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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

A Bag of Tricks: Literary Tricksters as Mediators of Changing Gender Roles
in Early Modern London

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Interdisciplinary Humanities

by

Rhea Riegel

Committee in charge:

Professor Susan Amussen, Chair
Professor Katherine Steele Brokaw
Professor Gregg Camfield
Professor Sholeh Quinn

2020

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2020

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Courses Taught

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Advanced Shakespeare (1 section)

Discovery of the political, religious, and social contexts that shaped Shakespeare’s plays.

Emily Dickinson and Friends (1 section)

Examination of the poems of Emily Dickinson; for majors.

History of Colonial Latin America (1 section)

Discussion section focusing on use of primary sources to gain an understanding of the colonization of Latin America; for majors and non-majors.

Introduction to Philosophy (2 sections)

Introduction to the main areas of philosophy using classic and contemporary sources, with a consideration of central problems in philosophy; for non-majors.

Jane Austen and Popular Culture (1 section)

Explores Austen’s contribution to literary and cultural history and her enduring popularity through an examination of her novels and a study of their adaptations; for non-majors.

Literature after 1945 (2 sections)

Introduces students to postcolonial and postmodern literature and theory that signifies, plays with, and forms an inter-textual relationship with narratives they will have encountered in the English survey sequence. For majors and non-majors.

Literature of California (1 section)

Examination of California’s immigrant / migrant realities and economic turbulence through literature, with an exploration of the notion of a canonical literature focused on the state; for majors and non-majors.

Medieval and Renaissance English Literature (1 section)

Examination of English literature from *Beowulf* to Milton; for majors.

Political Anthropology (1 section)

Exploration of state formation and political authority, social inequality, conflict, and indigenous responses to colonialism and the nation-state; for majors.

Topics in World History: Colonial Latin America (1 section)

Discussion section focusing on use of primary sources to gain an understanding of the colonization of Latin America; for majors and non-majors.

World History to 1500 (3 sections)

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World History from 1500 to the Present (4 sections)

Discussion sections for survey of world history from 1500 to the present; for majors/non-majors.

Primary Instructor

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Thematic exploration of imaginative literature and essays; for non-majors.

Introduction to the Humanities from the Renaissance to the Present
(4 sections)

Introduction to the arts through their expression in dominant themes of western culture; for non-majors.

Media Influences on American Culture (4 sections)

Introduction to forms of media that influence social, business, political, and popular culture in contemporary America; part of a first-year course sequence.

Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Learning (1 section)

Fundamentals of varied classroom assessments and evaluation models; for masters-level students.

College Prep English: Reading (1 section)

Introduces students to text-based reading at four levels below transfer.

Critical Reading and Composition (6 sections)

This course develops the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills that are essential for academic and life success.

Rhetoric and Research (2 sections)

This course extends practice in critical reading, writing, and thinking. Emphasis is given to developing an effective writing process that considers audience and rhetorical purpose.

University Composition and Communication I (10 sections)

First of two courses addressing key elements of effective academic writing, beginning with prewriting strategies and building to drafting and writing essays; part of a first-year course sequence. Online and traditional formats.

University Composition and Communication II (10 sections)

Second of two courses addressing key elements of effective academic writing, addressing rhetorical modes and use of sources; part of a first-year course sequence. Online and traditional formats.

Introduction to Research for College Writing (2 sections)

Introduction to the academic research process, with emphasis on analysis, evaluation, and documentation of sources.

The Research Paper (9 sections)

Online course introducing the development of the academic research paper.

Effective Essay Writing (19 sections)

Development of basic academic writing skills with an emphasis on application of writing strategies, development of paragraph and sentence structure, and use of evidence to support arguments. Online and traditional formats.

Beginning Business Communication (18 sections)

Online course on the basic writing processes for effective business communication.

Written Business Communication (11 sections)

Development of effective strategies for written business communication for both internal and external audiences.

Foundations for University Success (3 sections)

Transitions students to the foundations of study at the college level. Students develop personal strategies for achieving educational goals, and skills in critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

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Professional Affiliations

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- North American Conference on British Studies
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Other Employment

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Product marketing for software consulting division
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Editing, writing, and database development
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Custom market research

Abstract

A Bag of Tricks: Literary Tricksters as Mediators of Changing Gender Roles in Early Modern London. Dissertation submitted to the University of California, Merced in 2020 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Humanities by Rhea Riegel.

