'s flyting scene, this battle's sharper tone, its threat of violence (turned actual violence), and the obvious power inequity it sets up may not center entertainment as its most accessible function for all audiences.

[37] William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* (ed. Barbara Hodgdon), 2.1.219-221. Elsewhere in this essay I quote from the critical text in Frances Dolan's *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*; however, all quotations from the play itself come from Hodgdon's Arden Shakespeare edition, aside from specific instances where I indicate that I am quoting from the first folio edition (STC 22273 Fo.1 no.68).

or at least complimentary, if it did not also indicate his willingness to manipulate Katherine's

sense of reality (169, 171, 178). This dramatic irony establishes a power imbalance that enables

Petruchio to wink at the audience and to direct interpretations of his dialogue with Katherine.[38]

Katherine, however, initially defies expectations of shrewish behavior by replying to

Petruchio's inflammatory jibes with a surprising degree of ironic wordplay and self-command.

When Petruchio greets Katherine as "Kate," she corrects him: "They call me Katherine that do

talk of me" (2.1.183). After she explicitly rejects his use of the diminutive, which assumes

intimacy where there is none, Petruchio goads her by launching into a litany of "Kates" that,

however lighthearted in delivery, seeks to overwhelm Katherine with an index of her own social

significance: "you are called plain Kate / And bonny Kate, and sometimes 'Kate the Curst'; /But

Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom, / Kate of Kate Hall, my super-dainty Kate / For dainties

are all cates, and therefore 'Kate' -- / Take this of me, Kate of my consolation" (184-89).

Petruchio concludes his litany by announcing that he is "moved to woo thee for my wife" (193),

a sentiment at odds with the preceding barrage of diminutive epithets and his refusal to call

Katherine by her preferred and more dignified name. Rather than rise to Petruchio's provocation,

however, Katherine pivots to more amusing terrain and plays on his use of "moved": "Let him

that moved you hither / Remove you hence," she returns (194-95). By sidestepping Petruchio's

use of "moved" to mean "emotionally swayed" and putting forth her own spin on the term, to

"[r]e-move," Katherine's witty polyptoton denies Petruchio the rhetorical and emotional control

that he seeks. In her ability to respond with playful repartee rather than with unironic, adamant

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[38] Amy Smith argues that many of Petruchio's announcements to the audience do not come to pass, which
ultimately undermines his authority onstage. While I agree that in this speech, many of Petruchio's specific claims
do not pan out in the way he plans, his central intention – to manipulate and thereby dominate Katherine – is borne
out in the text. See Smith, "Performing Marriage with a Difference."

resistance, Katherine displays a capacity for witty detachment that undermines Petruchio's attempts to control either the conversation or Katherine.[39]

Petruchio has primed the audience to expect a recognizably shrewish response from Katherine; however, each time Petruchio critiques her tone she responds with jests and ironic wordplay that maintain her critical detachment. When Petruchio mocks Katherine's tone by attributing to it the "sharp" or "stinging" qualities of shrewish speech, chiding, "Come, come, you wasp, i'faith you are too angry," Katherine resists the urge to directly deny the association (2.1.210). Instead of reacting *with* anger, she responds with a reflection *on* anger, playfully converting the focus of Petruchio's jibe into a source of power: "If I be waspish," she warns, "best beware my sting" (211). Just as Beatrice leverages the persona of "Lady Disdain" to mock Benedick (*Ado* 1.1.114-15), Katherine ironically mobilizes the waspish imagery to put Petruchio on the defensive, without becoming "too angry" herself (*Shrew* 2.1.210).[40] When Petruchio replies, "My remedy is then to pluck it out," Katherine responds, "Ay, if the fool could find where it lies" (212, 213). Instead of shutting Petruchio down, Katherine's oblique comment serves to extend their rally: "Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting?" Petruchio wonders (214). Because his response is a question rather than an accusation or other assertion, Petruchio loses some of the interpretive command he had been building over the previous lines.

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[39] Dolan describes how this collaborative, if combative, style of discourse can construct a sense of intimacy between the two speakers: "fast word-play and bawdy innuendo, with one speaker building on the words of the other, creates a sense of intimacy between the pair as they try on various verbal styles" (204n194-268). McEachern suggests something similar about *Ado*'s parallel flyting scene, but describes what Dolan calls "intimacy" as a kind of sexual tension: "Both characters convey a vibrant sense of verbal energy [...]. This energy carries a sexual charge (not merely because of its production of *double entendres* […]); it is the energy of flirtation, the dance of attraction and elusiveness that constitutes the mating ritual of these two wits" (76-7). Given Petruchio's willingness to deny Katherine's voice and needs in favor of his own, it would not be wrong to view whatever "tension" or "intimacy" their flyting produces as threatening.

[40] While it is certainly possible to read Katherine's line as scathing and earnest in its ire, it appears in a moment of dialogue that is characterized by the most playful back-and-forth in the scene, in which Katherine controls the meaning and direction of discourse.

With what might be an attempt to reassert control over the direction of conversation, he answers his own question: "In his tail," he wagers (215). "In his tongue," Katherine corrects, prompting Petruchio to ask, with what appears to be genuine bemusement, "Whose tongue?" (216, 217). Katherine brings the joke home by alluding to and then shutting down its bawdiness: "Yours, if you talk of tails, and so farewell" (218).

The scene taunts viewers and Petruchio with this apparently inverted victory. Up to this point, the scene's dramatic irony, inaugurated by Petruchio's direct address prior to the flyting, has been building toward two likely possibilities: Katherine could fulfill the expectation of shrewish behavior that Petruchio's monologue introduced; or, she could subvert it by demonstrating controlled, ironic detachment, making her the ultimate victor in the battle of wits; or, she could fulfill the expectation of unmitigated, shrewish ire. In this moment of seeming conclusion – "and so farewell" (2.1.218) – Katherine appears to subvert expectation by demonstrating greater emotional and rhetorical control than Petruchio has been able to muster, proving herself the superior wit. However, perhaps in response to Katherine's apparent victory, Petruchio makes a comment that provokes a response from Katherine that appears to lack the critical detachment that had given her earlier complaints a tone of mock-invective and thereby protected her from Petruchio's accusations of shrewishness.

Relying on the same rhetorical strategies he has used throughout the scene, Petruchio deliberately misunderstands Katherine's final utterance ("Yours, if you talk of tails, and so farewell" [2.1.218]) and asks in mock-clarification, "What, with my tongue in your tail?" (219). While earlier instances of sexual innuendo were just that – suggestions of sex acts hidden within more overt meanings, which the interpreter could either ignore, extend, or transform – this line is

explicit, crude in its lack of credible equivocality or good-humored jest.[41] Furthermore, by

suggesting that this explicitly sexual line is one that Katherine herself articulated, Petruchio

attributes knowledge of a specific sexual practice – or, given the multiplicity of sexual meanings

of "tail" in the period, set of practices – to her. Katherine has already mobilized the imagery of a

sharp tongue to threaten Petruchio to "beware [her] sting" (211); now Petruchio uses the same

logic that underpinned her self-empowering threat to transform it into a sexual invitation, calling

Katherine's chastity into question. Petruchio then distances himself from this projected

impropriety by adopting a posture of mock-mortification: "Nay," he says, "come again, good

Kate, I am a gentleman" (220). At this suggestion of her sexual solicitousness, which turns the

gendered tables to construct *him* as modest and *her* as immodest, Katherine appears to abandon

the affective posture of ironic indifference that had enabled her to deflect Petruchio's earlier

barbs and to direct the flow of conversation. "That I'll try," she scoffs, and in fulfillment of the

scene's dramatic irony and the shrew's most recognizable trope, Katherine responds by striking

him (221).

This moment is significant not only because Katherine reacts with physical violence

rather than wordplay, thus appearing to abandon the critical distance she had cultivated over the

course of this scene, but also because her body has become the butt of Petruchio's joke and the

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[41] The term "tail" carried a variety of meanings in the early modern period, including legal (to "entail": land, chattel, or money), sartorial (tailcoats, tails of a dress or bodice), botanical/zoological (short for [cat]tails; also animal tails, rumps), general (the rear part of a place or thing), and bawdy (a slur for "whore"; also penis, buttocks, pudendum) definitions. For a discussion of tongues and tails in the context of sexual wordplay and knowledge relations, see Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns*, 205-7. In bawdy lexicons, "tail" was occasionally appended to other terms to disparage people who traded sex for money or women suspected of nonmonogamous sexual activity, such as "draggletail/e," as in, "a durtie draggletaile, a filthie slut, a dunghill queane" (John Florio, "Cianciafera"). See also: "wagtail/e": "A contemptuous term for a profligate or inconstant woman; hence, a harlot, courtesan" ("wagtail, n.," 3b, *OED*). Despite the wide variety of referents the term "tail" held in the early modern period, Petruchio's pairing of two body parts ("tongue" and "tail") and his inclusion of individualized possessive pronouns ("my" and "your") in the phrase, "my tongue in your tail," emphasizes the union of two people's body parts (2.1.219). Regardless of the phrase's other possible connotations, Petruchio encourages its bawdy interpretation by disavowing the phrase as an ungentlemanly suggestion ("Nay, come again, good Kate, I am a gentleman" [2.1.220]).

object of its satire. We can understand the significance of Katherine's violence within the scene's satirical framework in two ways, depending on whether and how we read irony into her response. The more overt reading does not attend to the possibility of irony at all: in this interpretation, Katherine is taken aback by Petruchio's sexual exposure of her body after she has declared the battle of wits over, and feels trapped in a rhetorical quandary. She therefore responds with the weapon that feels most accessible in the moment: in this case, her fists rather than her tongue. In this reading, Katherine loses control not only of the direction of the flyting and wordplay, but also of her own emotional composure. She responds with physical rage, literalizing what was in *Ado* only a metaphor of a "skirmish" or "battle" of wit. Katherine's physical rather than verbal attack on Petruchio's body underscores the absence of the rhetorical inventiveness and affective indifference that had characterized her earlier responses, since the attack does not, in and of itself, alter the meaning or referent of Petruchio's assertion that he is "a gentleman" (2.1.220). Rather, it appears to confirm what Petruchio has primed the audience to expect: a shrew who would "scold and raise up such a storm / That mortal ears might hardly endure the din" (1.1.171-72).

The second interpretation of this moment hinges on the possibility of Katherine's continued self-possession and affective control, which her display of violence seems to evacuate in the previous reading. When Petruchio asserts that he is "a gentleman," Katherine pauses to declare, "That I'll try," before she flies at him (2.1.220, 221). When she follows through on her word and actually strikes him, Petruchio drops his witty facade and turns nasty: "I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again" (222). And thus, Katherine has won her point: "If you strike me you are no gentleman," she insists, playing on both popular meanings of "gentle" ("benign," as well as "genteel") to demonstrate the fallacy of Petruchio's gallantry (224). By indicating the purpose of

her violence before she enacts it ("That I'll try"), Katherine demonstrates a degree of self-awareness and control that qualifies the rage that physical violence would otherwise seem to convey. Just as Beatrice mobilized the persona of "Lady Disdain" to voice disdain while distancing herself from it, thereby articulating her position as satirical agent in relation to her object, we can read in Katherine's self-conscious deployment of the shrewish persona an attempt to goad Petruchio into dropping his witty facade. In this interpretation, Katherine performs violence from a point of ironized, affective remove, even as her body is embroiled in the physical skirmish.[42] While this scene threatens to position Katherine's body as the object of its satire for her enactment of shrewish violence, Katherine's *use* of her body to self-consciously enact the central convention the shrewish stereotype ironically underscores her distinction from that trope: if Katherine is the shrew of the play's title, in this reading she is a self-ironizing one with a degree of emotional control that fundamentally challenges the stereotype she appears to represent.

Despite the possibility that Katherine's physical violence is strategic and its supporting affect at least partly ironic, the scene's broader social and satirical contexts firmly associate physical violence with the shrew's feminized emotional reactivity rather than the satirist's "masculine" affective control.[43] Only after this moment of Katherine's apparent loss of self-possession does Petruchio begin to gain ground in their battle, winning rhetorical points and

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[42] This reading depends to a great extent on the placement of the stage direction, "*She strikes him,*" immediately following Katherine's line, "That I'll try" (2.1.221). According to an editor's note, Michael Cordner raises the possibility that Katherine strikes Petruchio an additional time: two lines earlier, immediately after Petruchio says, "What, with my tongue in your tail?," albeit without the meta-reflective warning she provides here (Hodgdon, 207n221). In this case, both my first and second readings of this scene may apply, since it would suggest that Katherine's first strike was emotionally reactive while her second strike was perhaps more strategically calculated. See Michael Cordner, "'To show our simple skill': Scripts and Performances in Shakespearean Comedy."

[43] For more on the gendering of emotion in dialogue and debate forms, see McEachern, 27-8.

pushing the agenda he described in his earlier monologue.[44] Perhaps the men in the scene –

Petruchio, joined later by Baptista and Bianca's suitors – do not perceive the self-reflexive,

performative irony in Katherine's violence, or perhaps they choose to ignore it; either way, the

result is the same: the apparently heartfelt nature of Katherine's protestations enables those men

to characterize her speech as shrewish complaint and abuse. For the remainder of the scene,

Katherine is unable to perform an ironic relationship to her shrewish persona, and when her

verbal attacks do not affect Petruchio, he dictates the direction and meaning of their exchange.

The scene closes with Katherine losing the capacity to defend herself, to wound with her tongue

or her fists, to alter the course of conversation, or to convince her father that she does not wish to

marry the man who "is no gentleman."

2.2 Comedy, Romance, and Convention: Satirizing Genre

Thus far, I have shown how individual characters can employ irony to cultivate emotional

distance from the social tropes they are expected to play, and thereby critique their associations

with those tropes from within their structures. As Beatrice's flyting demonstrates, mocking her

social role by enacting it ironically can enable her to undermine the regulating power of that role

– that is, to demonstrate that the role does not determine her beliefs, perceptions, or identity.

However, as Katherine's flyting demonstrates, the ability to ironically undermine her association

with her social role depends on several social factors beyond her rhetorical inventiveness,

including her gender, reputation, external expectations of her behavior and speech, and

Petruchio's relative power and [im]propriety. Because many of these factors fall outside of

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[44] Petruchio succeeds in manifesting the goal he set out in his monologue (reproduced in abridged form above). After his extended flyting with Katherine, he says: "I find you passing gentle. / 'Twas told me you were rough and coy and sullen, / And now I find report a very liar, / For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous, / But slow in speech, yet sweet as springtime flowers; / Thou canst not frown, thou canst not look askance, / Nor bite the lip, as angry wenches will, / Nor hast thou pleasure to be cross in talk" (2.1.244-251).

Katherine's control, her ironic deployment of her social role does not always succeed in undermining the constricting power of that role: as we have seen, Petruchio either cannot or chooses not to see the irony in Katherine's ironic deployment of shrewish violence; in consequence, he is able to use a literal interpretation of her violent display – that she is a shrew in need of taming – to his own advantage, subordinating her will to his bad-faith interpretations.

While other staged figures may ignore or fail to detect the irony in a character's self-performance, that irony is often still legible at the metacritical level – that is, the level at which staged or extra-theatrical audiences can recognize the conventions and social dynamics that structure the staged action. Thus, the specific form of irony I discuss here is *dramatic irony*, or the audience's superior, metacritical understanding of staged dynamics, which is withheld from staged characters. Consider, for instance, how *Ado*'s messenger, who lacked the audience's metacritical perspective, initially failed to detect the irony in Beatrice's critiques of Benedick, and therefore perceived her as an inappropriately critical, outspoken woman. Because Beatrice's irony was still legible to the onlooking members of Messina's court, as well as to attentive audience members watching the play, Beatrice was not the object of the scene's ribbing; rather, the *messenger* was positioned as the butt of the scene's joke for misinterpreting Beatrice's speech. Ironic discrepancies (distances) between the possible diegetic (character-level) and metacritical (scene-, play-, or other structural-level) interpretations of staged moments form a key element of a play's capacity to mock its own form. While *characters* might fail to register the irony in the ways that they perform their generic roles, for instance, that irony might be key to understanding the broader, *metacritical* significance of the scenes in which those generic figures appear.

Having identified how Beatrice and Katherine use rhetorical and affective irony to distance themselves from, and thereby undermine, the stereotypes that Benedick and Petruchio attach to them (Lady Disdain; the wasp-tongued woman), I now examine how *Ado* and *Shrew* employ the same forms of rhetorical and affective irony at the metacritical level to undermine their depictions of comedic resolution. This section argues that *Ado* and *Shrew* critique the romantic and comedic premise of their staged narratives from within the structures of those genres by constructing ironic distance between the diegetic and metacritical significance of their central comedic conventions, including the roles of husband and wife, as well as marriage as the device that often concludes comedic plots. Although the genre of early modern English comedy was a porous, dynamic category that lacked a rigid taxonomy of conventions, there were certain structural and narrative "resemblances" that many plays within the comedic "family" shared in common[45]: for instance, a comedic marriage, typically located in a play's final scenes, often appears to amend, justify, or nullify social incompatibilities and to produce the appearance of communal cohesion, regardless of the degree of abuse or disharmony that characterizes the preceding action.[46] The romantic narratives of Katherine and Petruchio, as well as of Hero and Claudio, are characterized by antagonism, physical and emotional abuse, death threats, faked death, and other horrors that conclude in the protagonists' marriage. My readings suggest that *Ado* and *Shrew* use satirical mechanisms – such as parody and the dramatic irony that parody can produce – to draw attention to the ways that marriage ultimately eclipses, but does not account

[45] In response to attempts to define genre in terms of universal themes and structural conventions, Alastair Fowler describes genre in terms of "family resemblance," a term that acknowledges the variety and transformations of convention that occur across texts which could be seen under a shared, generic umbrella. See Fowler, "Genre."
[46] See Frances Dolan, *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy*. For studies that challenge the notion that comedic marriage necessarily produces comedic endings that entail heterosexual harmony, see Mario DiGangi, "Queering the Shakespearean Family"; Julie Crawford, "*All's Well That Ends Well*: Or, Is Marriage Always Already Heterosexual?" and "Shakespeare. Same Sex. Marriage."; and Kathryn Schwarz, "Comedies End in Marriage."

for, the gendered violence that each play stages, exposing and critiquing this lack of accountability by ironizing key conventions of their comedic structures. Just as Beatrice, Katherine, and their suitors adopt ironized, defensive postures of shrewishness and gallantry, *Ado* and *Shrew* themselves adopt the conventions of comedy and romance as protective postures that obscure satirical subtexts. These romantic narratives challenge the idea that marriage is a cure-all for courtships characterized by harm; if, by observing their structural reliance on self-critical mechanisms such as parody and dramatic irony, we view them as *satiric* romantic narratives, their challenge appears deliberate.

  Ado and *Shrew* stage exaggerated or ironically iterated conventions of romance and comedy that, through their overdramatization, draw attention to the artificiality of those tropes as structural elements that give comedic shape to romances that are tinged with, if not steeped in, tragedy. I argue that by ironically deploying these generic conventions, *Ado* and *Shrew* parody their own comedic forms and subvert the capacity of those structural elements to assign comedic meaning to their staged action. I focus this analysis on the figures who constitute *Ado* and *Shrew*'s formal "main" plots: Katherine and Petruchio in *Shrew*, and Hero and Claudio in *Ado*. In their roles as disharmonious or thwarted lovers who, through the action of the plot, come together, marry, and appear to resolve lingering tensions in the final scenes, these characters represent essential elements of the plays' comedic structure. I argue that *Ado* and *Shrew* stage these figures in ways that *parody* the narratives of harmony and romance implied by that structure, producing dramatic irony that undermines a literal reading of these plays as romantic comedy. Both *Ado* and *Shrew* muster dramatic irony to draw attention to the distance that exists between the narrative resolution implied by the formal structure of each play's final scene, which appear conventionally comedic, and the protagonists' diegetic, social experience of that

conventional structure, which borders on tragedy in its violence and self-negation. I demonstrate that through these characters' parodic representations of lovers, brides, grooms, and conventional elements of the marriage plot, *Ado* and *Shrew* unsettle the function that marriage typically serves at the end of comedies: to reestablish traditional order and tie loose ends by reconciling premarital tensions and incompatibilities, pardoning abuse and disharmony, and providing a sense of tonal resolution to the stories that have been staged. Thus, while these plays adhere to the formal conventions of early modern comedy, I argue that they stage those conventions to challenge, rather than to reify, the romantic significance that comedic form tenders for abusive courtships.

2.2.1 Genre Parody and Parodic Forms

In the comedic tradition, marriage is touted as a social necessity that erases, redeems, or justifies past abuse, nullifies incompatibilities, balances excesses of reason and emotion, and reaffirms the status quo.[47] To this end, it is an efficient device for closing out a play. Both *Ado* and *Shrew* seem to hold the return to comedic convention – the image of a happy marriage – as the solution to the social ills they stage, but as critics have noted since the first days of their staging,[48] the plays' final moments leave a bad taste. By *Ado* and *Shrew*'s final scenes, neither Petruchio's mistreatment of Katherine, nor Claudio's of Hero, is explicitly accounted for, but rather subsumed and nullified by the "completion" of their marriages. The actual, socially

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[47] See McEachern. For an analysis of how Shakespeare challenges the generic convention in which marriage (and death) appear to resolve lingering tensions in comic plots, see Kathryn Schwarz, "Comedies End in Marriage." See also Cook.

[48] John Fletcher wrote a dramatic rejoinder to *The Taming of the Shrew* called the *Tamer Tamed, or, The Woman's Prize*, which was first performed in 1611 and is often considered to be a critique of Shakespeare's play. *Tamer Tamed* restages Petruchio and his marriage – his second marriage, that is, to a woman named Maria, whom he marries after his turbulent marriage with Katherine leads to her death. On her wedding night, Maria bands together with the local townswomen; they barricade themselves in Maria and Petruchio's home and refuse sex to their husbands until the men learn to treat women with more respect, reversing the taming dynamic in Shakespeare's play.

destructive experiences of romance that Hero and Katherine endure conflict with the demands of the genre and patriarchal culture that pulls comedic protagonists toward marital union. In consequence, *Ado* and *Shrew* proffer conclusions that adhere to the structure of generic convention but fail to substantively engage with or account for the specific narrative tensions they appear to resolve.[49] While this failure to achieve narrative resolution through comedic convention has variously been attributed to Shakespeare's error or to his developing skill as a writer, such readings miss the opportunity to examine either how the tonal tension that these unsettling conclusions construct is, in fact, constructed, or how that construction contributes to the play's satire of its own form.[50]

These concluding moments are more than unsatisfying in their lack of closure; they are stylistically obvious in their use of comic convention to erase the previous five acts of abuse and bring the protagonists to an artificially romantic end. In her essay, "Comedies End in Marriage," Kathryn Schwarz argues that Shakespeare's comedies contest the idea that heterosexual marriage is a necessary resolution to comic plots, and instead invite their viewers to consider its price, as well as the boons of alternative forms of intimacy and social relationship.[51] While I agree with Schwarz's conclusion that these so-called comedies trouble the notion that marriage is a necessary, uncontested, and natural resolution to comedic plots, I argue that *Ado* and *Shrew* do not merely contest this view of marriage; they satirize it. This insight requires a change in our conventional understanding of Shakespearean genres: the plays are not romantic comedies; they are *satirical* comedies, plays that parody and thereby critique the conventions of the genre –

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[49] This is an argument that Cook makes in "'The Sign and Semblance of Her Honor.'"

[50] In "Performing Marriage with A Difference," for instance, Amy Smith examines how *Shrew* constructs such a tension in its concluding depiction of marriage, but she does so to demonstrate how Katherine and Petruchio reshape marriage to suit their own needs, whereas I do so to demonstrate how the play acknowledges its failure to meet Katherine's needs, and thereby satirizes its comedic form.

[51] See Schwarz.

including marriage – as woefully insufficient resolutions to courtships characterized by disharmony and abuse.

Parody and dramatic irony are the primary mechanisms of *Ado* and *Shrew*'s satire. While the first section of this chapter focused on a form of irony that occurs at the level of character and dialogue which is produced through characters' self-conscious enactments of social types, this section examines how characters' *failure* to recognize their own or others' behavior as parodic produces dramatic irony at the metacritical level. Both plays use the characters that they stage as tools – quite literally as parodic literary devices – to execute their critiques of comedic convention. Through the ironic uptake of their roles, for instance, characters draw attention to their own dramatic meaning, abstracting their conventional significance even as they enact their functions.

Linda Hutcheon provides a definition of parody that orients my use of it here: it is "repetition with difference" (*Parody* 32).[52] Hutcheon later specifies that the "difference" in parodic repetition is a form of "critical distance" between the parodied object and parodying text, which is "usually signaled by irony" (10, 32). This ironic repetition can happen on almost any scale, from a repeated word or sentence spoken in an ironic tone, such as Katherine's iteration of Petruchio's use of the word "moved" to suggest that he "re-move" himself from her presence (2.1.195); to a character's knowing or exaggerated mimicry of a character type, akin to Beatrice and Katherine's ironic performances of the shrewish persona; to a plotline that is imitated with archly meaningful changes, such as the contrast that Benedick and Beatrice's romance provides in its imperfect mirroring of Hero and Claudio's; to a genre whose conventions, in their ironic iteration, appear self-mocking, as this section will show. Hutcheon claims that when one subject

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[52] See Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*.

parodies another, the act of repetition "marks difference [from] rather than similarity" to the parodied object by drawing attention to the stylistic or formal mechanisms that produce the ironized distance between the two (*Parody* 32). Samuel Fallon explains that parody draws attention to its formal mechanisms by abstracting them: "Parody…insists on our recognizing the work of abstraction," he claims; "in taking its object as repeatable, [parodic imitation] has the effect of turning it into a style or form" ("Formal Men," 29).[53] Consider again Beatrice's ironic imitation of Lady Disdain's defining trait: through her parody of the type, disdain is legible not only as an individual practice but also as an abstracted form, style, or mechanism whose relationship to herself Beatrice mocks. As a form of ironized imitation that abstracts signs of character as signs of a *type* of character, while highlighting the fact of abstraction itself, parody "objectifies what it touches" – in Beatrice's case, her affiliation with "Lady Disdain" – in order to open it to evaluation" (29). By mimicking its object with ironic distance, a parodic text isolates the "style or form" that it iterates, drawing audience attention to those formal components in order to mock them or undermine their power (Hutcheon, *Parody* 10, 32; Fallon, "Formal Men" 29).

Hutcheon argues that the purpose of parodic abstraction – and, thus, the purpose of parody – is to enact an "active exploration of form," or to facilitate an audience's "questioning of the very act of aesthetic production" by abstracting and drawing attention to those differences, as well as to the alternative meanings they enable (*Parody* 50, 10). When one text parodies the *genre* or narrative structure of another, it "actively explores" how that genre produces meaning by abstracting the social and formal conventions that comprise its style. A parodic interpretation of early modern comedy, for instance, might isolate social clichés like the maid's modesty and

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[53] See Fallon, "Formal Men: On Parody and Character."

the courtier's language, or tropes like love at first sight, or formal elements like marriage and happy endings, and render them iterable and alienable. Carolyn Williams notes that by abstracting generic conventions, genre parody "promotes an awareness of social forms of life precisely as *formations*" – that is, as elements of literary style or form that are codified through the parodic iteration of certain behaviors, discursive styles, and other social qualities (15).[54] For instance, in a play's parody of comedic form, social roles might become legible as comedic types, and social norms as comedic (or theatrical) conventions.[55] By abstracting these generic forms, a parodic text "promotes an awareness" of their constructedness, or, as Fallon puts it, "discloses the formalizing logic" of their apparent conventionality (Williams 15; Fallon, "Formal Men" 27). As Williams notes, parody "forces attention not only on the 'content' of the types … but also on their forms and on the principles of their formation, including the genres and discourses through which these types have been precipitated in social life" (16). The effect of parody's self-conscious abstraction, then, is to unsettle or denaturalize the sense of *conventionality* of the social and generic formations that it represents.

The theories of irony, character, and genre parody that Hutcheon, Williams, and Fallon offer help to demonstrate how Shakespeare's plays satirize the ways in which romantic comedy articulates and seeks to regulate characters' gendered social identity through generic conventions. In my examination of how *Ado* and *Shrew* parody their own comedic conventions, I analyze the ways in which social roles, norms, and contexts become codified as generic

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[54] See Carolyn Williams, *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, Genre, Parody*.

[55] In *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, Caroline Levine proposes the efficacy of "post-post structuralist formalism" as a method of understanding how the relations between social and aesthetic structures organize human experience (632). My examinations of the ways in which early modern comedic form, ideological structures, satirical irony, Shakespearean notions of gender, rhetorical and affective constructions, and other formal elements "operat[e] simultaneously but not in concert" to structure satiric meaning in *Ado* and *Shrew* reflect a similar investment in the "affordances" of form and her method of historicized formalism (22). See Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*.

formations – tropes, types, and other conventions of comedic form.[56] More specifically, I

examine how these plays codify *gender* identities as *generic* roles in their romantic-comedic

contexts – namely, the roles of comedic lovers, of willing (or eager) bride and groom, and

ultimately of companionate husband and wife. Through *Ado* and *Shrew*'s parodic representations

of these conventions, the plays "disclose the formalizing logic" by which characters' gender

performance makes their generic typology legible. In doing so, the plays abstract the stylistic and

formal elements that comprise those characters' gender performance, unsettling their

conventionality and promoting the audience's, but not the characters', realization of their

constructedness. I now examine how *Ado* and *Shrew*'s characters imitate conventions of

romantic comedy, and how the theatrical apparatus of each play ironizes those imitations in

service of their satirical critiques of the artificiality through which comedy deploys convention to

structure stories about violent, gendered conflict.

2.2.2 Shrew*'s Parody*

Among the characters who constitute *Ado* and *Shrew*'s main plots, Katherine is the only

parodic agent who self-consciously parodies the role of "loving and obedient wife." Throughout

the play, Katherine never loses the metacritical awareness that enables her ironic deployment of

the shrewish stereotype in 2.1; in *Shrew*'s final scene, we see her using that metacritical

awareness to ironically inhabit her new, wifely role. Katherine, I argue, uses the same rhetorical

and affective forms of irony that enabled her ironic deployment of the shrewish persona in her

flyting scene to deliberately ironize her relationship to that role and its expectations of obedience

in the play's final scene, exaggerating external "tokens" of that identity to draw attention to the

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[56] For an analysis of how literary and social forms interact and affect each other, see Levine, especially Ch. 4, "Hierarchy" (82-111).

artificiality of her performance, and thus to her distinction from the role (Butler 187). While

other characters might not recognize the irony in the distinction that Katherine establishes

between herself and "the obedient wife," that irony is legible at the metacritical level; as such, I

argue that it frames her performances as parodic and critical – as repetition with ironic difference

– rather than simply imitative.[57] Ultimately, I argue that through her parodic uptake of her

generically mandated role, Katherine undermines the power of that role to regulate her gendered

social identity – that is, the beliefs and attitudes she holds about herself as a woman, which

exceed and often conflict with the conventions of obedience and subordination. Thus, even as

she enacts the stylistic tropes of her wifely role, her exaggerated way of doing so underscores her

distinction from that type, and ironically draws attention back to Katherine's social identity as a

woman who resists conventional roles.

My claim that Katherine's apparent alignment with the role of "obedient wife" represents

a form of parody resonates with several extant studies that read Katherine's submission to

Petruchio's authority as a performance, and often an ironic one. These studies from the 1950s,

1970s, and 1980s achieve the effect of "rescuing" Katherine from the narrative of Petruchio's

successful taming, and *Shrew* from unequivocal misogyny, by suggesting that Katherine retains

her capacity to resist, if not the patriarchal order, then at least Petruchio.[58] For instance,

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[57] See Amy Smith for another analysis of how Katherine's parodic deployment of her role enables her critique of that role.

[58] In the Laurel edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Francis Fergusson refers to Katherine's final monologue as "ironic" (13); Margaret Webster expands on Fergusson's meaning when she describes it as an ironic jest characterized by "outward seeming" that enables Katherine's "victory" over Petruchio's attempts to tame her (23). In "'The Taming of the Shrew': Shakespeare's Mirror of Marriage," Coppélia Kahn argues that Katherine employs irony in her final speech to "[subvert] her husband's power without attempting to challenge it, and she does so in a gamesome spirit, without hostility or bitterness" (88). In "Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*," Karen Newman argues that throughout the play, Katherine's linguistic facility is a great power which poses a threat to male authority; In Katherine's delivery of her final speech, Newman observes "self-consciousness about the power of discourse," as well as "punning and irony" in her promotion of submissiveness via a demonstration of her own continued linguistic power (99). While I affirm these scholars' recognition of irony in

Marianne Novy examines Katherine's use of ironic allusion and parodic forms to argue that she has learned how to play Petruchio's "games," that her rhetorical irony signals her willing participation in those games, and that her rhetorical facility indicates her parity with Petruchio not only in their verbal game, but also in their marriage.[59] Amy Smith takes a different tack. Instead of arguing that *Shrew*'s parodic moments enact a straightforward "acceptance or rejection of the subjection of wives to their husbands," Smith claims that Katherine and Petruchio's parodies of their wifely and husbandly roles should be seen as representing "fluid negotiations of power" in which first one, and then the other, dominates (290, 298). The function of this parody, Smith argues, is that Katherine and Petruchio "loosen" the shape of their marital roles to better suit their individual needs, and thereby implicitly critique the ideal forms of "husband" and "wife" (296). While I agree that Katherine's parodic uptake of her conventional wifely role serves to critique the obedient form of that role, the notion that Katherine and Petruchio engage in "fluid power shifts" that "contradict the idea that courtship and marriage are exchanges in which women necessarily, by definition, lose" is over-optimistic (300). My examination of Katherine's parody recognizes that whatever "negotiations of power" that *Shrew* stages occur within the misogynistic context of a patriarchal hierarchy that fundamentally disadvantages women, and within a narrative of "taming" that fundamentally targets Katherine. In addition, while Smith premises her claims on the idea that Petruchio and Katherine recognize and respond to one another's parodies, my interest in parody rests in its metacritical value – that

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Katherine's final monologue and agree that her irony suggests that she has resisted Petruchio's complete taming, in contrast to these studies, I argue that Katherine's irony does not "rescue" her from her position of forced subordination, nor does it indicate that she has learned to avoid Petruchio's ire through equivocal speech. See Margaret Webster, "A Director's Comments on Staging *The Taming of the Shrew*"; Francis Fergusson, "Introduction"; Coppélia Kahn, "'The Taming of the Shrew': Shakespeare's Mirror of Marriage"; Karen Newman, "Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*."

[59] See Marianne Novy, "Patriarchy and Play in *The Taming of the Shrew*."

is, the functions that parodic moments serve for viewers of the play, rather than for the characters within it.

The distinction I note above between Katherine's gender identity and her generic role as "obedient wife" can be understood in terms of Katherine's gender performance. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler proposes an understanding of gender performance *not* as a mimetic expression of one's gender identity, but rather as a series of repeated, parodic practices that mimic gendered ideals (like "wife" or "maid," in *Shrew*'s context) with key, and often ironic, differences. Butler examines contemporary drag shows as a particularly apt example of the parodic nature of gender performance for the ways in which performers exaggerate external tokens of gender identity – makeup, body shape, clothing, gesture, language and tone – to present a unified, recognizable picture of the category of "woman." Butler argues that even when drag performers do not identify as women, audiences are able to view a drag performance and apprehend the category of "woman" because they are observing the performance through the lens of "heterosexual coherence" (187). Butler defines heterosexual coherence as the normative drive to align a person's gender identity, anatomical sex, and gender expression in one, unified picture; it is an ideology, or a "regulatory fiction," that assumes and actively constructs that false cohesion. However, while the exaggerated image that a drag performer curates might be legible as the category of "woman," Butler explains that the act of exaggeration *denaturalizes* the external tokens of their gender performance, drawing attention to the artificiality or constructedness of the very qualities that produce the image of "woman."[60] In this way, the practice of gender parody highlights the distinctions between the performer's anatomical sex, their gender identity, and their gender performance (187).

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[60] Butler uses "denaturalizes" in the way that Williams uses "promotes an awareness" and Fallon uses "abstracts" (Butler 187; Williams 15; Fallon, "Formal Men" 29).

If we consider Katherine's performance of "the obedient wife" in these terms, it is possible to see that by exaggerating external tokens of that role – unquestioning obedience, passivity, servile gestures, etc. – Katherine denaturalizes those tokens, drawing attention to the artificiality of her performance and to the distinction between her identity and her performance of that role.[61] By reading Katherine's performance of wifely convention as parody, we can observe not only how Katherine undermines her association with that type, but also how comedic convention, like Butler's "heterosexual coherence," functions as a "regulatory fiction" that "falsely naturalize[s]" Katherine's exaggerated performance of "the obedient wife" as a sign of marital harmony in *Shrew*'s final scene, and thus of the play's successful comedic closure. By attending to the ways that Katherine's parodic obedience responds to the twin structures of comedy and patriarchy, it becomes possible to recognize how Katherine's *tragic* experience of Petruchio's taming, in its comedic expression, produces affective and logical tensions at the end of the play that cannot be resolved from within the twin structures that organize its narrative.

Unlike many other romantic comedies from the period, the marriage of *Shrew*'s protagonists occurs in the third act rather than in the final scene. It is the subplot's marriage – that of Bianca and Lucentio – that serves as the impetus for comedic closure, despite the fact that theirs is an offstage elopement. Lucentio hosts a banquet in celebration of their wedding, and of the unions between Katherine and Petruchio, and Hortensio and a wealthy widow. This celebration serves the same function for the play's generic categorization that a wedding typically achieves: it provides a public opportunity for characters to settle disagreements and resolve lingering tensions; it aligns characters with their "proper" (i.e. generically conventional,

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[61] Amy Smith also argues that Katherine's parody denaturalizes the conventions of her performance; however, whereas Smith uses that denaturalization effect to argue that Katherine actively shapes the conventional role that she enacts into one that better suits her needs, I use it to argue that Katherine does not alter the role of "obedient wife" but rather draws attention back to the imposition of her shrewish persona.

or status-appropriate) roles; and it generates the festive impression of communal harmony. This is the culminating function that comedy promises, and on its surface, the formal structure of *Shrew*'s final scene seems designed to achieve it. For instance, in lieu of the wifely vow of obedience that a marriage scene might entail, Katherine *demonstrates* her obedience at Petruchio's request.[62] In a display of his successful taming of the "shrew" he married, Petruchio calls Katherine to him; not only does she follow his instruction, but she appears to take his dominance to heart by voluntarily offering her total subservience to him, thereby instantiating a power dynamic that she has resisted for the previous five acts. While Katherine's sudden shift is formally aligned with comedy's project of resolving dramatic conflict by staging characters who happily accept their lot in the final scene, this reading is only possible if one ignores the irony in Katherine's performance of wifely compliance.

Katherine's performance of "the dutiful wife" becomes recognizable as a form of *imitation* through the way it abstracts the conventions, or common tokens, of that role. When Katherine comes when Petruchio calls her, fetches Bianca and the widow when Petruchio orders her to do so, removes her cap and steps on it at Petruchio's command, and launches into her monologue when Petruchio charges her to speak, onlooking characters comment on the discrepancy between Katherine's historically unconventional social identity and the traditional gender performance that she enacts. Although these characters do not recognize that difference as *ironic*, Katherine's performance nevertheless prompts onlookers to notice how the conventions of the wifely role simultaneously construct the image of "wife" and underscore her difference from that role. "Here is a wonder, if you talk of a wonder," Lucentio comments,

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[62] A demonstration is, inherently, a performative act. In what follows, I make arguments about Katherine's enactment of comedic conventions that can and have been refuted in alternative stagings of *Shrew*. I offer these readings not to assert their infallibility, but rather to open up new ways of understanding performed dynamics through the lens of satire.

registering his astonishment, and perhaps the unnatural or supernatural quality of Katherine's change (5.2.100).[63] "And so it is," Hortensio agrees; "I wonder what it bodes" (111). Although Petruchio and Baptista have held Katherine's successful "taming" by Petruchio as the culminating event toward which the play tends, Hortensio's repetition of the term "wonder" suggests that Katherine's performance is not a *culminating* event, but rather a portent of some future change or meaning. Baptista echoes Hortensio's temporal interest by observing that his daughter "is changed, as she had never been," suggesting that in her conventional, wifely verisimilitude, it is "as if she [Katherine] had never existed" (119, 199n). Katherine's gender performance, in its "wonder[ful]" similarity to the wifely ideal, ironically draws the onlookers' attention back to Katherine's social identity as a woman who resists conventional roles. Baptista cannot square Katherine's fulfillment of the wifely ideal with her usual social tendencies; when he offers to pay Petruchio for "taming" his daughter, Baptista registers that tension by referring to his payment as "Another dowry to another daughter," as if the wifely Katherine is someone else altogether (118). But Petruchio defers the payment: "I will win my wager better yet," he boasts, "And show more sign of her obedience, / Her new-built virtue and obedience" (120-22). Petruchio here names the tokens that Katherine performs to construct the unified image of "wife": "obedience" and the "virtue" of Katherine's apparent acceptance of that role. Although the assembled characters do not recognize the irony in Katherine's performance, their responses to her wifely semblance register the effects of her parody, including the denaturalization of the role's conventions, and the tenuous relationship that those conventions uphold between Katherine's established social identity and her performed, wifely obedience.