This dissertation explores the social concerns of early modern Londoners through the lens of literary trickster characters, focusing on changing gendered roles. The inclusion of multiple tricksters from the beginning of the 17th century through the early 1660s demonstrates that over the course of the century, tricksters are increasingly human, and the magical elements of their actions disappear; at the same time, their tricks shift from a focus on social relations in the growing city in the early century to concerns with disguise and dress in the Restoration. Robin Goodfellow, including his portrayal in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is the template for tricksters. Tricksters in city comedies, starting with Moll Cutpurse, the one female city comedy trickster (in Middleton and Dekker's 1611 *The Roaring Girl*) followed by male tricksters in Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* (1608) and *A Tricke to Catch the Old-one* (1608), as well as Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* (1611), draw attention to concerns about money wasting gallants and the marriage process. Following the execution of Charles I and the flight of Charles II, Captain James Hind, a highwayman, is transformed from an actual criminal into a trickster hero in news stories and pamphlets written by and about him. Finally, two women tricksters, Mary Frith and Mary Carleton, write their own stories following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Placing Hind, Frith, and Carleton in the trickster tradition demonstrates the way the trickster tradition allowed individuals to frame their own behavior in ways that drew attention to social and political tensions.

Tricksters are visible across multiple genres, from plays, ballads, and jestbooks to newsbooks and pamphlets and finally to autobiography. Together they show that attention to tricksters—magical, real, and imagined—makes visible not just social tensions, but change over the course of the century.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Tricksters in literature are characters at the edge; they do not obey the rules of conventional behavior or society, playing tricks and jests apparently for their own purposes. Their actions push the borders of what is normal, while seeming to support tradition. Tricksters are ubiquitous in the world's myths and literature: the Norse Loki and Native American Coyote are familiar examples. Early modern England had its own tricksters: the most popular was the folk character of Robin Goodfellow, who was drawn from earlier oral traditions but regularly appeared in a variety of published works in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century. A magical creature who can transform himself into other shapes at will, Robin Goodfellow's origins are unknown; he is part of old tales told again and again in ballads, stories, and plays. Robin Goodfellow, who was an old figure even before Shakespeare's Puck, is described variously as a fairy, a hobgoblin, and a country spirit, but he is always a trickster; his stories are filled with pranks and jests played on the unwary, using his shape-shifting powers to transform himself at need. Robin Goodfellow's jests sometimes help other characters suffering a wrong, or they support true and appropriate love matches. His tricks also underscore proper behavior by punishing those who do not conform to community standards.

Further, Robin Goodfellow is not alone; 17th century English literature includes multiple characters with trickster attributes. Other tricksters are

not mythic as is Goodfellow—they are modelled on human characteristics—but they do follow in his footsteps, using disguise and cross-dressing to mimic his shape changing, and follow the same patterns of tricking or jesting to help or punish other characters. These trickster characters appear in plays and stories, but also in news pamphlets, biographies, and autobiographies. Like many other cultures' tricksters, early modern English tricksters generate laughter and fun, but they also address serious social and political issues as they uphold tradition and common standards while also suggesting possible social change and new possibilities.

Background

Large, overwhelming events such as wars, plagues, and changes of government or state religion affect broad sweeps of the population and create the backdrop and context for the day-to-day changes to ordinary life that often result from these major ruptures. In addition, the very ordinary human resistance to change makes such times of rupture both challenging and exciting. Probably no one would disagree that early modern England was a site of numerous large changes: multiple rulers including a queen ruling without a king, a regicide followed by a period with no monarch, a commonwealth that ended in a return of the king, and complex religious allegiances as the reformation took root and was resisted in a variety of ways. Add in the relatively rapid growth of the population of London at the beginning of the century, recurring bouts of plague, and the later decimation

of the heart of the city in London's great fire and its subsequent rebuilding in the late 1660s, and the result is what must have seemed to be an almost continual disruption to the lives of everyday citizens, and especially those of London.¹ Seventeenth century England was an extraordinarily complex time and place, with many stresses on and changes to existing social, religious, and political structures. This study uses trickster characters in 17th century texts to show how they function to support traditional social, cultural, and political systems while simultaneously modelling resistance to existing power structures.

Tricksters appear in fictional stories, plays, and songs, as well as in texts generally considered to be nonfiction, including news stories, pamphlets, and autobiographies. Simply defined, tricksters are often categorized as rogues or cheats who practice their tricks on other characters.² However, a closer examination shows them to be complex characters, often highlighting social concerns by the tricks they play and the laughter they generate. At times, tricksters may also provide rough justice tailored to the circumstances where appropriate or official punishment might otherwise be

¹ For an overview of 17th century English politics and religion, and details concerning London's growth and changes, see Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1485-1714: A Narrative History*, Second Edition (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Robert O. Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 2003); and Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003).

² Oxford English Dictionary Online, "trickster."

absent. Tricksters also have a negative side when their tricks are self-serving or harm other characters; there is rarely just a single reason for a trick, and all the reasons cannot be understood as good for the community or the victims. Trickster humor is thus a blend of heroic actions and mean-spirited tricks, supporting community standards yet pushing the boundaries of what is proper. Even when their tricks seem to benefit the society in which they operate, tricksters generally get something out of the tricks they play.

Social and Cultural Context

England's early modern period, roughly covering the late 16th through the 17th century, was a time of extreme social and cultural change at all levels of society. This study explores ways that tricksters address issues of concern for ordinary people. It focuses on three major cultural changes: increases in literacy and available print, urbanization, and changing notions of gender and power.

Literacy and Popular Print

Increased literacy affected many aspects of early modern English life.³ Protestant beliefs about the importance of personal Bible reading were a

³ The literature on this subject is extensive and complex. A key problem is that the skills of reading and writing were taught separately, with writing considered more necessary for boys and for specific trades, while reading might be taught to anyone. The ability to sign one's name, often used to measure literacy, likely understates the rate of reading literacy. For discussions concerning these issues and rates of literacy, see Jonathan Barry, "Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective," in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Bernard Capp, "Popular Literature," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England*, ed. Barry Reay (London: Routledge, 1988), 198–243; Barry Reay, "Orality, Literacy,

catalyst for some of the rise in literacy, as was an increase in education. Improvements in print technology also helped, by making more reading material available at a cost low enough for many more people beyond the elite to afford it. The rise in literacy allowed for broader transmission of news and ideas in print, both religious and secular.⁴

The early modern period included a lively mix of entertainments, oral and literary, available free or for a low sum; it is in this mix that the character of Robin Goodfellow appears. Ballads were readily available in London, for example, and offered for sale on street corners and pasted on the walls of alehouses.⁵ Ballads were not simply items for sale but were performed as part of the sales process: ballad sellers were part of the entertainment, performing the songs they sold to attract buyers. In addition, the performance of ballads was not restricted to sellers. As Tessa Watt indicates, the “printed broadside ballad was only the visible tip of an iceberg. Ballads could be chanted out by petty chapmen, performed by travelling

and Print,” in *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750*, ed. Barry Reay (London: Longman, 1998), 36-70; and Eve Rachele Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 28 (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴ For print culture, see Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2000); Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁵ For ballads see the digital archive English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA) and the work there.

players, danced to at bride-ales, harmonized, or shouted as insults.”⁶

However, ballad sellers and chapmen were not the cream of society, but rather were often considered vagrants. In spite of the marginalized status of the vendors, the audience for these works was not just the poor and humble,⁷ but also included readers among the middling sorts and gentlefolk.

The quality of writing in this cheap print varied considerably, but quality of writing was usually not their strength in spite of the appearance of works from some well-known writers in cheap formats. Writers of ballads and jestbooks were often not the literary elite and frequently went unnamed. Ian Munro describes early modern England as an “age of cultural appropriation”⁸ in which the borrowing of characters, plots, and other literary elements is commonplace. Such hack writing is more likely to use traditional, existing characters, relying on the assumption that readers would already know something about them; appearances of Robin Goodfellow often make use of this public knowledge through abbreviated introductions and short characterizations. One clear example of this borrowing without explanation comes in *Tarlton’s Newes out of Purgatorie*, which positions Robin Goodfellow as “an old Companion” of the comic Richard Tarleton; within the story itself, Tarlton compares himself to Robin Goodfellow as a “pleasantly disposed”

⁶ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, 37.

⁷ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, 3.

⁸ Ian Munro, “Knightly Complements: ‘The Malcontent’ and the Matter of Wit.” (*English Literary Renaissance*, 2010): 237.

spirit who will make the reader merry.⁹ Although limited, such references evoke the traditional understanding of Robin Goodfellow as a popular and cheerful spirit.

Along with tricksters in works with no known authors, trickster characters also appeared in works by Shakespeare, Middleton, and other playwrights. However, while cheap print often featured poor quality writing, no-one would call William Shakespeare a hack writer, nor would Thomas Middleton be so scorned; writing for the stage, their works were both popular and polished. Plays by such respected and popular authors were also available in print; an early modern Londoner could attend a performance of a play and later purchase a printed copy. This was particularly true in the early part of the 17th century, in what is often called England's golden age of theatre; even with the closing of the theatres in 1642, some plays continued to be printed, although this included fewer new works. One way in which English publishers filled the gap was with the publication of news.