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[63] The definition of "wonder" as "A deed performed or an event brought about by miraculous or supernatural power; a miracle," was prominent in the early modern period (*OED*, "wonder, n.").

In her parody of wifeliness, Katherine obeys Petruchio's command to speak by delivering a 43-line monologue in which she promotes an exaggerated, misogynistic view of wifely subservience that Petruchio, Baptista, and Bianca's many suitors hold as the ideal of a woman's marital role. This speech is, significantly, the longest speech in the play. Its sheer volume of language and powerful sentiment underscore the irony of its demand for and enforcement women's self-effacement. Katherine begins by chiding Bianca and the widow for their "headstrong" behavior, and moralizes on the duty women have to their husbands (5.2.136): "Thy husband is thy lord," she proclaims, to whom wives "are bound to serve, love and obey" (152-53, 170). She suggests that a woman's resistance to this role would be an act of false strength: "our lances are but straws," she declares, "seeming to be most which we indeed least are" – that is, strong (179, 181). She ends her speech by kneeling at Petruchio's feet in a display of abject subservience. Katherine has fought against this role with gusto for the majority of the play, yet at its end we see her swap the persona of a shrew for that of a dutiful wife. As she follows Petruchio's charge and praises the idea of a woman's subservience to a more powerful husband, Katherine appears to accept his dominance over her. I maintain, however, that she employs rhetorical and affective irony to call attention to her wifely performance *qua* performance, whereby she unsettles the conventionality of the gestures, attitudes, and discursive forms that she performs.

In her speech, Katherine promotes an understanding of marriage as a reciprocal relationship, wherein wives exchange their passive tractability for a husband's active care and command. However, by dwelling on the essential obligations of each gendered role, Katherine highlights the lack of reciprocity in her own relationship, and thereby ironizes her obligation to perform the conventional "dut[ies]" she claims that wives "do owe their lords and husbands"

(5.2.135). "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign," Katherine says, proliferating types of authority, "one that … commits his body / To painful labor … Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe; / And craves no other tribute at thy hands / But love, fair looks, and true obedience — / Too little payment for so great a debt" (150-58). By tying the fulfillment of wifely obedience to the *husband*'s fulfillment of his reciprocal role, Katherine overdetermines her own performance of obedience by implicitly drawing attention to Petruchio's failure to enact his. When Petruchio first brought Katherine to his home after they married, he undertook "painful labor" not to secure Katherine's domestic comfort, but rather to *prevent* her from feeling "warm at home, secure and safe" (154-55). By implicitly distinguishing between the generic obligations of "the loving husband" and Petruchio's failure to perform that role, Katherine implies that she has no obligation to fulfill the conventions of her wifely duty, even as she appears to promote obedience as "payment for so great a debt" (158). In fact, she has no debt to repay.

Throughout her parodic speech, Katherine highlights the distinctions between the form of wifehood that is organized around her subservience and the attitudes and beliefs she maintains that do not align with that role, particularly in moments where she promotes especially debasing tokens of obedience. Consider, for instance, the moment when Katherine instructs Bianca and the widow to "vail your stomachs, … / And place your hands below your husband's foot" (5.2.183). This gesture is an ironically imitative move, one that exaggerates a form of wifely compliance by physicalizing the wife's social position beneath her husband: "My hand is ready," Katherine attests, "may it do him ease" (183). In addition to Katherine's physical exaggeration, Frances Dolan notes that the directive to "place your hands below your husband's foot" is a reference to an antiquated marriage ritual that had been prohibited for four decades by the time Shakespeare

wrote this play. Dolan posits that to "resurrect it for this moment either marks Petruchio and Katharine's union as obviously anachronistic or endows it with the nostalgic prestige of a recently lost custom." [64] A third option emerges if one recognizes that Katherine is *using* the anachronism to perform an over-the-top, out-of-date version of "obedient wife" for some purpose other than *to become* such a wife. Just as she mobilized shrewish violence in the flyting scene to attack Petruchio while remaining affectively distanced from that trope, thereby marking her difference from it, Katherine's exaggerated performance of subservience in her final speech displaces the meaning of the antiquated marital ritual: far from being a promise of servitude, Katherine uses the gesture to critique the wifely ideal as an outmoded representation of women's marital roles, by "*seeming* to be most which [she] indeed least [is]": that is, an obedient wife (181).[65] Katherine's ironic revival of the obsolete marital practice reveals a "dissonance," in Butler's terms, between Katherine's social identity as a woman who has maintained a sense of self beyond her role as Petruchio's wife and her generic role as a romantic-comedic heroine who performs a model of wifehood that is grounded in abject obedience (Butler 187).

If one does not interpret Katherine's speech as ironic, then one has just read or watched a play about a woman who has been abused into submission, in which Katherine remains the target of the play's vicious, occasionally satirical excoriation of outspoken women.[66] In order to appropriate the play as a feminist tragedy, contemporary performances often take this route. In order for this reading to work, however, Katherine must undergo a complete conversion from a

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[64] Dolan, "Introduction," 35.

[65] Italics mine.

[66] Contemporary performances often stage this version of Katherine's narrative, thereby appropriating the story as a feminist tragedy in its explicit depiction of Katherine's horrifying "taming." See Diana Henderson, "The Return of the Shrew: New Media, Old Stories, and Shakespearean Comedy."

critic of gendered marital stereotypes to a proselytizer of the same.[67] If, however, one recognizes

that irony may still be driving Katherine's language and gestures, then one has just read or

watched a play about a woman who has been abused into near-submission, but has held onto a

perspective of heterosexual marriage in which women are *not* "bound to serve, love, and obey"

(5.2.170). In this second interpretation, the rhetorical and affective tools that Katherine used to

ironically mobilize the shrewish persona during her flyting scene enable her to parody the role of

the ideal, obedient wife that Petruchio expects her to play in *Shrew*'s final scene. By styling an

exaggerated portrait of wifely subservience, Katherine abstracts *obedience* and *subordination* as

artificial conventions; by simultaneously enacting those conventions, she ironizes her own

performance of them, distancing herself from their debasing meaning. Katherine's capacity for

irony does not save her from the structures of patriarchal dominance that she exaggerates in her

speech – she is, after all, still married to a "tamer" – but it registers her intellectual and emotional

distance from the role of "obedient wife." Through parody, Katherine undermines the power of

the role of dutiful wife to articulate, regulate, typify, or otherwise account for her own sense of

her unconventional social identity, which remains legible in its ironic distinction from the

generic role.

I wish to acknowledge that while Katherine might retain a sense of her identity that is

distinct from the wifely ideal, this does not "soften" the impacts of patriarchy or indicate that she

is somehow immune from future misogyny or gendered violence. On the contrary, because her

continued capacity for irony represents her continued capacity to entertain alternatives to wifely

obedience that are not structured exclusively by the demands of patriarchal hierarchy, I suggest

that Katherine's irony registers her incomplete taming and, thus, the potential for future conflict

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[67] This is, indeed, commensurate with what we know of the psychology of protracted domestic abuse. But that is not the only option. See Emily Detmer, "Civilizing Subordination: Domestic Violence and *The Taming of the Shrew*."

with Petruchio. Indeed, the final lines of the play register the effects of Katherine's parody in their recognition not only of her incomplete conversion to "the obedient wife," but also of the gendered and generic structures that threatened violence to wifely insubordination earlier in this play. Immediately following Katherine's speech, Petruchio voices a quatrain as he exits the stage in which he boasts about his success in taming Katherine and bids the other characters adieu, in seeming conclusion to the play. However, it is Hortensio and Lucentio who voice the final couplet:[68] "Now go thy ways," Hortensio says in redundant farewell to Petruchio, "Thou hast tamed a curst shrew" (192). Hortensio's reductive summary of the plot ("Thou hast tamed a curst shrew") could be read as offering an additional sense of finality to Petruchio's adieus or resolution to Katherine's ambiguous speech; however, in citing Katherine's former identity as a "curst shrew," the line also mirrors the function of her speech by drawing attention back to her seeming incompatibility with the obedient wife, and to the equivocal matter of her "tam[ing]." Given that Petruchio has already left the stage, Hortensio's line also seems needlessly to repeat Petruchio's declarations of victory and adieu; needless, but for the fact that this repetition abstracts "victory" and the closure that "adieu" implies, implicitly holding them up for audience – and Lucentio's – scrutiny. In the final line of the play, Lucentio hazards a comment that, rather than affirm Petruchio and, perhaps, Hortensio's sense of settled conclusion, underscores the unsettled question of Katherine's apparent conversion: "'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so" (193). Like his earlier use of "wonder" to describe the inexplicable change in Katherine's comportment, Lucentio's line registers his astonishment and recognition that such a dramatic conversion could be better explained by "miraculous or supernatural power" than

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[68] The Folio includes the stage direction, "*Exit Petruchio*" after the quatrain. See Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, STC 22273 Fo.1 no.68.

Petruchio's "tam[ing]."[69] In its explicit invocation of Katherine's unconventional social nature ("curst shrew") and the "wonder" that "she will be tamed so," the play's final couplet underscores the lingering tonal and narrative tensions that Katherine's ironized performance of obedience made conspicuous for viewers, and possibly suggests a tragic return to the context of abuse: the "tam[ing]" that Hortensio cites. In its implicit recognition of the tension, if not the irony, in Katherine's performance of ideal wifehood, the final couplet suggests that her exaggerated performance of submission does not erase her resistance to Petruchio.

Over the course of *Shrew*'s dramatic action, we see how Katherine's ironic performance of wifely tropes becomes formalized as a generic role, as well as how those conventions become "falsely naturalized" by the generic pull toward a conclusion characterized by heterosexual felicity (Butler 187). By parodying the social role of the obedient wife, Katherine highlights the distinctions between her gendered social identity and the extrinsic fact of her generic role, thereby subverting the regulating power of the role over her inner life, even as she plays it. In addition, through Katherine's parody, *Shrew* satirizes the notion that wifely obedience is a socially or narratively viable conclusion to a romantic relationship characterized by a husband's attempts to "tame," or cruelly dominate, his wife.

2.2.3 Ado*'s Parody*

Like *Shrew*, parody is the primary mechanism of *Ado*'s satire of comedic convention. However, *Ado*'s relationship to parody and to the satire it enables is more complex than *Shrew*'s. Those who note *Ado*'s parodic tendencies tend to look at the play structurally, examining how Beatrice and Benedick's romantic subplot imitates, with ironic differences, the romantic main

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[69] "Wonder, n," *OED.*

plot of Hero and Claudio: the supposed unconventionality of Benedick and Beatrice's romantic narrative draws attention to the highly formalized elements of Claudio and Hero's conventional courtship, providing a comic and critical counterbalance to the main plot's conventional, if tragedy-tinged, romance.[70] However, while Beatrice and Benedick serve an explicitly mocking function in the play, they are not the sole agents of *Ado*'s satire of comedic convention; Claudio and Hero are, too, and it is those figures that my analysis centers. As the play's formal protagonists, Claudio and Hero serve a strikingly conventional function within *Ado*'s marriage plot: as in many early modern comedies, their tumultuous courtship risks disrupting the homosocial ties between men and patriarchal authority that organize Messinian society; when the couple marries in the final scene, however, they appear to overcome these obstacles, remediating the preceding social disruption and reifying *Ado*'s patriarchal social order in a conservative restatement of the period's social values.

Comedic form enables these outcomes. However, as feminist scholars have pointed out, many such marriages achieve the appearance of social cohesion or festivity by eclipsing and obscuring, rather than substantively accounting for, the gendered conflicts that marriage may appear to resolve.[71] In *Ado*, for instance, whose plot is largely driven by Claudio's false accusation of Hero's sexual promiscuity, the marriage of Claudio and Hero circumvents an escalation of their gendered conflict into a broader family and social affair – or into a political one, given the status of Leonato and Claudio's closest ally, Don Pedro. However, while this marriage might bring together two parties whose disputes risk the stability of a broader community, it does not necessarily bring justice for Hero. Some scholars argue that this

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[70] If one follows Shakespeare's sources, and considers which characters drive the plot, Claudio and Hero are the play's formal protagonists. Neither Beatrice nor Benedick appears in Shakespeare's source texts; they are generally attributed to him as original inventions. See Cook; Schwarz.

[71] See Dolan, *Marriage and Violence.*

misogyny challenges the illusion of resolution or harmonious social conclusion that the concluding marriage seems to imply;[72] some argue that this challenges the play's status as comedy. Others understand misogyny to be a prominent element of early modern social life, and view *Ado*'s marriage as a reparative strategy *not* for the heterosexual couple but rather for male, homosocial bonds;[73] for these scholars, so long as Claudio and Hero's marriage restores male friendship at the end of the play – between Benedick, Claudio, Leonato, and Don Pedro – persistent misogyny appears to be less relevant to early modern conceptions of "social harmony," or of comedy, than a reinstated patriarchal hierarchy.

Rather than directly taking up these debates, I explore how *Ado* enables such readings by deploying satiric mechanisms – including parody – to self-consciously stage the misogynistic elements of its marriage plot, drawing metacritical attention not only to Claudio's mistreatment of Hero, but also to the ways its comedic conventions fail to account for that mistreatment. I argue that through parody, *Ado* ironizes its central comedic tropes at key moments of the marriage plot, producing conspicuous tensions between, on the structural level, the standard, comedic narrative that the conventions tell, and on the diegetic level, the characters' social experience of those conventions. In doing so, the play abstracts the generic tropes, gendered stereotypes, and other structural elements through which comedy falsely naturalizes marriage as an expected or inevitable social outcome of romantic narratives characterized by gender-based mistreatment and other forms of misogyny. In other words, by parodying conventions of comedy, *Ado* abstracts the ideological functions of its own form, highlighting how the comedic tropes that it stages aim to normalize gender-based abuse in service of a story that in fact ends

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[72] See, for instance, Mihoko Suzuki, who compares *Ado* to contemporary domestic tragedies in "Gender, Class, and the Ideology of Comic Form: *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*."

[73] See, for instance, Michael D. Friedman, "Male Bonds and Marriage in *All's Well* and *Much Ado*"; and Jean Howard, "Renaissance Antitheatricality and the Politics of Gender and Rank in *Much Ado About Nothing*."

with a patriarchal hierarchy revitalized by Claudio and Hero's marriage. By building ironic tensions into its depiction of conventional comedic forms, *Ado* emphasizes the artificiality of its comedic narrative, and ironically emphasizes the *tragic* potential of Claudio and Hero's romance. In doing so, the play's satiric parody alludes to narrative alternatives that, in contrast to comedic convention, do *not* feature marriage as an inevitable conclusion, leave homosocial bonds unrepaired, and consequently do *not* reify the misogynistic, patriarchal social structure that Messinian authorities hold as an ideal.

Focusing on key scenes for the play's comedic structure, including those surrounding Hero's death and burial (4.1), as well as the concluding wedding (5.4), I attend to these scenes' affective dimensions, for it is in the tonal discrepancies between the narrative implied by generic convention and the characters' social experience of those conventions that the play's irony becomes legible.

2.2.3.1 Discrepant Tones: Romantic Burial and Tragic Marriage

*Ado'*s plot is driven by conventional elements of early modern comedy: the two lovers, Hero and Claudio, follow a narrative progression through mistaken identity, conflict, anagnorisis, apparent resolution, and marriage, producing a social arc in which the rest of the cast moves from conflict to a semblance of cohesion in the final scene. Like many other comedies from the period, *Ado* uses the marriage of the characters in its main plot to conclude the play, drawing disparate parts of the narrative together in its final moments and appearing to return characters to a conventional understanding of their social and generic roles: as she becomes Claudio's wife, Hero is again acknowledged as Leonato's daughter; Leonato reclaims his privileged reputation when Hero is redeemed through her marriage; Don Pedro, who was beguiled by Don John's trick and contributed to Hero's defamation, resumes his advice- and

command-giving authority as prince; Beatrice loses her avenging impulse as Claudio marries, rather than kills, her cousin, and appears to trade her skirmishing wit for a romantic one as she admits to loving Benedick; Benedick escapes a duel with Claudio and repairs their homosocial bond by marrying into the same family; and Claudio is shifted from a misprizing villain to an amorous, comedic hero. Despite these multiple accommodations to social norms, scholars have noted that *Ado*'s final scene presents the *appearance* of narrative and tonal cohesion, while leaving open questions about whether it has accounted for or avenged Hero's defamation, or provided the sense of tonal resolution for *Ado*'s action that its conclusion seems structured to produce.[74]

Despite the conventionality of Hero and Claudio's apparent dramatic (i.e. structural) function – to produce and then resolve social conflict – these figures exist in highly ironized relation to the generic conventions that they enact, and which enable their marriage in the final scene. As I show, *Ado* consistently displaces Claudio and Hero from their participation in the comedic narrative, ironizing their proximity to their generic roles as romantic protagonists by staging scenes in which they feign, parody, or outsource their own participation in the comedic narrative. By building dramatic and other forms of irony into their enactments of convention at key moments of their romance, *Ado* denaturalizes their roles as lovers, as well as marriage as the institution toward which comedic lovers tend. Ironizing, imitative, and distancing enactments of their social roles abound: Claudio performs his initial wooing by proxy, by Don Pedro in disguise; the social rift that the romantic protagonists must remediate occurs when Claudio observes a serving woman wrapped in another man's embrace and misprizes her as Hero; the dramatic climax of Claudio and Hero's first wedding ceremony is Claudio's rejection of, rather

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[74] See Brean Hammond, *Tragicomedy: Forms of Drama*; Schwarz; Cook.

than union with, Hero; in response, Hero agrees to fake her death and is, thus, absent from her tomb when Claudio appears to redeem himself by mourning over it; and in the final scene, when Hero appears to bring the play to comedic closure by marrying Claudio, she enters the scene pretending to be someone else and, upon revealing her true identity, is acknowledged as the "Hero that is dead" (5.4.65). The irony embedded in Claudio and Hero's enactment of comedic convention is largely dramatic – that is, a product of the audience's superior knowledge of staged dynamics rather than a function of the characters' own awareness and will. In contrast to *Shrew*'s satire, where Katherine self-consciously parodies the conventions of the "obedient wife" to undermine her association with that type, neither Claudio nor Hero possesses the metacritical awareness that would enable them to recognize the irony in their imitations of comedic convention, nor to understand those imitations as parodic. Consequently, they seem unaware of – or unbothered by – their typification or genericism. Thus, while Hero and Claudio enable *Ado*'s satire by parodying the roles of comedic lovers, because they are ignorant of the irony of their performance, the play's satire happens at their expense.

  Ado uses satirical parody to draw attention to the constructedness of its narrative form. By using parody to ironize their participation in the generic roles and rituals that structure its plot, *Ado* highlights a central tension between the tropes of comedy, which tell a generically conventional tale, and *how* those tropes are performed, which tells a far more equivocal and, perhaps, tragic story. Scholars who debate whether *Ado*'s final scene successfully ties its loose narrative ends and resolves interpersonal tensions through the union of Hero and Claudio tend to base their claims on the degree of remorse that Claudio brings into the wedding scene for his role in Hero's supposed death.[75] Because the play's final scene permits Claudio to marry a woman

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[75] See Cook.

whom he has cruelly and publicly defamed to the point of her social and potentially literal death,[76] many scholars argue that if he does not first come to a right understanding of his error and his role in Hero's demise, their marriage would be tragic[77]: Claudio would be rewarded for villainous behavior that not only put Hero's life at risk, but in doing so also risked rupturing Messina's social cohesion and, perhaps, destabilizing its political future, if Leonato's governorship were to pass down the family line.[78] Thus, a significant degree of critical pressure is often placed on Claudio's emotional development – from the lovesick gallant in the first act, to the enraged and self-righteous gull in the third and fourth, to the remorseful groom in the fifth – to determine the generic significance of the concluding marriage. I, too, turn my attention to the affective implications of *Ado*'s comedic structure, not to make a subjective claim about whether characterological development achieves an adequate emotional resolution for the end of the play to "work" as comedy, but rather to demonstrate how the play's ironizing of its own formal elements draws attention to the social and affective movements – between love, rage, and remorse; between conflict and cohesion – that those conventional moves imply.

Hero's "death" and the events that occur around her tomb form the affective premise of the wedding in the final scene; these events demonstrate how *Ado* uses parody to draw attention to the characters' social experience of comedic convention, thus undermining any clear sense of Claudio's experience of remorse. Following Claudio's public shaming of Hero and her feigned death, Hero is valorized in a way that would not have been possible were she presumed to be

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[76] Leonato's repeated calls for a dagger in 4.1 underscore the very real threat that Claudio's accusations posed to Hero's life: Leonato was prepared to kill Hero himself upon Claudio's news, in a traditional move to recuperate the family's reputation by excising the members whom social convention deems indecent.

[77] As I explain below, this is also due to the expectation that *Ado*'s Friar sets up when he proposes that Hero feign her death, arguing that "The supposition of the lady's death will quench the wonder of her infamy" and "Change slander to remorse" (4.1.238-39).

[78] These are the consequences of Don John's actions, whom the play portrays as an unequivocal villain. *Ado* threatens to align Claudio and Don John in this respect.

living, thereby transforming Claudio's fury into something like remorse. In "'The Sign and Semblance of Her Honor': Reading Gender Difference in *Much Ado about Nothing*," Carol Cook argues that Hero's death enables the play's comedic ending to "work" affectively by providing Claudio with an opportunity to express contrition for his role in her demise, thereby absolving him from his role in her defamation in time for their wedding. This is the argument that *Ado*'s Friar makes when he proposes the plan to feign Hero's death. He frames Claudio's affective conversion from rage to remorse as the central purpose of the scheme: "The supposition of the lady's death will quench the wonder of her infamy" and "Change slander to remorse," the Friar explains, "For it so falls out / That what we have we prize not to the worth / Whiles we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost, / Why, then we rack the value, then we find / The virtue that possession would not show us / Whiles it was ours" (4.1.238-39, 211, 217-22). The Friar maintains that to "prize" Hero again – both to value her and to recognize her true character (as in "misprize") – Claudio requires a shift in feeling. This is the explicit dramatic and social function of Hero's feigned death and burial: to "catch the conscience of the" villain,[79] or to align Claudio with a feeling that will enable him to "prize … the worth" or "find / The virtue" in Hero, by experiencing her as "lacked and lost" rather than spurned.

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[79] I borrow this quote from *Hamlet*. Three years after the publication of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare writes a scene for *Hamlet* that recapitulates many of the metadramatic dynamics at play in Hero's burial. In this later scene, Prince Hamlet directs a short play for an on-stage audience in which he dramatizes his uncle Claudius's murder of his father in an attempt to "catch the conscience of the king" – that is, to observe Claudius's reaction to the play and thereby ascertain his guilt (2.2.634). This play-within-a-play, often referred to as the "mouse-trap scene," is layered with dramatic irony: there exists an ironic difference between the theatrical audience's awareness and the staged audience's ignorance, both of the documentary (as opposed to fictional) nature of the performance, as well as of Claudius's guilt. *Hamlet*'s mouse-trap scene represents another instance in which Shakespeare uses parodic metatheater as a mechanism to draw audience attention to the shifts and, perhaps, discrepancies in a character's response to staged events. I am suggesting that Hero's mock-burial functions as an earlier, parodic mouse-trap scene in which *Ado* ironizes its imitation of mourning rites to draw audience attention to Claudio's emotional experience. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

However, *Ado*'s burial scene equivocates on the matter of Claudio's contrition: despite its explicit framing as a hoped-for site of affective conversion, the scene undermines any clear sense of Claudio's remorse through parody. Act 4, scene 1 functions as a parody of mourning that ironizes, and thereby abstracts, the generic mechanisms through which the play stages a performance of Claudio's remorse. The layers of dramatic irony at play in 4.1 underscore the ways in which "style and form" can produce the fictive appearance of substance: not only can the conventions of burial produce the illusion of mourning, but the conventions of mourning can also produce the illusion of remorse (Fallon, "Formal Men" 29). Consider, for instance, the fact that Hero is not within the tomb: the entire ceremony is a mock-interment, nothing but "mourning ostentation" that is fundamentally ironized by the fact that no one has died (4.1.205). The Friar makes the scene's parody explicit when he instructs Leonato's family to enact his vision of the macabre pantomime of conventional mourning rituals: "on your family's old monument, / Hang mournful epitaphs, and do all rites / That appertain unto burial," he instructs (206-8). The Friar suggests that Hero's presence within the tomb is irrelevant so long as the scene's formal gestures convince Claudio that she is dead. Even when those gestures are unsubstantiated by a body, the Friar suggests that those structural elements are sufficient to produce the necessary contrition in Claudio, for he requires only the "idea of [Hero's] life" to "sweetly creep / Into his study of imagination" to be transformed by mourning (224-5). However, while Hero's absence may be inconsequential for Claudio's perception of "mourning *ostentation*" as, simply, "mourning," it is of great consequence for the scene's parodic function. Hero's absence from the tomb is, after all, the "ironic difference" between this mock-burial and the ideal of burial that it mimics, which flags this ceremony as parody. As Barbara Everett notes, "the fact that [Hero] isn't dead, and that we [the audience] know she isn't, and that her family, too, knows that she isn't, turns this

grieving ceremony at the tomb into something like … an art, a game, a pretence" (72).[80] This

discrepancy between Hero and Claudio's knowledge – Hero's awareness and Claudio's

ignorance of her living status – grants Hero (and her kin) the power to manipulate Claudio's

reality in this scene, ironically reversing the previous dynamic in which Claudio's imputations of

Hero's chastity, sexual inconstancy, and other qualities manipulate Hero's experience of reality

(e.g. as idealized or slandered, as living or dead). Thus, through its ironic absenting of Hero, the

person around whom the burial is ostensibly organized, this scene accomplishes two things: it

demonstrates the authoring power of formal convention ("mournful epitaphs," "all rites") to

convey the semblance of social substance ("the idea of her"); and it draws metacritical attention

to the supposed emotional shift from self-righteousness to remorse that Claudio must undergo for

this scene to enable his generic conversion from a tragic villain to a comedic groom.

However, Claudio fails to fulfill both the ritualistic and affective conventions that the

Friar has designed. Two scenes prior, Leonato tasks Claudio with two mourning rites: "Hang her

an epitaph upon her tomb," he says, "And sing it to her bones. Sing it tonight" (5.1.274-75).

When the burial scene comes to pass, Claudio exaggerates the scene's parody of mourning by

reciting Hero's epitaph and singing by proxy, thereby emphasizing the "ostentatio[usness]," or

artificiality, of the rite. The Quarto and Folio suggest that Shakespeare may have given the

responsibility of hanging Hero's epitaph to an attendant lord, whom Claudio directs to recite in

his stead.[81] As McEachern notes, the attribution of Hero's epitaph to the lord has posed an issue

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[80] While Everett argues that *Ado* draws attention to the psychological and affective modes through which gulled or foolish characters express their folly, she does so to demonstrate how the variety of tones and generic techniques that *Ado*'s comedy indexes produces a sense of the play's social "nothingness," not to argue for the play's deliberate construction of affective *tensions* or its engagement with parody. Barbara Everett, "*Much Ado About Nothing*: The Unsociable Comedy." Also qtd. in McEachern, 53.

[81] The Quarto explicitly assigns Hero's epitaph to the Lord, while the Folio, whether for the printer's lack of space, the typesetter's error of memory, the writer's genuine attribution, or another reason, prints the cue (or title)

for scholarly and dramaturgical interpreters, who typically give the speech to Claudio in order, as Jeff Myers explains, to "assign the epitaph to the character whose importance merits the speech and who is an appropriate choice to speak it" (415).[82] In extant textual versions of *Ado*, however, Claudio speaks one line prior to the epitaph, in which he wonders whether he has found the right tomb, and the line immediately following it, in which he delegates responsibility for the second task Leonato assigned him – to "sing tonight" – to a group of musicians whom he instructs to "sing your solemn hymn" (5.3.11). Claudio relies on proxies to conduct the mourning rituals that establish the "solemn" tenor of Hero's burial, rather than contributing to that affective production himself. However, as an editor's gloss notes, "it does not seem out of character for Claudio to do his grieving by proxy, as he did his wooing" (Mares 5.3.2n).[83] As Mares suggests, Claudio's characteristic move is to outsource key romantic conventions to other men that are intended for him as the romantic protagonist; while this outsourcing may have precedent in premodern rituals of courtship, in the context of a romantic comedy – which had come to depend on such characterological attributes as interiority, consistency, and development by 1600 – these imitations of Claudio's characterological duties have the effect of underscoring the importance of the conventions themselves while also highlighting the fact that Claudio does not fulfill them.

As if to underscore this point, both the Quarto and Folio give the attendant lord a final line of mourning that Claudio might speak in a version of this scene that is less equivocal about his emotional and moral redemption, but which instead marks the end of his already-curtailed mourning: "Now unto thy bones good night," the Lord says, and "Yearly will I do this rite"

"*Epitaph*" at the end of a line that the Lord speaks, without providing an alternative speech prefix for the epitaph itself. *After* the epitaph concludes, however, both the Folio and Quarto insert Claudio's speech prefix followed by a line of instruction, suggesting that Claudio was *not* speaking the epitaph.

[82] Jeffrey Rayner Myers, "An Emended *Much Ado About Nothing* Act V Scene 3." Qtd in McEachern, 5.3.2n.

[83] F.H. Mares, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 5.3.2n. Qtd. in McEachern 5.3.2n.

(5.3.22-3). Whereas Claudio's delivery of this line might suggest a lifelong commitment to Hero that, in mimicking marital duration, may account for his role in her death, the Lord's delivery emphasizes Claudio's displacement from the rite, suggesting, perhaps, a perpetually parodic performance of mourning.[84] the strangeness of an anonymous attendant vowing annually to repeat the burial rite. In its conspicuous displacement of Claudio, this line suggests a perpetually parodic performance of mourning. Immediately after the attendant lord speaks his final line, Don Pedro enters the scene, formally ending the mourning ritual and shifting focus toward the impending nuptials by marking the dawn of a new day ("Good morrow," he bids), ordering the mourners to "Put your torches out," and instructing Claudio to "put on other weeds" (24, 30). By ordering the exchange of stage properties befitting of burial for those befitting of celebration, Don Pedro again emphasizes the power of generic and other stylistic tropes to connote, if not fully to author, narrative modes such as comedy or tragedy, even in the absence of any sign of social or emotional understanding from Claudio that could substantiate his affiliation with the role of romantic protagonist. In response to Don Pedro's hastening, Claudio voices the scene's closing couplet: "And Hymen now with luckier issue speed's / Than this for whom we rendered up this woe" (32-3). In its solicitation of favor from the Roman god of marriage and its naming of "woe," this line could be performed to suggest that Claudio has undergone the affective conversion that the Friar sought; indeed, an editor's gloss notes that the contraction "speed's," or

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[84] The outsourcing of prayer and mourning in this scene may not have seemed depersonalized or parodic to early modern viewers, who may have been familiar with the Catholic practice of intercession, or the act of saying a prayer on behalf of someone else. Nevertheless, I maintain that intercession serves a displacing effect in *Ado*'s burial scene; in addition, in light of the scene's other displacements of Claudio from the roles and feelings that Hero's kin expect him to enact, the Lord's recitation serves to ironize Claudio's mourning. For an in-depth examination of early modern English mourning rituals, rituals of remembrance, and the "theatre" or performance of death and mourning – particularly for royal deaths, which Hero's appears to mimic – see Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570-1625*. See also Hyun-Ah Kim, "Death, Music and the Appropriateness of Emotions in Reformation England: Humanist Portrayals of Burial and Mourning in *Musica Rhetorica*."

"speed us," is often lost in performance, thereby changing the referent of Hymen's blessing from "us" (Claudio and Don Pedro) to "this for whom we rendered up this woe" (Hero, or her burial) (32n). However, the textual line enables another interpretation: in addition to the possibility that Claudio asks Hymen to favor him and his next marriage rather than Hero's memory, his use of the term "render," which means not only "to present or perform" a duty, but also to "*represent*," to "recite or repeat (something previously learned)," reiterates the possibility that Claudio offered only an imitation or semblance of woe at Hero's tomb (*OED*).[85] In addition, given that "woe" could operate as a variant of both "vow" and "woo," Claudio's line ironically enhances the relationship that this scene establishes between the Lord's "solemn vow" and marital vows, as well as between Claudio's "rendered" (i.e. proxied) wooing and mourning (*OED*).[86] Through its invocation of Hymen and its equivocality regarding his rendering of woes/vows, Claudio's final couplet underscores his too-quick transition from mourning Hero's death to anticipating his consolation prize: his marriage to Leonato's niece, who is Hero in disguise.

The pantomime of burial rites reveals the artificiality of the mourning conventions that it stages, as Claudio directs others to style the formal rituals that he was asked to enact. Just as the Friar and Hero's family employ "mourning ostentation" to present the semblance of burial without substantiating that ceremony with a death, 5.3 presents Claudio's gestures of mourning – his presence at the tomb, his instruction to the musicians to "sing your solemn hymn" – without substantiating those gestures with any textual evidence of grief, contrition, or other affective indication that Claudio comprehends his responsibility for the would-be tragedy.[87] By building

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[85] "Render, v.," *OED.*

[86] "Vow, n.," *OED*; "woo, v.," *OED*; "woe, int., adv., n., adj.," *OED*.

[87] I specify "textual" evidence here because 5.3 enables directors and actors to make creative choices that contradict my argument: an actor playing Claudio could appear so deeply bereft, unable to catch his voice through tears, that reading and singing would not be possible if they were not performed by others. However, given the lack of stage

dramatic irony into its enactment of the formal, mourning conventions that Claudio is meant to perform, this scene highlights a discrepancy between the generic narrative that those burial conventions purport and the narrative that Claudio's social and emotional *experience* of those conventions demonstrates: that Claudio, faced with the "supposition of the lady's death," delegates mourning rites to others, expresses equivocal words of remorse, and too soon looks forward to his "luckier," second attempt at marriage.

Ado augments its sense of romantic, comedic, and tragic equivocality not only by ironizing Claudio's participation in Hero's mourning rituals, but also by repeatedly displacing Hero from her role as bride as the play's concluding marriage approaches. In the final scene, Hero parodies the marital and generic processes that will transform her into a comedic wife, enacting her bridal role *not* as herself but rather as an invented cousin whom Leonato describes as "Almost the copy of my child that's dead" (5.1.273). In this ironized guise, the marital processes that Hero enacts include her presentation to Claudio by her "father" and "uncle," Claudio's taking of Hero's hand, and their exchange of vows; the generic processes include Hero's anagnorisis, her realignment with Claudio through forgiveness, and their union. Through ironic mechanisms that include Hero's self-parody and other allusions to her potential absence from the action, this scene highlights the metacritical discrepancies between the comedic legibility of the roles and rituals that Hero performs, and the tragic context to which her parodic performance of those roles and rituals alludes.

Hero's displacement from the scenes and roles in which she appears is enabled in part by her persistent reticence throughout the play, which male characters use to interpret her

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directions to this effect, the choice to stage Claudio's extreme grief would be just that: a decision to portray this scene in a manner other than what is explicitly indicated by the textual material.

significance according to their own desires.[88] Marilyn French describes Hero as "a noncharacter"; as Cook notes, Hero "is the 'nothing' that generates so much ado. … Hero's nothing invites noting, her blankness produces marking" (French 133, Cook 192).[89] Over the course of the play, without changing her behavior, speech, or other action, Hero transitions in "[Claudio's] study of imagination" from an object of liking when he looks with "a soldier's eye," to an object of love when he looks with the eye of a courtly lover, then from "a modest young lady" in the opening scene to "a contaminated stale" in the balcony scene (4.1.225, 1.1.157, 2.2.23).[90] As the Friar aptly puts it, Hero's character exists as an "idea," and a malleable one at that: she is "a person-like entity" who can be imagined to suit any generic wont,[91] be it the romantic need for a chaste maid, the farcical need for a cuckolding woman, the tragic need for a dead bride, or the comedic need for a slandered innocent who "ha[s] patience and endure[s]" and thus, inexplicably, still wishes to marry her accuser at the end of the play (4.1.254).

Hero's constant iteration through multiple social and generic tropes suggests that the "style or form" that she represents, and which the play draws attention to through its parody, is alienability – that is, the quality of being transferable between roles, generic contexts, and meanings.[92] Despite Hero's formal "nothing[ness]," other characters' *deployments* of her alienable "noncharacter" drive the play's action: Hero's imputed associations with social and

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[88] "In the world of the play," Cook argues, "Hero's role is to meet or reflect others' expectations of what women are supposed to be"; she is "a mirror to the other characters. She is represented as conventionally feminine; meek, self-effacing, vulnerable, obedient, seen and not heard, she is a face without a voice" (191)

[89] See Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*; qtd. in Cook, 192.

[90] Borachio's use of the term "stale" to describe the vision of Hero that he and Don John attempt to construct for Claudio does double work here: an editor's gloss notes that in addition to a derogatory term for a sex worker, "stale" was also a term for "decoy," or a parodic imitation that allures through its formal similarity to the thing it mimics (2.2.23n).

[91] Fallon, "Formal Men" 27.

[92] Recall Fallon's claim that "in taking its object as repeatable, [parodic imitation] has the effect of turning [the object] into a style or form" ("Formal Men" 29).

generic tropes such as the chaste maid, the sexually licentious woman, the slandered woman, the dead woman, and the moral innocent animate the plot's structure. Indeed, Hero's alienability is abstracted through *Ado*'s ironic displacement of her from key comedic moments, legible as a central component of her experience of the marriage plot, not only in her death and burial, but also in her long-awaited, overdetermined marriage. By using ironic self-reference to highlight Hero's alienability from her marital role and to allude to the tragic elements of her romantic narrative, *Ado*'s final scene undermines the festive, unified sense of comedic closure to which the play's formal elements allude.

The concluding wedding of Act 5, scene 4 draws attention to its tragic, rather than comedic, implications, by ironically displacing Hero from the role of bride. Consider, for instance, how Hero participates in the scene in disguise, as a proxy for the "dead" Hero. She is presented to Claudio as a cousin, an invented persona that is, itself, a parody of Hero: Leonato describes his "niece" as "Almost the copy of my child that's dead" (5.1.279). Not only does this persona explicitly invoke the tragic context of Hero's death; it also parodies Claudio's incomplete participation in the first wedding in 4.1. Claudio initiated the earlier wedding without intending to see it through to its close, misrepresenting himself as a willing groom until the very moment of their union. In 5.4, this formula is reversed: it is Hero who misrepresents herself, enacting the rituals of a marriage that she does not intend to go through with as her own "copy" (279). While it is possible to read this parodic inversion as a comedic one – Claudio's deceit was ill-intended, whereas Hero's aims to reunite the lovers – it nevertheless links the tragic context of the first wedding with the ceremony of the second.

When Hero enters the final scene, the play rhetorically emphasizes the confusing, interchangeable nature of the bride's identity: "Which is the lady I must seize upon?" asks

Claudio when a group of ladies enters – a question that intends to discern between the women but rather highlights their collective anonymity and, perhaps, their interchangeability (5.4.53). Claudio demonstrates his willingness to follow through on the rite regardless of whom his bride may be by vowing to "hold [his] mind were she an Ethiope" (38). Claudio's racist vow suggests that however unknown or unattractive he finds his bride, he will marry whomever steps into the role. It is precisely at this moment, when the tragic conclusion feels closest at hand, that Hero unveils herself, inaugurating the would-be comic ending.

Rather than shutting down the tragic possibility, however, Hero's unveiling serves to emphasize the tragic elements of the romantic plot. Anagnorisis – a narrative moment marked by revelation or critical discovery of hidden information, usually related to a character's identity – is a common comedic device in plots driven by misunderstandings and mistaken identity. Anagnorisis provides all characters with the knowledge that some characters have been missing, returning them to a shared understanding of staged dynamics, and resolving the dramatic irony that may have instantiated certain staged power dynamics related to knowledge differentials. Hero's anagnorisis appears to achieve a similar outcome: by enabling Claudio's recognition of the knowledge that he lacked over the preceding action – of Hero's identity, of her living status, and of the significance of the union at hand – Hero's unveiling aligns the characters in a shared, distinctly comedic reality. However, the anagnorisis, in revealing Hero's living status, aligns her with her forgiving, wifely role by requiring her to relinquish her advantage over Claudio: her superior knowledge of the fact that she has not died, which had enabled her manipulation of Claudio's reality in the burial scene. Thus, not only does Hero's unveiling *symbolically* emphasize the tragic elements of the romantic plot by drawing attention to the death that has not

been adequately accounted for; her anagnorisis also actively disempowers Hero by granting Claudio access to her more comprehensive understanding of staged dynamics.