Immediately following the golden age of theatre came the age of news, with the introduction of numerous newsbooks and pamphlets printed in the news market stimulated by decreases in censorship after the Civil War. The closing of the theatres was just one factor in the public's appetite for printed matter; civil war, regicide, and a new Parliamentary government drove

⁹ Richard Tarlton, *Tarlton's Newes out of Purgatorie* (London: T.G. and T.N., 1590), eebo.chadwyck.com

both sides to seek information about the state of the country. Some newsbooks aimed at weekly publication; others were printed as news occurred. Newsbooks and pamphlets also filled propaganda needs for both parliamentarians and royalists, complicated by issues of licensing and censorship.¹⁰ One event could cause a flurry of publications, as demonstrated by the many newsbooks and pamphlets published following the capture of James Hind, a notorious highwayman. Although the reopening of the theatres in 1660 brought new authors and new plays, both in performance and in print, the desire for news continued; with the reinstatement of the monarchy, there was always something new to be reported. While Parliament restored state censorship in 1662 with passage of the Licensing Act, resulting in fewer printed newspapers, the early Restoration also saw the establishment of the first continuously published newspaper, the *London Gazette*, published from 1665 to today.¹¹

Urbanization and Poverty

Despite fire and plague, two major events that negatively affected the population of early modern London, the period saw extreme growth and urbanization of London's population, stemming from an influx of young rural

¹⁰ Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

¹¹ Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England 1485-1714*, 281, 372.

men and women seeking employment.¹² This rapid urbanization resulted in changing social structures, disrupting the comfortable familiarity of neighborhoods. Neighbors might not know each other as well as before, with no knowledge of a person's history or family. Further, although incomers came to the city seeking work, there was no guarantee they would find it, resulting in what city folk feared as disorder, a pervasive fear in early modern thought.¹³

Ian Archer argues that in spite of migration and population growth, Elizabethan London's institutions adapted to provide stability.¹⁴ His work gives a clear picture of London as the urban center where rural poor sought work, seriously increasing the population and causing official concern about crime and a loss of stability. Because of the influx of arrivals from the countryside, urban neighborhoods were less cohesive than they had been. Disorder was an underlying concern for much of early modern England;

¹² Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹³ Historians disagree about the level of disorder. Ian Archer and Paul Griffiths anchor the extremes of the discussion around urbanization, poverty, and disorder; other voices include B. S. Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); D. C. Coleman, "Labour in the English Economy of the Seventeenth Century," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 8, no. 3 (1956): 280–95; Muriel C. McLendon and Joseph P. Ward, "Urban Economies," in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. Susan Doran and Norman Jones, The Routledge Worlds (New York: Routledge, 2011), 427–38; and Paul P. S. Seaver, "Apprentice Riots in Early Modern London," in *Violence, Politics, and Gender in Early Modern England*, ed. Joseph P. Ward (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 17–39.

¹⁴ Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Archer suggests the livery companies, wards, and parishes were communal substitutes, resulting in a manageable unrest rather than an explosion that was feared: an explosion based on apprentice riots, economic inflation, and political differences that added to the burden of both the city managers and the poor.

Paul Griffiths focuses on London's disorder at the end of the 16th and the early 17th century.¹⁵ In a city overwhelmed with too many people and not enough resources, street crimes such as theft, prostitution, and all manner of immoralities could only be expected. Griffiths' work highlights crime as a key problem of rapid urbanization but uses this lens to identify differing attitudes towards urban immigrants and previous residents: the practice of neighbors witnessing against crimes of their neighbors, as well as godly citizens and law-abiding freemen versus beastly criminals and unfree masterless vagrants. Griffiths also considers changing roles of women in London, especially their criminal activities such as prostitution and disorderliness. Other crimes were associated with specific occupations, such as midwives who broke civil law by counseling women where to abandon their babies, thus potentially helping their clients but in effect shifting the burden of those children to the community.¹⁶ Another type of women's work that came under

¹⁵ Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Griffiths, *Lost Londons*, 124.

fire from city officials was that of street-seller: vendors offering their wares on street corners rather than out of shops. According to Griffiths, the “anti-street-selling drive was coloured by gender”¹⁷ and targeted fishwives, among others. However, Griffiths’ focus on prostitution and the disorderliness of working women presents only part of the picture. Like Archer, Griffiths provides details about the problems of urbanization, but complicates an understanding of the effects.

Whether the unrest was manageable, as Archer suggests, or an overwhelming problem as Griffiths believes, early modern London was a bustling metropolis, having grown rapidly over the sixteenth century; a “consensus estimate among scholars of the metropolitan population trend during the sixteenth century suggests that there were about 50,000 people living in Greater London in 1500; 75,000 in 1550; 200,000 in 1600.”¹⁸ The number of London residents reached 500,000 by 1700.¹⁹ Population growth does not equal wealth, however. Coincident with the rapid expansion of the city’s population, of course, was an increase in the ranks of the poor, the perfect audience for ballads and stories about Robin Goodfellow, with the growth of cheap print adding to the availability of songs and stories, no matter one’s economic status, with costs as low as a penny for “printed works

¹⁷ Griffiths, *Lost Londons*, 131.

¹⁸ Muriel C. McLendon and Joseph P. Ward, “Urban Economies,” 435.

¹⁹ Paul P. S. Seaver, “Apprentice Riots in Early Modern London,” 19.

targeted for humble readers”²⁰ or performed for free by ballad sellers, in taverns, and other public places. The Robin Goodfellow stories seem primarily to be aimed at this humble audience; he is one of the “‘heroes’ drawn specifically from both the urban and the rural poor.”²¹ Robin Goodfellow does appear to champion the working poor, a sizeable and growing segment of the population.

Gender and Power

A third important element in the messages of trickster characters is related to gender roles and expectations. Early modern English gender expectations—or rather, ideals—focused on order, including “familial order, with a father/husband ruling over his wife, children and servants.”²² However, as Susan Amussen and David Underdown explain, multiple responsibilities pushed women into positions of authority over others such as children and servants, as well as in the marketplace,²³ changing ideas about women in early modern London, including placement and displacement of women workers as an element of London’s population growth. However, women workers must be understood in relation to the men in their lives, with women working in the shops and workshops of their fathers and husbands.

²⁰ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, 5.

²¹ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, 50.

²² Susan D. Amussen and David E. Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics in England, 1560-1640: Turning the World Upside Down* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017), 2.

²³ Amussen & Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics*, 2.

As Laura Gowing states, “Men’s power over women was an absolute social truth”²⁴ and women’s work outside of their own domestic spheres was often controlled by or connected with their husbands, fathers, and masters. Eleanor Hubbard, however, indicates that “women were constrained by legal and cultural understanding of their roles, but these constraints were by no means uniformly imposed.”²⁵ As women moved into the workplace, various factors such as poverty, sexual commodification, crime, and gendered cultural standards of behavior affected their circumstances.

Jean Howard focuses on women workers in the Royal Exchange, either as street vendors at the doors selling items like fruit, or upstairs at the shops in the pawn, crafting and selling items for sale. Howard considers three plays set in the Royal Exchange; her analysis of Heywood’s *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* suggests that these women could also be for sale, or that their position in the forefront of the shops made them appear to be so, compromising their characters.²⁶ While the women characters resist such commodification, they also struggle with its effects. According to Howard, the play identifies another danger: that skilled women will “grow beyond the control” of traditional familial ties, especially regarding their eventual

²⁴ Laura Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England*, 1st ed, Seminar Studies (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson, 2012), 6.

²⁵ Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

²⁶ Jean Elizabeth Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia, Pa: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

marriages.²⁷ In either case, whether from skilled working women or women as commodities, such women step out of the traditional role of women controlled by their families, and particularly that of control by fathers and husbands.

Concern about disorderly and uncontrolled women was exemplified by responses to the practice of women wearing men's clothing: much of the debate on women was concerned with "the maintenance of gender and moral boundaries through dress and fashion."²⁸ Sandra Clark's discussion of this issue points to the early 1620s and the pamphlets *Hic Mulier* and *Haec-Vir* as the high point of the controversy,²⁹ including support from King James I who "ordered the preachers of London to inveigh from the pulpit against the practice of women dressing mannishly"³⁰ but not against men dressing as women. Rachel Warburton points out that "male-to-female and female-to-male transvestism are non-identical,"³¹ going on to state that "the language of clothes is always gendered, class-marked, and racialized."³² According to Warburton, *Hic Mulier* identifies the problem of female cross-dressing as

²⁷ Howard, *Theater of a City*, 63.

²⁸ Amussen & Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics*, 49.

²⁹ Sandra Clark, "'Hic Mulier, Haec Vir', and the Controversy over Masculine Women," *Studies in Philology* 82, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 158.

³⁰ Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 420.