The play ironically underscores its brush with tragedy by confusing Hero's relationship to life and death. When she unveils, Hero fashions her identity in terms of her death: "when I lived," she says to Claudio, "I was your other wife" (5.4.60). Hero speaks in the voice of her dead self, using the past tense ("when I lived, I was") to represent her former, living self as Claudio's "other wife," a different person altogether. However, her syntax confuses this clear delineation between past and present, living and dead selves: while the verb forms in the sentence, "when I *lived*, I *was* your other wife," suggest that the speaking Hero is the dead Hero, she uses the pronoun "I" to refer to *both* her living and dead personas, thereby conflating the two selves as she speaks for both at once. Never one for nuance, Claudio attends only to the clear delineation that makes most sense to him: "Another Hero!" he exclaims, accepting the idea that the Hero before him is distinct from his "other wife," whom he killed. "Nothing certainer," Hero says, contradicting her earlier conflation of the living and dead personas. Hero begins to shift away from her proximity to her dead self, speaking instead for the living Hero and affirming the firm distinction that Claudio assumes between the Hero before him and the Hero he slandered: "One Hero died defiled," she says, using the third person to distance herself from that tragic persona, "but I do live, and surely as I live, I am a maid" (63-4). In this, the penultimate line that Hero speaks in the play and the final line that she speaks about her own narrative, Hero constructs a contingency between her maidenhood and her living status. In contrast to the preceding rhetorical confusion between her death and life, this statement is syntactically unambiguous and offers a clear articulation of the ideological, gendered implications of Hero's anagnorisis: to enable a comedic ending, Claudio's recognition of Hero's living status must also

entail recognition of her virginal status. Despite the seeming clarity of this declaration, however, Don Pedro catches sight of Hero and apprehends only her tragic persona: "The former Hero!" he declares, "Hero that is dead!" (65). "She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived," Leonato clarifies, reiterating Hero's suggestion that her virginal and slandered selves could not coexist (66).

In its ironized, overdetermined relations of life, death, comedy, tragedy, and maidenhood, this moment illuminates the authoring power of generic and gendered tropes, the power to create and destroy "Th'idea of [Hero's] life" and, thus, certain kinds of stories (4.1.224). This authoring power is ideological: the tragic trope of the adulterous or sexually licentious woman implies one kind of narrative ending for Hero, which the burial scene teased; the comedic trope of the slandered and forgiving innocent, on the other hand, enables Hero's social restoration and further narrative production – that is, her adoption of a new trope, that of the forgiving wife, whose function is, in part, to enable the restoration of male, homosocial bonds. Through its ironic invocation of Hero's tragic storyline, *Ado*'s final scene illuminates the misogynistic conventions and rituals that the play frames as necessary for its legibility as comedy, and which it therefore falsely naturalizes as *comedic* elements of romance: Hero's forfeiture of her superior knowledge to Claudio (which was the source of her power to manipulate his reality following the first wedding); her reiterated virginity, placing her above reproof in a way that is not required of Claudio; and her gracious forgiveness of Claudio for slandering her and the harm he has caused to her family and kin.

Ado's final scene highlights the absence of a conventional comedic resolution by producing this curious tension of comic and tragic elements. In constructing the need for a wedding around Claudio's accountability to Leonato's family, *Ado* ensures that a ceremony that

would conventionally offer a celebratory ending to the play's action is, instead, explicitly linked to Hero's tragic death. Not only does *Ado* equivocate in the burial scene about whether Claudio demonstrates an adequate degree of remorse when he mourns Hero by proxy; the play also invokes that site of supposed affective conversion through Hero's displacement from the role of bride via her parody and rhetorical confusion. Hero's proximity to her own death and symbolic absence from this scene is made explicit in the play's final moments and ironized by her ambiguous syntax. These tragic and comedic possibilities are so thoroughly intertwined that they cannot be disarticulated, rhetorically, narratively, or socially; as McEachern argues, the "multiple emotional movements – towards sadness, towards happiness – sometimes contrapuntally, sometimes simultaneously," can "produce moments in which the comic and the tragic are so fused that one is not sure whether laughter or tears is the appropriate response" (52-3). McEachern describes the hermeneutic challenge of interpreting this play as either comedy *or* tragedy when "multiple emotional movements," some implied by form, some dramatized in characters' experience of form, confuse the affective register through which the play conducts its plot. The play's metacritical attention to its own form raises conflicting expectations about its genre, affect, and message by flirting with both tragedy and comedy without fully aligning itself with either.

The final scene's equivocality regarding Hero's status as living or dead underscores what Kathleen Kuiper refers to as the "satiric extreme" of comedy, in which "the sense of the discrepancy between things as they are and things as they might be or ought to be has reached to the borders of tragedy" (5).[93] The play's satiric mechanisms, including parody and other forms of ironic allusion, produce conspicuous discrepancies between "things as they are" – i.e. certain

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[93] Kathleen Kuiper, *The Comedies of William Shakespeare*.

characters' diegetic experiences of the marriage plot as involving misogyny, loss, grief, and self-abnegation – and things that comedic form suggests "they might be or ought to be." These comedic expectations include the generic necessity for Hero to experience (or to perform) faithfulness, as her unflagging commitment to Claudio suggests; forgiveness, as Hero's acceptance of Claudio in the final scene implies; and pleasure, as the concluding marriage seems designed to connote. By using parody to ironize the comedic conventions and rituals that might be expected to dramatize these qualities, *Ado* clarifies the ideological implications of its own form, noting how the conventions that it stages uphold a particular kind of narrative closure for its female protagonists: a return to patriarchal order via marriage. For courtships characterized by violent power struggles, that narrative closure depends on misogynistic expectations for women's self-effacement and for their performance, if not internalization, of obedience, faithfulness, and submission. While *Ado*'s final scene is structured to bring characters and plotlines together in alignment with comedy's patriarchal ideal, its ironized way of doing so yields "discrepant tones" and "contradictions" that "the play cannot resolve … from within its own structures of meaning" (McEachern 52, Cook 186). This is satire's project: to resist resolution in favor of the irresolvable tensions that always exist between an ideal and the reality, to draw attention to those discrepancies, and to hold them up for "amused or scornful scrutiny" (Prescott 220). In *Ado* as well as in *Shrew*, the effect of parody is to hold aloft the gendered and generic conventions that endeavor to pass off the characters' tragic reality as the plays' comedic ideal.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined parody and its ironic effects – ironic distance and dramatic irony – as the central mechanisms of *Ado* and *Shrew*'s satire of comedic convention. These

mechanisms operate on several levels of scale, from dialogue, to characters' performances (of self, others, and roles), to the plays' deployments of generic and gendered conventions. Despite the fact that much of this irony is implicit – legible primarily in the discrepancies that the plays construct between their diegetic and metacritical, comedic and tragic, and generic and experiential structures of meaning – or perhaps because it is implicitly invested in these structures, irony organizes Shakespeare's romantic storytelling in these plays. *Ado* and *Shrew* stage tragic narratives that are structured by comedic and romantic conventions; by ironizing key moments of their marriage plots – key in terms of these moments' characterization of domination and gendered violence as elements of heterosexual romance – *Ado* and *Shrew* illuminate the ways in which patriarchal hierarchy operates and oppresses through conventions that enjoin female protagonists to play the role of "obedient" or "forgiving wife," irrespective of their experience of displacement, abuse, or death, in order to produce an image of seeming communal harmony. *Ado* and *Shrew* represent Shakespeare's use of satiric parody as a way to explore the narrative possibilities that comedic form enables – and disables, as both plays demonstrate in their displacement of Petruchio's and Claudio's accountability for the harm they have caused Katherine and Hero through marriage.

Despite the fact that Katherine retains a capacity for irony and resistance at the end of *Shrew* while Hero is passively interpolated into the role of forgiving wife in *Ado*, I do not uphold Katherine as a feminist figure; rather, my analyses suggest that at the end of each play, both Katherine and Hero exhibit the very signs and mechanisms of their continued oppression: irony and alienability. Katherine's irony is both that which enables her alignment with convention and that which signals her difference from convention; it is the difference that Petruchio tried to tame. Because *Shrew* ends with the play's most performative instance of Katherine's parody, it

suggests, as I have argued, a continuation of her resistance to Petruchio's taming and, thus, a continuation of the dynamic we have witnessed throughout the play. This effect of Katherine's parody – the recognition of possible future conflict – is mirrored in *Ado*'s final scene. As my analyses have shown, the characterological element that Hero's performance of "the forgiving wife" abstracts is her "nothingness," her fundamental alienability from the roles she is asked to play, which enables the play's men to inscribe their own meanings on her passive behavior. Just as Katherine's continued capacity for ironic resistance to Petruchio's rule implies a continuation of their violent conflicts, so, too, does Hero's continued capacity for alienation imply a continuation of Claudio's imputations and Hero's self-negation in their marriage. Irony does not save either Hero or Katherine from the patriarchal structures to which comedic marriage subjects them. Rather than a tool of feminist rescue, satirical irony functions in these plays to draw audience attention to the ways that comedy curates experiences of gendered violence for female protagonists by presenting marriage as an inevitable form of apparent "resolution" to plotlines structured by patriarchal hierarchy and enforced by violence.

Whether one views *Much Ado About Nothing* or *The Taming of the Shrew* to be aligned more with comedy, tragedy, or tragicomedy, the plays' satiric apparatus demonstrates that their comedic structures do not merely "[reach] to the borders of tragedy" (Kuiper 5); they dissolve that border, demonstrating the contingent nature of comedic form and tragic experience for the women implicated in the marriage plots, particularly plots that are implicitly or explicitly structured by violence. By observing how gender and other identity markers are not only dramatized as formal or generic conventions, but also ironized to mock, make strange, or otherwise trouble forms of authority, order, and social relationship, we can see how Shakespeare's satire draws attention to the ways in which a character's unconventional

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experience of a comedic plot might conflict with the normatively patriarchal narrative that comedic form appears to construct – or *does* construct for other characters and, perhaps, viewers. If we recognize the irony that these plays dramatize at the level of dialogue, persona, plot, and genre as *satirical irony*, we open up a way of experiencing these stories and characters in which we do not have to buy into the belief that marriage resolves lingering tensions or balances oppressive power differentials. Indeed, in both *Ado* and *Shrew*, Shakespeare uses satiric mechanisms to emphasize the ways that violent conflicts of gender and identity cannot be resolved from within comedy's patriarchal structure. Understanding these plays' parodic elements as satirical gestures that abstract the ideological implications of comedic form allows us to think *with* the logical incompatibilities, loose ends, and lingering skepticism that undergird marriage and patriarchal hierarchy beyond the stage.

Chapter 3 Satiric Categorization: Wonder, Knowingness, and Urban Gender Status in Jonson's *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman*

London was undergoing a dramatic cultural transformation at the turn of the seventeenth century. In addition to an expanding international trade and commercial economy, which gradually reformed England's feudal agrarian economy of previous generations, the population of London nearly quadrupled in the 50 years prior to 1600.[1] As people moved to England's largest city for work, for its expanded market in fine and affordable goods, and for the other opportunities they imagined it to promise, they encountered complex and competing hierarchies of power and social status within the space of the city, where the traditional, hereditary system that conferred status via land ownership and family rank came up against an emerging system of urban value that conferred status via social means such as earned wealth (trade), tastefulness, and knowledge of city norms and spaces.[2] Playwrights who lived in London and wrote for urban audiences frequently queried the nature of social status in their works: tragedies from this period dramatize disinheritance and the ends of noble lineage; histories stage older ideals of absolute, hereditary status, sometimes nostalgically, sometimes critically; and comedies frame heterosexual romance and marriage as tools for perpetuating family status and wealth. City comedy, a subset of the broader comedic genre that often satirizes contemporary London phenomena, frequently queries the nature of social status by implicitly asking whether that status

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[1] David Harris Sacks and Michael Lynch, "Ports 1540-1700," qtd. in Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642*, 1.

[2] See Howard, especially p. 1-14; also Adam Zucker, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy*.

is natural – that is, whether social standing is an inherent or inborn value, as the system of hereditary status implies, or if that value is some other kind of construction, craft, or performance. The stage, especially in private or coterie theaters, proved a fruitful space for the kind of social satire for which city comedy became known. The theater enabled playwrights to highlight the artificiality of urban social hierarchy by presenting tastefulness, rank, gender, education and knowledge, propriety, and other signs of social status as literal performances, as illusions of costume, speech, and adopted airs, which were often undertaken by boy actors whose distance from the roles they played was conspicuous and intentional. Ben Jonson was one such writer who took advantage of these metatheatrical mechanisms to satirize London's changing social landscape when the children of the Blackfriars Theatre first performed his satiric comedy *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman* in 1609.

    Epicoene is a play that satirizes the uniquely urban forms of gender and status that London boasted in the first decade of the seventeenth century. The plot begins in medias res; the preceding action is withheld not only from the viewing audience but also from many of the characters until the very end of the play. Just prior to the first scene, an older gentleman, Morose, learns that his nephew and heir, Dauphine, had mocked Morose to his fashionable London neighbors. In an effort to disinherit Dauphine, Morose decides to marry and bear a new heir; due to his extreme intolerance of noise, however, he seeks to wed a silent woman. In response, Dauphine develops a plan to reclaim his economic status as heir and to establish his social authority over Morose as his urbane superior. Without informing any other character, Dauphine hires a neighbor's son, whom he trains for six months in the characteristic speech, dress, and behaviors of an urban gentlewoman. When the boy graduates from Dauphine's tutelage, he is introduced to Morose as Lady Epicoene. This is the point at which the play begins. Morose

believes that he has discovered the only passive, whispering gentlewoman in England, and quickly secures her hand in marriage. After they wed, however, Epicoene reveals that her silence was an act: she is as loquacious and authoritative as the other city women whom Morose abhors, and Morose spends the remainder of the play seeking grounds for divorce. In the final scene, when Morose has exhausted every legal and religious recourse, Dauphine claims to know a way out of the marriage; when Morose promises to restore Dauphine's inheritance, Dauphine removes Epicoene's wig and reveals her to be a young boy, thereby invalidating the union. Dauphine's revelation surprises the entire cast, whose expectations of city women's appearance and comportment Lady Epicoene fulfilled in every scene.

 Epicoene levels its satire at early seventeenth-century London's mutable social hierarchy, staging the absurdities involved in characters' attempts to climb a patriarchal social ladder that is defined not by hereditary rank or wealth – or at least, not exclusively – but rather by the gendered social authority that attends knowledge of the city, its residents, and their social norms. Social authority and status were inextricably linked in the early modern period due to England's patriarchal system of governance and status formation. Under this misogynistic system, men were legally authorized to "rule" their households and to own, sell, and pass property down their family lines, while women were largely prohibited from doing so, as laws of coverture designated women as "covered" by, or subsumed by and subordinate to, their fathers or husbands.[3] Although scholars have demonstrated that early moderns' everyday lived realities were not so black and white,[4] patriarchal ideals nevertheless shaped many aspects of English life, including the social roles and forms of propriety that people were expected to enact according to

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[3] See Tim Stretton and Krista J. Kesselring, "Introduction: Coverture and Continuity."

[4] See David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*; Amy Louise Erikson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*; Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England.*

their rank or social status. *Epicoene* is a play that dramatizes and critiques the discrepancies that it presents between the patriarchal ideals that govern notions of elite status in the play and the realities of urban social life, which challenge characters' capacity to perform those traditional roles and forms of propriety.

The play revolves around a fashionable group of city-dwellers who live in the Strand. The ability to live without employment sets *Epicoene*'s characters apart from the laboring class of Londoners; however, their varied means of acquiring such economic privilege also sets them apart from the noble or courtly ranks of English society. These characters represent an elevated, but distinctly urban, category of person. Within this urban category, the characters are further stratified – not through a strict, hereditary order of status based on land ownership, but rather through social means, such as differences in their knowledge of elite and urban social norms.[5] Thus, *Epicoene*'s milieu comprises a hierarchy of characters, some with great social authority and some who, despite their wealth and titles, function as the play's gormless laughingstocks. Some of these Londoners, such as Morose and a group of ladies known as the Collegiates, are wealthy and of noble lineage, but are ill-adapted to their urban setting; others, including two men called the Braveries and a married, heterosexual couple, Captain and Mistress Otter, are wealthy and at ease in their urban environs, but lack the cultivated propriety and inherited rank of their genteel peers, which threatens to undermine the illusion of elegance that they attempt to project;[6] and still others, such as Dauphine and his young, witty friends Truewit and Clerimont, lack the wealth of their peers but possess an air of knowingness and a sophisticated style of speech, dress,

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[5] Accordingly, when I use the term "social status" in this chapter, I am referring to the social meanings that adhere to the ways in which characters fashion themselves and represent their identities in particular urban spaces.

[6] "Bravery" was an alternative term for a "gallant," or a young man of fashion. As Chapter 3 discusses in more detail, there are two types of gallants in *Epicoene*'s playworld: Braveries and Wits. While Wits are known for their urbane, knowing sophistication, Braveries are known for their "ostentatious pretense" ("bravery, n." *OED*). This chapter explores the fine, performative space that distinguishes the Braveries from the Wits.

and manner that marks their tastes as urbane and grants them the appearance of cultural fluency within their London milieu. Regardless of how these characters came into their fashionable urban status, *Epicoene* satirizes the ways in which they perform it by drawing attention to the conspicuous, stylistic discrepancies between the qualities that these characters attribute to ladies and gentlemen – including elite modes of speech, styles of dress, and cultivated manners – and their enactments of those elite qualities in an urban environment.[7]

In their efforts to climb the urban status ladder, *Epicoene*'s characters attempt to emulate the knowledge, speech, and critical orientations – that is, attitudes and emotions – that they attribute to people of higher status than themselves.[8] This chapter argues that affect and knowledge are the two basic mechanisms of *Epicoene*'s satire: by mocking status-seeking characters' beliefs about what constitutes elevated status in an urban space, as well as the

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[7] I use the term "perform" here (and, later, "gender performance") to refer to conscious and unconscious ways that characters make their social identities – specifically their gender identities – legible for themselves and others, such as through clothing, speech, and tone. At the character level, "performance" does not necessarily imply insincerity; a character may identify closely with the embodied parts, material goods, and social norms through which they express their gender identity. However, in drama, "performance" can also refer to the role played by an actor, which does imply a degree of fiction in their representation of character. For example, because *Epicoene* is a play, none of the staged characters are men or women; they are fictional representations of men and women, amalgams of gendered traits that an audience may interpret as masculine and/or feminine, or neither. Moving between these two scales – the actor's performance of character and the character's performance of gender – allows us to recognize the material properties, behaviors, rhetoric, and attitudes that construct urban gendered categories over the course of the play. For more on the performativity of gender, see Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, esp. Chapter 1. See also Simone Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature*, especially Chapter 2, "Crossdressed Brides and the Marriage Market: *A Mad World, My Master*, *Epicoene,* and 'Phylotus and Emelia.'" For more on the performativity of femininity in *Epicoene* in particular, see Samantha Dressel, "'Were I but a man as others are': Secrecy and Gender on the Renaissance Stage." For more about how gender performance contributes to sexual stereotyping, see Mario DiGangi, *Sexual Types: Embodiment, Agency, and Dramatic Character from Shakespeare to Shirley*.

[8] As noted in the Introduction, "orientation," a term I borrow from Sara Ahmed, describes the social, emotional, and, sometimes, spatial relationship between bodies, objects, and ideas. When a person apprehends an object, they automatically take a specific position in relation to that object – that is, they are oriented toward it in a particular way. Because "what is perceived depends on where we are located," physically as well as socially and ideologically, "I can perceive an object only insofar as my orientation allows me to see it" (Ahmed 27). Differences in social position – for instance, differences in the age, gender, rank, or sexuality of the perceivers – can produce unique orientations between individual perceivers and the objects that they apprehend. For instance, a young boy might be warily or indifferently oriented toward the idea of marriage, whereas a wealthy, elderly gentleman who lacks an heir might be anxiously or desirously oriented toward it. Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*.

attitudes and emotions those figures express toward the city's mutability, the play satirizes the

contradictions and absurdities involved in the promotion of an elevated, urban status that is

socially constructed rather than inborn. By examining, in particular, how *Epicoene* musters

misogynistic affects and knowledge to shape its critique of urban status formation, this chapter

offers a granular understanding of how *Epicoene* depicts urban social hierarchy as the product of

emerging and competing systems of patriarchal social value, and how the play satirizes efforts to

climb a dynamic social ladder that is always, actively taking shape. This chapter's analyses

center on the emerging, urban forms of gendered status that *Epicoene* stages – forms that are

more complex and less immediately intelligible than courtly categories like "lady" or

"gentleman" – as well as how the play circulates beliefs about these urban categories and the

changing norms of gender and status that they represent. *Epicoene* stages three gender-status

categories: elite femininity, urban epicenism, and urbane, "witty" masculinity.[9] Characters

express their affiliations with these categories through material resources (clothing, makeup,

household goods) and discursive styles (mockery, exaggerated courtesy, silence), as well as

through their critical orientations toward signs of urban mutability, such as disinterest, wonder,

and knowingness.[10]

I examine the critical orientations involved in characters' performances of gender-status

to identify the distinct relations of affect and knowledge that *Epicoene*'s urban social categories

index, for it is these relations that determine status in *Epicoene*'s London, and therein provide the

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[9] I use the terms "masculine" and "masculinity" to describe the social meanings that the period's literature and other writings associate with the category of men, while I use "feminine" and "femininity" to describe the social values associated with the category of women. My definition assumes that there is no necessary relationship between men and masculinity, nor between women and femininity, nor indeed between masculinity, femininity, and anatomical sex; those relationships are socially produced.

[10] Although I define "critical orientation" in more detail below, I use it here to refer to emotions (like wonder) and attitudes (like knowingness), that "orient" a person, affectively and cognitively, toward the object or phenomenon they perceive.

fodder for the play's satire. Elite femininity exists in the play as an imagined ideal that men

desire and some women aspire to achieve. It is characterized by silence, chastity, and passivity,

as well as disinterest in the mutable urban world. Elite femininity represents the older, hereditary

system of English status formation, in which the ideal of elite status exists outside of the

economic and social fluctuations that impact the financial well-being of, for instance, laboring

folk; it is this relative immunity from market and social volatility that produces the association

between elite status and disinterest in urban affairs. This disinterest is coded as feminine in

Epicoene when it manifests as passive silence, a form of submissiveness that is held as an ideal

not only for the play's female characters, but also for women in sermons, pamphlets, and conduct

books that circulated in early modern London around the time of *Epicoene*'s writing and

production.[11]

By contrast, urban epicenism is the category associated with the majority of the play's

characters. Within a binary context of gender, the word "epicene" refers to indeterminate gender

identity – specifically to people, animals, or objects that "[have] characteristics of both sexes, or

of neither" (*OED*).[12] In their efforts to climb the urban status ladder, characters whom I identify

as urban-epicene often emulate signs of elite status, regardless of how those signs are gendered:

for instance, city women might pursue forms of learning that are typically reserved for

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[11] See Ann Rosalind Jones, "Nets and Bridles: Early Modern Conduct Books and Sixteenth-Century Women's Lyrics"; and Karen Newman, "City Talk: Women and Commodification in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*."

[12] "Epicene" is a term originally used in Greek and Latin grammar to refer to a category of nouns that possess "a fixed grammatical gender (masculine, feminine, neuter, etc.)," but which may be used to denote either male or female subjects, subjects with masculine *and* feminine properties, or subjects with *neither* masculine nor feminine properties ("Epicene, adj.," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*). Consider, for instance, the term "they," which is a pronoun with a fixed grammatical gender (neuter) that can be used to denote groups of men, groups of women, groups of nonbinary people, and groups that comprise multiple gender identities. Over time, "epicene" retained its association with indeterminate and composite gender, even as it became unmoored from its grammatical origins, such that it could refer to "indetermina[cy] in respect of sex" in terms of people, animals, or objects (*OED*). Today, contemporary scholars often use the term "epicene" outside of a gendered context simply as a synonym of "indeterminate, mixed," or "hybrid." This chapter, however, maintains the early modern sense of the term to refer specifically to a person "having characteristics of both sexes, or of neither" (*OED*).

gentlemen, convinced that their erudition will elevate their social standing; and city men might

pursue showy fashions that are affiliated with ladies' tastes, convinced that their sartorial choices

convey elite discernment. The "urban" aspect of the urban-epicene category refers to the London

context and to the feeling or emotion that critically orients such characters within it: urban

epicenism is characterized by a critical orientation of wonder, which I define as both a feeling

and expression of astonishment that is triggered in this play by unexpected urban phenomena or

information, such as a piece of gossip or a neighbor's new fashion. Wonder as I employ it is an

affective category that comprises more specific emotions such as surprise, delight, alarm, and

bewilderment, as well as the embodied and rhetorical expressions of those feelings (*OED*).[13]

Wonder is reactive; for the play's urban-epicene figures, wonder emerges from the condition of

not knowing and responds to the sudden availability of information that one lacked. Thus, a

character's expression of wonder can reveal their naivete or ignorance, and thus the insincerity

involved in their performances of elite status.

Epicoene's third gender-status category, urbane masculinity, is associated with the play's

"witty" gallants, figures who are intent on demonstrating their expertise about the city and who

are granted the privilege of articulating the play's satire. In contrast to the wonder that

characterizes urban epicenism, urbane masculinity is defined by a posture of knowingness.

Knowingness is not the same as knowledge; it is, rather, a projection of certainty or confidence

in one's own knowledge or beliefs, which witty characters often perform to claim a sense of

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[13] I follow the example of Eric Shouse in understanding affect as a pre-verbal "intensity," feeling as the embodied experience of that intensity, and emotion as the expression of the embodied feeling. See Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect." For an analysis of the many, alternative uses of these three terms in recent scholarship on early modern dramatizations of sentiment, see Ronda Arab, Michelle Dowd, and Adam Zucker, "Introduction" to *Historical Affects and the Early Modern Theater*. For another examination of the varied scholarly uses of the term "affect" to examine textual, political, and environmental forms in early modern texts (inclusive of drama), see Amanda Bailey and Mario DiGangi, "Introduction" to *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form*. See also "wonder, n.," *OED*.

social mastery. It is this aim of mastery, of social domination, that affiliates wit, or the urbane performance of knowingness, with masculinity.

The scholarly conversation about *Epicoene*'s satire of status and gender performance is robust, but there remains some uncertainty within that conversation about who is being satirized. The ranging interpretations of which characters the play lauds and which it pillories is an indication that *Epicoene*'s satirical structure successfully obscures the central thrust of its critique of urban gender and status performance. Many scholars acknowledge that Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine – three characters whom I affiliate with the urbane-masculine category – function as *Epicoene*'s primary satirical speakers, articulating the play's critiques and elevating their own social standing by ridiculing their neighbors' efforts to climb the urban social ladder. Because these figures mock, in particular, *Epicoene*'s female characters and the men they deem effeminate for emulating city women's manner of status-seeking, many scholars take this as an indication that city women are the primary objects of the play's satire.[14] While this vein of analysis successfully identifies *Epicoene*'s city women as satirical objects, it is incomplete in assuming that they are the play's *only* targets. Consequently, this argument tends to replicate the urbane-masculine figures' perspective on their peers' inferiority, mirroring their misogyny and their projections of social hierarchy.

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[14] See, for instance, David Kay, "Epicoene, Lady Compton, and the Gendering of Jonsonian Satire on Extravagance;" Roger Holdsworth's "Introduction" to the New Mermaids *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman*; and Adam Zucker, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy*. In "City Talk: Women and Commodification in Jonson's Epicoene," Karen Newman considers the play's Braveries as satirical objects for their consumerism and extravagant dress, which the period misogynistically associates with women. By limiting her analysis of the play's satire to consumerism, however, Newman also limits the possible range of satirical objects to characters who display consumerism. By broadening the analytical scope to focus on the function of *knowledge* and *feeling* for the play's satire, the range of satirical objects expands to include any character who engages behaviors that can be viewed as witless according to the play's definition of that term, *including* (but not limited to) characters known for overconsumption and extravagant dress. See Newman, "City Talk."

Other critics take this line of thinking a step further: while they identify city women as *one* of the play's satirical targets, they also recognize that the dissembling, ignorance, and self-promotion that comprise city women's mode of status-seeking are qualities that Truewit and Clerimont display, too. These readings tend to focus on the play's ending, which exposes Truewit and Clerimont's ignorance of Lady Epicoene's gender identity and of Dauphine's scheme to reclaim his inheritance. By exposing these men's ignorance, the final scene poses a problem for an interpretation of the play in which they retain their knowing, socially masterful status. This is another point at which critical discourse splits: some scholars who acknowledge the difficulty of the gallants' ignorance find ways to argue for their inclusion in Dauphine's scheme, claiming that Truewit and Clerimont were *not* ignorant of Lady Epicoene's gender identity and therefore maintained their witty status throughout the play.[15] Other critics recognize that the gallants' ignorance repositions them as satirical targets, a circumstance that fulfills a convention of early modern satire in which satirical speakers are implicated in the phenomena they critique. More often than not, however, these studies locate the significance of this finding not in its meaning for the play's conception of the elevated, masculine status that urbane knowingness appears to grant or of *Epicoene*'s social hierarchy more broadly,[16] but rather in its meaning for the audience's relationship to the dramatic action.[17] For much of the play, the

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[15] See Phillip Mirabelli, "Silence, Wit, and Wisdom in *The Silent Woman*."

[16] Those studies that do consider the function of *Epicoene*'s ambiguous social hierarchy within the play's broader social critique tend to focus on identifying Jonson's social perspectives, often suggesting that Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine represent Jonson's own attitudes toward urban mutability and the competing systems of status formation extant in his world. See, for instance, Bruce Thomas Boehrer, "*Epicoene*, Charivari, Skimmington." In "Refashioning Society in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*," Marjorie Swann does not claim that the Wits represent Jonson's perspective on urban status formation, but she does argue that the play "reveals Jonson's complex response to commercial capitalism" in its efforts to "simultaneously subvert and uphold a hereditary social order" (298). See Marjorie Swann, "Refashioning Society in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*."

[17] See J. A. Jackson, "'On forfeit of your selves, think nothing true': Ben Jonson's use of Deception in *Epicoene*"; P. K. Ayers, "Dreams of the City: The Urban and the Urbane in Jonson's *Epicoene*." Adam Zucker's *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy* is one study that does consider the bearing that *Epicoene*'s ending has for the

viewing audience receives information about *Epicoene*'s play-world at the same time and through the same channels as do Truewit and Clerimont. Because of this mirroring, scholars often consider these urbane figures to be indicators of how a reader or audience should be interpreting the play's action. Thus, the logic goes, if the final scene reveals that the urbane figures lack crucial knowledge, then the audience must, too; and if the urbane figures are being satirized for their lack of wit – that is, for believing themselves to possess status-granting knowledge that they actually lack – then the audience is being satirized as well for mirroring their presumption.

These studies provide crucial historical context for *Epicoene*'s role and reception within the period's antitheatrical tradition, especially for audiences at London's private theaters, and they demonstrate the moralizing function that satire can play (or that satirists claim satire can play) by implicating audiences in a play's internal battles of knowledge and wit. What these studies don't do, or at least fail to do consistently, is to explore the *significance* of the fact that Truewit and Clerimont, two characters who use their urbane knowingness to successfully manipulate their neighbors and the dramatic action for most of the play, are recast as objects of the play's satire in its final moments, or to analyze exactly how that satire is generated. It is both the significance and the mechanisms of these urbane figures' downward social mobility that my study examines. What is the play critiquing by turning its satire on its satirical speakers? If witty, urbane knowingness is still a useful metric for evaluating a character's urban, gendered status – and I argue that it is – then why do two of the wittiest, most knowing characters look foolish by

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play's conception of wit. Zucker argues that in *Epicoene*'s final scene, Truewit makes Epicoene's anagnorisis rhetorically useful for himself by using the surprise to chide the other characters for their ignorance, thereby deflecting attention away from his own. This argument is sound: Truewit's ability to resituate the surprise for his own social gain *does* mark him out as witty. However, Zucker suggests that Truewit's final display of wit enables him to reclaim his privileged status—an implication that, I argue, the play's satire does not bear out.

Epicoene's end? By focusing on the diegetic implications of Truewit and Clerimont's public ignorance in the final scene, rather than on its implications for the play's viewers, I demonstrate that Truewit and Clerimont's concluding positionality as targets of the play's satire is a function of their social mobility – that is, their transition from signaling an urbane-masculine subject position to an urban-epicene one. In short, I argue that the two Wits are satirized for crossing categories, which implicates them in the ignorance and insincerity that Jonson's vision of urban-epicene social aspiration entails.

In order to identify how *Epicoene* satirizes its characters' performances of status, I begin by laying out the theoretical basis for my character-based analysis of the relations of knowledge and feeling that determine status in this play-world. I then examine the play's three gender-status categories, identifying their central characteristics, the figures who are identified with each, and the hierarchy that those categories form. This second section is organized around moments where a character's performance of status is undermined or made ambiguous by the apparently improper ways they engage traditional signs of gender identity, such as clothing, cosmetics, silence, emotional expression, and forms of propriety. By examining the rhetoric that mocking, urbane-masculine characters use to categorize their milieu, I identify the attitudes and other critical orientations that the play develops toward shifting norms of gender identity.[18] By tracing these attitudes over the course of the play, I demonstrate how the staged knowledge relations – the beliefs, attitudes, and discursive practices that comprise relational knowledge in the play – contribute not only to *Epicoene*'s social stratification, but also to the play's metadramatic satire

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[18] It is in part through these attitudes that gender-based categories form in the first place. These attitudinal stereotypes help the urbane Wits understand – or, rather, feel like they understand – how to orient themselves toward others who resist easy categorization, who cross categories, or who challenge their own performance of status in some way.

of the ignorance and insincerity involved in Jonson's vision of social aspiration.[19] The chapter

concludes with an analysis of *Epicoene*'s final scene, in which a surprising moment enables all

characters to recognize their ignorance, as well as Truewit and Clerimont's social demotion.

3.1 Knowledge, Affect & Social Stratification

Within the last seven pages, I have already referenced "England" four times, "London"

15 times, and "urban" 39 times; as these numbers indicate, *place* is a key analytic for this

chapter's examination of *Epicoene*'s model of social status. London is the affective and

epistemological context for characters' beliefs about gender and status in the play. *Epicoene*'s

setting, with its shifting and frequently indeterminate boundaries not only between forms of

status, but also between public and private spaces and their domestic and commercial functions,

challenges characters' abilities to know how to behave decorously at any given moment, such

that they erroneously "will salute a judge upon the bench and a bishop in the pulpit, a lawyer

when he is pleading at the bar, and a lady when she is dancing in a masque, and put her out" – or,

in other words, engage traditional signs of courtesy in a manner and in places that are interpreted

as discourteous for the ways they disrupt city business and social rhythms (1.3.29-32).[20] For

those who hope to be perceived as decorous or genteel, knowledge of London's social norms is

an essential dimension of urban social status.[21]

The London that *Epicoene*'s characters inhabit is a theatrical construction that reproduces

select aspects of early seventeenth-century London's geography and social life that may have

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[19] I adopt the term "knowledge relations" from Valerie Traub, who explores the concept in *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns.*

[20] This quote and all following references to *Epicoene* come from the 2008 New Mermaids edition. See Ben Jonson, *Epicoene, or, The Silent Woman*.

[21] For an examination of the primacy of urban (specifically commercial) knowledge in determining characters' status, see Zucker, especially p. 1-7. See also Swann.

been recognizable, if not familiar, to certain theatergoers, and may have inflected the meanings

that those audience members ascribed to the scenes and characters who interact with those

fictionalized sites. To its analysis of urban *place*, therefore, this chapter brings a sensitivity to the

space of the theater for which Jonson wrote the play. While the space of the theater always

informs the significance of the places and people it stages, this dynamic is particularly

meaningful for satiric dramas, which explicitly bridge the staged and extra-theatrical worlds

through dramatic irony and other moments of self-reference that remind audiences that they are

watching a play. *Epicoene* takes this metacritical convention a step further, drawing attention to

its theatrical apparatus not only through explicit references to real, extra-theatrical landmarks,

people,[22] and to sounds in and around the Blackfriars Theatre,[23] but also by dramatizing urban

social advancement as a matter of performance and dissimulation. *Epicoene* is deeply concerned

with the indeterminacy of appearances in London's urban social landscape; the play explores the

question of whether urban forms of social identity – rank and gender primary among them – are

"natural" or artificially constructed in a city that is, itself, human-made. The play examines that

question through metacritical strategies such as ironic ridicule and dramatic irony that call

attention to characters' diegetic identity markers – gender, age, rank, expertise, and manner, to

name a few – as forms of performance, confusing the distinction between stage and city, between

artifice and nature, and between [im]personation and being.

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[22] For an analysis of an early modern controversy in which Lady Arabella Stuart believed that she was a target of *Epicoene*'s, see Newman, "City Talk."

[23] In her article, "'O'erwhelmed with Noise': Sound-Houses and Sonic Experiments in Ben Jonson's *Epicene*," Briony Frost examines *Epicoene*'s sonic landscape, drawing particular attention to staged noises that mimic or otherwise reference sounds that were commonly heard within or directly outside of the Blackfriars Theater, including the calls and bells of street vendors. Frost argues that the playhouse itself is "an acoustic laboratory" that teaches audiences "to negotiate the place of the individual within their sonic community" through sonic references to the theatrical space and the space of the city beyond it (543). Briony Frost, "'O'erwhelmed with Noise': Sound-Houses and Sonic Experiments in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*."

The goal of satiric comedy is often to reveal to supposedly foolish characters that their

actions have been witless, and thereby to reinstate what the play-world deems to be a proper

hierarchy of power, usually with the most knowledgeable or knowing characters near the top. In

the absence of reliable visual markers to differentiate between the ranks and degrees of their

fashionable peers, *Epicoene*'s characters place a higher premium on their own and others'

knowledge of popular tastes and fashions, protocols of propriety, urban gossip, and other social

information as a means of identifying people of sophisticated refinement. Access to social

knowledge of this kind enables certain characters to better conform to the norms of their

assigned or desired social position ("gentleman," "citizen's wife," "Wit," etc.) by avoiding

common forms of indecorum and by cultivating tastes, beliefs, and attitudes that are like (or

unlike) their neighbors'. As other scholars have noted, the authorial choice to socially stratify

characters via differences in knowledge is a method well-suited to comedy and, I would add, to

comic satire, wherein both the comic and critical elements arise out of moments where knowing

characters critique those who lack access to the same knowledge.[24]

Epicoene's overarching concern with urban hierarchy centers on the indeterminacy of

social status and gender in its urban setting. *Epicoene* dramatizes the epistemic problem that the

city's changing social context poses for its residents by repeatedly staging scenes of urban

mutability: we see homes that have been partially converted into china shops, where the upper

floors have been reserved for the purveyors' living quarters; we hear about Londoners using city

landmarks that have dedicated religious, medical, legal, and economic functions – cathedrals,

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[24] Zucker makes this argument about early modern English comedy: "Dramatic comedy always depends on the distances separating those in the know from those who stand in definitive contrast to them," distances that are delineated through "differences in taste, in aptitude, and in cultural fluency" (1, 3). I would add that satirical comedy doesn't just depend on those "distances"; it *constructs* them by staging moments in which witty (or witting, in-the-know) figures explicitly mock other characters who possess unrealistic views of their own knowledge and tastes.

Bedlam, civil courts, residential streets, and the Exchanges – for alternative social functions such as entertainment, paid sex, and exhibitions of new fashions; we witness people of low origins wearing highly regulated elite goods and socializing with people of fashion; and we see, time and again, characters navigating their own and others' changing expectations of how people of elevated, urban status *should* look and behave.

Epicoene's dramatic action revolves around its characters' attempts to enhance their social status by seeking to understand, align themselves with, and master the shifting social norms that govern elite status in an urban environment during a time of bewildering structural and cultural changes. *Epicoene*'s characters seek to elevate their social standing by performing gendered conventions of elevated status – that is, the behaviors and manner associated with ladies and gentlemen. In the early modern period, social rank and the privileges that rank entails were perpetuated through the performance of gender roles, including those of father, husband, mother, and wife. Different but often overlapping forms of knowledge, speech, authority, and emotional orientation were required to execute the essential social and economic functions that each role was entailed to perform, such that certain speech acts (e.g. academic or Latinate reference-making, punning, gossiping, scolding), forms of knowledge (e.g. of discretion, bartering, domestic and sartorial trends, literacy and textual interpretation, courtesy, familiarity with city streets and shops), and social attitudes (e.g. pliancy, modesty, bravado, gallantry, confidence, disdain) became associated with particular categories of gendered authority.[25]

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[25] There have always been people whose manner of conducting their social roles did not align with the idealized forms of those roles. As Henderson and McManus (among others) have shown, literary, religious, and legal figures sought to manage this variety by asserting what they viewed as the idealized forms of these roles, and by critiquing the behavior of women who did not live up to them. Through circulating pamphlets, sermons, conduct books, poetry, and drama, these social authorities reiterated and produced popular stereotypes of women's roles and status (the "seductress," the "shrew," the "vain woman," the virgin, and the city wife among them) by producing gendered relations of speech, knowledge, and feeling through alternating discourses of idealized adoration and vehement critique (Henderson and McManus, 47-8). See Katherine Henderson & Barbara McManus, *Half Humankind:*

Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus have shown how such gendered relations of speech, knowledge, and feeling circulated as stereotypes in the period's pamphlets, sermons, conduct books, and popular literature, gaining cultural meaning and power through their (re)iteration.