³¹ Rachel Warburton, "Travestied Hermeneutics: Social and Semiotic Instability in *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*," *Social Semiotics* 16, no. 1 (April 2006): 156, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330500487984>

³² Warburton, "Travestied Hermeneutics," 157.

going beyond that of simple identity: “The woman in men’s clothes who is still legible as a woman is neither man nor woman and therefore, in the opinion of the pamphleteer, not fully human.”³³ This level of anxiety about female cross-dressing demonstrates Warburton’s point that “masculine women” effectively “occupied a special place in the paranoias and anxieties of the Renaissance imagination.”³⁴ Jean Howard asserts that cross-dressing indicated “a sex-gender system under pressure”³⁵ where women dressed as men were seen as prostitutes, while men dressed as women, including boy actors, were seen as sexually perverted. Howard indicates that a man “who theatricalizes the self as female, invites playing the woman’s part in sexual congress” which was shameful, but states that for a woman, cross-dressing displayed her to be a “creature of strong sexual appetites needing strict regulation.”³⁶ While David Cressy suggests that cross-dressing “was not so transgressive as critics and scholars have suggested”³⁷ there was at least some anxiety about the issue; Cressy indicates that “the prevalence of the disguise motif in early modern literature, with its jokes about sex and costume, suggests that the inner and outer signs of gender identity formed a topic of continuing concern.”³⁸ The

³³ Warburton, “Travestied Hermeneutics,” 167.

³⁴ Warburton, “Travestied Hermeneutics,” 168.

³⁵ Howard, “Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle,” 418.

³⁶ Howard, “Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle,” 424.

³⁷ David Cressy, “Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England,” *Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1996): 439.

³⁸ Cressy, “Gender Trouble,” 458.

debate over cross-dressing, and in particular over cross-dressed women, is important because tricksters often cross-dressed and disguised themselves.

Trickster Theories

Much of the scholarship on trickster characters focuses on folk characters in oral traditions, although this has recently begun to change with the recognition that tricksters also appear in more recently written works. Prior research on tricksters has focused on characters from other mythic systems,³⁹ not on England. Also, scholars—often anthropologists—have often focused solely on one aspect or another of trickster behavior, ignoring other tricks and actions that did not fit the current model. Raney Stanford's explanation of tricksters as “a blending of the human intellect and emotion with demonic surges of natural forces”⁴⁰ exemplifies the early 1960s western understanding of tricksters as evil; in this, Stanford agrees with Paul Radin that such characters are at once rogues and heroes.⁴¹ Stanford's understanding of tricksters rises from his belief that they execute “evil tricks and pranks for no reason at all, except for the sheer joy of exercising power

³⁹ See Paul Radin, Karl Kerényi, and C. G. Jung, *The Trickster: a Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) for early work on tricksters. William J. Hynes and William G. Doty, eds., *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1997) expand this work to global tricksters from West Africa, Japan, Greece, and Scandinavia; the latter work is expanded in Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art* (New York, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

⁴⁰ Raney Stanford, “The Return of Trickster: When a Not-A-Hero Is a Hero,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1967): 228.

⁴¹ Stanford, “The Return of Trickster,” 229.

and cunning.”⁴² Roger D. Abrahams held similar views to Stanford, seeing tricksters as representing amorality and the rise of individual freedoms “in the face of group restrictions.”⁴³ According to Abrahams, “Trickster’s actions are not to be considered models for behavior” but are instead a release for repressed anti-social desires.⁴⁴ This view of the trickster character ignores the ability of tricksters to create change, suggesting that change was not necessary for society as a whole, while individual humans must adapt to the group.

In the 1970s, perceptions of the trickster shifted when Laura Makarius introduced the idea that rather than being merely evil, tricksters might be magician heroes who break old taboos in order to meet society’s changing needs.⁴⁵ Makarius considered clowns to be the “earthly counterpart”⁴⁶ of trickster magicians; she identified one of the “component elements of the ‘clown complex’” to be a “magical ‘medicine’”⁴⁷—an apt description of the juice of the flower Puck uses to trick Hippolyta and the Athenians in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, tricks that seemed to injure the victims, but which in the end help them. However, Makarius’ views do not wholly absolve

⁴² Stanford, “The Return of Trickster,” 229.

⁴³ Roger D. Abrahams, “Trickster, the Outrageous Hero,” in *Our Living Traditions: An Introduction to American Folklore*, ed. Tristram P Coffin (New York: Basic Books, 1968): 170.

⁴⁴ Abrahams, “Trickster, the Outrageous Hero,” 172.

⁴⁵ Laura Makarius, “Ritual Clowns and Symbolical Behaviour,” trans. Raoul Makarius, *Diogenes* 18, no. 69 (March 1970): 46.

⁴⁶ Makarius, “Ritual Clowns and Symbolical Behaviour,” 46.