As other scholars have noted, all of *Epicoene*'s city-dwelling characters, and not just the titular character, exhibit behaviors that can be considered epicene – that is, possessing both masculine and feminine qualities, or neither.[26] At the most basic level, in these figures' aspirations to be "courtly," they connect this to being gentlemanly or ladylike. In their efforts to climb the urban social ladder, these figures attempt to emulate the rhetorical styles they imagine elite gentlemen and ladies to use, with differing degrees of ease; and they put on gendered, courtly airs, feigning modesty, disdain, and gendered knowledge that they do not have.[27] And thanks to the London marketplace that forms *Epicoene*'s setting, these city folk have access to many of the goods and services that elite people purchase: they buy fine clothes, fancy hats, jewelry, and sumptuous household goods in an effort to legitimize their aspiring, elite status. However, while *Epicoene*'s characters have access to elite goods and possess knowledge of courtly manners, their gendered social roles are circumscribed by the demands of the urban marketplace: their sense of decorum is adjusted to the city rather than the court, their fine purchases are guided by urban tastes and are displayed in city homes and shops, their elevated language is used to conduct urban business and to describe city news, and their adopted airs

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Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640, especially p. 47-71, "The Social Contexts: Popular Stereotypes and Real Women." For two studies on the literary forms and contexts for social stereotypes, see Samuel Fallon, *Paper Monsters: Persona and Literary Culture in Elizabethan England*, and Elizabeth Fowler, *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing*.

[26] Edward Partridge is credited as the first to make this claim in his article, "The Allusiveness of *Epicoene*."

[27] For examples of gendered knowledge, see 4.3.22-46, 51-56, when the Collegiates share strategies with Epicoene for controlling her husband, maintaining lovers, and preventing pregnancy; see also Truewit's speeches that he delivers to his fellow Wits in 1.1 and 4.1 about how to woo and sexually dominate women. For examples of characters sharing gendered knowledge that they do *not* possess, see 2.3, wherein Daw claims to have literary expertise that he lacks, and 4.4, wherein the Collegiates claim that they have medical expertise that they lack.

often conflict with urban social attitudes. Thus, while *Epicoene*'s characters attempt to integrate

signs of elevated, gendered status into their urban lives, they do not become the courtly ladies or

gentlemen they seek to emulate; rather, in their eager deployment of elite resources, these

characters elide many of the distinctions that are central to courtly notions of gender: women

speak with a conviction and academic style often attributed to gentlemen, and men dress and

display themselves with the care and éclat often attributed to ladies. Thus, while *Epicoene*'s

characters are attached to gendered notions of elite status, their enactments of those courtly

conventions produce categories of urban status and gender identity that, compared to courtly

categories of "lady" and "gentleman," are fundamentally indeterminate: these urban categories

are neither male nor female, nor elite nor laboring, but rather distinctly urban amalgamations of

various masculine and feminine qualities.

  Epicoene opens with an example of the challenge that characters experience in their

attempts to categorize London's denizens according to clear lines of gender and status. Truewit,

a Wit and a young man of fashion who does not work for a living, gossips with his friend

Clerimont, trading stories about women. These are not the sorts of stories one might expect from

braggadocious Wits in city comedy, concerned with detailing their own romantic and sexual

exploits; rather, they describe more vulnerable moments of their romantic and sexual confusion,

when women's behavior or appearances discomposed these otherwise self-possessed men.

Truewit relates an occasion when he called on a lady and was allowed to enter her private room

during her dressing process, before she was ready to be seen.[28] "I once followed a rude fellow

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[28] This is an instance of impropriety enabled, perhaps, by the changing significance of urban households as private, domestic spaces that frequently doubled as shops and, thus, as public, commercial spaces. This is not to say that this economic shift led to frequent occasions of men walking in on half-dressed women; it is to say that the city's material and cultural structures enable Truewit's intrusion. I thank Katherine French for facilitating my thinking on this point.

into a chamber," he tells Clerimont, "where the poor madam, for haste, and troubled, snatched at her peruke to cover her baldness and put it on the wrong way" (1.1.124-7). In disclosing the lady's baldness to Clerimont, Truewit describes the haphazard manner ("snatched at," "for haste") and emotional distress ("troubled") that the "poor madam" conveyed as she rushed to curate a genteel, feminine appearance. Truewit suggests that the improperly placed wig did not hide the lady's baldness but rather drew attention to it, functioning as a visual reminder of the discomposure that she revealed before her formal hosting duties began. Truewit describes the gentlewoman's incomplete transformation from the private discomposure of her chamber into a lady who *performs* femininity in social or public contexts, and suggests that the gentlewoman's reversed wig – an indication of her emotional fluster – undermined her ability to convey refined femininity. Clerimont appears to share his perspective: "Oh prodigy!" he cries, professing second-hand wonder, if not horror, at what Truewit frames as an unsuccessful exhibition of a gentlewoman's goods and courtesies (128).[29]

The hurried or inexpert use of material props and cosmetics, coupled with the lady's conspicuous effort to muster an appearance of propriety reveals the performative, affective nature of the process through which one makes one's gendered status legible to others – or fails to do so, as Truewit suggests. As the gentlewoman played host to her unexpected guests, her mustered composure failed to convince Truewit, who seemed unable or unwilling to overcome his fixation on her reversed wig and the earlier "haste, and [trouble]" to which it alluded.

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[29] The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes Clerimont's interjection ("O prodigie!") as the first example of the use of the word "prodigy" to mean "[a]n amazing or surprising thing; a wonder, a marvel" (n., 3a). Before Jonson apparently coined this usage of the term, "prodigy" was a noun commonly used to describe portents of great or terrible significance, as well as people or beings that were considered to be "unnatural" or even monstrous. Philemon Holland's glossary to his 1601 translation of Pliny the Elder's *History of the World* defines "prodigy" as "straunge sights and wonderfull tokens, presaging some fearefull thing to come." The *OED* offers another early modern definition of "prodigy": "An unusual or extraordinary thing or occurrence; an anomaly; something abnormal or unnatural; *spec.* a monster, a freak" (*OED* "prodigy, n.2"). See "prodigy, n," *OED Online*; Holland, "Prodigy."

According to Truewit, the apparent tension between the gentlewoman's mustered equanimity and her reversed peruke provoked him out of his own customary performance of gallantry such that for the duration of his visit, he was incapable of speaking to his hostess. By contrast, "the unconscionable knave held her in compliment an hour, with that reversed face," Truewit says of his "rude" companion, "when I still looked when she should talk from the tother side" (129-131). Truewit describes the conspicuous tension between the gentlewoman's physical discomfiture and her projected nonchalance as an epistemological problem that challenged his ability to orient himself toward his hostess, both spatially and socially: every time she spoke, he was startled to hear her voice emanate from what he deemed to be the wrong side of her head. However, he responds to the epistemological problem in a way that serves own social aims: by using it to distinguish his superior social and intellectual position from that of his host and the "rude fellow" through ridicule, and to showcase his emotional sophistication before Clerimont. According to Truewit's retelling, while his companion did not appear to register the woman's backward peruke during their hour-long conversation, let alone the epistemological tension that Truewit identifies, Truewit highlights his relative discernment by suggesting that it entirely occupied his mind. In fact, Truewit indicates that he was so preoccupied with the impropriety of the situation that, rather than engage his host in civil dialogue, he chose instead to sit in derisive silence for the duration of his visit. Despite the seeming incivility of this judgmental silence, Truewit attempts to characterize his scornful behavior as, if not decorous, at least informed by his superior awareness of the forms of propriety that hosting duties entail – awareness that, he suggests, his gregarious companion lacks. Truewit implies that it is both his companion's ignorance and the gaiety that attends it that makes *the other man* and not Truewit the "rude fellow."

In Truewit's retelling of this perplexing scene to Clerimont, we can observe how Truewit attempts to produce a social hierarchy by performing attitudes of disdain and scorn that differentiate his understanding of the scene's impropriety from that of his companion and host. For Truewit, knowledge (understanding, awareness, belief) and critical orientations (emotions and attitudes) are key determinants of status: his companion's cheerful unconcern indexes his ignorance of social norms; his host's conspicuously mustered nonchalance indexes her ignorance of her failure to perform what Truewit holds as a feminine ideal. In registering his superior understanding, Truewit's scorn places him at the top of the hierarchy that he has constructed. By characterizing his deliberate derision before Clerimont as a sign of his own propriety, Truewit frames his emotional orientation as a marker of his superior understanding and taste as he attempts to elevate his perceived social status over that of his blithe, chattering companion and his visibly discombobulated host.

As this scene shows, in *Epicoene*'s play-world, urban social categories are more fungible than courtly or land-bound social ranks. The mélange of high, low, masculine, and feminine properties that the London context enables can appear incoherent to one like Truewit, for whom conceptual categories of gender and status, such as pre-existing stereotypes or codes of behavior, are important tools not only for making sense of his neighbors' social status, but also for identifying how to behave toward those figures such that he maintains his own stance of witty gallantry. When a character defies easy categorization in *Epicoene*, such as the gentlewoman Truewit describes to Clerimont, it affects the other characters in conscious and unconscious ways: it can surprise, confuse, titillate, or stir up other "passions" or emotional orientations that reveal, among other things, a character's lack of foreknowledge or expectation. This indeterminacy of identity risks surprising the play's Wits out of their performance of confident

self-control, as the gentlewoman's misplaced peruke demonstrates. In these cases, witty characters often resort to alternative means to establish clear ways of feeling and thinking about those in their social milieu; most typically, they resort to mockery and other forms of ridicule, as Truewit does in 1.1. In *Epicoene*, the targets of the Wits' mockery include the members of their fashionable milieu: the socially ambitious women who populate the play, as well as the socially ambitious men whom the Wits consider to be effeminate.

I argue that through their consistent ridicule of their neighbors' performances of status, *Epicoene*'s Wits define the contours of three categories of gender and status, all of them somewhat eccentric to more established, binary forms of gender: urban epicenism, urbane masculinity, and elite femininity. As deployed in this play, these three categories become stereotypes with their own predictable sets of behaviors, ways of dressing, purchasing habits, speech acts, social desires, and, significant for this study, attitudes toward London's mutability. The Wits codify these attitudes and behaviors most particularly by means of their repeated satirical critiques, tracing distinctions between the "prodig[ious]" social presence of epicene figures, courtly ideals of femininity, and urban ideals of masculinity.

3.2 *Epicoene*'s Gender-Status Categories

3.2.1 Elite Femininity

Elite femininity functions in *Epicoene* as an imagined ideal rather than a socioeconomic reality; it represents a fantasy that certain characters maintain about the immunity that they imagine elite status to grant from the city's changing social and economic pressures. Accordingly, the elite ideal in this play is affiliated with neutral, indifferent, or disinterested orientations toward mundane, urban affairs. At points throughout the play, male characters describe their ideal of elite femininity in contrast to the kind of femininity that the noisy,

impassioned, and self-sufficient women in their urban milieu perform. For instance, Truewit and Clerimont provide a useful definition of elite femininity when they discuss their preferences regarding women's beauty: Truewit tells Clerimont that he "love[s] a good dressing before any beauty o' the world" – that is, he appreciates a woman's ability to style herself to enhance her most flattering attributes, even above the unrefined, "simpl[e]," or "neglect[ed]" good looks that Clerimont prefers (94-5; 89; 91). Truewit proceeds to catalog the elements of "a good dressing": "If she have good ears, show 'em; good hair, lay it out; good legs, wear short clothes; a good hand, discover it often; practice any art to mend breath, cleanse teeth, repair eyebrows, paint, and profess it" (97-100). Clerimont, startled by his friend's descriptive list, exclaims, "How! Publicly?" (101). "The doing of it," Truewit replies, "not the manner: that must be private. Many things that seem foul i'the doing, do please, done. [N]or when the doors are shut should men be inquiring; all is sacred within, then. Is it for us to see their perukes put on, their false teeth, their complexion, their eyebrows, their nails? You see gilders will not work but enclosed" (104-8). Truewit's catalog of the items to be "put on" casts the beautification process as not only a fairly lengthy endeavor, but also as a mystery of faith, a transubstantiation of disparate body parts into a more refined, feminine beauty. Although cosmetic enhancements align with Truewit's ideal, he claims that it is better not to know *how* these materials help the body display its beauty, such that an observer can behold "good ears," "good hair," and "good legs" without cosmetic or procedural information that might disrupt the sanctity of – or, rather, the male desire for – the final image. According to this view, withholding access to the refinement process is essential to the successful performance of elite femininity.

Though her performance is later revealed to be a strategic act, Lady Epicoene is the only character in the play whose speech, physicality, and attitude are characterized by the privacy,

modesty, and self-effacing disinterest expected of elite femininity. We get a taste of what this looks like in her first encounter with Master Morose, "a gentleman that loves no noise" ("The Persons of the Play," 1). When they first meet, Morose interviews Lady Epicoene about her social and domestic habits to discover whether she can fulfill his desire for a submissive wife who will bear an heir and thereby allow Morose to shore up his wealth without displacing his need for complete domestic control. Lady Epicoene's answers to Morose's queries, in both their content and style of delivery, mark her gender performance out as elite and distinguish it from the femininity performed by her urban peers.

Morose asks Lady Epicoene three substantive questions about her gender performance, focusing on her speech, her submissiveness to male control, and her consumeristic, self-styling habits. Lady Epicoene's style of speech has the most significant impact on Morose's perception of her, even over its content. When Morose first questions her, Lady Epicoene answers with curtsies and other mute gestures, and Morose, the man who can abide no person's voice but his own, beseeches her to "[s]peak out" (2.5.35). When he detects her whisper, he exclaims, "a divine softness!" representing her gentle timbre as not merely elite, but angelic. This reference to divinity reiterates Truewit's earlier description of elite femininity as a mystery of faith – a mystery to be venerated, not to be solved (37). Morose interprets Epicoene's silence according to his own wishes, guided by his preexisting beliefs not only about noise, but about its relationship to gender, such that softness of voice becomes a sign of a woman's elevated moral standing.[30]

Having already mapped his own desires onto Lady Epicoene's silence, Morose inquires about her habits of self-curation. He notes that other women actively curate their reputations by

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[30] By filling her silences with his own fantasies about what her "divine softness" means, Morose appears to assert his own interests at the cost of Epicoene's voice. The irony of this scene, we later learn, is that Epicoene is the one asserting her own interests by strategically using silence to secure Morose's marriage proposal.

"giv[ing] occasion for a man to court 'em" (e.g. flirting) and by adopting airs "to seem learned, to seem judicious, to seem sharp and conceited" (2.5.51, 55-6). Morose wonders whether, in the face of these social pressures, it is possible for Lady Epicoene to "bury in [her]self with silence, and rather trust [her] graces to the fair conscience of virtue than to the world's or [her] own proclamation" (56-9). In other words, Morose wonders whether Lady Epicoene would prefer to take a passive role in the curation of her public image, turning inward and allowing her own sense of virtue to determine her social standing rather than the social norms upheld by her milieu. "I should be sorry else," she replies (twice – her first utterance is too soft to hear) (60). Lady Epicoene does not claim that she is morally committed to an internal sense of virtue, nor to the "graces" that "fair conscience" would yield; she merely suggests that she might experience regret if she adopted the forms of self-promotion that Morose decries. What she communicates is a neutral critical orientation: disinterest in the social norms to which other women subscribe, detachment from the "learned … judicious … sharp and conceited" values that her milieu idolizes, and distance from the reputational concerns that appear to motivate others. Her indifference seems to inflame Morose's desire: "Oh Morose," he addresses himself, "thou art happy above mankind" (63-4).

Lady Epicoene appears to be the perfect object of male desire because her gender performance is crafted to mold to the needs of the man she is with: she expresses no opinions, no preferences, no habits, no desires, and no feelings that might perturb or drum up conflict. In response, Morose fills Lady Epicoene's silences with his own fantasies about her morality and her social habits, overlaying her reticence with his idealized vision. It is not until Act 3 that Epicoene's performance of "divine softness" is revealed to be an act, one that obscures less sacred ambitions: shortly after her marriage, Lady Epicoene begins to vocally chivvy her new

husband, and it is this capacity for speech, the absence of silences for Morose to fill, and the prominence of a resistant, disapproving orientation that forecloses any possibility that she is the elite woman of his fantasies: "Oh immodesty!" he cries, "A manifest woman! [...] She can talk!" (3.4.39-44).

3.2.2 Urban Epicenism

In her interview with Morose, Lady Epicoene attempts to appear disinterested and emotionally neutral – hallmarks of elite femininity – by denying that she engages in the behaviors and activities that Morose attributes to other ladies: status-seeking through conspicuous consumption, flirtation, and chatter. But it is not just ladies who seek higher status than they possess; *Epicoene* features both male and female characters who attempt to elevate their social standing by displaying signs of the status they crave. These markers include expensive clothing and household items, as well as the affected manners, speech, and forms of propriety that city-dwelling folk attribute to people of higher status.

London is a consistent source of entertainment for these excitable figures: from neighborhood gossip to the newest fashions sold at the Exchanges, *Epicoene*'s urban-epicene characters respond to signs of London's changing social landscape with wonder and its close relatives: astonishment, surprise, delight, and horror. In contrast to the indifferent orientation toward consumerism and status that Lady Epicoene models in her performance of elite femininity, and which Morose takes as a sign of her moral superiority, wonder illuminates urban-epicene characters' emotional investment in the urban scene – their interest in it, as opposed to elite disinterest – and thus their vulnerability to be affected by its changing markets and norms as they delight in the goods they buy to adorn their bodies and homes and take immense pleasure in their affected rhetoric and manners. In addition to displaying symbols of elevated social status,

these characters go out of their way to draw attention to their own efforts to procure and display those symbols: they loudly proclaim their elevated manners, gossip about their shopping excursions, and complain publicly when their fine entertainments go wrong. Thus, ostentation itself is part of these figures' projections of elevated status; but because their ostentation brings attention to, rather than naturalizes, their desired status, their performances fall short of their mark.[31] *Epicoene* stages scenes in which these characters fail to perform the status they seek, holding up their excitability, their inexpert use of elite goods and language, and their lack of self-awareness for the viewer's amusement and for the Wits' satire.

I use the term "urban epicenism" to refer to such gendered performances of aspirational status. They are *gendered* insofar as they refuse, neglect, or fail to abide by certain normative distinctions of gender in the period. They are *performances* that display not only the material and rhetorical signs of aspirational status, but also the effort one takes to procure those materials and to perform that identity. Certain forms of gender performance are circumscribed (or enabled) by status-seeking: in their preening self-promotion, their conspicuous consumption, their mistaken Latin, and their unabated speech, *Epicoene's* status-seeking characters engage behaviors that may be normatively either masculine or feminine, but they do so in a manner that is distinctly ungentlemanly and unladylike. Unlike elite femininity, there is no uniform model of urban epicenism except for its aspirational quality. Social aspiration is the central characteristic of this urban gender performance, but each character seeks a different kind of status, which they execute using varied manners and urban resources.

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[31] For an analysis of early modern ostentation as a symptom of changing norms of consumerism, see Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital*, 237. See also F. J. Fisher, "The Development of London as a Center of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."

The female characters who perform this epicene status-seeking include the Ladies Collegiate, the city wife Mistress Otter, and Lady Epicoene – that is, after she has married. These ladies speak, give orders, and express opinions about their urban milieu with an authoritative orientation that Truewit deems "masculine or rather hermaphroditical," and which leads Clerimont to mockingly refer to Mistress Otter by her husband's name ("Captain Otter") (1.1.76-7, 1.4.28). The male characters who perform urban epicenism include Captain Otter, a man of common origins who marries rich, agrees to be ruled by his wife, and "does Latin it" (i.e. peppers his language with odd Latin phrases) to mimic the elegant speech of courtiers; Morose, a gentleman who desires to consolidate his wealth by marrying and bearing an heir, but whose intolerance of women and of London's social activity leads him to proclaim his impotence and announce that he is "no man" (5.4.41); as well as Daw and La Foole, who are "Braveries," or "gallants who set the fashion in … dress" by buying, wearing, and displaying the newest styles on the market (14n74). In addition to the more overt challenges to normative masculinity that are posed by Captain Otter's subordinated position to his wife and Morose's declaration that he is "no man," several critics have identified the literary and historical traditions that feminize men who attend to fashion in a way that is perceived as overly fastidious.[32] Throughout the play, other characters critique Daw and La Foole for a style of dress and speech they deem effete, marking out the Braveries' gender and sexual difference through derisive jokes and diminutive, femininizing terms, such as "one extraordinary [...] but in ordinary," "precious manikin," and, possibly, if intended ironically, "fine youth" (2.3.88-9; 1.3.24, 41). As these male and female characters pursue higher status than they possess, their showy manner of self-display, rather than

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[32] See James Bromley. *Clothing and Queer Style in Early Modern English Drama*. See also Bailey, ""Monstrous Manner': Style and the Early Modern Theater"; Karen Newman, "Dressing Up: Sartorial Extravagance in Early Modern London"; and Herbert Norris, *Tudor Costume and Fashion*, especially p. 524-56, 642-54.

placing them solidly among the elite men and women they strive to emulate, presents them as epicene amalgams of conventionally defined femininity and masculinity.

The "urban" part of the term "urban epicenism" refers to the play's setting – not just London, but a narrow crosshatch of streets near the Strand – which provides the social and affective context for the characters' negotiations of tastes and status. *Epicoene*'s characters are people of fashion who do not work for their living, but who, as Adam Zucker has argued, negotiate status through differences in knowledge and taste, which they perform through the manners, materials, and discursive styles of the city.[33] "*Epicoene* shows us again and again how the practical utility of urban spaces underpins … assumptions" about "how wit and tastefulness create intricate differences and hierarchy within a community of people," Zucker explains (57). By knowing and choosing which fashions to wear, where to be seen making purchases or seeking entertainment, and whom to invite into one's home, this set of Londoners makes visible the preferences and tastes that distinguish their social ambitions from those of their peers. In a play that represents ostentatious status-seeking as the defining orientation of epicene gender performance, London is both the site of consumption and the site of display, where characters use their knowledge of urban resources to construct the persona of a person of high status, and where they perform these personas in front of an audience of their urban peers – just as the actors impersonating them perform in front of the theater audience.[34]

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[33] Zucker, 55-8, especially 57.

[34] In his analysis of how "performance" of gender and status is doubled for audiences of the play, J.A. Jackson writes: "Part of the subtext of *Epicoene* is the audience's relationship to the play itself. Believing they assume a position clearly outside of the play as objective observer—a position which allows them distance to judge the characters, to mock the characters, and to be in on the many inside jokes—the audience unknowingly casts itself as yet another dupe within the play. The audience member potentially becomes an extension of the know-it-all-know-nothing characters *Epicoene* satirizes" (1). See Jackson.

As the play's socially ambitious characters display the goods, manners, and tastes that comprise their visions of elite status, they also publicize the efforts that they take to procure and compile these elements of their public personas. In the play's first scene, when Truewit and Clerimont compare their tastes in women's beauty, Truewit identifies the conspicuous labor of self-curation as the criterion that distinguishes performances of urban epicenism from those of elite femininity. As we have seen, he explains that for a woman to meet his standard of elite beauty, "the manner" or effort of her self-curation – the application of makeup, the placement of her wig and clothing, and other signs of labor – "must be private," for "[m]any things that seem foul i' the doing, do please, done" (1.1.99, 108-9). Whereas performances of elite femininity "do please" once they are "done" by keeping "the manner" of such a performance private, performances of urban epicenism do exactly the opposite: because people who perform urban epicenism are eager to be perceived as more elite than they are, they take pains to display their status symbols and to call attention to the fact that they have procured them. They show off the material goods, rhetorical styles, social attitudes, and other "things that seem foul i' the doing" which comprise their vision of an elite lady or gentleman, as well as "the manner" of their display – that is, their attitudes toward these properties of their performed status and the effort it takes to procure and perform them. Performances of urban epicenism, therefore, reside perpetually in "the doing"; the tools of and the labor involved in social aspiration are always on display.

In their conspicuous efforts to display the "manner" of their self-curation, characters who perform urban epicenism unwittingly collapse several of the social distinctions that organize early modern English society, notably those between masculinity and femininity, public and private spaces, and courtly and country manners. At the nexus of masculine and feminine gender

identity, for example, is the epicene identity performed by the Braveries, Otters, Collegiates, and

Morose. Between courtly and country manners are the urban ones that these characters enact:

they demonstrate a distinctly urban sensibility by displaying a farrago of goods and tastes that

the city affords, such as signs of courtly refinement and signs of "country," less refined, social

aspiration (1.1.72). Additionally, these Londoners live and socialize at the intersection of private

information and public spectacle: as Truewit avows, by displaying the "manner" of their self-

curation, urban-epicene figures publicize a process of status-seeking that otherwise "must be

[kept] private" (1.1.108). By bringing private information into the public purview, or by bringing

public noise and entertainment into the private space of the home, urban-epicene characters

perform the indecorum for which they are known.

Mistress Otter is the play's prime example of an indecorous city wife who performs

urban epicenism by dominating her husband, by bedecking herself, her home, and her husband in

fine goods, and by expressing heightened wonder, rather than elite detachment, about them all.

We first encounter Mistress Otter when she is preparing to host a group of elite-aspiring urban

folk, including the Collegiates and a smattering of gallants. Her wonder manifests as horror in

this scene: she is mortified to learn that her husband, Captain Otter, has prepared an exhibition of

bull- and bear-fighting for their guests, a violent entertainment that undermines her preparations

for an elite milieu.[35] Mistress Otter opens Act 3 in a towering fury, horrified that her husband has

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[35] Although Mistress and Captain Otter discuss bear-, horse-, and bull-baiting in a literal sense in this scene, when the event comes to pass, "animal-baiting" is revealed to be a raucous drinking game (4.2.1-63). Truewit explains that Captain Otter refers to "his chief carousing cup" by the name of the animals he once baited: "One he calls his bull, another his bear, another his horse" (58-60). It is unclear in 3.1 whether Captain Otter really intended to bring three live animals into his home but changed course to appease his wife, or if he intended to play a drinking game all along and, rather than bait "beasts" for public entertainment, instead baited his wife for his own. The former is possible, as Captain Otter had been "a great man at the Bear Garden" – a popular baiting site – "in his time," but the latter seems more likely in light of commentary from Truewit and Captain Otter (2.6.57-8). When the drinking game commences in 4.2, Captain Otter proclaims, "Wives are nasty, sluttish animals," and, "A wife is a scurvy clogdogdo, an unlucky thing, a very foresaid bear-whelp, without any good fashion or breeding: *mala bestia*" – ostensibly, unsophisticated and therefore easy to bait and provoke (4.2.50-1, 68-70).

planned entertainments that she deems too lowbrow for their guests, and incredulous that he has neglected to wear the fine clothes that she has purchased for him. "I'll ha' you chained up with your bull-dogs and bear-dogs," she threatens him, "if you be not civil the sooner. [...] I would have you get your Whitsuntide velvet cap and your staff i' your hand to entertain 'em" (3.1.2-8). Mistress Otter's uncivil, threatening language, as well as her orientation of horror, reveals her perspective on social stratification: civility is signaled through fine materials (velvet), the company of other elite (or elite-striving) people, and entertainments that promote respectable, holiday cheer (Whitsuntide) rather than roisterous spirits.

As they negotiate differences in taste and social expectation, the Otters attempt to justify "the manner" of their self-refining labor. Mistress Otter is desperate to hide her husband's indecorum behind velvet caps and elite entertainments that, even as they fail to entertain Captain Otter, will at least produce the illusion of elevated taste. But Captain Otter pushes back: "Not so, princess," he protests, "these things I am known to the courtiers by … and [they] do expect it. Tom Otter's bull, bear, and horse is known all over England, in *rerum natura*" (10-14).[36] Captain Otter suggests that because he is "known" for these entertainments, and because "the courtiers … do expect it," then meeting those expectations is "the natural order of things" (3.1n14)[37] "'Fore me," his wife swears, "I will 'na-ture' 'em over to Paris Garden and 'na-ture' you thither too, if you pronounce 'em again. Is a bear a fit beast, or a bull, to mix in society with great ladies?" she wonders (15-17).[38] As Mistress Otter expresses horror at what she perceives as her husband's

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[36] An editor's gloss suggests that Captain Otter uses this phrase literally, as in, "the natural order of things" (3.1n14).

[37] Captain Otter's inexpert use of Latin unintentionally creates another "natural order of things" that plays on his name, "Otter," to group him not with the courtiers but with the "bull, bear, and horse" that entertain them.

[38] Paris Garden sits in Southwark's Bankside neighborhood, on the south bank of the Thames across from the more fashionable Strand. Paris Garden was a marshy area known in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as a site for bear baiting and other industries that could flourish in London's less regulated Liberties, such as theatre and

unrefined, urban tastes, she converts the Captain's affected Latin (*natura*) into a statement of open hostility, threatening to expel him from her company (and from that of the "great ladies") to the fellowship of his beasts in an urban marsh ("Paris Garden"). However, in scolding her husband for his unrefined conduct, Mistress Otter herself misuses the signs that she attributes to elite status: she uses vulgarized Latin to communicate horror, rather than elite detachment; she attempts to pass off her loutish husband as a gentleman by dressing him in fine clothes; and she attempts to correct his behavior through uncivil means of her own, using low-brow urban landmarks to threaten him and asserting her own domestic authority over his. In doing so, Mistress Otter implicitly challenges her own conviction that elite status symbols have the power to impart elite value, demonstrating instead how her socially ambitious, critical orientation overrides the elite symbolism of the goods and entertainments she intends to display.

As the Otters' argument shows, performances of urban epicenism are characterized by self-promotion and expressive social desires, often at the cost of traditional forms of propriety. Mistress Otter's ambition for status leads her to procure external signs of refinement (fine goods, clothing, and entertainments), but to misappropriate them in ways that highlight her impropriety. The fact that the Otters' domestic dispute is overheard (and commented on) by a group of eavesdropping gallants further underscores Mistress Otter's indecorum. Although the Otters' argument occurs inside their home, their home is not a uniformly private space: it doubles as a china shop, a public venue where city folk come to view and purchase fine, imported porcelain. The conflation of public and private spaces enables three gallants, Truewit and Clerimont among them, to enter the Otters' home "unobserved" and take in their private dispute as a form of public

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sex work. See Anthony Mackinder, Lyn Blackmore, et al, *The Hope Playhouse, Animal Baiting and Later Industrial Activity at Bear Gardens on Bankside: Excavations at Riverside House and New Globe Walk, Southwark, 1999-2000*. See also "The Bankside Playhouses and Bear Gardens."

entertainment (stage direction, 3.1). As Mistress Otter's rage builds to a crescendo, the gallants exchange whispered commentary that highlights the impropriety of Mistress Otter's household management, both in the way she dominates her husband and in the semi-public nature of her home. "For god's sake, let's go stave her off him," Truewit whispers to his friends, "She'll worry [Captain Otter], if we help not in time" (47, 51). Truewit uses bear-baiting rhetoric to describe Mistress Otter's speech and manner: Captain Otter has baited her with his uncouth deportment, and she, with uncontrollable fury, must be "staved off" or else "She'll worry him" – that is, "seize [him] by the throat with the teeth and tear or lacerate," or "kill or injure [him] by biting and shaking," like a baited dog or bear might do.[39] Truewit describes Mistress Otter not merely as a discourteous, domineering wife, but as an enraged beast – notably, a beast whose fury is a matter of public entertainment. The gallants' participation in the Otters' domestic scene extends beyond passive viewership, however; Truewit suggests that they are the ones who must "stave her off" (47). Truewit's self-insertion in the Otters' private affair underscores the impropriety of the public nature of their dispute: the Otters implicate their neighbors in their domestic affairs, requiring outside scrutiny and intervention to maintain a semblance of peace and civility.

Performances of urban epicenism often merge public and private information and spaces, giving rise to the indecorum for which those performances are known and mocked. Consider, for example, Sir Amorous La Foole, a Bravery and cousin to Mistress Otter, who adopts the affected courtesies he attributes to a more elite milieu so that he may be seen performing them. La Foole takes pains to publicize his elevated manners, dispensing private greetings and invitations to dinners at his home in a conspicuously public way. However, in his efforts to broadcast his refined manners, he performs the same pompous courtesies to every person he meets, regardless

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[39] "Worry, v. 1a," *OED Online*. Also, "to assail with hostile or menacing speech."

of differences in rank or location. "He will salute a judge upon the bench and a bishop in the pulpit," Clerimont ridicules, "a lawyer when he is pleading at the bar, and a lady when she is dancing in a masque, and put her out. He does give plays and suppers, and invites his guests to 'em aloud out of his window as they ride by in coaches" (1.3.29-34). Whereas a judge, a bishop, a lawyer, and a lady represent different social categories that are circumscribed by different codes of civility for conversation, La Foole's undifferentiated, enthusiastically courteous orientation toward everyone he meets – heedless of timing, location, or status – underscores his lack of discrimination (i.e. taste), as well as his emotional investment in social concerns, marking him as an unrefined social aspirant. Although La Foole's personal greetings and invitations to his private entertainments represent signs of civility, according to Clerimont's tastes, they are inappropriately deployed: La Foole's zealous salutations disrupt other people's business, and his shouted invitations bridge the private domain of his chamber and the public scene of the street.[40] By performing his affected courtesies in a way that invites public attention without considering the propriety of his context or how his manners might be perceived in contrast to his wishes, La Foole fails to perform the aloof orientation that the play associates with elites; consequently, his signs of civility become, in practice, acts of indecorum.

As is the case for Mistress Otter and La Foole, the unwitting elision of categorical distinctions through the ineffectual display of status markers is part of the Collegiates' performance of urban epicenism. The Collegiates are a group of "great" ladies (ladies of rank), whose social aspiration to ascend the urban, rather than courtly, hierarchy leads them to elide the

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[40] Clerimont's inclusion of the detail that La Foole stands by his window may be an effort to feminize the over-courteous man. For more on the associations between women and windows, as well as the impropriety and perceived danger of windows as gendered thresholds that bridge private and public spaces, see Ann C. Christensen, "Women, Work, and Windows in *Women Beware Women*"; Lena Cowen Orlin, "Women on the Threshold"; and Diane Wolfthal, "The Woman in the Window: Licit and Illicit Sexual Desire in Renaissance Italy."

boundaries not only of public and private information and spaces (like La Foole) or of normatively masculine and feminine behaviors (like the Otters), but also of courtly and country tastes. Prior to *Epicoene*'s opening scene, the Collegiates leave their husbands at court to seek a different kind of status in the city: while they wish to maintain their elite social standing, their location in a the fast-changing urban milieu supports their aspirations to a level of education, social autonomy, and intellectual status that is typically reserved for men. The manner in which the Collegiates perform their urban-epicene status poses a challenge for their peers who are bent on classifying them: Truewit describes the ladies as "an order between courtiers and country madams, that live from their husbands and give entertainments to all the Wits and Braveries o' the time, [...] cry down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine or rather hermaphroditical authority, and every day gain to their college some new probationer" (1.1.72-8). Though the Collegiates came to London directly from court and are ostensibly of higher rank than their urban neighbors, due to the vocal manner in which they display their authoritative social orientation, Truewit places these ladies in the social hierarchy "between courtiers" (their actual rank) "and country madams" (the status he attributes to their status-seeking manner). In their efforts to claim status that depends not on the rank of their fathers or husbands but rather on their own, acquired social expertise, the Collegiates express their judgments ("what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion") with a critical orientation that Truewit dubs "masculine or … hermaphroditical" – that is, confident, unreserved, and without deference to male opinion (1.1.76-7). By "cry[ing] down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion," the Collegiates publicly display both their assumed knowledge and their belief in their own social authority, two fundamental components of their urban-epicene gender performance.

The Collegiates' performance of social authority is a central feature of their urban-epicene identity, which they bolster not only by doling out advice, but also by publicly excluding people from their society – primarily men, as well as ladies like Mistress Otter, who desire but have not yet achieved full membership in the college. In the list of *dramatis personae*, Jonson describes novitiates like Mistress Otter as "pretenders," or ladies who pretend to possess, but who may actually lack, the elevated speech, tastes, manner, and intellectual pretensions that the Collegiates perform.[41] However, as the Collegiates' healthcare recommendations and occasionally inflated language suggests, all of the society's ladies are "pretenders" of some kind, whether it be of learning (Haughty and Centaure), of wit (Mavis), of rank (Mistress Otter), or of gender identity (Lady Epicoene). Pretension to higher status than one possesses is the trademark of urban epicenism, but due to the internal hierarchy of the college, some of the Collegiates – Haughty, Centaure, and Mavis among them – have the appearance of greater legitimacy than their peers who serve as "probationer[s]" to their ranks (1.1.78). These probationers serve two legitimizing functions: to vocally, if not substantively, corroborate the Collegiates' knowledge (advice and other claims to expertise), and to authorize the Collegiates' elevated status through their exclusion of others from the college.

The Collegiates conduct themselves with an authority typically denied to women by maintaining an internal hierarchy as well as the consensus of the society's members. When Truewit recommends Lady Epicoene for membership to the college, he describes her manner and speech in terms to which the Collegiates aspire: "she is a woman of an excellent assurance, and

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[41] In *Bibliotheca Scholastica* (1589), John Rider defines "pretender" as a "pretender of that which is not," a "pretense, or coulure." In *World of Words* (1598, revised for Queen Anna in 1611), John Florio reiterates Rider's definition and includes a series of useful synonyms when he defines the Italian term "Simulatore" (simulator): "a dissembler, a fainer, an hypocrite, a counterfeiter, a pretender of that which is not." See Rider, "To pretend," and Florio, "Simulatore."

an extraordinary happy wit and tongue" he says, reframing a vocal "authority" he earlier

described as "masculine or … hermaphroditical" as a valuable asset (3.6.42-3; 1.1.76-7). "[A]nd

she have wit, she shall be one of us!" responds Haughty, president of the college, before seeking

validation from the other Collegiates: "Shall she not, Centaure? We'll make her a collegiate"

(49-51). Centaure offers her concurrence ("Yes, faith, madam" [52]), but challenges Truewit's

influence by suggesting that the Collegiate Mavis should first verify Epicoene's wit. "Believe it,

madam, and Mistress Mavis," Truewit interjects, "[Lady Epicoene] will sustain her part" (53-4).

But the Collegiates, ever resistant to male control, reject Truewit's assurance: "I'll tell you that

when I have talked with her and tried her," Mavis declares (55).[42] Mavis performs her social

authority by taking it upon herself to "[try]" Epicoene's alleged wit, rather than allow herself to

be influenced by Truewit's recommendation. However, her disavowal of others' influence

extends only to those outside the college, or perhaps just to men; when Haughty advises Mavis to

"[u]se [Lady Epicoene] very civilly" in her test of wit, Mavis heeds her word: "So I will,

madam" (57). The Collegiates present a unified front; their performance of collective authority

enables each lady to advise, critique, and make claims with a "masculine … authority" derived

from the assurance that she will have the support of the whole college. When Epicoene passes

her test of wit, Haughty inducts her into the college by masculinizing her name and insisting on

consensus: "I'll call you Morose still now, as I call Centaure and Mavis: we four will be all one"

(13-4).[43] By referring to Epicoene by her new surname, Haughty invites her to partake in the

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[42] Though the Collegiates heed gossip as a source of valuable social information, Truewit's discourse shifts from disinterested information-sharing ("she is a woman of an excellent assurance") to personal avowal ("Believe it, she will sustain her part"), revealing his desire for the Collegiates to find Lady Epicoene as he describes her. The presence of Truewit's desire, or some other motive, seems to alert the Collegiates to the possibility of influence and manipulation, which they promptly reject.

[43] I refer to Lady Epicoene as "Epicoene" for the duration of this chapter to avoid confusion with the other character named "Morose" and to distinguish her urban-epicene performance from her earlier personation of elite femininity ("Lady Epicoene").

customs that order the Collegiates' inner circle, such as the central tenet that those members ("we four") will operate as a unified body ("all one").

In their attempts to claim higher status than they possess, the Collegiates display their self-governing authority – a privilege typically reserved for elite men – by making a show of their public exclusion of aspirants to the college who might impede the ladies' social aspirations. By vetting their membership and publicizing whom they accept and whom they keep out, the Collegiates display their exclusive, if not fully elite, status and ensure that their pompous, superior social orientation will be bolstered by each new addition. For example, when the Collegiates and their acolytes first enter Epicoene's home after her marriage to Morose, they display their self-governing power by proceeding in order of rank: Haughty and Epicoene enter first, as the College's president and honored guest, followed by Centaure. A stage direction divulges that Mistress Otter "*Tr[ies] to take precedence*" by entering the house before Mavis (stage direction). Desperate to be a Collegiate, Mistress Otter frequently entertains the ladies in her home, yet they do not extend an offer of membership to her. She fails to notice this: "'Tis my place," she insists (3.7.31). "You shall pardon me, Mistress Otter," Mavis commands, using a formal address rather than the surname that the Collegiates use for their inner circle, thus reminding Mistress Otter that it is not her "place" (32). "Why, I am a collegiate," Mistress Otter protests (33). "But not in ordinary," Mavis corrects – that is, not officially (34).[44] Mavis implies that there are tiers of membership: Mistress Otter is at the bottom as an unofficial or part-time member. Mistress Otter cannot be an "ordinary" member of the college, for although she has established dominion over her husband – a form of social control the Collegiates deem essential for membership (4.3.6-13) – she does not display the courtly wit, education, nor superior manner

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[44] The *OED* offers "in an official capacity" as a definition for the phrase "in ordinary" ("ordinary, n. P2" *OED Online*). An editor's gloss adds, "full-time, belonging to the regular staff" (2.3, n89).

that these ladies value. Nor does she perform the consensus that empowers the Collegiates'

social authority: "But I am," Mistress Otter insists, continuing to argue (3.3.35). "We'll dispute

that within," Mavis pronounces, suggesting that if they pursue the dispute, it will be on her terms

of location, timing, and privacy. By excluding Mistress Otter from membership in a way that

publicly showcases their power of self-governance, the Collegiates claim a status-granting social

authority that women are typically prohibited from wielding, which empowers them to

categorize others (Mistress Otter is not an "ordinary" member of the College), to shore up their

sense of their own wit and exclusive status ("we four will be all one"), and to benefit from social

privileges (autonomy, confidence, the power to exclude and mistreat others without

consequence) that are typically reserved for men.

The Collegiates' hold their exclusivity, authority, and knowledge as signs of elevated

status; while it is true that these qualities represent forms of social difference and power that

women such as Mistress Otter do not possess, the Collegiates' conspicuous display of these

status symbols and their efforts to procure them nevertheless exemplify an urban-epicene status

performance. The Collegiates use their collective authority to showcase their social knowledge,

using an academic manner to minister personal advice to their milieu. Although their name

suggests scholarly aspirations, the Collegiates' situation in an urban context exposes them to

subjects of a social rather than an academic nature, and they display knowledge of local events,

gossip, and other social phenomena *as if* it were scholarly expertise, with an inflated sense of

their superior learning.[45] The Collegiates believe that they occupy a privileged space within the

urban set, possessing knowledge and authority that their peers lack. But the play pokes fun at this

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[45] I want to clarify that the Collegiates' knowledge of local events, gossip, and other social phenomena constitutes a
form of expertise; however, the play does not hold this expertise to be as legitimate as academic learning, and mocks
the Collegiates' experiential, social knowledge as a lesser form of mastery, in part by suggesting that they cannot
discern a difference between "philosophical" and medical learning.

belief, suggesting that the Collegiates may also lack the expertise they pretend to possess. If these ladies read or discuss scholarly texts, it happens offstage; the studies that the play presents include their neighbors' health, relationships, and perceived failures of propriety. When the Collegiates refer to academic and literary texts, they do so for the purpose of displaying their familiarity with those titles and authors rather than to discuss their contents. For instance, when Morose grows frantic after his marriage to Epicoene, Epicoene asks the Collegiates for treatment advice and the ladies instruct her, "you must talk divinity to him altogether, or moral philosophy (4.4.53, 74-5). "Ay, and there's an excellent book of moral philosophy, madam," interjects La Foole, "of Reynard the Fox and all the beasts, called *Doni's Philosophy*" (76-8). The fable of "Reynard the Fox" does not, in fact, appear in *The Moral Philosophy of Doni* (1570), suggesting that La Foole is less familiar with the contents of these texts than he is with their titles (editor's gloss, 4.4n78).[46] Like La Foole, the Collegiates brandish titles (and concurrence) as false signs of their learning: "There is indeed, Sir Amorous La Foole," Centaure agrees, authorizing his comment. Haughty adds that she once knew two "mad" people who were "cured" by reading "*The Sick Man's Salve*" and "Greene's *Groat's-worth of Wit*" (93, 97-9). "Yes forsooth," attests Mistress Trusty, a "pretender" to the college, "and every night they read themselves asleep on those books" (114-15). Wendy Wall has demonstrated that early modern English women often served as domestic medical authorities, authorized by dint of their specialized, household knowledge to tend to the bodies of family and servants within their domestic purview, and on

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[46] Jack Daw, the play's other "Bravery," is a self-styled poet who is known among *Epicoene*'s cast of characters for name-dropping authors and titles he has never read, or from which he has failed to derive any useful meaning. In a conversation with the gallants Clerimont and Dauphine, Daw seeks to elevate his own poetic standing by denigrating the works of well-known writers. However, rather than meaningfully engaging those works, Daw merely lists the names of 30 Classical philosophers (counting Seneca twice) and one contemporary writer, describing them as "Grave asses! Mere essayists! A few loose sentences, and that's all [...] Not worthy to be named for authors" (2.3.42-82; 46-7, 58). The gallants mock Daw for the vacuity of his learning: "What a sackful of their names he has got!" Clerimont exclaims, "And how he pours them out!" Dauphine rejoins, comparing Daw's literary criticism to the act of pouring out a sack of wine (67, 68).

special occasions, to the bodies of people beyond their domestic scope.[47] Once again eliding the boundaries between private and public spaces, the Collegiates use their pseudo-medical advice to extend both the authority that the ladies might wield in a domestic space, as well as the intimacy of that space, into the public purview through their attention to Morose's body. However, in their efforts to be seen as knowledgeable without actually possessing much topical knowledge, the Collegiates do not prescribe medical tinctures or "receipts" [recipes], as they do elsewhere (4.3.52)[48]; rather, they prescribe academic texts that were, via the early modern English education system, typically reserved for men. As the ladies explain their literary recommendations, they implicitly suggest that their texts will be effective not, as they claim, for their moral or other didactic value ("you must talk divinity to him … or moral philosophy" [74-5]), but rather for the sleep that must come to the reader of such presumably boring texts. Like Captain Otter's velvet cap, which symbolizes elite status but fails to mask his crassness, the Collegiates' literary prescriptions are empty signs of learning, titles that do not materially change the health of the hearer, but rather reveal the false pretension motivating the Collegiates' status-seeking.

The Collegiates aspire to be seen as experts in the news and norms of their urban milieu, and they display their acquired knowledge by doling out criticism and advice in ways that undermine and appropriate masculine authority. Not only do these ladies instruct their neighbors on the proper way to furnish their homes, minister health tonics, and give entertainments (4.4.154-5, 74-115, 3.6.70-86); they also advise other women on how to keep lovers, manage their husbands, and prevent pregnancy (4.3.22-46, 51-56). After Epicoene's marriage to Morose,

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[47] See Wendy Wall, "Tending to Bodies and Boys: Queer Physic in *Knight of the Burning Pestle*."

[48] The medical recipe that Epicoene requests from the Collegiates in 4.3 includes "those excellent receipts … to keep yourselves from bearing of children," which might refer either to pregnancy prevention (birth control) or abortion support, or possibly both (4.3.52-3).

the Collegiates advise her to establish her domestic command so that she may "have him," ostensibly in her control, "ever after" (4.3.17-8). "Let him allow you your coach and four horses," says Centaure, listing out the personnel that would attend a lady of rank: "your woman, your chambermaid, your page, your gentleman-usher, your French cook, and four grooms" (19-21). "And go with us to Bedlam, to the china-houses, and to the Exchange," chimes Haughty, listing urban locales where people would go for entertainment,[49] shopping, paid sex,[50] and self-display, and where the Collegiates apprehend their male "servants," or lovers (22-23). "It will open the gate to your fame," Mavis explains, suggesting that these activities, when engaged in the company of the other Collegiates, will help secure Epicoene's renown as a freethinking, cosmopolitan lady – or, perhaps, her sexual infamy.[51]

By giving advice, the Collegiates do more than share helpful information; they also demonstrate an eagerness to appropriate "masculine … authority," making a claim for their social mastery by demonstrating their possession of tasteful knowledge that others lack, as well as their power to change others' circumstances through that knowledge.[52] In light of Mavis's remark about her "fame," Epicoene clarifies, "But ladies, do you count it lawful to have such plurality of servants, and do 'em all graces?" (28-9). "Why not?" Haughty explains: "Why should women deny their favours to men? Are they the poorer, or the worse?" (30-1). Whereas

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[49] In addition its function as a carceral-like institution that separated people who may have benefitted from more mental health support than they had access to from the rest of society, Bedlam also served as a source of entertainment for Londoners: "Viewing the inmates of Bedlam was a popular amusement; a small fee was charged" (editor's gloss, 2.2n33).

[50] London's shopping centers – the Royal, New, and Middle Exchanges chief among them – were "destination locations" where Londoners could go to see and purchase new wares and imports, to show off their own fashions, and to seek paid sex (Baer, "Early Retailing," 32). Lady Haughty's reference to the Exchange invokes all of these activities. See Baer, "Early Retailing: London's Shopping Exchanges, 1550–1700."

[51] Mavis's imagery of the opening gate, in conjunction with Haughty's reference to the London Exchange – known, among other things, for its function in the sex trade – invokes "fame"'s alternative meaning of "infamy."

[52] For an examination of advice-giving as a gendered activity that is closely associated with the category of woman, see Susan Phillips, *Transforming Talk: The Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England.*

the answer to Haughty's question is often "yes" – in a patriarchal society, married women accused of having sex with multiple partners often do end up the poorer, and the worse, especially if their marriages and other social ties are dissolved in the aftermath – Haughty's commitment to the Collegiates' society of women is founded on a belief in the possibility of creating their own social rules, or rather by usurping the gendered social rules pertaining to extramarital sex from which men benefit. She exhibits an orientation of self-righteous assurance that mirrors the unabashed "do[ing]" of sexual "favours" that she promotes, and implies that she, for one, is not "the poorer, or the worse." Centaure backs Haughty's claim: "They are empty losses women fear in this kind," she attests (36).

In an effort to claim higher status than they possess, urban-epicene characters draw attention to those status symbols and their efforts to procure them: they display expensive goods and affected courtesies; publicly negotiate their power struggles; express untempered wonder and other emotional effusions when they hear a juicy piece of news; discuss the services they employ to maintain the appearance of elevated status of their homes and spouses; and flirt openly and assert themselves in conversations in which they have no part. The belief that such status-seeking behavior will secure elite status demonstrates a lack of metacritical awareness about how the context of display – the location and time of day, the affect and tone of the exhibitionist, and the relative social status of those who witness the show – informs the social significance of the displayed goods and behaviors, as well as how one's manner of display – one's critical orientation toward those goods and behaviors – marks one out as a pretender in the eyes of others. By highlighting the labor involved in their procurement and display of status symbols, the play's urban-epicene characters undermine any sense of naturalized status they might be attempting to cultivate: La Foole's conspicuous civilities illuminate his incivility; Mistress

Otter's attempts to costume her husband in fine clothes accentuate her boorishness; and the Collegiates' efforts to display intellectual prowess rather reveals their lack of learning. The urban-epicene characters' ignorance of the conspicuousness of their own social striving is essential to the mode of *Epicoene*'s satire. Such discrepancies in social knowledge stratify a social body by creating a social hierarchy with those "in the know" at the top, in a position to correct, mock, or otherwise laugh at those with less awareness at the bottom. The Collegiates believe themselves to occupy this privileged position. But so too do the Wits.

3.2.3 Urbane Masculinity

The comedic element in dramatic satire arises out of perceived differences in social knowledge – that is, understanding of the social norms and forms of propriety that shape the social world one inhabits, or, in the case of *Epicoene*, the social world one hopes to inhabit. Satirical plays like *Epicoene* tend to flatter and celebrate characters who demonstrate a critical awareness of their own position within a staged social milieu, and mock those whose behavior or self-conception does not coincide with their assigned station. For example, in their performances of social aspiration, urban-epicene figures who incorrectly believe themselves to be "in the know," who overestimate their knowledge of sexual, romantic, domestic, public, and other social norms, are often framed as the butt of the play's jokes and positioned as the object of its satire. Urbane Wits or "gallants" like Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine, on the other hand, often demonstrate a critical attention to their own relative social status, including how others might be perceiving their performance of that status, as well as a sensitivity to the decorous or indecorous ways in which their peers seek to climb the social ladder. Despite the fact that the Wits, too, attempt to elevate their social standing by mimicking an elite ideal, their critical attention to norms of propriety and social performance of which their neighbors are ignorant enables them

not only to appear better informed than their peers and more confident in their knowledge (i.e. more knowing), but also to make fun of their peers' ignorance, thereby producing a social hierarchy where the knowing characters sit at the top. From that privileged social position, urbane Wits often make jokes and satirical critiques at the expense of their urban-epicene peers.

I use the term "urbane masculinity" to describe the witty, critical social persona adopted by *Epicoene*'s Wits. In their performance of status, the play's Wits attempt to claim a position of social mastery over the urban scene that *Epicoene* and the broader theatrical tradition codes as masculine because its aim is domination. This style of masculinity is not only a particularly urban phenomenon; it is also "urbane" because it seeks to project a sense of cultivated refinement. Urbanity is not an official rank, nor is it an economic class nor a defined political group. Urbanity is, rather, a performance of sophistication that distinguishes one from the tastes, manners, and activities of others in one's urban milieu. The forms of sophistication that make one urbane include the projection of superior knowledge (to appear better-informed than one's peers), emotional composure (to appear affectively detached from the influence of others or events),[53] and social control (to appear as if one commands one's relationships and situation, rather than the other way around). Urbane forms of sophistication might map onto elite or noble ranks, but they do not make one elite or noble. Unlike elite folks who maintain elevated rank even when they abandon genteel manners, when one stops performing urbanity, one is revealed to be unsophisticated. To maintain the appearance of sophistication, one must also maintain an

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[53] As argued above, emotional composure, disinterestedness, and neutrality are also qualities of elite femininity. Because elite feminine figures lack the social power that urbane-masculine characters wield within their respective circles, emotional neutrality serves a different function for each type of figure. As Morose's interview of Lady Epicoene reveals, emotional neutrality enhances the perceived passivity of women who perform elite femininity, thereby enabling elite (or elite-striving) men to use elite feminine figures to perpetuate their own wealth. In an urban context, on the other hand, where social status is correlated less with land and titles and more with spending power and social know-how, urbane-masculine figures have more agency than elite feminine figures, and performances of emotional neutrality enable urbane-masculine characters to maintain their appearance of sophistication by obscuring their desire for elevated status, even as they seek it.

awareness that one's projected status hinges on one's ability to perform the conventions of that status; there is always the danger of being considered *not urbane* if one allows one's performance to slip.[54] The possibility of being discovered as a status-seeking imposter enjoins urbane-masculine figures to project orientations of certainty or conviction, even when they do not possess comprehensive knowledge, and to be alert for any social phenomena that might threaten their ability to project an urbane persona. These phenomena include moments of surprise that might, by provoking urban-epicene wonder instead of urbane-masculine certainty, puncture the illusion of superior knowledge and social control. Consequently, an orientation of knowledgeable surety and carelessness that this chapter refers to as *knowingness* emerges as a primary mode through which urbane-masculine figures interact with their world. A character might express knowingness through disdain, certainty, or other cultivated attitude in order to signal (falsely) that they are immune from the effects of the city's mutability, that they have mastered the urban sphere, and that they are superior to the scenes at hand.

The sense of cultivated, knowing refinement that urbane-masculine figures attempt to project may sound similar to the urban-epicene status-seeking demonstrated by the Collegiates, who display rhetorical, material, and attitudinal signs of status to claim a social authority that Truewit labels "masculine." However, while the Collegiates and other urban-epicene figures

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[54] Theodore Leinwand's "The Gentleman Gallant" describes the interplay of confidence and self-consciousness involved in a gallant's performance of urbanity: "[In] city comedy … the gentleman-gallant … is figured as a man with an essential social identity, a core self that underlies a set of theatrical personae. … [T]he gentleman-gallant is a confident actor, a master of his craft who feels sure that he can turn aside from his playacting when it has served its purpose" (90). While the gallant might be confident in his ability to perform his urbane personae, his confidence emerges from a place of insecurity: as Leinwand suggests, the gentleman-gallant is aware that he is acting. He knows that his mode of social engagement is a form of dissembling and thus that his status is tenuous, and he fears that his underlying "core self" will be found out if he does not give a convincing performance. Later in this chapter, we will encounter examples of gentleman-gallants who perform their roles so convincingly that they buy into their own performances of confident urbanity, forgetting that they are playacting—and thus, perhaps, disqualifying them as gentleman-gallants. As Leinwand foreshadows, "If the gentleman-gallant turns out to be the butt of city comedy, it is because he is a considerably less accomplished actor than he believes himself to be" (91). Leinwand, "The Gentleman-Gallant."

seek to promulgate their aspiring, elite status by highlighting the labor involved in their

procurement and conspicuous display of status symbols, characters who perform urbane

masculinity seek to naturalize their projected social superiority by occluding that effort. They do

so by adopting the *attitudes* that they attribute to elite people, including confidence or conviction,

carelessness, disdain, and contempt, and use urban resources in the manner in which an elite

person might do so – that is, in the same fashion, and with the same critical orientations. In their

performances of knowing, social mastery, *Epicoene*'s Wits attempt to obscure their relationship

to the information they possess by performing a pretense of studied carelessness and an

orientation of emotional detachment from the social and economic realities that shape their urban

activity, speech, and discernment.[55] Thus, the labor involved in the performance of urbanity is

the effort of emotional regulation: by suppressing the wonder, delight, or confusion they might

feel toward signs of urban mutability and displaying an urbane attitude of careless certainty

instead, the Wits are able to display a degree of self-command that mimics the elite ideal by

suggesting that they are unaffected by, or otherwise in control of, their urban surroundings.

 This double move – displaying one's knowledge while concealing one's emotional

investment in that knowledge – depends on the often-satirical wit with which city comedy

frequently vests young gallants. Wit is a dynamic form of cultural knowledge that manifests as

rhetorical acuity (facility with wordplay and Latin phrases, for instance) and arch or otherwise

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[55] The term early modern writers used for the forms of controlled carelessness demonstrated by *Epicoene*'s Wits is "sprezzatura," a word Castiglione introduced in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) to describe the conscious self-fashioning of courtiers. For more on sprezzatura and its relationship to power, self-performance, and representational anxiety that generates suspicion, see Harry Berger, *The Absence of Grace: Sprezzatura and Suspicion in Two Renaissance Courtesy Books*. Leinwand also examines the affective implications of sprezzatura in his chapter, "The Gentleman-Gallant," in which he argues that controlled carelessness is a stylized performance of self-confidence that is available only to higher-ranking folk: "[self-confidence] is the essence of the gallant's style [...]. Indeed, this confidence was largely a matter of style, not substance, and such style was something few citizens could even hope to master. Self-confidence is that aspect of the courtier's *sprezzatura* available to the gallant and the gentleman. It means that the gallant […] is rarely on the defensive. He may assume a base of social legitimacy unavailable to the citizen" (89). See Leinwand.

ironic social commentary, conveyed by means of affective detachment; wit is the tonal and intellectual mode through which urbane gallants project a sense of distance from the mundane concerns of their urban milieu.[56] By using wit to imply that he is insulated from the urban scene – its noise and news, its showy fashions, its markets for fine goods and sex – a gallant claims the credibility to critique the city's impropriety and absolve himself of its vices. This appearance of credibility is based on the urbane fantasy that the gallant's metacritical critiques of his social world is somehow detached from his participation in that world, and is therefore unmotivated or "objective." When wit is deployed in this way – that is, to enhance the sense of separation between a gallant's participation in his social world and his critiques of the same – a gallant may forward his subjective interpretations of signs of urban mutability, such as cosmetic artistry and women's intellectual pretensions, as if they are unmotivated by his own experiences of those things.

Epicoene's gallants cultivate orientations of affective detachment from the mundane concerns that occupy their peers, which sanction their witty status and enable them to ridicule or laugh at their satirical objects from a point of critical or ironic remove. The Wits often articulate these critical orientations through equivocal language such as puns and wordplay that hide critiques within the possibility of other meanings. For instance, in 2.3 the Bravery Daw attempts to woo Lady Epicoene by reciting a list of authors whom he claims to admire. When he mis-identifies them all, the Wits Clerimont and Dauphine use clever puns to distinguish their

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[56] As Zucker explains, "gallants gain control over their social worlds through a double move in which they master London's filth and fashion while appearing to be somehow insulated from the jostling, anxious ambitions of the men and women who surround them. As a result of this emphasis on witty detachment, an abstract placelessness or vague and immaterial sociability can seem to define the figure of the gallant" (56). For an analysis of urbane detachment as a humanistic principle in the play – that is, as *performative* distance from "the follies of society" that prevents one from "becoming distanced from society itself" – see David Kay, "Jonson's Urbane Gallants: Humanistic Contexts for *Epicoene*."

knowing perspective on the scene's social dynamics from Daw's more limited understanding.

After Daw proclaims the names of his favorite authors, which are actually the titles of various

books, including "the King of Spain's Bible" and "*Syntagma*" (the Greek word for "corpus,"

whom Daw misidentifies as "a civil lawyer"), Dauphine remarks to Lady Epicoene, "'Fore God,

you have a simple learned servant, lady, in titles" (73-4, 78, 84-5). The word "servant" does

double work here: while it explicitly acknowledges Daw's social function in this scene as Lady

Epicoene's attendant, the term also underscores Daw's inferiority to her, and his possible

feminization, by implying that he also serves a subordinate sexual function in a version of the

"woman-on-top" trope that further undermines Daw's masculine authority.[57] Similarly, "simple"

conveys another double entendre: while Dauphine's use of the term may appear to pay Daw a

compliment by referring to his learning as "whole, pure, sincere, uncorrupted," it can also

suggest that Daw speaks "without craft or subtlety" and says "nothing wise" (Baret).[58] Picking

up on Dauphine's second meaning, Clerimont adds, "I wonder that he is not called to the helm

and made a councillor!" (86-7). While this line may also function as a critique of the ineptitude

of privy councilors, its immediate purpose is to mock Daw's inflated sense of his own scholarly

merit by suggesting – ironically – that rather than serve as Lady Epicoene's "servant," he could

advise or become one of the most powerful men in the country. In contrast to what he and

Dauphine have framed as Daw's effeminate, craft-less verse, Clerimont here associates literary

or other scholarly merit with the patriarchal authority wielded by privy councilors. In mocking

Daw's display of literary knowledge through this comparison, Clerimont implicitly suggests that

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[57] For more on the "woman-on-top" trope in early modern literature and culture, see Natalie Davis, "Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe."

[58] John Baret, "simple," in *An Alveary or Triple Dictionary, in English, Latin, and French* (1574), from *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). http://leme.library.utoronto.ca. The editor's note for Dauphine's use of the term "simple" defines "simple" as "purely, absolutely (with an ironic pun)" (2.3n88).

Daw is insufficiently learned or authoritative – that is, insufficiently masculine – to hold such a position of influence. Additionally, in critiquing Daw in a way that demonstrates his own rhetorical cleverness, Clerimont implicitly aligns himself and Dauphine with the learned councilors. "He is one extraordinary," Dauphine mock-agrees, playing on the term's equivocality ("exceptional," with neither positive nor negative valence)[59] to critique Daw as exceptionally foolish while implying that he is exceptionally learned (88). "Nay, but in ordinary!" rejoins Clerimont, building on Dauphine's line to suggest that Daw belongs among those councilors: "To say truth, the state wants such" (89). By punning on the term "want," Clerimont appears to say that the country would benefit from an advisor like Daw, while also implying that the state lacks, or intentionally excludes, such "extraordinary," self-proclaimed scholars from governing roles. Through their wordplay, the Wits create an added level of awareness that only they and the viewing audience can access, a virtual space where they are able to acknowledge Daw's folly and share in its common derision.

By using wordplay to mock Daw's double social failure – his inability to live up to the literary ideal of the poet-scholar and his inability to recognize that fact – Dauphine and Clerimont emphasize Daw's social ignorance in a way that simultaneously showcases their own understanding of those social dynamics, as well as their knowledge of the very titles and authors that Daw fails to mobilize for his own social advancement. By framing Daw's failures in terms of his sexualized, subordinate social position to Lady Epicoene, Clerimont and Dauphine elevate themselves above him by demonstrating a kind of expertise that they have defined (in contrast) as savvy, masculine, and even magisterial.[60] Wordplay affords Clerimont and Dauphine access to

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[59] "Extraordinary, adj., adv., & n.," *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[60] For an analysis of the gendered dynamics of sexual mastery in *Epicoene*, see Ari Friedlander, "Gender, Mastery, and Sexual Cozening in the Rogue *Querelle des Femmes* and Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*."

a shared understanding of the scene's social dynamics, producing the privileged status that elevates them above Daw in a hierarchy based on knowingness. This is the knowledge-based status that verbal acumen can afford, which is, ironically, the status that Daw seeks to claim by sharing the names of his favorite writers. However, because he lacks the critical awareness to recognize his own "extraordinary" "simpl[icity]," Daw is excluded from full participation in that rhetorically-constructed space. Through their ironized punning and mock-commendations, Clerimont and Dauphine not only distinguish their sophisticated understanding of the scene's knowledge relations from Daw's ignorant misuse of names and titles; they also do so without alerting Daw to his own folly by disguising their derisive orientation toward him as one of admiration, thereby maintaining the dynamic that enables them to mock him without his knowledge.

Social knowledge and its associated manner – the strategic performance of knowingness – are central to performances of urbane masculinity, and function as a kind of social currency: when a Wit possesses information that others lack, he uses it to his advantage, sometimes to manipulate others, but often simply to underscore his self-confidence and social superiority. In the first scene of the play, for instance, Truewit realizes that Clerimont is ignorant of the Collegiates' arrival in London, and he uses the information to position himself as a social superior to his friend. "When were you at the college?" he asks, with no segue from their previous topic (1.1.66). When Clerimont takes the bait and wonders, "What college?" Truewit responds, "As if you knew not!" (67-8). Whether an expression of genuine disbelief in Clerimont's ignorance or an attempt to prolong Truewit's moment of epistemic superiority, this line distinguishes Truewit – for Clerimont and for the viewing audience – as a person with access to exclusive social information. "No, faith, I came but from court yesterday," Clerimont explains,

justifying his ignorance by highlighting the elite space from which he has just returned (69).

Rather than providing the information that both Clerimont and the viewing audience lack, which

might put the Wits on equal footing, Truewit further protracts the moment: "Why, is it not

arrived there yet, the news?" he asks, articulating a question that Clerimont has already implicitly

answered in the negative (70). In addition to underscoring his better information, Truewit's

question also belittles the elite implication of Clerimont's comment by suggesting that the court

– a place where "the news" "is not [yet] arrived" – is a démodé alternative to the city, which is a

place where people and information come quickly into fashion, and where Truewit knows all.

The performance of knowingness, or the appearance of possessing a confident orientation

toward one's own knowledge, is central to *Epicoene*'s conception of urbane masculinity;

however, to avoid projecting the excitement, wonder, or other passion that the play associates

with urban-epicene social ambition, urbane Wits attempt to distance themselves emotionally

from the city knowledge that they describe and allude to. They often do so by adopting an

orientation of disinterest in or disdain for the information that they circulate. When Truewit

proceeds to share with Clerimont "the news" that "is not arrived" to court, for instance, he does

so in a ridiculing style that conveys a sense of his superiority to the information he describes: "A

new foundation, sir, here i' the town, of ladies that call themselves the Collegiates," he begins,

before interpreting the ladies' ambivalent status as "an order between courtiers and country

madams" (1.1.70-3). "[They] live from their husbands and give entertainment to all the Wits and

Braveries o' the time, as they call them" (73-5). Truewit suggests that the Collegiates entertain

"*all* the Wits and Braveries o' the time,"[61] but neglects to acknowledge whether he is one of that

number. Whether he was excluded from the Collegiates' invitations or is intentionally obscuring

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[61] Italics mine.

his familiarity with the "new foundation" and their "entertainment[s]," this line distances

Truewit from their order. From this detached position, he ridicules them: "[They] cry down or up

what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine or rather hermaphroditical

authority" (75-7). Here, Truewit engages precisely the behavior for which he criticizes the

Collegiates by "cry[ing] down … what [he] … dislike[s]" in the ladies' "brain or … fashion."

However, by critiquing the Collegiates' authority as "masculine or rather hermaphroditical," he

not only distances himself from the Collegiates' critical speech acts by articulating his scorn for

their "hermaphroditical" social manner, but also sanctions the "masculine" authority of his own

critiques.

    Despite their awareness of staged dynamics that their urban-epicene peers lack,

Epicoene's Wits cultivate their sense of urbane refinement in the same London setting that

shapes the tastes of those urban-epicene figures. To distinguish themselves from their peers and

disavow their participation in that setting, the Wits often adopt *dis*tasteful orientations toward

their implication in the urban scene, as if to suggest that they, like the elite feminine ideal, are

disinterested in or disapproving of the city's changing social norms. Consider again Truewit's

description of his visit to the "poor madam" who wore her wig askew. Despite Truewit's

presence in the lady's private room, he attempts to disavow his implication in the ill-mannered

scene by relying on a broader understanding of its impropriety to articulate a disinterested

orientation toward it – evident, for instance, in his claim that he did not lead the way into the

gentlewoman's room but rather passively "followed a rude fellow into [the lady's] chamber"

(1.1.124-5).[62] In addition, by calling his companion "rude," Truewit acknowledges the

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[62] Truewit's suggestion of disinterest or passivity in this scene illuminates what Erin Mackie identifies as a "convention of satiric discourse," in which the satirist is granted "a privileged distance above or outside the object of his critique," which "provides his immunity from the conditions he exposes and so validates his own authority"

impropriety of the setting while distancing himself from that indiscretion by accusing the *other* man of rudeness. He justifies his ridicule by suggesting that he was a passive observer of, rather than a participant in, the conversation between the "poor madam" and "rude fellow" (129-131). When Clerimont scolds Truewit for failing to notify the lady of her misplaced wig ("Thou shouldst ha' relieved her" [132]), Truewit attempts to further distance himself from the impropriety by disguising any emotional investment in the scene – surprise, horror, or titillation – that he may have conveyed in its retelling with the suggestion that he was, rather, neutral and unengaged: "No, faith, I let her alone, as we'll this argument, if you please, and pass to another" he says, before changing the topic (133-34). Truewit compares his distaste for the indecorous scene to his disinterest in his conversation with Clerimont, using that comparison to shut down further commentary on his behavior and implicitly insult his friend in the same breath. Truewit's performance of urbane masculinity is on full view in this scene, as he shares knowledge of the impropriety he witnessed while attempting to distance himself from it by claiming to have been a neutral, disinterested observer.

Despite the best efforts of *Epicoene*'s gallants to perform certainty toward their own knowledge by projecting indifferent or detached orientations toward the urban scene, there are moments when the city – usually through its urban-epicene figures – obtrudes on their composure and hinders their ability to perform either the knowingness or the posture of distance that bolster their urbane status. In an environment where people do not fit neatly into predefined categories of identity, but rather body forth as epicene and often unpredictable amalgams of

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(173). See Mackie, "The Culture Market, the Marriage Market, and the Exchange of Language: Swift and the Progress of Desire," in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*, eds. Brian A Connery and Kirk Combe (New York: St. Martin's, 1995): 173-192. Zucker notes that this convention merely *purports* to grant immunizing distance: "[G]allants present themselves as aloof observers and droll humorists. They insist, at times to a ridiculous extent, on a social disposition marked by externality and superiority" to the economic and social concerns of their urban scene, despite the literary evidence that "it is impossible to uncouple urbane Londoners from their urban matrix" (56-7). See Zucker.

multiple, overlapping categories, it can challenge even the Wits' ability to maintain a consistent performance of confident, knowing detachment. *Epicoene*'s second act demonstrates the potential consequences for an urbane-masculine figure who neglects to recollect that the privileged social status from which he benefits is a performance of knowingness that he must actively cultivate, rather than a stable or inherent rank. In 2.2 Truewit visits Morose's home and attempts to dissuade the gentleman from marrying, bearing an heir, and thereby disinheriting Dauphine. With the knowledge that Morose cannot stand the sound any noise beyond that of his own voice, Truewit bombards the gentleman with noisy, verbose accounts of the risks of marriage and the treachery of deceptive wives, driving Morose into an emotional frenzy and halting his assault only when Morose promises to "think of these things." Swayed, perhaps, by Morose's apparent distress and by his own experience of ironized, emotionally distant dominance over the other man, Truewit leaves Morose's home convinced that he has successfully dissuaded the gentleman from marrying and disinheriting Dauphine. Persuaded by his own experience of confident superiority, however, Truewit fails to maintain his active performance of urbane masculinity, and momentarily abandons the urbane orientations of carelessness and detachment that underpin his desired status.

Truewit's myopic confidence in his social mastery – specifically, his belief that he has convinced Morose to avoid marriage – leads him to rationalize or outright reject any information that contradicts his feeling of certainty, as we see when Truewit finds Dauphine and Clerimont to boast of his success in dissuading Morose from marrying. "Dauphine, fall down and worship me," Truewit crows, "I have forbid the banns, lad. I have been with thy virtuous uncle and have broke the match. … I have put him off o' that scent forever" (2.4.4-16). Truewit's boast registers not only his expectation for gratitude, but also a bid for his friends' acknowledgment of his

superiority ("fall down and worship me") for reestablishing Dauphine as Morose's heir. Failing

to receive either, he betrays only the slightest uncertainty: "Why do you not applaud and adore

me, sirs?" (17). Rather than celebrate the wit of Truewit's scheme, however, Dauphine accuses

him of witless interference: "[M]ischief!" Dauphine fumes, "If the most malicious enemy I have

had studied to inflict an injury upon me, it could not be a greater" (19; 24-5). Truewit betrays his

confusion – "Wherein, for God's sake?" – before correcting course, recommitting to his sense of

his own, righteous certainty, and assuming that the others have made a mistake: "Gentlemen,

come to yourselves again" (26-7). Truewit shifts blame from himself to his angry friends by

citing the urbane-masculine persona ("Gentlemen") from which they briefly departed in his call

to "come to yourselves again."[63] Taking Truewit's cue, Dauphine attempts to smooth over his

emotional response by asserting that Truewit's "mischief" was an expected outcome: "But I

presaged thus much afore to you," he says to Clerimont, referencing an earlier scene in which he

voiced chariness about Truewit's interference in others' affairs (28).[64] "Thus 'tis when a man

will be ignorantly officious, do services and not know his why," Clerimont attests, turning on

Truewit to characterize his interference as witless ignorance (43-4).

Dauphine then reveals the reason for his upset: without divulging Epicoene's gender

identity, he explains that he had secretly allied himself with Morose's intended bride and plotted

their marriage as part of a broader plan to retain his inheritance – a plan that Truewit now learns

he has ruined. Truewit also learns that in boasting of his success, he has betrayed his ignorance

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[63] While early satirical plots from this period tended to stage competitive moments between Wits and gulls (figures like Daw and La Foole, who are less successful at performing naturalized gallantry), George Rowe argues that later plays – starting with *Volpone* – increasingly featured moments like this one, where Wits compete between themselves for witty status. DiGangi quotes Rowe to explain that "the goal of comic intrigue becomes 'supremacy, the creation of a new hierarchical relationship out of an apparent democracy of equals, the elevation of one wit above the others'" ("Asses and Wits," 184; quoting Rowe, *Distinguishing Jonson*, 111-12). See DiGangi, "Asses and Wits"; George E. Rowe, *Distinguishing Jonson: Imitation, Rivalry, and the Direction of a Dramatic Career*.
[64] The scene is 1.3, and the pertinent exchange between Dauphine and Clerimont spans lines 1-9.

of Dauphine's plot to his friends; he revealed that his confidence in his superior knowledge was misplaced, and undermined the illusion of intellectual and emotional mastery that he sought to project.

Before Truewit is forced to admit his witlessness, however, a messenger enters the scene and reveals that Morose has decided to proceed with his wedding, providing Truewit with an opportunity to reestablish his social authority. Dauphine is the first to respond: "Excellent! Beyond expectation!" he cries, neglecting to hide his surprise at the news (2.4.63). Truewit pounces on Dauphine's momentary vulnerability to reestablish his own credibility in the scene: "Beyond your expectation?" he blusters, "By this light, I knew it would be thus" (64-5).[65] As he scrambles to muster a posture of informed carelessness, Truewit declares that he predicted Morose's decision. In light of his earlier claim that he "put [Morose] off o' [marriage] forever," this assertion is an extraordinary act of dissembling (15-6). Clerimont calls his bluff: "Wilt thou ascribe that to merit now, was mere fortune?" he scoffs (69). "Fortune had not a finger in't," Truewit retorts, doubling down on his claim to prescience: "I saw it must necessarily in nature fall out so: my genius is never false to me in these things. Show me how it could be otherwise" (70-3). Despite his demonstrated lack of knowledge, Truewit claims that his witless interference in Dauphine's affairs was more than witting: that Morose's decision to wed was an outcome so certain that there was no credible alternative. "Away, thou strange justifier of thyself," Clerimont scolds, "to be wiser than thou wert by the event" (77-8). Clerimont criticizes Truewit for

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[65] While early satirical plots from this period tended to stage competitive moments between Wits and gulls (figures who might attempt, but who are less successful at, performing naturalized gallantry), George Rowe argues that later plays – beginning with *Volpone* – increasingly featured moments like this one, where Wits compete between themselves for witty status. Mario DiGangi quotes Rowe to explain that "the goal of comic intrigue becomes 'supremacy, the creation of a new hierarchical relationship out of an apparent democracy of equals, the elevation of one wit above the others'" ("Asses and Wits," 184; quoting Rowe, *Distinguishing Jonson*, 111-12). See DiGangi, "Asses and Wits." George E. Rowe, *Distinguishing Jonson: Imitation, Rivalry, and the Direction of a Dramatic Career* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

claiming to possess certain knowledge ("wis[dom]" in Clerimont's terms; "genius" in Truewit's) of how an event would unfold before it was possible to know its outcome, and for attempting to use this "strange justifi[cation]" to recoup his position of urbane authority. But Truewit is quick to reclaim the confident appeal to social knowledge that undergirds witty status in this play: he avers that what the other two men experienced as a surprise was an outcome that he not only predicted but planned: "I foresaw it as well as the stars themselves," he boasts (79-80). Truewit reframes hindsight (knowledge of an event in the context of its outcome) as foresight (knowledge of the outcome before an event has occurred); in short, his prescience means he was always in command of the outcome. Whether he is pretending to have possessed knowledge of future events or actually suspected such an outcome,[66] at stake in Truewit's assertion is a claim to social mastery and, by extension, to the privileged sense of carelessness that such proficiency affords ("Show me how it could be otherwise" [73]).

Truewit attempts to recoup his position of self-assured, confident authority before Dauphine and Clerimont by claiming to possess information that he had no way of knowing. Needing always to justify his actions as informed and righteous, Truewit demonstrates in this scene how he brazenly bends reality to fit his needs. When he encounters information that threatens his sense of certainty or social control, Truewit either rejects the information outright ("Gentlemen, come to yourselves again"), or rationalizes it as foresight ("I foresaw it as well as the stars themselves"). Ironically, in his efforts to appear knowing, Truewit prioritizes his

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[66] In his article "Silence, Wit, and Wisdom in *The Silent Woman*," Philip Mirabelli provides an alternative reading of this scene and of Truewit's character more broadly, claiming Truewit is telling the truth in this moment: that he *did* foretell that Morose would proceed with his plan to marry. Mirabelli makes a claim for Truewit's "honesty" not through scene analyses but rather through a formal lens of "character consistency," exegetical naming conventions ("*True*-wit"), and theories of authorial intent that don't adequately support the article's claims (see Mirabelli, p. 313). Despite its dubious conclusions, "Silence, Wit, and Wisdom" raises interesting questions about how a change in what Truewit knows might alter not only his social standing, but also his role in the play's satire of urban status.

performance of certainty over the thing that would make him knowledgeable – that is, his acceptance of new or surprising information. Truewit's efforts to claim the knowing authority that he lacks are overt in this scene, aligning him with a central convention of the urban-epicene identity category: the overt display of status symbols (in this case, postures of conviction and claims to certain knowledge) and of the efforts that he undertakes to perform his desired status. Truewit's conspicuous display of urbane-masculine conventions reveals the value that such figures place on the articulation of conviction – specifically, of surety about how their social world operates – as a posture through which they project their knowingness. However, Truewit's performance also reveals that while conviction can produce the *appearance* of knowingness, it is a confident orientation toward one's own knowledge or beliefs that has more to do with the strength of one's feeling (confidence) than with the veracity of one's knowledge (belief). While displays of conviction can enable a Wit to suggest that he knows more than he does, Truewit's brazen claims to foresight reveal that such displays can also indicate that an urbane gallant feels more self-assured in his beliefs than he has reason to. Truewit's bravado and claimed foresight in 2.4 fail to convince Dauphine and Clerimont of his wit and demonstrate how the privileged authority that often attends urbane, masculine status derives from the witty person's feelings about their own beliefs rather than from the epistemological value of the beliefs themselves. As Truewit's conspicuous efforts to claim knowledge of and responsibility for Morose's marriage show, if a gallant attempts to display conviction without maintaining critical awareness of his actual knowledge status, he risks buying into the false sense of certainty that he projects, being played the fool, and thereby revealing the artificiality of his own status as a wit.

This scene represents a rare moment in *Epicoene* in which a gallant loses control of his stylized performance of wit and, in his momentary alignment with the urban-epicene identity

category, reveals the intellectual and affective conventions of the urbane-masculine status which he most urgently seeks to reclaim.[67] A similar disclosure of witty status-seeking occurs in the final scene, when Dauphine reveals Lady Epicoene's identity as a young boy, rather than a young woman.