⁴⁷ Makarius, “Ritual Clowns and Symbolical Behaviour,” 47.

the trickster of negative connotations; Barbara Babcock-Abrahams points out that “while [the] trickster’s power endows his group with vitality and other boons, it also carries the threat and the possibility of chaos. His beneficence, though central, results from the breaking of rules and the violating of taboos.”⁴⁸ Babcock-Abrahams identifies tricksters, at least some of the time, as criminals yet culture heroes—that is, as “paradox personified.”⁴⁹ The recognition of paradoxical tricksters’ contradictions does not fully address the complexity of the trickster character. Robert Pelton’s work on West African tricksters in the early 1980s adds another dimension to the discussion with a consideration of trickster’s comic nature, the first round in an active decade of trickster scholarship.

Pelton sees the trickster as having an “essentially comic nature” which he says creates a barrier for modern trickster scholars based on “how greatly estranged the comic and the holy have become since the Renaissance and the Reformation.”⁵⁰ Pelton indicates that discussions of trickster tales see them as interesting or clever, but not interesting *and* clever or funny, resulting in an over-emphasis on the seriousness of the issues underlying the tales.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, “A Tolerated Margin of Mess’: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 11, no. 3 (March 1975): 148.

⁴⁹ Babcock-Abrahams, “A Tolerated Margin of Mess,” 148.

⁵⁰ Robert D. Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight*, Hermeneutics, Studies in the History of Religions 8 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 11.

⁵¹ Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa*, 2.

Still, Pelton's analysis points to an increase in the complexity of trickster analysis; this is supported by Ann Doueïhi's work when she states that the "trickster's nature is characterized by Western scholarship as problematic because it is complex and contradictory."⁵² The problem of complexity is further explained by Michael P. Carroll, who says that "Unfortunately, at least part of the ubiquity of the trickster results from the fact that modern scholars tend to use an extremely broad definition of the term trickster itself, in that they tend to apply this term to any character who makes extensive use of deceit."⁵³ To combat a too-expansive definition, Carroll then restricts his understanding of tricksters to those characters who are both "selfish buffoons" *and* "culture heroes"⁵⁴ but he recognizes the difficulty this limitation places on identifying tricksters across cultures. On the other hand, Klaus-Peter Koepping seems more able to track the trickster across cultures, identifying the "cunning form of intelligence and the grotesqueness of the body imagery used to indicate the inversion of order"⁵⁵ as common markers of the trickster character. Koepping also points to what he calls the trickster's "paradox of inverted social action" as a "beacon pointed toward the

⁵² Anne Doueïhi, "Trickster: On Inhabiting the Space between Discourse and Story," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 67, no. 3 (Fall 1984): 283.

⁵³ Michael P. Carroll, "The Trickster as Selfish-Buffoon and Culture Hero," *Ethos* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 105.

⁵⁴ Carroll, "The Trickster as Selfish-Buffoon and Culture Hero," 125.

⁵⁵ Klaus-Peter Koepping, "Absurdity and Hidden Truth: Cunning Intelligence and Grotesque Body Images as Manifestations of the Trickster," *History of Religions* 24, no. 3 (February 1985): 194.

positive.”⁵⁶ However, Koepping warns that not all trickster traits appear in all cultures or genres, clearly indicating that “not all jesters, fools, or picaros are tricksters”⁵⁷ although a trickster might have traits in common with any or all of these. However, one trickster trait not highlighted in the roster of common attributes is wit; it wasn’t until the 1990s that Wayne A. Rebhorn first mentioned linguistic wit as a trickster tool.

According to Rebhorn, it was during the Renaissance that “texts featuring [tricksters] in their various guises... present them as masters of language who use their skill with words to satisfy their desires through the manipulation and control of others.”⁵⁸ For Rebhorn, the skill of persuasion used by tricksters to sway their victims was key, as tricksters used language and wit to make themselves appear “credible, as worthy of faith.”⁵⁹ For Ellen B. Basso, however, the key to understanding the trickster lay in the physical, with “[his] compulsive and thoughtlessly excessive behavior, his lust, his gluttony, and especially his greed for unsuitable objects and relationships.”⁶⁰ However, Basso also points to ongoing scholarly fascination over the

⁵⁶ Koepping, “Absurdity and Hidden Truth,” 193.

⁵⁷ Koepping, “Absurdity and Hidden Truth,” 199.

⁵⁸ Wayne A. Rebhorn, “‘The Emperour of Mens Minds’: The Renaissance Trickster as Homo Rhetoricus,” in *Creative Imitation: New Essays on Renaissance Literature in Honor of Thomas M. Greene*, ed. Thomas M. Greene and David Quint, vol. 95, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies (Binghamton, N.Y: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992): 31.

⁵⁹ Rebhorn, “‘The Emperour of Mens Minds,’” 34.