3.3 *Epicoene*'s Satire of Gender-Status

In its fifth act, *Epicoene* begins to draw its satire of urban social ambition and gender-status to a close, reshuffling the social order it has established over the preceding four acts by shifting Truewit and Clerimont, two of its most socially powerful characters, from a privileged position of knowing, urbane-masculine authority to one of ignorant, urban-epicene wonder. This shift is enabled by a surprising incident that startles the Wits out of their customary, status-granting performances of knowing mastery. This moment of surprise reveals the performativity of Clerimont and Truewit's projections of urbane-masculine status, denaturalizing its conventions and revealing the Wits to be as ignorant and self-deluding as the urban-epicene figures they mocked throughout the preceding action.

In *Epicoene*, surprising social interactions – such as Truewit's unexpected encounter with his hostess's "reversed face" (1.1), Dauphine's sudden fury at Truewit's interference with Morose's marriage, and the messenger's news that Morose has chosen to proceed with his marital plans in spite of Truewit's interference – often reveal staged power dynamics by illuminating the status of characters' knowledge about their milieu and challenging witty characters' ability to maintain their status-granting orientations of nonchalance. In *Epicoene*, the

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[67] The other significant example of this loss of control is the play's final scene, in which Dauphine reveals to the audience and the entire cast of characters that Morose's bride, Lady Epicoene, is really a "gentleman's son" whom he has disguised and coached to personate a woman (5.4.189). While both Clerimont and Truewit are shown to have been ignorant of Dauphine's scheme, Truewit recovers his witty persona more quickly than he does in 2.1 and he distracts attention away from his own ignorance by chiding the other characters for theirs.

urbane-masculine figure's worst fate is to be surprised – that is, to experience the wonder or astonishment that the play associates with the urban-epicene identity. The experience of surprise reveals one's lack of foreknowledge, or one's miscalculated expectation; as an emotional response to an unexpected event, surprise also reveals one's emotional investment in the surprising event; and because surprise indicates that one lacked the knowledge to accurately anticipate the unexpected event, it reveals one's lack of control over the event and its outcome. Surprise, in other words, risks putting the gallant's urbane, masculine status into question by challenging the three central tenets of his witty persona: his performance of knowingness about his social world, his false pretensions of affective distance from that world, and his ability to control or manipulate the events and people who comprise that world.

Following the revelation that Epicoene is a "manifest woman" in 3.4, Morose spends the remainder of the play in a state of desperation as he seeks legal means to annul his marriage. In the play's final scenes, he begins to fear that he will never find a way out of his union with his talkative, status-seeking bride. When Morose has no other legal avenues left to try, Dauphine claims to know a way out of the marriage. Morose eagerly accepts his nephew's terms – that Morose will reinstate Dauphine as his heir – in exchange for an exit strategy. And thus, the moment of Epicoene's anagnorisis arrives: Dauphine steps forward, removes Epicoene's wig, and reveals that rather than a "manifest woman," she is "a gentleman's son" who had been personating a woman for the duration of the play. This revelation shocks more than just Morose; it dumbfounds the entire group of characters, including the Collegiates, the Otters, the Braveries, and, most significantly, the other Wits.[68] While Truewit and Clerimont were previously able to

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[68] Scholarship on the play tends to accept that this surprise is doubled for the theater audience who, upon learning that Epicoene is actually a "gentleman's son," is also reminded that the gentleman's son is actually a boy actor (see, for instance, Jackson). In "*Epicoene* Minus Its Secret: Surprise as Expectation," Charles Carpenter asks what it

deflect or justify other instances of surprise in the play by scoffing or pretending to have "presaged as much," in the final scene they are unable to escape the fact that they have been duped by Dauphine and Epicoene. While Morose is the explicit target of the final scene's mockery – it is he and his money that Dauphine exploits – the scene's satire is directed at all characters who presumed to know more about their social world, and their place within it, than they really did; because Clerimont and Truewit's gender-status is premised on their knowingness, when they are shown to be as socially ambitious and self-deluding as the urban-epicene characters they mocked throughout the preceding five acts, they transition from signaling an urbane-masculine position to an urban-epicene one. In short, they become the primary objects of the play's satire.

The presumption that one knows more than one does, or that one has more social clout or control than one possesses, is a convention of the urban-epicene identity, as I have shown; it is hardly surprising, therefore, that Jonson directs his play's satire towards these presumptuous characters. It is just as crucial, however, and perhaps more surprising to critics who assume that Jonson's Wits deserve unqualified approbation for their witty repartee, that the play's final reveal underscores that urbane-masculine figures enact this quality of misprision as well. Up until the moment that Epicoene's wig leaves her head, Truewit and Clerimont believe themselves to possess status-granting knowledge, social awareness, rhetorical control, and affective distance from their social sphere that insulates them from the emotional impact of an unexpected event. But Epicoene's anagnorisis clearly surprises these Wits. Their surprise challenges the premise of

would mean for the audience's interpretation of the play if the final surprise were not a surprise at all but rather an expected outcome – something that, he posits, may have been true for contemporary viewers who saw the production more than once. Although Carpenter justifies his analysis of audience reception by conjecturing about what might amuse a seventeenth-century viewer without providing much evidence, the article raises interesting questions about how an audience with varied knowledge and generic expectations might derive different meanings from the play. Carpenter, "*Epicoene* Minus Its Secret: Surprise as Expectation."

their urbane-masculine performance by suggesting that the conventions of that persona –

ridicule, confidence, rhetorical acuity, affective detachment, and other mechanisms that bolster

their pretense of all-knowing superiority – are rather ineffective and self-deceiving signs of

status. Although Truewit and Clerimont have performed these conventions convincingly in order

to appear socially sophisticated in all the ways their urban peers do not, the final scene suggests

that ultimately, the manner in which the Wits engage these signs of urbanity dissipates, rendering

those status markers as ineffectual at conferring high status as Captain Otter's velvet cap. The

play's final moment of surprise demonstrates not only that Truewit and Clerimont possess the

same degree of knowledge about the makeup of their social milieu as their urban peers – that is,

not very much – but in doing so, that their performances of knowing mastery were rather empty.

By making a mockery not only of Morose, the Otters, the Braveries, and the Collegiates, but also

of the urbane-masculine characters who ridicule their peers' inflated sense of their own

knowledge and power, only to find themselves the objects of that same ridicule, *Epicoene*'s final

scene ironically underscores Truewit's earlier, wry assertion: "he that thinks himself the master-

wit is the master-fool" (3.6.46-7).

3.3.1 Crossing Categories

Lady Epicoene's unmasking occurs at the house that she has shared with Morose for the

contentious half-day they have been married. Truewit and Clerimont gather the Otters, the

Collegiates, and the Braveries at Morose's home, where they celebrate the nuptials with noisy

carousing. Morose, who has spent the day attempting to annul his marriage, becomes

increasingly overwhelmed by the revelers and is driven into a desperate frenzy. It is at this point

that Dauphine makes his move, taking advantage of Morose's agitated state to execute his re-

inheritance plan. After securing Morose's signature on a legal document that reinstates him as

heir, Dauphine reveals the crucial knowledge that he withheld from the other characters, which helped him manipulate them and claim his current power. "Then here is your release, sir," he addresses Morose, removing Epicoene's wig: "you have married a boy: a gentleman's son that I have brought up this half year at my great charges, and for this composition which I have now made with you," he reveals (188-191). The characters are struck dumb; neither Morose, the Collegiates, the Otters, the Braveries, nor the Wits, all of whom are known in one way or another for their capacity for speech, says a word.

This surprises functions for the assembled characters as a moment of metacritical recognition: the revelation exposes the assembled characters to their own ignorance about the composition of their social world, enabling their recognition of the fact that someone whom they considered to be a friend, a Collegiate, and a wife, was actually a stranger, a boy who successfully employed artifice to gull them all. While there is no expectation for the urban-epicene characters to demonstrate comprehensive or certain knowledge about their social world, there is such an expectation for the urbane-masculine characters, whose projections of knowingness and social mastery are undermined and implicitly satirized through Dauphine's surprise reveal. Although one is material and the other behavioral, both Epicoene's wig and the Wits' knowingness are held aloft here as conventions of performed, rather than inherent, gender-status categories. Dauphine's unmasking of Epicoene mirrors the play's unmasking of Truewit and Clerimont; by removing Epicoene's wig, Dauphine simultaneously exposes Truewit and Clerimont as socially ambitious pretenders, reframing their performances of knowingness as pretensions to greater knowledge and power than they possessed.[69]

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[69] When one considers the knowledge relations involved in this mirroring, the reflection becomes legible as an inverse one, as Dauphine's unmasking of Epicoene exposes Epicoene as having had superior knowledge and power, while his unmasking of the Wits reveals the opposite. I thank Valerie Traub for deepening my thinking on this point.

The final moments of the play are organized around the assembled characters' reactions to Epicoene's reveal, providing an opportunity to examine their critical orientations for evidence of the new social order, signified by the affective gender-status conventions that characters display. The characters whom I have identified as urban-epicene figures – La Foole, Daw, the Collegiates, and Mistress and Captain Otter – do not experience a shift in status. In the aftermath of Dauphine's reveal, these figures are so overcome with urban-epicene wonder that for the first time in the play, they fall silent; in fact, but for Captain Otter, who responds to a direct inquiry from Dauphine, none says a word for the remainder of the scene. After dismissing Morose, Cutbeard the barber, and Captain Otter, Dauphine turns to Truewit and Clerimont, and invites his friends to acknowledge his supremacy: "How now, gentlemen! Do you look at me?" he asks, observing their uncharacteristic silence (204-5). When Clerimont speaks, he expresses wonder: "A boy," he verifies, attempting to recategorize the person before him (206). "Yes, Mistress Epicoene," Dauphine says as if Clerimont does not know of whom they speak, exaggerating the sense of his ignorance. Whether Clerimont distrusts that Epicoene is "a boy" or is still actively processing the surprise, by verifying the information Dauphine shares, his question does not challenge Dauphine's knowledge or authority, but rather implicitly confirms his own lack of conviction.

Truewit takes a different tack: intent on reestablishing his social authority after initially responding to Dauphine's surprise in the silent manner of the other characters, Truewit immediately reverts to an urbane performance of confidence. However, having just been exposed as a pretender to knowledge and authority, Truewit's conspicuous attempts to reassert his social supremacy appear exaggerated, and serve to *abstract* rather than to naturalize the elements of his status performance, including his willed orientation of nonchalance, his wordplay, his

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feminization of other men, and his confident orientation toward knowledge he has only just learned. "Well, Dauphine, you have lurched your friends of the better half of the garland, by concealing this part of the plot!" Truewit admits. In contrast to earlier scenes when Truewit, forced to reckon with his own ignorance, pretended to have "[known] it would be thus" (i.e. predicted the outcome), here he acknowledges his friend's superior knowledge and the status or glory ("the garland") that attends it (2.4.64-5). However, he makes this admission as a means of performing an urbane orientation of nonchalance: "But much good do it thee," he says familiarly, "thou deserv'st it, lad" (208-210). By offering his approbation, Truewit performs a lack of concern with the ignorance he has just revealed, and appears retroactively to sanction Dauphine's scheme, as if he had the authority to do so. Whether he uses the term "lad" as an endearment, thereby aligning himself with Dauphine, or as a diminutive, thereby patronizing Dauphine and his trick, Truewit's congratulations offer more than praise for his friend; they also register his attempts to elevate his own social standing.

As Truewit continues to reassert his knowing authority within the newly realized social hierarchy, he attempts to distract from his own witlessness by chastising the other characters for theirs. In doing so, however, he engages a central convention of the urban-epicene identity: the blatant display of signs of his desired status. As he begins to denigrate the Braveries, for instance, Truewit employs his rhetorical acuity to emphasize his knowingness about the information that they have all just learned; given his recent admission of ignorance, however, Truewit's use of ironic ridicule and wordplay to mock the Braveries' ignorance appears hypocritical. Two scenes prior to this moment, the Braveries had attempted to bolster their own masculine status by claiming – falsely – that they both had slept with Lady Epicoene. "Sir Daw and Sir La Foole," Truewit now begins, invoking their dignified titles to throw their undignified

behavior into starker relief: "you see the gentlewoman who has done you the favours!" Truewit

exclaims, gesturing to the young boy (212-4). By referring to Epicoene as a "gentlewoman,"

Truewit ironically highlights the Braveries' former ignorance of the boy's gender identity,

exposing their lie and underscoring their failure to bolster their masculinity through claims of

sexual conquest. However, in addition to omitting his own ignorance of Epicoene's gender

identity, Truewit also neglects to acknowledge that he and Clerimont were responsible for

persuading Daw and La Foole to fabricate their story. The audience's awareness of this fact

further ironizes Truewit's ridicule, and extends any critique of the Braveries to the Wits who

puppeteered them: "You are they that, when no merit or fortune can make you hope to enjoy

[women's] bodies, will yet lie with their reputations and make their fame suffer," Truewit

critiques (220-3). In a final attempt to contrast his own, knowing masculinity with that of Daw

and La Foole, Truewit employs a Latinate pun to criticize the Braveries in front of the

Collegiates: "Take heed of such *insectae* hereafter," Truewit says to the ladies, hypocritically

warning them against men like Daw and La Foole – and, implicitly, men like himself – whom he

characterizes as effeminate pests, unworthy of the Collegiates' attention (229-230).[70] Despite

Truewit's continued attempts to distance himself from the witlessness that he attributes to the

Braveries, the audience's knowledge of the Wits' prior manipulations ironize Truewit's ridicule,

drawing attention to the artificiality of the knowing, righteous conviction and projected,

normative masculinity that he performs in this scene.

 In addition to his conspicuous displays of rhetorical acuity and a posture of certainty,

Truewit continues to signal an urban-epicene status position by performing an exaggerated form

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[70] An editor's gloss suggests that the term "*insectae*" is an "incorrect feminine form of the plural" that Jonson likely
intended as "a jibe at the knights' effeminacy" (5.4n229). Regardless of the grammatical gendering of the term, the
equivalence Truewit draws between the Braveries and insects serves to diminish their social worth for promoting a
lie that he persuaded them to make.

of confidence not only toward his new knowledge of Epicoene's gender identity, but also toward

knowledge that he does not yet possess. "Madams, you are mute upon this new metamorphosis!"

he exclaims, acknowledging the Collegiates' uncharacteristic silence and eclipsing the fact that

he was also "mute" with wonder prior to scolding the Braveries. "And let it not trouble you that

you have discovered any mysteries to this young gentleman," he tells the ladies, gesturing to

Epicoene; "He is, a'most, of years, and will make a good visitant within this twelvemonth" (230-

3). Though there is no way to confirm what the Collegiates silently contemplate following

Dauphine's revelation, it is significant that Truewit assumes it is the privileged knowledge that

the ladies shared with Epicoene on her marriage night: the strategies that the Collegiates use to

dominate their husbands (and men in general), to achieve sexual satisfaction, to "maintain [their]

youth and beauty" with the passing years, and to "keep [themselves] from bearing of children"

(54-5, 52-3). This is subversive knowledge that can disrupt men's dominance over women by

enabling married women to live lives that are not defined by motherhood, monogamy, or

dependence. By highlighting that the Collegiates unwittingly shared these "mysteries" with a

"young gentleman," Truewit implies that they have lost some of their social power to the boy.

Truewit describes how Epicoene could use the knowledge to satisfy the Collegiates' sexual

desire ("He … will make a good visitant within this twelvemonth"), but he concludes with a

more threatening statement: "In the meantime," he says, "we'll all undertake for his secrecy"

(233-4). With this line, Truewit aligns himself and Clerimont with Dauphine ("we'll all") and

establishes the Wits' authority over the boy, and thus over the knowledge that the boy possesses,

by claiming responsibility for his secrecy. By endeavoring, so soon after his disclosure of

ignorance, to associate himself with the play's last true Wit and to perform the knowing authority

that only Dauphine may claim, Truewit abstracts one of the central methods of urbane-masculine

status-seeking: the deployment of knowledge-based confidence – in this case, confidence derived from knowledge that *he does not yet possess* – to dominate others, as he did with Clerimont in the play's first scene, and as Dauphine and Clerimont did with Daw's poetry in 2.3.

Jonson does not offer other characters an opportunity to respond to Truewit's speech; in the next line, Truewit turns to the audience, calls for their applause, and promptly concludes the play. By enabling Truewit, a figure who is revealed to be a socially ambitious pretender to status, to perform the conventions of his desired status and end the staged action, *Epicoene* might appear to take an equivocal stance toward Truewit's fate, or toward its own satire of social ambition and urban hierarchy. However, I argue that it is precisely because *Epicoene* reveals Truewit's ignorance and presumption that we are able to understand his subsequent performance of urbane masculinity as just that: a performance, a projection of mastery that he does not possess outside of the context of display. In other words, by drawing ironic attention to the ways in which Truewit constructs an exaggerated sense of his superior knowledge and social power *after* he was exposed as having neither, *Epicoene*'s final scene categorizes Truewit's display of urbane-masculine conventions as a performance of urban epicenism, satirizing his and Clerimont's presumption of knowledge.

3.4 Conclusion

what social status consists of in an urban environment where land-holding and inherited wealth or rank, though relevant, are insufficient to account for a person's social standing. What is status worth, and what is its substance, if social standing is merely an illusion of costume and gesture? *Epicoene*'s final surprise recalibrates the play's extant power dynamics by inviting the staged characters into a shared recognition of their relative positions within the play's social hierarchy, and by presenting Dauphine as the play's most powerful character: socially

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knowledgeable, successful in his manipulations, and newly re-enfranchised. By mocking the overblown confidence and the appropriation of elite resources by *Epicoene*'s socially ambitious urban characters – especially Truewit and Clerimont – Jonson suggests that the traditional system of hereditary status, wherein rank adheres to resources that are passed down through family lines via marriage, is out of step in a culture in which it is possible for some to *purchase* those benefits of elite status. However, rather than mocking the old system of hereditary status as obsolete or as insufficiently adapted to commercial economies, the play ends on a conservative note, satirizing those who believe themselves successful in performing a status they do not have. In its final moments, the play attempts to reinstate the primacy of hereditary status by shunting characters into their "proper" places: the status-seeking characters are knocked off their high horses and humiliated into silent submission, and Dauphine's urbane-masculine status is reaffirmed and materially substantiated by inherited fortune and property. Truewit alone appears to inhabit an equivocal status position at *Epicoene*'s closure by resisting the humiliation that silences his peers; but the play has already provided guidelines for interpreting his performance as one of confident ignorance.

By identifying affect and knowledge as the key mechanisms of the play's social stratification, we can observe how *Epicoene*'s final moments reorganize the play's social hierarchy by enabling only Dauphine to retain his urbane-masculine status. When Truewit and Clerimont respond to Epicoene's anagnorisis with surprise, they do not merely reveal their ignorance and presumption; *in* revealing their ignorance, their surprise registers their transition from an urbane, masculine status position to an urban-epicene one. It is the Wits' presumption of knowledge that forms the primary target of the play's satire.

Emotion and knowledge are fundamentally dynamic forms of meaning that are produced by the interactions between individuals and their environments; consequently, *Epicoene* suggests that the categorical boundaries between different relations of emotion and knowledge are rather porous, enabling certain characters to shift between rungs of hierarchy based on how their understandings of and emotional investments in their social world change. Whereas it is, perhaps, too easy to shift between categories in a downward trajectory, as Truewit and Clerimont demonstrate, the play dramatizes the comparative challenge of elevating one's station in London's urban social economy. Even Dauphine, whom the final scene celebrates as the most socially powerful character, merely reclaims an inheritance that was once legally his. It is significant, however, that he remains the only character to display signs of urbane masculinity at the end of the play.

The significance of Dauphine's continued, urbane-masculine status lies in the fact that he is the only character who seems able to navigate between the hereditary and socially-constructed systems of status that the play dramatizes. He does so by remaining somewhat external to the play's social action, where he is less vulnerable to the emotional impacts of *Epicoene*'s social life than those embedded within it. From that outside, metacritical vantage, Dauphine may exert control over the social action without exposing himself to the possibility that his interactions with his peers will change him, his confident experience of the world, or his way of understanding his place within it. The hereditary system of status – manifest in Epicoene's performance of elite femininity and in Dauphine's reclamation of his inheritance – represents elevated status as a life removed from the surprise and wonder commensurate with urban activity during a period of rapid social change. Urbane masculinity would seem to be the only gender-

status position that provides immunity to the threat that change poses to knowledge, certainty, and mastery.

Chapter 4 Satiric Epistemologies: Suspicion, Stereotypes, and Misogyny in *Epicoene*'s Uses of Wit

This chapter adopts as its premise an argument from the previous chapter: that urbane, "witty" masculinity functions as a gendered category of status in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* which derives its empowered social position from *knowingness*. I define knowingness as an *illusion* of social mastery comprising relations of knowledge, affect, and metacritical awareness that produce the appearance and manner of sophisticated social understanding. With their metacritical takes on the dramatic action, their awareness of phenomena (such as the audience) beyond the stage, and their elevated social status within their playworlds, witty gallants are often afforded the privileged position of articulating the satirical critiques of their housing fictions. In an effort to identify the mechanisms through which witty gallants construct the illusion of knowingness that underpins their urbane, masculine status and enables their articulations of the play's satire, this chapter examines how a specific system of knowledge, which I term the witty episteme, enables gallants to understand and, at times, to imply that they have mastered their changing social world.

This definition of "episteme" as a "system of knowledge' is an amended version of Michel Foucault's *épistémè*, or the field of knowledge that defines "the fundamental codes of culture" that order society, "governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices" (xxii).[1] For Foucault, the *épistémè* is that

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.*

which "defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice" (183). To identify the field of knowledge that is both "silently" and explicitly invested in the practice of gallant wit, which produces the male privilege from which *Epicoene*'s urbane-masculine characters benefit, this chapter is organized, on the one hand, around scenes in which the Wits' displays of knowingness enable their social advancement, and, on the other hand, those scenes in which their knowingness fails. The latter, in particular, leads to the Wits' social decline and the shift in their structural function from the primary *speakers* of *Epicoene*'s satire to its primary *objects*.

My examination of the epistemological and affective mechanisms that enable the Wits' performances of knowingness and social mobility reveals misogyny to be a primary component of the system of knowledge that bolsters urbane, masculine privilege in Jonson's play. Rather than accept misogyny as an unfortunate byproduct of satiric city comedy, as other critics have done, however, this chapter examines how misogynistic ways of knowing *motivate* gallant wit, empowering witty, high-ranking male characters to articulate *Epicoene*'s satire of urban gender and social status. Through close readings that synthesize theories of affect and gender, I identify suspicion, and the social categories or stereotypes that suspicion produces, as epistemological mechanisms that link misogyny and gallant wit in this play. Stereotypes of urban women and suspicion of women who do not fit neatly into those stereotypes are two central strategies of the witty episteme that gives rise to the masculine forms of power and authority – such as access to a metacritical perspective and the capacity to articulate the play's satire from that vantage – that so often attend a knowing manner in Jonson's *Epicoene*.

It is the metacritical perspective on diegetic events that enables witty gallants to project the knowingness that undergirds their critiques of their peers' expressions of gender, status, and

character. The metacritical perspective represents an outside view on staged events; that distanced view can empower witty gallants to navigate their social world with a heightened awareness of the boundaries between reality and performance – an awareness that is withheld from characters who are confined to a diegetic perspective. As the last chapter argued, from that distanced vantage a witty gallant may apprehend other characters' behaviors, goods, and relations as distinctly performative elements of identity, and thus ridicule or pass judgment on *how* others enact their public personas. However, ridicule is not the only method of social mastery that a metacritical perspective can enable. As this chapter argues, a metacritical lens can also enable a witty gallant to *exert control* over his peers by *manipulating* their sense of reality. Because a gallant's distanced perspective can yield a more nuanced understanding of the constructedness of his staged reality, it can also grant him the capacity to understand the knowledge relations (desires, beliefs, and strategies of performance) that organize categories of gender and status in his play-world. Thus, that metacritical lens can also grant witty figures the power to *exploit* those knowledge relations and thereby manipulate the perceptions and actions of their peers.

Much extant scholarship describes gallant wit as a kind of *social mastery* or *cultural competence* – that is, as an inherent rhetorical or cognitive ability that sets certain young men apart from and above those who lack their skill or intellect.[2] Scholars have demonstrated that many of the period's city comedies appear to sanction the gallants' metacritical perspectives by presenting a social order wherein those witty/witting characters sit at or near the top of the hierarchy. Accordingly, the "competence" that witty figures are taken to represent includes a metacritical understanding of the social norms and ideal forms of propriety that structure the

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[2] See Ian Munro, "The Matter of Wit and the Early Modern Stage."

social world that they inhabit (or hope to inhabit), as well as the ability to enact and enforce those norms – or to violate them without incurring negative social consequences. However, as the previous chapter makes clear, witty gallants are not always successful in their attempts to appear knowing or to use their knowingness to climb the social ladder. More recent scholarship demonstrates how witty "competencies" are not inherent characterological qualities, but rather the products of a character's privileged access to material, educational, financial, and other resources that are unevenly distributed across lines of gender, citizenship status, birth order, regional origin, and other dimensions of early modern identity.[3] By staging social hierarchies that celebrate such figures as competent ("witty") and suggest that other characters who lack their privileged access are, by contrast, incompetent ("witless"), city comedy reinforces the misogynistic, ableist, and elitist ideologies of the culture that first produced these plays.

To account for how misogyny, in particular, is implicated in this dynamic, this chapter advances an understanding of wit as a knowledge *practice* – that is, a recurring way of implementing or working with knowledge.[4] Unlike the language of *competency*, which can obscure the socioeconomic and other factors that enable one's cultivation of proficiency, *practice* emphasizes the effort involved in making knowledge socially useful. Reframing wit as a knowledge practice allows us to consider the specific strategies of knowledge production

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[3] See especially Adam Zucker, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy*; and Michelle O'Callaghan, *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England*, among others. In his 1986 study of "The Gentleman-Gallant," Theodore Leinwand also examines the phenomenon of gallant wit within the social contexts that produce the category of "the gentleman-gallant." For a study of how witty convention changed over the course of sixteenth and seventeenth century social and cultural contexts, see Phil Withington, "'Tumbled into the dirt': Wit and incivility in early modern England."

[4] In the academic context, this is known as a methodology. I borrow my definition of "knowledge practice" from the field of pedagogy, where Klas Karlgren, Sami Paavola, and Maria Beatrice Ligorio define it as "recurrent activities and learned ways of working with knowledge where knowledge should be understood in the broadest sense including that which is stated explicitly but also tacit or procedural knowledge (Knorr Cetina 2001; Hakkarainen 2009)" (3). See Karlgren, Paavola, and Ligorio, "Introduction: What Are Knowledge Work Practices in Education? How Can We Study and Promote Them?"

involved in performances of early modern comedic wit: as a knowledge practice, wit becomes

legible as the *effort* of accessing a metacritical perspective on the diegetic dynamics in which one

is embedded and of strategically deploying that metacritical knowledge in creative,

improvisational ways that ultimately work for one's own social benefit.[5] Because it is aimed at

benefiting one person over others, the practice of being witty necessarily creates social

hierarchies that are based on perceived differences in knowledge. Viewing wit as a knowledge

practice clarifies its dramatic function as a strategy of social striving rather than an elite

competency; it is precisely this distinction that gallants attempt to elide with their sprezzatura

and displays of clever rhetoric, endeavoring not only to claim superior, gentlemanly status, but

also to make that status appear inherent or inborn. As this chapter demonstrates, by refusing to

accept the conflation of wit with social mastery, we can identify the knowledge relations and

epistemological strategies that Wits use to access that metacritical awareness, and observe how

they use (or fail to use) this awareness to construct the illusion of knowing, dominant

masculinity.

In contrast to studies that accept wit as simply a form of social mastery, then, this chapter

examines the epistemological and affective mechanisms that witty gallants employ to produce

the metacritical perspective from which they perform their masterful knowingness. By focusing

on the function of misogynistic beliefs, attitudes, and strategies of knowing within the Wits'

attempts to understand and master their social sphere, I demonstrate that gallant wit is a stylized

performance of *seeming* knowledge whose affective power is itself derived from misogynistic

tropes. In the first section, I describe the epistemological and affective relationship that exists

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[5] I borrow Zucker's definition of wit, which he describes as the "capacity to resituate knowledge so as to make it socially useful" (5). My conception of wit as a *practice* trains attention on the strategies of "resituat[ion]" that enhance the utility of knowledge.

between gallant wit and misogyny within the period's satire, and identify the mechanisms by which *Epicoene*'s Wits construct their sense of knowingness. I argue that suspicion is a primary mechanism through which gallants project their claimed social authority, enabling them to perform two central conventions of their witty personas: the illusion of sophisticated, even prescient knowledge about their milieu, and a posture of affective distance from that mundane knowledge.

The second section examines how *Epicoene*'s gallants deploy suspicion in their efforts to appear knowing. *Epicoene*'s Wits use suspicion to produce misogynistic stereotypes that, in their summative logic, function as preemptive shortcuts to knowledge about women's essential natures. This section also charts the epistemological limitations of suspicion and stereotypes, arguing that while these mechanisms can convey the *appearance* of knowingness, they can also prove false and produce a false sense of confidence in one's own beliefs. The third section builds on these analyses to argue that misogynistic suspicion and stereotyping are the mechanisms that produce the *illusion* of social mastery by enabling witty gallants to access a metacritical perspective on the ways their peers perform their gender-status.

By examining the various ways in which *Epicoene*'s Wits engage these mechanisms of witty knowingness to control and master their milieu, I identify how Dauphine retains his witty, knowing status through the end of the play while Truewit and Clerimont shift from *Epicoene*'s satirical speakers to its satirical targets. The two gallants' social decline and Dauphine's material elevation can be attributed to the shortsighted, diegetic ways in which Truewit and Clerimont deploy their misogynistic beliefs, compared to the strategic, metacritical ways in which Dauphine uses misogynistic ways of knowing to manipulate the people within his milieu. I demonstrate that while Truewit and Clerimont rely on suspicion and misogynistic stereotypes to

enhance their *feelings* of confidence in their own knowledge, Dauphine employs these epistemological tools to gain critical *distance* from his emotional experience of the social scene; from that metacritical vantage, Dauphine is able to control the dramatic action and access the material forms of status (such as monetary wealth) that the other characters desire.

4.1 Satiric Wit & Misogyny

4.1.1 Gallant Wit & the Illusion of Knowingness

Wit is widely known for its rhetorical forms, such as wordplay, punning, and euphuism, but recent scholarship has redefined the term to account for its broader social function in early modern drama: wit is the specifically masculine practice of recasting social or cultural knowledge so as to make it socially useful for oneself.[6] While there are many varieties of wit in early modern English texts and society, foolish wit, malcontented (tragic) wit, and gallant (comic) wit are perhaps the most common dramatic forms. Gallant wit, a variety found most frequently in comedy and comic satire, is the domain of men who are characterized by a certain kind of social aspiration. It is an active, metacritical relationship with social knowledge: it is not simply knowledge of norms, tastefulness, or local gossip; it is also the understanding of how to use this information strategically to enhance one's social stature through a broader, metacritical awareness of the emotional, epistemological, and even dramatic structures that organize the staged world. As this chapter demonstrates, because gallant Wits are embedded in the staged worlds that they seek to master, in order to access that broader, structural perspective, they engage affective and epistemological strategies to gain emotional distance from their own

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[6] Zucker, 5. For more on the masculine coding of early modern wit, and the traditions of jest that non-elite women curated, see Pamela Allen Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England*.

experience of the scenes in which they participate – this is the "active" part of the witty practice that my definition indexes.[7] The strategies that this chapter identifies include the Wits' reliance on suspicion and stereotypes to draw conclusions about the people in their world without needing to engage directly with, and thereby risk being emotionally influenced by, those people. Thus, beyond a set of rhetorical devices, wit is the tonal and intellectual mode through which urbane gallants project a sense of mastery of and superiority to the mundane concerns of their urban milieu, often through arch, ironic, or affectively detached social commentary.

I refer to this practice as *gallant* wit based on the comedic character type who uses the epistemological strategies that underpin wit to insist on his own social superiority. The gallant is an urban social type who is frequently represented in the period's literature;[8] he is, fundamentally, a social aspirant, seeking to project a degree of social authority that he does not possess in order to bolster his status. Gender is central to the gallant's conception of social standing: in his efforts to claim elevated, urban status, he connects this to being gentlemanly; however, while gallants hold genteel masculinity as the standard to which they aspire, they may not possess the status of a gentleman. If he is of genteel lineage, the gallant of early modern drama is probably the second or third son – that is, unlikely to inherit – and is eager to prove his social value by displaying signs of his urbanity. Regardless of his actual rank and order, the ultimate goal of the gallant is to be known as a masculine social authority; to him, this means being seen as knowing and nonchalant, in possession of the latest news and aware of the latest trends, firm in his beliefs, and confident in his emotional control.

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[7] The "emotional distance" that I refer to here is a form of the critical, and often ironic, distance that Chapter 1 explores.
[8] See Leinwand, O'Callaghan.

As the last chapter showed, not all gallants are Wits. The gallant's primary social goal and literary function is to establish his superiority over others in his milieu by displaying signs of his expertise in the social norms and other forms of knowledge that his neighbors prize: news and gossip; courtesy; and tastefulness in attire, language, and emotional expression. Those gallants who successfully mobilize their knowingness for their own social gain are known as Wits; those who do not are seen as Braveries, gulls, and other, less flattering terms. The ability to capitalize on one's knowingness in this way depends upon a gallant's metacritical or metasocial awareness. Some aspiring "gentle[men] of the time" do not recognize when their efforts to be seen as knowing and urbane fail to proffer a convincing image of gentility; to the contrary, their efforts actually reveal their social ambition and allude to their lower status origins.[9] Other gallants are able to recognize the gendered ideologies that structure their housing fiction's social hierarchy, and thus are better able to use that metacritical awareness to identify any perceived misalignment with their ideal social role, to correct their performance of status and so avoid the association with folly. In studies of city comedy, this group has become known as witty gallants, or more familiarly as Wits. The primary literary function of the witty gallant is to create or instantiate social hierarchies by highlighting – often through mockery or other ridicule – differences in individuals' knowledge or execution of social norms, wherein the least knowledgeable, least decorous, or least rhetorically deft – that is, the least witty – are relegated to the bottom of the social ladder.

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[9] I borrow the term "gentleman of the time" from another Jonsonian character: Carlo Buffone, a clown figure from Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*. As Buffone ironically notes, "to be an accomplished gentleman, that is, a gentleman of the time, you must give over housekeeping in the country, and live altogether in the city amongst gallants: where, at your first appearance, 'twere good you turn'd four or five hundred acres of your best land into two or three trunks of apparel" (1.1). Buffone explains how a gallant might construct a convincing image of a gentleman by displaying fine apparel that showcases both his elevated taste and his expense. However, in light of the previous chapter's analyses, one's conspicuous display of status symbols often fails to naturalize one's desired status. Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*.

Wits undertake significant efforts to naturalize their claimed status, carefully

manipulating their rhetoric and affect to suggest not only that they have mastered the urban scene

in which they are embedded, but that they are superior to it. Indeed, *Epicoene*'s gallants adopt

postures of detachment from the mundane concerns of their peers by performing a pretense of

controlled carelessness or other form of affective "distance" from their own emotional

experience of the scenes in which they participate.[10] Such a stance implies that their critical

perspectives are unmotivated by the economic, romantic, or other mundane concerns of their

milieu. To enhance the illusion of their social superiority, *Epicoene*'s gallants attempt

simultaneously to display a sense of knowingness about their social milieu while concealing their

emotional investment in the knowledge they claim to possess.[11] As the last chapter showed, in

contrast to the excitable, emotional reactivity that playwrights often attribute to women, social

aspirants, and laboring folk, witty gallants attempt to align themselves with an idealized form of

masculinity by demonstrating their emotional control, carefully composing their manner and

language to appear offhand and tonally disinterested, as if to suggest that they have mastered (to

the point of boredom) the world that excites and perplexes their neighbors.

4.1.2 Modes of Witty Knowingness: Skepticism, Cynicism, Suspicion

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[10] For more on affective "distance" or "detachment," see Anne Lake Prescott, "The Evolution of Tudor Satire," and Michael Shapiro, "Audience vs. Dramatist in Jonson's 'Epicoene' and Other Plays of the Children's Troupes."

[11] The term early modern writers used for the forms of controlled carelessness demonstrated by *Epicoene*'s Wits is "sprezzatura," a word Castiglione introduced in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) to describe the conscious self-fashioning of courtiers. For more on the relationship between sprezzatura, power, self-representational anxiety, and suspicion, see Harry Berger, *The Absence of Grace: Sprezzatura and Suspicion in Two Renaissance Courtesy Books*. For an analysis of sprezzatura as a classed attitude reserved for courtiers, gentlemen, and gallants, see Leinwand. For an analysis of affective detachment as a form of self-dramatization for aristocratic gallants, see Shapiro. For a discussion of affective detachment as a rhetorical form of "civil dishonesty" that enables male friendship by suppressing the vulnerability that adheres to homosocial bonds, see O'Callaghan, pp. 20. For a study of the material and historical conditions toward which Wits perform affective detachment, see Zucker.

Witty gallants attempt to claim a superior social position to their peers by showcasing their expertise and unflappable certainty about the workings of their social world, which they demonstrate through rhetorical acuity, cultural references, and a posture of controlled carelessness. However, in an urban setting as mutable as *Epicoene*'s London, where people move daily from the country and court, where laboring folk can purchase signs of high status, and where categories of gender and status are ill-defined, overlap, and break down, it is impossible to possess the degree of certainty about one's social environs that the Wits project. So the question remains: what kind of knowledge are the Wits using to bolster their status? More specifically, what knowledge relations – the beliefs, attitudes, and discursive practices that comprise relational knowledge in the play – comprise their field of "expertise"?

The Wits' field of expertise is defined, in large part, by misogyny: prejudice against, hatred toward, and the assumed inferiority of women. In order to bolster their sense of their own masculinity, as well as to naturalize their projected social superiority, witty gallants rely on recurring strategies – such as mockery and ridicule – to produce the illusion that they are unflappably knowing. The frequent targets of witty ridicule are those who transgress the norms of their ideal social roles. Despite, or perhaps in response to, the fact that in London's urban environment, women contributed to business, managed domestic households and affairs, and shopped and socialized in public spaces, the feminine ideal was still that of silent, passive chastity. By Jonson's time, various stereotypes of women who transgressed this ideal – shrews, scolds, social aspirants, sexually licentious or adulterous wives, etc. – had come to overpopulate the stage. The function of these figures is often to serve as primary targets of witty ridicule.[12] By ridiculing female characters for deviating from the forms of gender-status that *Epicoene* holds as

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[12] In a similar, chauvinistic vein, men who engage behaviors and styles of speech and dress that are deemed effeminate in contrast to the witty ideal are also a frequent target of witty mockery, as the previous chapter showed.

ideal, the play's Wits access a metacritical perspective on their peers' diegetic performances of gender-status and explicitly proclaim the ideologies that structure *Epicoene*'s patriarchal social hierarchy. In this way, misogyny forms an essential dimension of the witty episteme and empowers the Wits' articulation of the play's satire.

Misogyny provides the basis for the two primary components of witty gallants' performances of knowingness: the beliefs that masquerade as knowledge, as well as confident, certain orientations toward those beliefs. Misogyny provides a constantly replenishing set of foregone conclusions about the behaviors, manners, speech acts, and social meanings that constitute femininity and the category of women in this play. Misogyny also furnishes metacritical strategies of knowing and interpretation that Wits rely on to reach those foregone conclusions, such as suspicion and ridicule, which provide witty gallants with the means of assigning negative meaning to those behavioral characteristics and the people who display them. By examining the content of the Wits' ridicule, misogyny becomes a legible feature of their status performance; its assumptions about the inferiority of women provide the logical and affective foundation for gallants' assumed superiority, the base upon which their performance is staged. In its mirroring the play's ideological structure, the Wits' deployment of misogyny enables them to project sophisticated, even prescient knowingness about their social milieu, as well as a posture of affective "distance" from the mundane concerns of that milieu.

As the last chapter argued, the key affective-epistemological strategy that bolsters witty, urbane-masculine status is the performance of *knowingness*. Knowingness involves, but is ultimately distinct from, knowledge; it is the confident feeling, orientation, or attitude toward one's own beliefs. Regardless of the veracity of the knowledge that one claims to possess or holds as belief, a confident orientation toward one's presumed knowledge can produce the

illusion of knowingness, especially if it is performed with distanced, metacritical awareness of one's social sphere. Where, we need to ask, do those confident orientations come from? What mechanisms are involved in the production of certainty, and what implications do those mechanisms have not only for the witty episteme, but also for the play's satire? In the long history of satiric wit, satiric speakers have utilized a remarkably limited and consistent set of attitudinal mechanisms to cultivate postures of certainty: for instance, toward unknown or ambiguous phenomena or toward others' beliefs that conflict with their own, comic Wits tend to express attitudes that shift them from a posture of uncertainty to one of conviction. These attitudes include skepticism, cynicism, and, as this chapter argues, suspicion.

Skepticism and cynicism are close relatives of suspicion that have long been associated with early modern English satire. Despite their similarities, skepticism, cynicism, and suspicion are distinct critical orientations with tonal differences that mattered to early modern satirists. The classical satiric tradition, whose modes and concerns early modern satirists explicitly adopted, is rooted in a style of cultural commentary that takes a skeptical stance toward change. Accordingly, some scholars have argued that generic satire first developed out of the early Pyrrhonistic philosophical traditions, "the most radical forms of ancient skepticism" (Combe 4).[13] Skepticism does not presume a particular (negative) outcome in the way that cynicism or suspicion do, and often yields a gentler form of incredulous commentary as a result. Skepticism is tonally aligned with Horatian satire, originally a style of satiric poetry (less frequently, prose) whose voice is characterized by a humorously disbelieving attitude and a tendency to poke fun at apparent cultural absurdities for the purpose of amusing and delighting readers, rather than

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[13] Kirk Combe, "Shadwell as Lord of Misrule: Dryden, Varronian Satire, and Carnival." For an analysis of the connection between satiric rhetoric and skepticism, see, among others, Fredric Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron*.

eviscerating the object. Skepticism is the intellectual and tonal mode of urbane Wits like

Dauphine who place a premium on presenting themselves as refined, sophisticated cultural

critics. By adopting a skeptical stance toward their social world, witty satirists can gain access to

a metacritical perspective that enables them to see through the ideas and cultural norms to which

their credulous peers subscribe; by taking amusement in those discrepancies, Wits can suggest

that they are intellectually and, perhaps, morally superior to those peers.

In addition to its inherited associations with skepticism, early modern satire draws

explicit links between satiric ridicule and cynicism. The word "cynic" comes from the Greek

term for "dog-like, currish, churlish" ("cynic," *OED*), and early modern satirists explicitly played

on this rhetorical link by appropriating dog imagery to enhance the violent immediacy of their

invective: satire could "bite" (e.g. Joseph Hall's "biting satires"), "bark" (e.g. Marston's self-

reference as "sharp-fang'd satirist" in "Satyre IX"), "scratch," and "snarl" (e.g. Middleton's

invocations of his "snarling muse").[14] Despite the physical proximity that this violent rhetoric

suggests, in the theatrical tradition, cynical critics often represent their metadramatic perspective

by adopting a posture not of urbane distance, but rather of social alienation, in an effort to

sanction their critiques of society's vices. Particularly in satiric texts, cynicism's misanthropy is

associated with streaks of extreme misogyny.[15] This cynical misogyny is the tradition in which

Juvenalian satire was written – a style of critique that offers a far more acerbic counterpoint to

the Horatian model. Juvenal's style of satire is infamous for its cynical excoriations of Roman

social ills, with particular emphasis on the evils of social climbing, the hypocrisy of the nobility,

and, in his most famous satiric poem, "Satire VI," the dissembling and immorality of women.

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[14] Hall, *Virgidemiarum. The three last bookes. Of byting satyres*. Marston, "Satyre IX." Middleton, "Microcynicon: Seven Snarling Satyres."

[15] See Mark Thornton Burnett, "Staging the Malcontent in Early Modern England"; and Wendy Wall, "Introduction to *Microcynicon: Six Snarling Satires*."

Not only is the Juvenalian *style* of cynicism one that Truewit and Clerimont tend to favor; the Wits also explicitly quote from and reference Juvenal's misogynistic screeds against women, most notably in Clerimont's critiques of "pieced beauty" (cosmetic artistry) and in Truewit's attempts to dissuade Morose from marrying.[16] To sum up, the satiric tradition associates skepticism with intellectual and rhetorical sophistication, and cynicism with misogyny.

While Truewit and Clerimont demonstrate a tendency for misogynistic cynicism defined by hatred of women, and Dauphine appears to favor a form of skepticism that is defined by urbane disbelief, in their efforts to access the metacritical perspective that enables their critiques, all three Wits employ a third, closely related attitude: an orientation of suspicion, which underpins and empowers gallant wit in this play. Suspicion is "the action of suspecting; the feeling … of one who suspects" (*OED*). This definition constructs a necessary relationship between affect ("the feeling") and knowledge, although the knowledge is necessarily of a presumptive kind ("suspecting"). The "action of suspecting," or the act of *feeling suspicious*, frames suspicion as the critical orientation toward limited knowledge, or toward *not* knowing. In light of suspicion's semantic origins – "to suspect," meaning "to believe" or "to imagine something … undesirable … with insufficient proof or knowledge" ("suspect, v.," *OED*) – we can see that the critical orientation toward limited knowledge is, in fact, a cynical one: without sufficient "proof," it reaches the conclusion, or establishes the belief, that one's limited knowledge hides "something … undesirable."[17] Thus, suspicion can be understood as the action of cynically orienting oneself toward one's "insufficient … knowledge" by filling in the gaps

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[16] See Jonas A. Barish, "Ovid, Juvenal, and the Silent Woman."

[17] Although suspicion is not necessarily a cynical presumption – one can suspect positive outcomes, too – this article uses the term's primary definition, which does entail a negative form of distrust tied to its etymological roots: *suspicere, or* "mistrust."

with whatever "proof" one would need to construct the predetermined "belie[f]" that the object

of one's suspicion is "undesirable."

Suspicion toward women is the affective premise of Jonson's play. In *Epicoene*, a

character's suspicion is activated when they fear (or detect) that they are at a power disadvantage

related to differences in knowledge and wish to guard against surprises. Wits often use suspicion

as a prophylactic that enables them to manage their fear of unknown or ambiguous phenomena

by intellectualizing it: suspicion provides a predetermined, cynical orientation toward uncertain

or ambiguous phenomena that gallants can adopt in moments when their social uncertainty

threatens to puncture the illusion of all-knowingness that they seek to project. Suspicion can

therefore function as an affective distancing technique for the Wits: by orienting witty gallants

cynically toward, for instance, ambiguous gender-status performances such as "hermaphroditical

authority," suspicion can enable gallants to fill the gaps in their "insufficient … knowledge" by

activating the metacritical attention that enables their recognition of social tropes (such as the

domineering woman) that confirm the "undesirab[ility]" of the object of their suspicions. In this

way, witty gallants are often able to use suspicion as a prophylactic, mitigating the threat of

surprise by accepting dissembling or other unanticipated outcomes as already known and

expected, and so, not really a surprise.[18] Because a suspicious person already assumes that there

is some form of deception at hand, then even if the particulars of that deception are not clear, one

is prepared for the occasion of surprise if a deception is revealed. In this way, suspicion can

function as a tool of interpretive control: by treating deceit as an expected outcome of their

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[18] Writing about the hermeneutics of suspicion and paranoia, Eve Sedgwick writes: "The unidirectionally future-oriented vigilance of paranoia generates, paradoxically, a complex relation to temporality that burrows both backward and forward: because there must be no bad surprises, and because learning of the possibility of a bad surprise would itself constitute a bad surprise, paranoia requires that bad news be always already known" (130). See Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*.

interactions with figures whom they deem challenging to categorize, and by treating the

language, appearance, and behaviors of those potentially deceitful figures as objects that require

self-conscious acts of interpretation, gallants abstract themselves from the sensory and emotional

immediacy of their social experience, often producing a metacritical space in which they

observe, rather than react to or participate in, their peers' performances of gender-status. Because

women are explicitly thematized in this play as inscrutably epicene figures and thus as difficult

persons for the Wits to interpret and categorize, women are the primary objects of the Wits'

suspicion. Suspicion, therefore, is more than an attitude embedded in misogynistic stereotypes; it

is a critical orientation toward knowledge that underpins gallant wit, grants access to a

metacritical perspective, staves off the fear or discomfort of *not knowing*, and, thus, forms an

essential component of the witty episteme.

4.2 Misogynistic Ways of Knowing

4.2.1 Suspicion, Certainty, and Stereotypes

In their encounters with London women who resist easy categorization, such as ladies

who possess "pieced beauty," city wives who display "hermaphroditical authority," and

altogether silent women, *Epicoene*'s gallants typically presume the existence of dissimulation:

that "pieced beauty" masks physical and moral flaws, that "hermaphroditical authority" threatens

masculine authority, and that silent women are keeping secrets (1.1.77, 81). What makes this

kind of suspicion *witty* is not the cynical presumption itself – after all, suspicion is available to

people at any level of social hierarchy[19] – but rather the use of suspicion to access a metacritical

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[19] In *Epicoene*, for example, the Ladies Collegiate distrust all advice from men (3.6.31-63); Mistress Otter suspects her husband of intentionally sabotaging her preparations to host their courtly guests (3.1); and at a suggestion from Truewit, Daw and La Foole are more than willing to suspect one another of murderous intent (4.5). None of these characters is able to deploy their suspicion for their own social gain.

awareness of staged social dynamics such that one can deploy the cynical presumption strategically for one's social benefit.[20] In this way, although suspicion typically responds to ambiguous or uncertain phenomena, suspicion can (ironically) be used to cultivate a posture of certainty. For instance, by presuming the existence of deceit or hidden meaning behind the layers of language, cosmetic artistry, and clothing that city women overtly display, the Wits can claim foreknowledge of deceit and maintain a pretense of studied carelessness if any is revealed.[21]

For gallants who use suspicion to cultivate metacritical awareness, suspicion can function as a shortcut to certainty. Throughout the play, *Epicoene*'s Wits respond to perplexing moments or incidents by using suspicion to cultivate firm, pejorative beliefs about those in their milieu. Suspicion contributes to the gallants' projections of social authority by enabling them to shift from a position of confusion, ambivalence, or *not* knowing to one of conviction, if of a cynical kind. In the first scene of the play, for example, Clerimont employs suspicion to presume knowledge of a lady's perfidy, and thereby to convert his experience of romantic frustration and confusion into a more detached, disdainful knowingness. Clerimont and Truewit learn that while Clerimont is excluded from the home of his romantic interest, Lady Haughty, his hired boy has free admittance; Clerimont struggles to verify the reason. The Wits learn that in the privacy of her home, Lady Haughty "play[s] with" the boy, "throw[s him] o' the bed," and "kisses [him] with her oiled face," showering him with signs of affection that Clerimont covets (1.1.12-4). When Clerimont first hears this news, he lets slip an upset oath – "A pox of her autumnal face, her pieced beauty!" (81) – before attempting to convert his frustration about his exclusion from

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[20] See Zucker.

[21] As a hermeneutic, suspicion determines how one interprets information, and thus what one can know: by assuming that some form of deception or wrongdoing is lying in wait, a suspicious person may be particularly vigilant for signs of dissembling in any non-normative behavior that could justify one's fears. Whenever an instance of dissembling is imputed, the cynical presumption is reinforced; it appears to validate the suspicious hermeneutic that "uncovered" deceit. See Sedgwick.

Haughty's company into suspicion that she hides something sinister behind her closed doors and beneath her "painted and perfumed and washed and scoured" outer layer (83).

Clerimont's critique of Haughty's performance, delivered as a song that he has his boy sing for Truewit, begins by highlighting the fact that "no man" has seen her before she is properly attired (81-2). The boy's song suggests that Haughty's motives for undertaking these cosmetic preparations are dishonest, intended to hide something about her body: "Still to be neat, still to be dressed, / As you were going to a feast," the boy croons, claiming that Haughty dresses for any occasion "as if" she were going to a formal event, alluding, perhaps, to her social climbing tendencies. "Still to be powdered, still perfumed: / Lady, it is to be presumed," he continues, suggesting that with all of her powder, perfumes, and dressings, it is only presumable, and not certain, that Haughty is a "Lady" (89-90). "Though art's hid causes are not found" the boy sings, "All is not sweet, all is not sound" (91-2). In these lines, the boy articulates the hermeneutics of suspicion: when Haughty's identity cannot be verified beneath her enhanced layers, "all is not sound."[22] Clerimont's suspicion enables him to reframe Haughty's rejection of him as evidence of her hidden infamy, suggesting that despite her best efforts to dissemble, he knows what she seeks to hide: that she is not a "Lady." And if Haughty is not a lady, Clerimont implies, then her rejection of Clerimont is not a romantic failure. By using suspicion to cultivate the cynical belief that Haughty refuses him admission to her home because she is hiding something shameful or sinister related to her gender identity or status, Clerimont is able to move from a position of uncertainty and frustration to one of conviction. In addition, by opting to project urbane scorn before Truewit, rather than confusion or embarrassment, for instance,

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[22] The "hermeneutics of suspicion" is a term coined by Paul Ricoeur to describe a skeptical approach to interpretation that he observed in the writings of Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx, wherein the interpreter assumes that the "text" is hiding meanings that the interpreter must sleuth out and expose. See Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*.

Clerimont preserves his witty status and validates his sense of his own superiority to Haughty. Through the scornful knowingness that his cynical presumption enables, he creates the illusion of distance from the emotional immediacy of Haughty's rejection, implying through his disdain that he is unaffected by, or even above, the "Lady's" affections.

Clerimont's logic demonstrates how, even in the absence of complete information about Haughty's reasons for excluding him from her company, suspicion enables him to reflect metacritically on her gender-status performance and, in critiquing it, to reclaim a position of emotional power over her. Recall that our definition of suspicion involves cynically orienting oneself toward one's insufficient knowledge by furnishing "proof" that constructs the predetermined belief that one's limited knowledge hides "something … undesirable." In order to reach the cynical conclusion that Haughty is not a "Lady," Clerimont employs, by way of evidence, a series of misogynistic tropes. In an effort to discredit Haughty's tasteful social authority, the source of her power to invite and exclude, Clerimont attributes inappropriate sexual appetites to her – a common, misogynistic trope of city women in the period's literature.[23] When his boy reveals that Haughty "play[s] with" him, "throw[s him] o' the bed," and "kisses [him]," Clerimont exclaims, "No marvel if the door be kept shut against your master, when the entrance is so easy to you" (1.1.18-9). With a play on the term "door" as a double entendre for Haughty's genitals, Clerimont suggests that Haughty's sexual desire is both excessive and misplaced: he highlights the "eas[e]" with which his boy gains "entrance" to Haughty's inner sanctum, while he is left outside. Clerimont draws on further tropes to supplement his image of Haughty as a woman of illicit desires and habits: he invokes the trope of the deceptive woman, who represents herself as something or someone other than she is, using "pieced beauty" to

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[23] See Katherine Henderson & Barbara McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640.*

disguise physical defects, to seduce, and to control. Clerimont's explanation for Haughty's rejection converts from a series of questions about Clerimont's specific undesirability to a series of assumptions about the *type* of woman Haughty might be: deceptive, with inappropriate sexual appetites for her station. By reframing Haughty as an object of his suspicion rather than the cause of his unfulfilled desire and by reinforcing his cynical conclusions about the type of woman she is with misogynistic tropes, Clerimont retrospectively reasserts his interpretive control over the scene. By performing attitudes of disdain toward the *image* of the deceptive, sexually illicit woman, Clerimont shifts away from his identification with a vulnerable, defensive positionality – that of a failed romantic – at the experiential, diegetic level to his identification with an empowered, offensive one at the evaluative, metacritical level.

By articulating Haughty's rejection through misogynistic tropes, Clerimont does not merely presume what her reasons for doing so are; he also generalizes those reasons, depersonalizing them by associating them with common tropes of women's behavior. This interpretative move suggests that suspicion, itself an orientation derived from misogyny, provides the material upon which witty gallants construct misogynistic stereotypes, or "preconceived and oversimplified idea[s] of the characteristics which typify a person," and "attitude[s] based on such a preconception" ("stereotype, n.," *OED*). Stereotypes enable one to claim knowledge of a person's essential nature without fully engaging with the nuances of that person's character; they are shortcuts to certainty that enable Wits to avoid becoming immersed in the emotional experience of their diegetic social interactions with the people they suspect and stereotype. For the urbane Wits, stereotypes and suspicion create a sense of distance from the emotional immediacy of their social context by providing a template for how to understand and behave toward people who resist easy categorization. These templates appear to negate the need

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to know specifics about individual women, for instance, in order to identify what *type* of woman

she is and, thus, how to behave toward her in a way that appears decorous, knowing, and urbane.

Even in the absence of specific information about Lady Haughty's social and sexual preferences,

the foregone conclusions that misogynistic suspicion and stereotypes entail – that the unknown is

treacherous and that women deceive – provide Clerimont with preset ways of feeling and

thinking about Haughty's rejection of him. In short, misogyny in its attitudinal and stereotypical

forms serves a prophylactic function for the Wits, enabling their access to an emotionally-

distanced, metacritical perspective on their diegetic experiences.

4.2.2 Cynical Presumptions & Emotional Distance

Immersion in one's diegetic social scene is a dangerous social positionality for a Wit,

who depends on his emotional distance from that scene not only to identify threats to his

performance of knowingness, but also to recollect that his urbane knowingness is an active

performance which must be sustained for him to be seen as urbane and masculine. Immersion

risks dissolving the emotionally distanced, metacritical perspective on which the Wits rely to

assess their own performances of status and to align themselves with their gendered ideal. To

maintain their detachment from emotional particulars, the Wits rely on suspicion and stereotypes

to access a metacritical intellectual space, from which they observe and evaluate their own and

others' interactions, as if from a distance.[24] Because the metacritical stance is, at least in part, an

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[24] In "Asses and Wits: The Homoerotics of Mastery," Mario DiGangi describes a similar dynamic in Jonson's
Volpone between Volpone, a calculating gentleman who represents the metacritical perspective I describe, and
Volpone's servant, Mosca, who can be read to represent Volpone's embodied social presence. DiGangi claims that
Volpone treats Mosca as a "version of himself," whom he sends into the urban space to perform the real-world tasks
that Volpone designs from the safe distance of his home (191). Volpone and Mosca literalize the separation that
Epicoene's Wits seek to maintain between their metacritical awareness of and their embodied presence in a given
scene. They also demonstrate the risk that such a separation can pose for the Wit who overidentifies with his
metacritical perspective: while Volpone believes that he possesses total control over the other man, Mosca's social
ambitions are informed by the city in which he, and not Volpone, is embedded. Ultimately, Mosca takes advantage

observational rather than a participatory mode of social engagement, that perspective can protect the Wits from full immersion in the diegesis.

Truewit presents a case-in-point. Truewit is both the play's most active Wit – perpetually engaged in schemes and pranks, showing off his rhetorical prowess and emotional control – and one of its most virulent misogynists. Truewit fancies himself an expert in the ways of women. In a series of speeches peppered throughout the play, Truewit constructs stereotypes of different types of women by drawing on urban tropes, clichés, and other extant cultural beliefs to describe not only how women dissemble and undermine masculine authority, but also how men can manipulate and dominate women. Many lines of Truewit's speeches are adapted or taken directly from misogynistic screeds written by Ovid and Juvenal.[25] These speeches enable Truewit to socially dominate his less witty neighbors by immersing *them* in new ways of understanding their relationships and social interactions with women, without becoming subsumed in his own, vivid descriptions of those stereotypes.

In 2.2, Truewit tries one of his speeches on a new audience, using suspicion and stereotypes to perform a deliberately exaggerated form of misogyny before Morose in order to inflame his misogyny, to disorient him with fears of women's deception, and to overwhelm him with the horrifying possibility of his own marriage – all while he, Truewit, remains metacritically

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of Volpone's deliberate abstraction from the urban scene, appropriating his employer's likeness to advance his own social standing. Like Volpone, Truewit and Clerimont's overidentification with their metacritical perspective leads them to ignore the social influences to which they are prone, and they risk deceiving themselves into thinking that they are in control of their social milieu when they are not. For more on the role of servants during this period as "extensions" of the people they served, see Thomas Moisan, "'Knock me here soundly': Comic Misprision and Class Consciousness in Shakespeare" (qtd. in DiGangi, 187). For an analysis of this relationship as a player-avatar dynamic in the gaming context, see Gina Bloom et al, "Playful Pedagogy and Social Justice: Digital Embodiment in the Shakespeare Classroom."

[25] For a detailed analysis of Truewit's (and Jonson's) engagement with Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and Juvenal's "Satire VI," as well as how these dual engagements trouble an easy interpretation of *Epicoene*'s satire, see Barish. For a response that challenges the premise of Barish's essay – that Ovidian and Juvenalian "point[s] of view" conflict, and as deployed in *Epicoene*, yield a stylistically perplexing critique of women – see John Ferns, "Ovid, Juvenal, and 'The Silent Woman': A Reconsideration."

distanced from the scene. As described in the previous chapter, Dauphine's uncle Morose is a gentleman of considerable inherited wealth who chooses to live in the heart of London's fashionable Strand despite his aversion to any noise beyond the sound of his own voice. He attempts to shut out the city by padding his walls and barring his doors, and requires his household staff to communicate through silent gestures. Morose desires to disinherit Dauphine by marrying and bearing a new heir, but due to his intolerance of both noise and women, the only appropriate spouse would be a silent woman. Truewit, who serves to benefit from Dauphine's increased wealth and social stature, is mortified when he learns that Morose is courting Lady Epicoene, a passive, whispering gentlewoman. At this point in the play, Truewit does not know that Epicoene has agreed to marry Morose at Dauphine's request as part of a scheme to retain Dauphine's inheritance. In what Truewit believes to be an effort to maintain Dauphine's legal status as heir – and by association, his own social standing – Truewit pays a visit to Morose and attempts to dissuade the gentleman from marrying. Truewit takes advantage of Morose's prejudice against women, using an exaggerated posture of suspicion to construct vivid, misogynistic stereotypes of dissembling women.[26] Truewit's exaggerated misogyny produces the illusion of his knowingness about women and marriage, while signaling his affective distance from those mundane romantic concerns.

In this scene, Truewit relies on urban stereotypes as a form of presumed knowledge about women's socially ambitious, dissembling natures, establishing his credibility with Morose before dominating him with misogynistic beliefs. "I but tell you what you must hear," Truewit justifies, "It seems your friends are careful after your soul's health, sir, and would have you know the

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[26] Ironic exaggeration is among the common repertoire of devices that witty characters use to signal their affective detachment from the objects of their critiques: its self-referential hyperbole registers distance between what the speaker says and what he means.

danger [of marriage]" (2.2.52-5). Truewit falsely legitimizes the knowledge he plans to share, including the necessity of maintaining a suspicious posture toward urban women, by claiming that his information comes from a group of people ("your friends") who share an understanding of the risks of marriage that Morose is excluded from knowing as an unmarried man. Truewit, too, is unmarried, but claims the authority to share this knowledge by claiming that he is "but a messenger" tasked with relaying advice from Morose's supposed "friends," thereby literalizing his emotionally detached, metacritical perspective on Morose's concerns (52). "If after you are married your wife do run away with a vaulter," Truewit continues, "or the Frenchman…, or him that dances the jig, or a fencer," he continues, proliferating adulterous possibilities, "why, it is not [your friends'] fault; they have discharged their consciences when you know what may happen" (56-60). "[W]hat *may* happen" is the space where suspicion flourishes;[27] it is the possibility, rather than the certainty, of adultery and other forms of deception that fuels suspicion. Despite Truewit's claims to prescience, by alluding to "what may happen" after Morose marries – and suggesting that it is not only his happiness and wealth but also his "soul's health" that is at risk – Truewit attempts to activate Morose's fearful, anticipatory attention as the Wit prepares to catalog the risks of marriage.

In an effort to intimidate Morose into adopting a cynical attitude toward any potential bride, Truewit constructs urban stereotypes of women on the marriage market, enabling Morose to suspect, or "to imagine something … undesirable … with insufficient proof or knowledge," by anatomizing the social lives, dressing processes, domestic activity, and dubious morality he attributes to married women ("suspect, v.," *OED*). Truewit proliferates descriptions of women who appear to possess varied, premarital qualities that Morose seeks in a wife, but who are liable

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[27] Italics mine.

to become sources of vexation after marriage: "If she be fair, young, and vegetous," Truewit

begins, "no sweetmeats ever drew more flies; all the yellow doublets and great roses i' the town

will be there," he goads, describing the gallants who would pursue Morose's bride as a swarm of

flies (2.2.62-4). "If rich and that you marry her dowry, not her," Truewit continues, "she'll reign

in your house as imperious as a widow. If noble, all her kindred will be your tyrans. If fruitful,

[...] she must have her doctors, her midwives, her nurses, her longings every hour, though it be

for the dearest morsel of man" (66-71). Truewit presents Morose with different tropes of

desirable women – "fair, young, and vegetous," "rich," "noble," and "fruitful" – but suggests that

marriage subverts this variety, converting individual women into a single type of person: the

dissatisfied and disobedient wife. Truewit builds a sense of foreboding into his descriptions by

reflecting metacritically on the signs of wealth, rank, and beauty that women display, suggesting

that while these qualities might appear to ensure Morose's conjugal bliss, they may actually

guarantee his misery. According to the cynical stereotypes Truewit constructs here, after

marriage, youth and beauty become temptations for adultery; wealth and nobility become

justifications for a woman's domestic authority; and fertility becomes an endless parade of

medical attendants, complaints, and excessive sexual desire (Truewit implies that Morose is not

the sole object of this desire). Regardless of what kind of person a woman seems to be prior to

marriage, Truewit warns that Morose cannot trust appearances; that the role of "wife" – or rather,

the set of urban practices, goods, desires, and relationships he claims comprises that role – will

ultimately eclipse all other identities.

Truewit attempts to rile Morose's suspicion into a paranoia, amplifying the sense of

unpredictability in "what may happen" after Morose marries by rhetorically blurring the

boundaries between possible and certain outcomes. In his characterization of married life,

Truewit relies on the word "if," a conditional term that opens a virtual space of imaginative possibility. His catalog of "ifs" – "If after you are married your wife do run away," "If she be fair, young, and vegetous," "If foul and crooked," "If rich," "If noble," "If fruitful," "If learned," and "If precise" – introduces a list of possible marital futures that Morose has failed to consider. However, rather than maintaining this conditional grammatical format by using subjunctive conjugations such as "would" or "may" to preserve the sense of future possibility, Truewit attaches what he – and the popular stereotypes themselves – frame as inevitable outcomes to these projected futures: "all the yellow doublets and great roses i' the town will be there"; "she'll be with them and buy those doublets and roses"; "she'll reign in your house"; "all her kindred will be your tyrans"; "she must have her doctors, her midwives, her nurses, her longings every hour"; "all your patrimony will be too little for the guests"; "you must be invited to hear her speak Latin and Greek"; "you must feast all the silenced brethren once in three days" (2.2.63-76). By premising his threats of inevitable misery on a principle of possibility, Truewit destabilizes the boundary between certain and projected knowledge, immersing Morose in an affective space where suspicion thrives.

Truewit takes advantage of the temporal and epistemological instability that he constructs by literalizing some of the misogynistic threats he describes. Rather than making a rational appeal by ordering his descriptions of married life into an accessible logic, Truewit's tirade mimics the noisy speech he attributes to wives, and is designed to overwhelm Morose with a sampling of the noise and activity it describes:

> [W]here she must have that rich gown for such a great day, a new one for the next, a
> richer for the third; … have the chamber filled with a succession of grooms, footmen,
> ushers, and other messengers, besides embroiderers, jewelers, tire-women, sempsters,

feathermen, perfumers … and then comes reeking home of vapor and sweat with going

afoot, and lies in a month of a new face, all oil and birdlime, and rises in asses' milk, and

is cleansed with a new fucus. (101-134)

In this catalog, Truewit again reflects metacritically on the components of a lady's dressing

process, anatomizing those elements so that her gender performance becomes a grotesque

inventory of bodily horrors. It is not enough for Morose's imagined wife to have a "rich gown"

for "a great day"; she must have "a new one for the next, a richer for the third" in a series of

increasingly extravagant desires that threaten to overpower Morose's domestic control (101-2).

Each element of her dress and appearance requires attention from a different specialist, whom

she brings out of the London streets and into the privacy of her "chamber." Just as Morose's wife

would fill up his home with "a succession of grooms, footmen, ushers, and other messengers,

besides embroiderers, jewelers, tire-women, sempsters, feathermen, perfumers," and a host of

rancid smells, Truewit fills Morose's ear with a description of each unwanted guest and odor,

bringing the fantasy to life (2.2.103-6). As Truewit overloads Morose with information, the

boundaries between home and city grow less defined: his inventory of rich goods becomes a

critique of profligate household spending; his catalog of guilds- and crafts-people becomes a list

of household staff; and his queasy description of London stench becomes household odor when

Morose's bride walks through the door. Through his sensory-laden caricature of "the wife,"

Truewit suggests that marriage undoes the distinction between a private domestic space and a

public one, thereby relocating Morose's fears of the city to his own home. By emphasizing sheer

volume of language over the style or artistry of those words, Truewit dramatizes what he frames

as the risks of marriage, bringing urban, feminine excess to life through deliberate verbal surfeit,

treating the sensation-averse Morose to a sample of the relentless noise and activity Truewit

warns a married man should expect, and driving him into a semi-verbal frenzy: "Oh, what is my sin, what is my sin?" Morose cries, "Oh, oh! … Gentle sir, ha' you done? Ha' you had your pleasure o' me? I'll think of these things" (2.2.87, 120-129).

Truewit positions himself not merely as an expert in courtship and marriage, but as an oracle-like figure in his apparent prescience regarding Morose's possible marital future, based on his predictions of the "type" of wife Morose's bride will be (the *only* type, he seems to say). Without knowledge of the specific women whom Morose plans to court, Truewit predicts with conviction the negative outcomes of Morose's possible unions by generalizing individual women into predictable types. Truewit subsumes Morose in a hostile, sensory experience of marriage: armed not with legitimate "proof" but rather with a series of misogynistic stereotypes that simulate proof, Truewit frames wifely deception as a certain outcome of marriage. While Truewit's information indicates that marital misery is guaranteed, he also suggests that the specific *manner* of that misery is unpredictable. It is not the logic of this claim that overwhelms Morose's judgment; it is the feeling that it conveys and, perhaps, solicits, which disorients the gentleman. As this and what follows suggests, Truewit's suspicion has a contagious effect: it produces suspicion, even paranoia, in *others*. Truewit's exaggerated warning that it is impossible to know how a woman will change once she is a wife, coupled with the cynical assumption that any change will be for the worse, activates *Morose*'s paranoia of any woman he might desire, court, or interview for that role.[28]

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[28] In her discussion of knowledge as something that *does* rather than something that simply *is*, Sedgwick adopts paranoid reading practices as an example, arguing that paranoia reinforces its own suspicious logic, producing "conceptual feedback loops," wherein paranoia begets further paranoia: paranoia has a "contagioius tropism … toward symmetrical epistemologies" (12, 131). In other words, the paranoid reading practice of one reader solicits a mimetic response (tropism) from other readers to replicate that paranoid ways of knowing, as well as their knowing of paranoia (131). See Sedgwick, especially Chapter 4, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You" (123-151).

Truewit's performance of knowingness in this scene depends on his own personal detachment, not only from Morose's fate (he is "but a messenger"), but from marriage itself. Despite having no experiential or other personal knowledge of marriage, Truewit is able to present himself as an expert in the subject by relying on the cynical presumption that suspicion entails to draw horrifying conclusions about the outcomes of marriage. The conviction that misery is an inevitable outcome of marriage enables Truewit not only to project a sense of all-knowing, social prescience about the structure of the social world that he and Morose share, but also to maintain a protective posture of emotional distance from the miserable scenes he describes ("I but tell you what you must hear"), thereby avoiding his own immersion in the diegetic, sensory experience of marriage that subsumes Morose. By enacting these tenets of the witty persona – the postures of knowingness and urbane detachment – Truewit manipulates the way in which Morose apprehends the women in their milieu, and consequently exerts control over the relationships and romantic plotlines that comprise the play's action from a metacritical vantage.

4.2.3 Epistemological Limitations of Suspicion & Stereotypes

Throughout the play, several male characters attempt to use the mechanisms that Truewit successfully employs in 2.2 – suspicion and misogynistic stereotypes – to socially dominate their neighbors, to perform a sense of unfounded knowingness, and to claim the social authority or status that typically attends instances of knowingness in the play. However, while Truewit relied on suspicion's cynical presumption to access a metacritical perspective on wifely deception, thereby curating a posture of emotionally-detached certainty toward the scenes he described, other characters fail to follow suit; their uses of suspicion invest them more deeply in the emotional, romantic, and other social affairs of their peers. For instance, when Morose first

meets Lady Epicoene, he intentionally adopts a suspicious attitude as he prepares to interview her. In the course of the interview, Morose follows Truewit's example and employs a series of misogynistic stereotypes about city women, against which he measures Lady Epicoene's answers. However, whereas Truewit used his suspicion to draw cynical conclusions while remaining emotionally distanced from the experience of horror that he curated for Morose, Morose fails to maintain Truewit's metacritical, cynical conviction that women dissemble, and allows himself to be swayed by Lady Epicoene's answers. So delighted is Morose to find in her an exact contrast to the prevailing stereotypes that he unwittingly abandons the cynical orientation that gave Truewit the power not only to appear knowing, but also to maintain the emotional detachment and metacritical awareness that enables detection of deception. In doing so, Morose loses access to the emotional detachment he strives to perform, becoming, instead, emotionally invested in Lady Epicoene's responses.

Rather than using suspicion as Truewit and Clerimont do – to identify justifications for the cynical conclusions they have already reached – Morose allows his uncertainty about what kind of woman Lady Epicoene is, and his desire to find her otherwise, to direct his interpretations of her answers. Suspicious of what Lady Epicoene's silence might be hiding, Morose tests the limits of her noiselessness and modesty by conducting an interview in which he pretends to desire characteristics of urban-epicene city wives that he actually despises. However, Lady Epicoene's exact alignment with the stereotype of elite femininity seems to resolve Morose's uncertainty about her "type." Morose is so delighted by Lady Epicoene's soft timbre and timidity, and so immersed in his experience of that pleasure, that he repeatedly drops his cynical orientation and has difficulty controlling his powerful emotional responses. When he orders Lady Epicoene to "Speak out, I beseech you," she responds in a soft whisper that so

surprises Morose that he lets his act slip, revealing his emotional investment in her reply: "O' my judgment," he exclaims, articulating a mild oath that ironically cites the metacritical perspective ("judgment") that his emotional investment threatens, "a divine softness!" (2.5.22-3, 33). "But," he resumes, "can you naturally, lady, [...] think it plausible to answer me by silent gestures[?]" (37-41). When she answers by way of a mute curtsy, Morose again loses his cool: "Excellent! Divine!" he exclaims, "If it were possible she should hold out thus!" (43-4).[29] Rather than maintain his suspicious orientation, Morose is startled out of his affected severity and is quickly satisfied by her replies. Morose's repeated emotional interjections interrupt his own intended detachment, and he is forced to recollect himself after each occasion. When Morose inquires whether Lady Epicoene would see fit to "bury in [her]self with silence" rather than emulate the talkative women at court, she whispers, "I should be sorry else" (56-7, 60). Morose reacts with a degree of joy that overwhelms his ability to muster a posture of feigned disapproval toward her reticence: "That sorrow doth fill me with gladness!" he declares (63). "O Morose, thou art happy above mankind!" he says to himself, before recalling his purpose: "Pray that thou mayst contain thyself" (64-5). Beside himself with glee to have found a woman who "differ[s] from all" others in her apparent alignment with the elite, feminine stereotype, Morose reminds himself to monitor his self-possession ("contain thyself") as he attempts to reclaim his failing posture of emotional detachment (64-5). For a final time, Morose inquires of Epicoene whether she will be able, "with this frugality of speech, to give the manifold, but necessary, instructions" for the design of her clothing and household decor (75-6). When Lady Epicoene gives the passive reply, "I'll leave it to you, sir," Morose's excitement exceeds the bounds of his control a final time: "Admirable

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[29] Although Jonson wrote many of his stage directions into his plays, there is no stage direction indicating whether this line should be delivered as an aside. Whether Morose was so delighted by Epicoene's response that he delivered this line within her earshot or had the presence of mind to defer his relief to a semi-private aside, the earnest enthusiasm of this line invites the audience to laugh at Morose's uncharacteristic animation.

creature!" he exclaims in direct address to Lady Epicoene, "I will trouble you no more. [...] Let me now be bold to print on those divine lips the seal of being mine" (83-5). Once Morose receives the answer he desires, he abandons his cynicism and suspicion, and whatever degree of emotional distance from the scene that those mechanisms may have enabled.

Ultimately, Morose's failure to use suspicion to maintain his emotional distance from Lady Epicoene's responses repositions him as the object of the scene's satire. Morose's immersion in his delighted experience of Lady Epicoene's whispered responses dissolves both the cynical presumption that suspicion entails and the metacritical perspective that suspicion can enable, on which he had relied to identify falsehood or trickery in her answers. As Morose interviews the woman whom he believes will enable him to consolidate his finances, his emotional investment in the scene – his desire for Lady Epicoene to be silent and meek, his delight at finding her so – determines what he knows, or accepts as true, about his future wife. Rather than maintaining the misogynistic conviction that as a woman, Lady Epicoene must be dissembling in her quiet contrast to the city woman stereotype, Morose's own desire to find in her the embodiment of the elite feminine stereotype deceives him into accepting her performance. As a result of his self-deception, his lack of emotional regulation (to say nothing of detachment), his overinvestment in the signs of quiet modesty that Epicoene displays, and his inability to recognize his own folly, Morose unwittingly cedes control of the interpretive domain to Lady Epicoene, and is held up as an object of the scene's implicit ridicule. Significantly, as an urban-epicene character, Morose is not someone whom the play identifies as a Wit, so there is no expectation for him to transcend his immediate experience of pleasure to attend to the metacritical and misogynistic concern that Epicoene might be feeding him answers that he wants

to hear. But there is such an expectation for the Wits, whose sense of knowingness hinges on their ability to maintain that cynical, metacritical perspective.

4.3 Suspicion and the Illusion of Mastery

Characters who are able to assert their beliefs as truths and mobilize those beliefs as if they are a form of certain knowledge are less susceptible to the epistemological and emotional insecurity of *not knowing*, because they have ways to resolve ambiguity by assigning it a sure, if cynical, value, as Clerimont does with Lady Haughty (1.1) and Truewit with women in general (2.2). However, there is a dichotomy between one's *projection* of certainty, which can influence the beliefs of others, and one's *experience* of certainty, which influences one's own beliefs. As Morose's interview with Lady Epicoene demonstrates, by prioritizing one's diegetic *experience* of certainty without maintaining metacritical, emotional distance from that experience, one is liable to accept information that enhances one's feelings of conviction, without questioning its source or veracity.

The previous chapter argued that in *Epicoene*'s final scene, Truewit and Clerimont cross categories: due to their changing relationship to knowingness – that is, for presuming to know more about the makeup of their social milieu than they do – they shift from an urbane-masculine subject position to an urban-epicene one, and are ultimately satirized for the ultimate disclosure of their ignorance. Having detailed the mechanisms of witty knowingness, I explore how suspicion and stereotypes contribute to Truewit and Clerimont's social demotion. Truewit and Clerimont's changing relationship to knowingness is the result of a shift in the way that they engage with suspicion. Earlier in the play, Truewit and Clerimont used suspicion to identify justifications for the cynical conclusions they had already reached, relying on a metacritical understanding of the ways their peer's performances of status contested the forms of gender-

status that the play holds as its ideal. By cultivating cynical ways of feeling and thinking about the women in their milieu *without* needing to know particulars about individual women, these Wits were able to project a sense of knowingness while maintaining their emotional distance from the scenes they described. However, as the play progresses and the two gallants experience more success in their witty schemes, Truewit and Clerimont retain their sense of certainty about their knowledge of women without maintaining the posture of suspicion that facilitated their metacritical perspective and their knowing self-assurance in the first place. Without that suspicious posture and the protective, emotional distance that it enabled, Truewit and Clerimont become immersed in, rather than detached from, the diegetic social concerns of a milieu they claim to disdain. Ultimately, their immersion prevents Truewit and Clerimont from remaining attentive to active threats to their performance of certainty and the two gallants are exposed as pretenders to, rather than masters of, social knowledge. The final scene, which elevates Dauphine's social stature and undermines Truewit and Clerimont's projections of knowingness by surprising them out of their postures of controlled carelessness, suggests that at some point in the play, the gallants' misogyny stops functioning as a prophylactic device.

4.3.1 Truewit & Clerimont's Immersion

For much of the play, Truewit and Clerimont brag about their detailed knowledge of women. In fact, in every scene in which they appear, these men are either speaking to women or circulating information about them. With characteristic suspicion, disdain, and feigned detachment, the Wits share beliefs, cliches, and stories about the seemingly infinite ways that women dissemble and manipulate the men who are foolish enough to pursue them, describing married women's sexual dalliances and flirtations, as well as the ways ladies dress, apply makeup, walk, and position their limbs to disguise their bodies. However, as the Wits shift from

theorizing about women in the first act to interacting with "manifest [women]" – living, breathing members of their urban social sphere – in the second, they unwittingly drop their suspicious orientations and become immersed instead in a confident, pleasurable experience of women's company. Confident in their presumed command over the material, economic, romantic, and social concerns that structure the urban scene, Truewit and Clerimont continue to exert control over their neighbors' beliefs and actions, but they do so without metacritical distance, without suspecting others of attempting to undermine their authority, and without ever entertaining the possibility that they might *not* be in a position of control. The gallants do not realize, for instance, that their experience of the urban scene, and particularly their interactions with Lady Epicoene, are authored in large part by Dauphine.

After all of the warnings and stories of women's dissembling that they have circulated, the Wits' metacritical attention to the possibility of deception seem to take a back seat, replaced by a conviction in their ability to control the diegetic social scene through their supposedly superior knowledge. After Morose and Lady Epicoene marry, Dauphine, Clerimont, and Truewit mobilize a plan to drive the gentleman into a frenzy: they gather an assembly of noisy wedding revelers at his home, goading them into creating a hullabaloo that brings Morose to his wits' end. As they begin to execute their plan, however, rather than heeding their own misogynistic warnings, Truewit and Clerimont – but not Dauphine – partner with the very people they claim should be most worthy of suspicion: the Collegiates and Epicoene.

In his efforts to rile Morose, Truewit asks Haughty to join his cause: "[M]adam," he addresses her, "would but your ladyship help to vex [Morose] a little: you know his disease" (3.6.59-60). Truewit invites Haughty to participate in his scheme, not with an attitude of superiority or distance, but rather by alluding to their shared knowledge of Morose's intolerance

to noise or speech ("you know his disease"). With Centaure's assistance, Haughty nettles Morose by criticizing his unconventional marriage ceremony as a lowbrow event: "You that have sucked the milk of the court," Haughty chides, "been a courtier from the biggin to the night-cap … and you to offend in such a high point of ceremony as this" (72-6). Haughty provokes Morose by framing his quiet, private nuptials as a blight ("[offense]") on his courtly status. "He is a rude groom indeed," Centaure affirms, playing the double meaning of "groom" to further denigrate Morose as a "servant, lackey," and the double meaning of "rude" to suggest that his service might be of a sexual nature (97, 86n97). Truewit builds on the Collegiates' accusation, escalating their insults to threats of injury: "By that light," he addresses Morose, "you deserve to be grafted, and have your horns reach from one side of the island to the other" (98-9). Adopting the sexual/servant frame of the Collegiates' critiques, Truewit puts a violent spin on common cuckold imagery, further diminishing Morose by threatening to graft horns to his head and suggesting that the news of his shame would spread throughout England ("the island"). Truewit's threat is based on a premise that the Collegiates established; in recognition of this dependency, perhaps, Truewit suddenly changes course and attempts to distance himself from the ladies. In an aside to Morose, Truewit double-crosses the Collegiates by offering the gentleman some assurance: "Do not mistake me, sir; I but speak this to give the ladies some heart again, not for any malice to you" (100-102). By framing his dependent threat as support for "the ladies" rather than as "malice to [Morose]," Truewit attempts to distinguish the purpose of his commentary ("to give … heart") from the Collegiates' "malice." However, while Truewit's aside might enhance the *appearance* of his distinction from the ladies' ribbing, his actual dependence on the Collegiates' efforts to execute his manipulations, and his failure to maintain the suspicious, cynical presumption in his partnership with them, suggest that he is invested in, rather than

distanced from, these mundane social concerns. Morose's response, although accepting of

Truewit's authority over the ladies, also registers his sense of Truewit's immersion in the social

scene: "Is this your bravo, ladies?" he asks, implying that the Collegiates are dependent on

Truewit's support, rather than the other way around (103).

Convinced of their social dominance, Truewit and Clerimont unwittingly drop the cynical

presumption that once enabled their emotionally distanced perspectives on and control over the

scenes. In a moment apart from the rest of the party, the gallants pause to reflect on their

successful goading of Morose. While this moment illustrates the gallants' continued capacity for

metacritical reflection, it also demonstrates that they fail to take advantage of that metacritical

capacity to reclaim their emotional distance from the scene by performing a suspicious

evaluation of its social dynamics, as they did earlier in the play.[30] On the contrary, Truewit and

Clerimont use their literal distance from the party to reflect on, and thereby enhance, the diegetic

pleasure that they derive from their social experiences. "Was there ever poor bridegroom so

tormented? or man, indeed?" Truewit laughs, "Sure, he cannot but go to a place of rest after all

this purgatory," he says, joking that Morose must be on the verge of death after the torments

through which he and Clerimont have put him (4.1.1-5). "He may presume it, I think," chimes

Clerimont (6). Having played puppet-master with Morose and the other urban characters, the

Wits take pleasure in the idea that they possess power over Morose akin to the divine. "The

spitting, the coughing, the laughter, the neezing, the farting, dancing, noise of the music, and

[Epicoene's] masculine and loud commanding and urging the whole family, makes him think he

has married a Fury," Truewit continues (7-10). Truewit lists elements of an urban soundscape

that Epicoene and the Collegiates have imported to Morose's domestic space with "masculine"

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[30] See, for example, 1.1.81-133; 2.4.1-80.

presumption, literalizing the picture of married life that Truewit painted for Morose in his earlier

catalog. "And she carries it up bravely," Clerimont adds, admiring Epicoene's efforts toward the

cause (11). "Ay," Truewit agrees, "she takes any occasion to speak: that's the height on't" (12).

Truewit and Clerimont are not merely describing how Epicoene has followed their commands

and requests; they discuss the independent efforts she has taken to aggravate Morose without the

Wits' prompting. However, rather than suspect Epicoene or her improvised involvement of

deceit – something they have warned each other to do throughout the play – the Wits'

interpretation of Epicoene's efforts are guided by the pleasure they experience upon witnessing

Morose's misery, rather than by the cynicism they previously maintained toward women; they

admire her as a collaborator, finding her independent efforts to be the most delightful part of the

scheme ("that's the height on't").

　　In contrast to Truewit and Clerimont's emotional investment in their neighbors' affairs,

when Dauphine enters the scene, he endeavors to retain some of his affective separation.

Dauphine first acknowledges his delight before explicitly attempting to detach himself from

experiencing it: "Oh hold me up a little," he cries upon his entry, "I shall go away i' the jest else"

(18). Dauphine's line mirrors Morose's earlier self-admonishment ("Oh, Morose … Pray that

thou mayst contain thyself" [2.5.63-5]) and ironically underscores two functions of this scene: a

diegetic function for the Wits, and a metadramatic function for the play's satire of the Wits. For

Dauphine, Clerimont, and Truewit, this scene serves to "hold [them] up a little," or bring them

back to themselves, so that they avoid becoming so immersed in the apparent success of their

scheme that they lose their capacity for control of self and others.[31] However, in terms of the

play's satire of characters who believe themselves to have more insight and authority than they

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[31] An editor's gloss suggests that to "die laughing" is an apt contemporary translation of to "go away i' the jest"
(91n18).

possess, this scene sets up Truewit and Clerimont to become primary satirical targets for *failing* to "hold [themselves] up" – that is, for buying into their own confident, misguided sense of informed control. As becomes evident, those two gallants do "go away i' the jest," growing too comfortable with their experience of confident self-assurance and social authority to retain their cynical orientation toward the women in their circle.

Truewit and Clerimont fail to practice their usual forms of misogyny in the final scenes. While they maintain their metacritical capacities, as well as their tendency to stereotype women, the gallants abandon their cynical, suspicious postures. Consequently, they do not *utilize* their metacritical awareness, stereotypes, or other mechanisms to gain emotional distance from the social issues in which they are embedded. On the contrary, Truewit and Clerimont become so certain of their position as directors of the play's social activity, and so deeply invested in their own, socially ambitious schemes, that the people who were formerly objects of their deepest suspicion, even repulsion, become objects of their desire. Having wished "a pox of [Haughty's] autumnal face, her pieced beauty" in the first scene, Clerimont now reverses course: "Methinks the Lady Haughty looks well today, for all my dispraise of her i' the morning. I think I shall come about to thee again, Truewit," he says, referencing Truewit's preference for women who use cosmetic artistry to "repair" or "hide" any physical "defect" (1.1.81; 4.1.28-30, 31-4). Truewit jumps at this opportunity to showcase his authority as a connoisseur of women's dressing processes, launching into four distinct speeches amounting to 69 lines of prose that stereotype women according to how they prepare their bodies for public scrutiny, and describe how men can coerce different "types" of women into sleeping with them. "On what courtly lap hast thou late slept, to come forth so sudden and absolute a courtling," Dauphine exclaims, suspicious not of Truewit's motives to dominate women, but rather of his source of knowledge

(122-23). "Good faith, I should rather question you, that are so heark'ning after these mysteries," Truewit retorts, adopting a suspicious stance as a defensive posture against Dauphine's inquiries. "I begin to suspect your diligence, Dauphine," Truewit prods, suggesting that Dauphine's attention is motivated by something dubious. "Speak, art thou in love in earnest?" (124-26). Suspicion reemerges in this moment as Truewit and Dauphine attempt to settle a power struggle related to differences in knowledge. However, with great irony, the gallants direct their suspicion not toward the women whom Truewit and Clerimont have identified as deceptive, but rather toward each other. This moment of suspicion is short lived, a flash in the pan that Dauphine extinguishes by providing the information Truewit seeks: "Yes, by my troth, am I [in love]; 'twere ill dissembling before thee" (127). Once Dauphine makes his admission, providing all three Wits with access to the same information, the power dynamic appears to equalize. Truewit immediately drops his suspicious stance to wonder, "With which of 'em, I pray thee?" Despite his best efforts to avoid "go[ing] away i' the jest," Dauphine suggests that he is not distanced from the urban scene, but rather appreciatively embedded within it: "With all the collegiates," he replies (129).

Whether Dauphine is telling the truth about being in love with "all the collegiates," confesses it ironically,[32] or strategically admits to an attraction to divert attention away from his larger scheme, he does not allow his appreciation of the unfolding scene to distract him from his broader goal of reclaiming his position as Morose's heir. Dauphine's focus on the scheme to reclaim his inheritance – a plotline that provides the structure for the play and defines the

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[32] In "Jonson's Urbane Gallants: Humanistic Contexts for *Epicoene*," David Kay posits that Dauphine's claim that "''twere ill dissembling before thee'" and his subsequent admission that he loves the Collegiates "is too extreme to be plausible," especially "in light of his failure to reveal Epicoene's true identity to his friends" (261). Kay argues that Dauphine's admission of love should be interpreted as an "ironic pose" that maintains his position of urbane distance from the scene (260).

meaning of much of the social activity within it – grants him a metacritical awareness that all the other characters lack. By remaining attentive to risks of possible deception that could undermine his scheme, Dauphine remains at least partially abstracted from the action at the metacritical level as he consciously directs his own and others' actions – including Truewit and Clerimont's – from a point of affective remove.[33] He refrains, for example, from participating in Clerimont and Truewit's final schemes to feed Latin phrases to Cutbeard and Captain Otter, to encourage Daw and La Foole to lie about sleeping with Epicoene, or to fuel the Collegiates' anger at Morose on Epicoene's behalf.[34] Rather than becoming absorbed in these activities at the diegetic level, which have the local goal of vexing Morose, Dauphine capitalizes on them in the play's final scene, using their impact on Morose to achieve his pecuniary and social advantage.

4.3.2 Dauphine's Misogyny

Dauphine plays a subtler, and far more complicated role than the other gallants in articulating the play's misogyny. Because he neither takes additional efforts to display his urbane knowingness (a la Truewit), nor puts himself into situations that require him to recoup his posture of knowingness (a la Clerimont), there are very few scenes in which Dauphine explicitly articulates witty misogyny. In fact, this is the reason for his ultimate success: rather than drawing on misogynistic suspicion or stereotypes to ridicule others and enhance his *feelings* of superiority, Dauphine conducts his misogyny through proxies, enabling him to remain

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[33] For an examination of the performativity of identity in *Epicoene*, and of Truewit and Dauphine's self-performance in particular, see Eric Dunnum, "Dauphine Was Right: Masques, the Authenticity of (Un)Performed Identity, and the Two Prologues of Epicene."

[34] In fact, Dauphine chides Truewit for playing too active a role in Cutbeard and Captain Otter's farce of legal and religious counsel. Truewit grows so angry with Captain Otter's mistaken use of Latin, that he threatens him with physical harm: "*Matrimonium*?" he fumes, "We shall have most unmatrimonial Latin with you: *matrimonia*, and be hanged" (5.3.180-1). Dauphine interjects to scold, "You put 'em out, man," suggesting that Truewit will "make them forget their words" with his corrections (182, 151n182). With a less riled perspective than Truewit's, Dauphine tries to quell the other man's angry interference to enable the action to proceed.

emotionally and, sometimes, literally distanced from the urban scene and to exert greater control over the other characters in consequence. Through the use of Truewit, Clerimont, and Lady Epicoene as proxies, Dauphine steps into an authorial position from which he can design and orchestrate, rather than react to, the events and social dynamics that construct *Epicoene*'s culminating hierarchy. By conducting much of his scene-level involvement through proxies, Dauphine avoids becoming immersed in the urban scene or his experience of control, and is able to execute his wit and misogyny from a metacritical vantage.

Dauphine's metacritical misogyny is legible in the figure of Epicoene, whom he trains to perform two distinct stereotypes of women; indeed, that Dauphine schools Epicoene in *two* stereotypes of women suggests that Dauphine sees these versions of womanhood as performances that can be strategically deployed. As readers of the play or of the previous chapter will know, Lady Epicoene is actually a "gentleman's son" whom Dauphine hired, kept, and trained in the behaviors of a lady over the six months leading up to her first encounter with Morose. However, as is evident in Epicoene's comportment over the course of the play, Dauphine does not train the boy in the behaviors of *a* lady; he trains him in *two sets* of behaviors that are affiliated with the category of woman, which the boy codifies, through their enactment, as distinct stereotypes of the ideal and the shrewish woman. Before they are wed, Epicoene appears to embody the stereotype of ideal femininity: she is silent, passive, and accepting of Morose's control.[35] Through the proxy of the young boy, Dauphine exploits Morose's expectations of "woman" as Epicoene silently seduces the gentleman, whose delight at finding a woman who can be easily categorized according to a predefined stereotype supersedes the

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[35] Although we do not have access to dialogue that proves that Dauphine directed her to act thus, his fury at Truewit's interference in Morose's marital plans suggests that Dauphine expected Epicoene to behave in a way that would successfully seduce his noise- and woman-hating uncle.

cynical bent of his suspicions. Epicoene presents such a convincing portrait of elite femininity

that he is given [temporary] legal status as Morose's wife. By coaching the boy to embody the

gestures, manner, and courtesies of a silent and obedient woman, Dauphine demonstrates how

these qualities become falsely codified as signs of a particular gender-status category: the

stereotype of elite femininity.

But it appears that Dauphine has coached the gentleman's son in the comportment of a

second stereotype, too: that of the shrewish, urban-epicene city wife.[36] Once Morose and

Epicoene marry, Epicoene begins not only to speak, but to use her voice to chide and order

Morose about, and to mock him for his expectations of the elite, feminine ideal: "Why, did you

think you had married a statue?" she asks, "or a motion only? one of the French puppets with the

eyes turned with a wire? or some innocent out of the hospital, that would stand with her hands

thus, and a plaice-mouth, and look upon you?" (3.4.34-8). Epicoene's disavowal of the elite

stereotype's central qualities – passive ("a statue," "plaice-mouth," "with her hands thus"), pliant

("a motion"), and vulnerable to male control ("turned with a wire") – and her enactment of the

speech and manner of the shrewish stereotype, prompt Morose to acknowledge that she is not the

elite lady of his ideal. She is, rather, a "manifest woman" (3.4.39) – that is, a person who so

thoroughly fulfills his expectations of the stereotype of the shrewish city wife that her identity as

a woman is "evident" or "obvious," "[c]learly revealed to the eye, mind, or judgement [sic]"

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[36] As is the case for the elite feminine stereotype, it is impossible to prove one way or the other whether Dauphine actually coached Epicoene in the behaviors of the city wife stereotype. However, given that there is no scene in which Dauphine rebukes Epicoene for shifting tack, and that the change in Epicoene's behavior brings about Morose's urgent desire for divorce, it seems likely that Epicoene enacts behavior previously agreed upon with Dauphine. For an alternative interpretation, see Simone Chess, who attributes the change in Epicoene's behavior to the boy himself (especially p. 83). Simone Chess, "Crossdressed Brides and the Marriage Market: *A Mad World, My Master, Epicoene*, and 'Phylotus and Emelia," esp. p. 83; and Samantha Dressel, "'Were I but a man as others are': Secrecy and Gender on the Renaissance Stage."

("manifest," *OED*).[37] This moment shows that Morose experiences Epicoene's shift as proof of her deceptiveness, but it also suggests that he understands only her *initial* performance of elite femininity, and not her subsequent personation of the city wife stereotype, to be an act of dissembling. Simone Chess has shown how Epicoene's shift in behavior, in literalizing the deception that forms the basis of the city wife stereotype, ironically wins the trust of Morose and the other characters in her gender identity – i.e. the belief that she is a "manifest woman."[38] It is this trust that enables Dauphine's re-inheritance and rise to power: by literalizing two misogynistic stereotypes via proxy, Dauphine manipulates his neighbors' fears and certainties about the category of women, causing Morose to believe that he has "married a fury," and prompting him to seek any means to break the marriage.

While Truewit and Clerimont allow their feelings of confidence to supersede their need for continued suspicion or caution, as their metacritical pause in 4.1 and their surprise at Epicoene's final anagnorisis show, Dauphine maintains his protective posture of emotional distance until he secures material forms of privilege. Even though he *actually* possesses comprehensive knowledge about his circle of acquaintances and, thus, the position of greater power, Dauphine does not allow excitement or confidence to influence his actions. Instead, he maintains a posture of affective detachment by relying on proxies and suspicion to distance himself from Morose's social quandary in an attempt to win his uncle's trust. In the final scene, Dauphine chides Morose's other guests for raising a clamor, before scolding Truewit and Clerimont for encouraging them to do so: "gentlemen, I begin to suspect you for having parts with 'em," he says, suggesting that he is just discovering their involvement in the taxing of

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[37] As Chess notes, "As soon as Epicoene and Morose are married, the new bride transforms not from woman back to boy, but from mute fiancée to shrewish wife" (83).

[38] For analyses of how Lady Epicoene's performance of a stereotypical city wife – loquacious, authoritative, and socially ambitious – convinces Morose and the other characters of her identity as a "manifest woman," see Chess.

Morose (142-3). Although Dauphine need not suspect the Wits – he knows that they are entirely, and not just "part[ially]," responsible for the ado in Morose's home – he makes a show of his suspicion in front of Morose to suggest that he is uninvolved in his friends' hijinks.

With the protective posture of emotional distance in place, Dauphine begins to capitalize on Morose's distress, converting his manipulations-by-proxy into a form of material privilege. "Sir, will it please you hear me?" he addresses his uncle (143-4). Using Truewit's earlier rhetorical strategy, Dauphine begins to negotiate his conditions for facilitating his uncle's annulment by using the term "if" to shift Morose from his immediate experience of misery into a realm of conditional possibility for his liberated future: "If I free you of this unhappy match, absolutely and instantly after all this trouble, and almost in your despair now," he says, "what shall I hope for or deserve of you?" (151-156). Desperate for a release from the sensory overwhelm that characterizes his experience of married life, Morose offers to give Dauphine any sum that will manifest the conditional future that Dauphine offers: "Oh, what thou wilt, nephew!" he says, relinquishing his control; "Make thine own conditions," he continues, "My whole estate is thine. Manage it, I will become thy ward" (157, 160-1). Morose offers to swap financial and social positions with his nephew – to provide Dauphine not only with his "whole estate," but also, through that estate, with control over Morose who will become his ward. "Nay, sir, I will not be so unreasonable," Dauphine replies, setting up his subsequent request to appear, by contrast, reasonable: "You know I have long been a suitor to you, uncle, that out of your estate, […] you would allow me but five hundred during life, and assure the rest upon me after" (164-7). Unaware of the deception that his nephew undertook to bring him to this point, Morose seems pleased with Dauphine's proposed terms as an alternative to complete disenfranchisement: "Where is the writing?" he exclaims, "I will seal to it, that, or to a blank, and write thine own

conditions" (175-6). Morose's lines underscore the relationship that the play repeatedly establishes between heightened emotion – here, emotional distress – and social powerlessness by offering for a second time to give Dauphine more than what he explicitly requested. "I will subscribe to anything, and seal to what thou wilt, for my deliverance. Thou art my restorer," Morose attests, before signing the contract that Dauphine proffers. With Morose's signature, Dauphine successfully converts his elevated social authority – derived from his misogynistic constructions, his manipulations-by-proxy, and his structural knowledge of the play's social dynamics – into a form of status that is substantiated by inherited land and wealth, and thereby sanctioned under the older system of hereditary status.

Certain, now, of his superior social status and his secure financial future, Dauphine has no need to maintain his emotional or epistemological distance. He begins to disclose the knowledge that enabled his rise to wealth and power, revealing to the other characters that the cultural beliefs they held about gender and status were misplaced, oversimplified, and chauvinistically affiliated with the category of "woman" – and that Dauphine exploited those beliefs for his personal gain. "Then here is your release, sir," Dauphine addresses Morose, removing Epicoene's wig: "you have married a boy: a gentleman's son that I have brought up this half year at my great charges, and for this composition which I have now made with you," he reveals (188-191). Dauphine's information invites the other characters to acknowledge the falsity of their own assumptions about the structure of their social world – that neither their convictions about Epicoene's gender identity nor about gender categories broadly writ were founded. By revealing the play's primary dissembler to be a young boy, Dauphine demonstrates how he has played with his peers' expectations about what constitutes femininity and the category of woman. By using the "gentleman's son" to literalize some of the cultural beliefs about women

that misogynistic stereotypes index, Dauphine *abstracts* those beliefs, undermining their social purchase as ways to categorize people along gender lines. Truewit and Clerimont were so busy suspecting women of deception and circulating beliefs about the relationship between trickery and femininity that they failed to entertain the idea that dissembling, so central to their understanding of the category of women, is not unique to women – men can dissemble, too.

4.4 Conclusion

As the last chapter argued, *Epicoene* satirizes all characters who presume to know more about the composition of their social world than they do; this chapter has demonstrated that the mechanisms by which two of the most knowing characters perform their knowingness – misogynistic suspicion and stereotypes – become the means of self-deception. Truewit and Clerimont had previously used suspicion and stereotypes of women to reach the cynical but certain conclusion that women are fundamentally deceptive, to rely on that cynical presumption to detach emotionally from the scenes in which they were embedded, and to thereby access a metacritical awareness that enabled them to manipulate the staged action and claim a position of knowing superiority over their peers. However, over the course of the play, this dynamic shifts. While Truewit and Clerimont continue to use misogyny to claim a sense of confidence in their knowledge of their milieu, the gallants adopt that posture of conviction *without* engaging suspicion and stereotypes to remain emotionally detached from the urban scene. By applying their suspicion toward women in a way that enhances their sense of certainty and self-assurance about the threats that women pose to them, *without* maintaining their affectively detached, metacritical attentiveness to the forms of dissembling and performance that they classify as threats, Truewit and Clerimont deceive themselves into thinking that they are in control when they are not.

This dynamic demonstrates the ways in which *Epicoene*'s satiric knowledge relations reinforce the ideologies that structure its critique. *Epicoene* maintains a recursive, self-fulfilling logic between misogynistic belief, paranoia, and performances of wit: misogyny, particularly in its affective and attitudinal forms (e.g. suspicion, fear, disdain, disgust), contributes to male characters' paranoia about women's potential deception and usurpation of normatively masculine powers and privileges – we observed this paranoiac effect in Morose when he hears Truewit's tirade against marriage in 2.2. Paranoia, in turn, triggers male characters to perform greater control or dominance over their worlds to stave off possible appropriations of the power and privileges that they see as theirs – Morose's attempt to feign disapproval of Epicoene during their interview is suggestive of this desire for control, as is Clerimont's scorn for Lady Haughty after she rejects him, and Truewit's chiding of the Braveries and Collegiates for their ignorance after he, too, learns of Epicoene's true identity. Completing the circular logic, performances of witty mastery, particularly in their prophylactic displays of critical feeling toward women, reinforce the misogyny that fuels this cycle – again, consider Clerimont's critiques of Lady Haughty and Truewit's of all the Collegiates. *Epicoene*'s satire simultaneously depends on and bolsters misogyny, as well as its patriarchal ideal of masculinity as a form of domination; suspicion and paranoia are the critical orientations that animate movements between fearful beliefs about women and the desire to dominate them.

Truewit and Clerimont's suspicion of women is misdirected; their performance of urbanity was not undermined by dissembling women, as they feared, but rather by a boy whose womanly pretense they substantiated with their own assumptions about what kinds of people, speech, and activity threaten the social hierarchy from which they derive their male privilege. Whereas their fears about how dissembling can undermine their knowledge and social control

are founded, their misogynistic projection of these fears onto women is misdirected. The gallants' presumptions about things and people they don't fully understand (e.g. women's sexual desire, marital ambition, and cosmetic artistry) guide their interpretations of those phenomena, leading them to draw inaccurate conclusions that undermine their own social authority. The Wits' presumptions are cultural beliefs about the category of woman that Dauphine leverages first to construct an illusion of ideal femininity, with which he seduces Morose, and then of the city wife, with which he persuades his neighbors of Epicoene's gender identity as a "manifest woman." By strategically enacting these stereotypes, Dauphine lulls his peers into a false sense of complacency in their uncomplicated understandings of the gendered social categories into which they and their neighbors fit (Bravery, Wit, gentleman, lady, city wife, Collegiate, etc.) (3.4.39).[39]

In contrast to Truewit and Clerimont, Dauphine retains the detached, metacritical perspective that his misogyny affords him, and avoids becoming immersed in his social milieu, in part by conducting the effort of his social ambition through proxies – including Truewit, Clerimont, and Epicoene. Through the use of Epicoene's proxy, Dauphine remains both literally and emotionally distanced from his scene-level social machinations, enabling him to focus on the broader, metadramatic power dynamics that Epicoene influences through his gender performance: Morose's line of inheritance and the play's masculine social hierarchy. Ultimately, when the moment arrives in which Dauphine serves to gain by revealing Epicoene's gender identity, he cashes in on the secret to advance his social position, surprising the other Wits and undermining their projections of knowingness in the process. By maintaining the detached, metacritically knowing conventions of the witty, urbane-masculine persona, Dauphine is able to

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[39] See Chess.

secure the material and social forms of male privilege that witty gallants covet: inheritance (material wealth) and social power, which he uses to shame his witty friends for their presumption in fulfillment of the play's satire.

The final scene demonstrates both how misogyny in this play functions as an essential feature of gallant wit, and at the same time that the stereotypes that misogyny attributes to women are, at best, a social performance rather than an intrinsic quality. It also shows how gallant wit bolsters social hierarchies that are based on the imputed relationship between masculinity, knowingness, emotional distance, and social authority. Gallant wit, so often staged as the voice of the play's satire, is not an inherent, knowledge-based competency that sets clever and innovative men apart from their milieu; rather, it is a knowledge practice that involves mobilizing extant cultural beliefs to cultivate the *feeling* of certainty about the social structures and categories that organize one's world, and the *appearance* (manner or style) of carelessness that might attend the experience of social and cultural fluency. Misogyny represents one set of extant cultural beliefs on which witty gallants draw. Misogyny functions in this play as a series of attitudes (suspicion, as well as scorn, disdain, and contempt) and beliefs (codified as stereotypes) that masquerade as knowledge about women, which one can deploy *strategically* to manipulate the ways in which others perceive and interact with the people in their worlds. By making use of misogynistic epistemological devices like stereotypes and strategies like suspicion, a gallant can construct the illusion of self-assured, careless knowingness and thereby bring himself closer to the ideal of urbane masculinity; however, that witty, masculine construction will only ever be a performance of status. Despite the many examples in *Epicoene* of wit's function as a strategy of social advancement, Jonson's play seems to suggest that wit alone is a meager, unreliable alternative to the male privilege that attends inherited wealth and

status: Dauphine claims the prized position at the top of his social hierarchy because he uses

witty misogyny not as an end in itself but rather as a means of accessing other, material forms of

privilege.[40]

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[40] This claim resituates an observation that Jean Howard makes in *Theatre of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642*: "cultural sophistication of the sort epitomized by Dauphine was not simply an end in itself; in his case it was deployed against the less sophisticated Morose to capture his fortune" (211). In making this claim, Howard does not specifically examine its implications for the play's satire; by considering the satirical function of Dauphine's "cultural sophistication," my study demonstrates how Dauphine's ability to "capture [Morose's] fortune" is enabled by his "sophisticat[ed]" – that is, metacritical – reification of misogyny.

Epilogue

Like many other places distinguished by significant social change, early modern London was characterized by a culture of critique: critiques of religion,[1] of theatricality,[2] of monarchical authority,[3] of consumerism,[4] of gender and social order,[5] and of countless other social realities proliferated in the city.[6] Critique always entails affects, and the affects of critique have much to tell us about the social beliefs and ideals that organize cultural notions of social difference. However, when irony is the primary affect of critique, meaning becomes more difficult to discern and interpret; one cannot rely on a literal interpretation of the sentiments or attitudes that criticism conveys. This difficulty is satire's distinctive challenge, as well as its draw as a form of cultural criticism: satire engages irony and other rhetorical and affective strategies that often *obscure,* rather than clarify, the central thrust of its critical meaning. What is it about this strategy of critique that has appealed to writers across time, region, language, and cultural context? Why might satire be the tool that writers adopt to critique the social issues through which they are actively living, rather than a more forthright form of commentary? What, exactly,

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[1] See, for instance, Martin Marprelate, *The Martin Marprelate Tracts: A Modernized and Annotated Edition*.

[2] See, for instance, Steven Gosson, *The School of Abuse*; and Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*.

[3] For an examination of accounts and critiques of royal authority in contemporary drama, see Jessica Dyson, "Shaking the Foundations of Royal Authority: From Divine Right to the King's Will."

[4] For an overview of critiques of consumerism and sartorial law, see Amanda Bailey, "Monstrous Manner: Clothing Law and the Early Modern Theater."

[5] For an overview of early modern pamphlet culture and critiques of gender, see Marcus Nevitt, *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England, 1640–1660*. For primary source examples of gender critiques, see, for instance, anonymous, *Hic Mulier: Or, The Man-Woman*; Jane Anger, *Jane Anger Her Protection for Women*; Thomas Dekker, *The Gull's Hornbook*; Emilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*;

[6] See Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*.

does satire *do?* What kind of meaning does it produce, and how does it achieve its supposed

aims? And can satire function as a tool of social change? It is now possible to answer, and to

develop some informed conjectures about, these questions that my Introduction initially posed.

What does satire do*?*

   "The Affects of Critique: Women and Satire in Early Modern England" demonstrates that

satire produces meaning about epistemologically ambiguous social phenomena by staging the

object of satire in an ironic context that brings larger systems of meaning to bear on the object

and undermines straightforward interpretations of it. I have argued that this strategy of satiric

meaning-making constitutes a critical methodology – that is, a system of methods and

mechanisms that writers deploy within other genres to make sense of, or to assign meaning to,

social ambiguitues via affective and performative means.

What kind of meaning does it produce?

   Satiric meaning takes the form of attitudes and affects that both derive from and construct

cultural scripts such as stereotypes, social and literary tropes, cliches, and other social beliefs. As

my chapters show, it is common for early modern dramatic satire to avoid leveling an explicit

critique of its object in favor of implicit mockery that takes the form of the ironized attitudes and

affects that characters perform toward the object. In other words, rather than explicitly

articulating its critical thesis, satire will typically provide models for *how to feel* (or how *not* to

feel) about the ambiguous social phenomenon it seeks to mock. This, perhaps, is one reason for

satire's opacity: interpreting affect is a subjective matter, and multiple interpreters can yield as

many interpretations. There are two questions that scholarly interpreters can ask to facilitate their

analyses of particularly challenging satirical texts: What are the text's prevailing social ideologies? And what relationship do the critical affects have with those ideological frameworks?

Dramatic satire represents the issues it critiques as ironic tensions between the social or generic ideologies that organize the play-world and characters' social experience of those ideals. For instance, in Shakespeare's *Ado* and *Shrew*, the "issue" of disobedient wives is represented as an ironic tension between, on the one hand, patriarchal ideals, which are imposed on characters by comedic convention, and on the other hand, female characters' violent experiences of those conventions; in Jonson's *Epicoene*, the "issue" of London's mutable social hierarchy is represented as an ironic tension between the social *ideals* that England's hereditary system of status formation indexes and the social *practices* that London's emergent, performance-based system of urban status formation entails. Dramatic satire "critiques" the social issues that these tensions represent by staging characters who express exaggerated feelings toward those issues, modeling powerful attitudes for audiences. By staging *conflicting* attitudes over the course of the dramatic action, and by refraining from resolving those conflicting perspectives in their final scenes, dramatic satire places the onus of interpretation – of resolving the ironic and logical tensions – on the viewing audience.

How does satire achieve its supposed aims (i.e. how does satire produce meaning)?

With this understanding of satiric meaning as the attitudes and affects that a text makes available to an external interpreter, we can understand satire as an inherently performative mode of meaning production. This observation marks my project's main contribution to early modern performance and theater studies: "The Affects of Critique" proffers an understanding of satire as

an affective mode of knowledge production that relies on performative irony to convey its meaning. Because textual irony – irony that is available in a script or play-text – is not always nor easily legible, it would behoove a reader of dramatic satire to consider how an ironic *delivery* or *performance* of a line might alter its meaning, and thus its function for the play's satire. The fact that such lines appear in plays that have not widely been accepted as satirical, including the two Shakespearean comedies I examine in Chapter 1, may suggest that satiric meaning-making mechanisms may comprise a more prominent feature of the early modern theatrical tradition than has been recognized. The porous boundaries that the early modern theater upholds between between stage and city, between literary roles and social types, and between the diegesis and the audience's experience of the plot, are ripe for the kinds of equivocal, self- and extra-referential critiques that satire makes by enacting particular ways of feeling and thinking toward staged phenomena that double as critiques of offstage referents.

In addition to acknowledging that satire is an inherently performative mode, "The Affects of Critique" observes that satire produces meaning at two levels of scale: satire self-consciously stages behavior and other social phenomena at the diegetic level, which it explicitly evaluates (or makes available for evaluation) from an alternative, metacritical perspective. Because the alternative, metacritical perspective can become the object of satire, it is crucial to evaluate the diegetic and metacritical levels of meaning synthetically, rather than assuming that the metacritical perspective represents the text's overarching satiric critique. My dissertation has examined several meaning-making mechanisms that satiric stage plays employ to bridge or move between the diegetic and metacritical levels of significance, including irony (e.g. ironic distance, dramatic irony), abstraction, social and literary categories of identity (e.g. stereotypes), metacritical awareness, and suspicion. These mechanisms entail attitudes and particular affects

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(such as irony) that produce tensions between the diegetic and metacritical levels of significance,

bringing them into dialectical relationship.

As Chapter 3 describes, satiric meaning emerges by way of circular knowledge relations

between the diegetic and metacritical levels of significance – that is, through self-reinforcing

logic in which a text's critique reifies the ideological system that produces the need for critique

in the first place. For instance, a satirical play will stage a behavior at the diegetic level, in an

ideological context that implicitly frames the behavior as transgressive at the metacritical level;

when staged characters explicitly critique the behavior, they convey attitudes and affects that

bolster the ideological system that undergirds perceptions of the behavior, thereby feeding the

cycle. My dissertation observes, in particular, how patriarchy and misogyny are implicated in

these early modern satiric knowledge relations. "The Affects of Critique" has defined misogyny

as the imposition of belief (i.e. that women are inherently inferior and/or dangerous to men)

masquerading as a form of knowledge about women; I have argued that misogyny circulates in

the form of particular affects and attitudes, including suspicion, disdain, scorn, indifference, and

disgust. When these attitudes are projected toward women and non-normatively masculine men,

they reinforce patriarchal ideals through the implication and treatment of such figures as

inherently deceitful, usurping, and morally or physically repugnant. As Chapter 3 demonstrates,

Misogyny's affective and attitudinal forms contribute to male characters' paranoia about

women's potential deception and usurpation of normatively masculine powers and privileges;

paranoia, in turn, enjoins male characters to perform greater control or dominance to stave off

possible appropriations of the power and privileges that they see as theirs; performances of witty

mastery, particularly in their prophylactic displays of critical feeling toward women, reify the

misogyny that fuels this cycle. The effect of this circular logic is satire's reinforcement of the

ideological system that organizes perceptions of the target, thereby maintaining, in this case, the subordinate position of women and non-normatively masculine men.

Why might satire be the tool that writers adopt to critique the social issues through which they are actively living, rather than a more forthright form of commentary?

My answers to this question are largely conjectural, albeit based on my dissertation's analysis of satire's method of meaning production. The first concerns the benefits of satire's opacity: by couching critiques in the possibility of other meanings, the satirist may be seen as protecting themself against censure or greater punishment.[7] There was a risk for early modern satirists of being fined, jailed, or executed for their work, particularly for their critiques of individuals and royal authority. Ben Jonson, for instance, was repeatedly imprisoned for his satirical plays, including *The Isle of Dogs* (a "lost" play) and *Eastward Ho*.[8] Irony and other forms of equivocal language offered one way for cultural critics to divert detection of their critiques *as* critique, and so avoid punitive action**.**

The second possible reason that writers might turn to satire to critique the issues of their day is that satire enables writers to explore the social contours of an idea by trying on and projecting different attitudes toward it through ridicule. As I have described, satirical texts are structured according to particular social, generic, and cultural ideologies that provide a predictable and stable frame through which a writer might experiment with various expressions of feeling. In the three plays examined in this dissertation, for instance, those organizing

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[7] For more on the deliberate use of irony and amphibology to avoid detection of critique, see Steven Mullaney, "Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason." In this book chapter, Mullaney discusses the function of amphibology, or equivocal language, to obscure meaning in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; Mullaney reads the play alongside early modern treason cases, in which he identifies deliberate uses of amphibology to deflect accusations or punishment of treason.

[8] See Sean McEvoy, "Life and Culture"; and Suzanne Gossett, "Marston, Collaboration, and 'Eastward Ho!'"

ideologies and structures include patriarchy, comedic form, and hereditary status; the "ideas" that Shakespeare and Jonson explore within these frames include how comedy might *feel* for women who are trapped in abusive relationships; what society values when gender and status are matters of performance rather than inherent qualities; and how one might strategically author one's own status, rather than fashioning oneself in reaction to the changing trends and times. Satire's organizing structures function to establish expectations of character, relationships, and plot, through (or against) which on- and off-stage interpreters evaluate characters' conduct. A satiric play will explore the possible social implications of transgressive conduct or other phenomenon by staging it in ways that highlight and critique its contrast to the ideals established by the frame – *without* threatening to destabilize the frame itself. Indeed, as satire's circular knowledge relations show, critique serves to *bolster* the framing ideology. Thus, rather than using the socially transgressive conduct to imagine alternative cultural ideals and relations, in staging ironized ridicule of the conduct, satire illuminates the ways in which the prevailing ideological system (for instance, patriarchy) shapes opinion, belief, identity, and relations in the play. Satire may constitute an attractive form of cultural commentary for certain critics for the ways it enables one to apprehend the contours of the systems of belief that organize one's perplexing social world. By railing against social transgressions, satirists can cultivate deeper understandings, if not of the specific ways in which social ideology structures experience, then of the affective meanings that social ideology appends to forms of conduct that transgress those ideals.

Can satire function as a tool of social change?

If we define social change as a broad-scale shift in the ideals or values that a society holds, then my sense is that satire, like any other form of literature or cultural commentary, can *contribute* to social change by providing opportunities for individual interpreters to critically assess their own beliefs. However, I think it would be a mistake to credit satire with any special, causal relationship to social change. Recall that one of the mechanisms through which satire produces meaning is abstraction, or the effect of apprehending something (e.g. an idea, convention, habit, or value) independently of its context. Through abstraction, satire can reveal to audiences the norms and beliefs that are falsely naturalized as immutable characteristics of society and culture. Moments of abstraction *can* galvanize interpreters to take a critical look at their beliefs and, perhaps, to reassess their assumptions.[9]

However, while an interpreter's critical reassessment of their own assumptions and beliefs is a possible outcome of satire, I do not view it as a characteristic one. In fact, due to satire's circular knowledge relations, I suspect that it is more common for satire to reify than to change preexisting ways of feeling and thinking about the objects of its critique. As previously described, satire critiques socially transgressive phenomena, often using popular stereotypes and cultural references to do so; these critiques convey beliefs and attitudes that bolster (or mock) the organizing ideology, often with hyperbolic affect. Audiences who "get" the references or who share the values articulated by the satire may feel affirmed in their perspectives, while those who maintain alternative beliefs may feel not only that their values have been belittled, but also that they, themselves, have been derided for holding those beliefs. In this way, rather than

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[9] For instance, when Dauphine uses a gentleman's son to literalize misogynistic stereotypes, he abstracts the cultural beliefs about women that those stereotypes index, undermining their social purchase as ways to categorize people along gender lines; through Epicoene's anagnorisis, he makes these abstractions available for the staged *and* viewing audiences. Some members of the viewing audience might not give this moment of abstraction a second thought, but it might catalyze others to consider *why* Epicoene's anagnorisis caught them off guard and, perhaps, to reevaluate the beliefs that they hold about gender.

constructing connections *across* ideological boundaries, satire exploits those boundaries, producing "in" and "out" groups: those who are aligned with the satiric perspective and those who are excluded from, opposed to, and mocked by it.

Satire is not a methodology that is aimed at fostering shared ways of feeling or mutual understanding across belief systems. It is, rather, one for instantiating divisions, as its refusal to resolve affective and logical tensions suggests.

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