⁶⁰ Ellen B. Basso, “The Trickster’s Scattered Self,” in *Disorderly Discourse: Narrative, Conflict, and Inequality* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1996): 53.

tricksters with their “apparently incongruous attributes of the ‘culture hero’ who makes the world safe and secure for human life, and the ‘selfish buffoon,’ who in a compulsive and ludicrous manner acts in violation of the most fundamental social values.”⁶¹ Neither words nor physical acts alone could explain the trickster; instead, it is the interplay of both that allows tricksters to challenge social standards. Jeanne Rosier Smith agrees with this view when she proclaims, “Whether foolishly, arrogantly, or bravely, tricksters face the monstrous, transforming the chaotic to create new worlds and new cultures”⁶² through the use of “laughter, jokes, and outrage.”⁶³ Following this acceptance of the trickster as a multivalent force rather than a static or one-sided figure, but still seeking some commonality in the contradictory nature of the trickster across stories and characterizations, William J. Hynes proposes several similarities, suggesting among other attributes that tricksters generally are ambiguous, deceivers and trick players, shape shifters, and lewd—just not necessarily all at the same time, nor in all stories.⁶⁴ Instead, tricksters may use any of these tools as they function to highlight social issues in the cultures that tell their stories.

⁶¹ Basso, “The Trickster’s Scattered Self,” 53.

⁶² Jeanne Rosier Smith, *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 2.

⁶³ Smith, *Writing Tricksters*, 156.

⁶⁴ William J. Hynes, “Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide,” in *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*, ed. William J. Hynes and William G. Doty, 1. paperback printing (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1997), 33-45.

Often considered only as selfish buffoons, tricksters may serve multiple purposes within a story or characterization. At first read, tricksters appear to be simple comic characters, generating laughter with tricks played on other characters. In addition to causing laughter, however, they can be heroes whose tricks bring about cultural change.⁶⁵ For example, the trickster-god Loki is both “mischievous and dangerous”: he elicits laughter for his tricks but is dangerous in his ability to bring about change. As Helena Bassil-Morozow states, the changes Loki brings are necessary for the growth of civilization, although the chaos and uncertainty resulting from the change process is frightening and thus dangerous and must be managed. Bassil-Morozow indicates that both Loki’s ability to create change and the need for managing that change was demonstrated in the original Icelandic eddas and continues to be visible in today’s Marvel universe.⁶⁶ Trickster characters provide a focus for cultural revitalization by highlighting contradictions and injustices within societal structures, appearing to support traditional ideas of behavior, while simultaneously suggesting alternatives or explanations that

⁶⁵ Michael P. Carroll, "The Trickster as Selfish-Buffoon and Culture Hero," 107.

⁶⁶ Helena Bassil-Morozow, “Loki Then and Now: The Trickster against Civilization,” *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 9, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 84–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19409052.2017.1309780>

potentially help individuals work out their relationships to new social orders.⁶⁷

Drawing on these trickster theories, particularly related to comedy and cultural change, this study uses Robin Goodfellow as a baseline for English tricksters at the opening of the 17th century; as a mythic character, Goodfellow fits well within the model of tricksters who support tradition while offering alternatives, but also playing pranks for his own purposes and benefit.

Humor Theory and the Trickster

The appearance of Robin Goodfellow and other 17th century tricksters in multiple genres for multiple audiences complicates an understanding of how trickster humor works. Humor is demonstrably a vital and constant element of trickster behavior, used as a tool by trickster characters regardless of their other roles within a specific ballad, play, or story. The ways that humor functions in these various literary works requires an understanding of multiple theories of humor and laughter. Early modern humor, including that created by tricksters, can be appreciated using classic theories of humor and laughter such as those proposed by Plato and Aristotle

⁶⁷ Enrique R. Lamadrid, "The Rogue's Progress: Journeys of the Picaro from Oral Tradition to Contemporary Chicano Literature of New Mexico," *MELUS* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 15-34.

and later explored by Thomas Hobbes in his work *Human Nature*, as well as through more contemporary concepts.

Classic humor theory points to the ridiculous or laughable as evil, ugly, or deformed and offensive.⁶⁸ For example, using this classic theory, one possible reading of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggests that Robin Goodfellow's transformation of the actor Bottom into an ass is simply making Bottom's true ugly and stupid nature visible, and therefore laughable. While the physical transformation would not be necessary for laughter to occur since Bottom's dialogue also shows him to be a country bumpkin, the physical transformation exaggerates Bottom's nature, allowing even the lowest audience members to laugh at the comparison between Bottom and themselves. By creating this exaggerated image of the country bumpkin, Shakespeare draws on what John Morreall calls the superiority theory of laughter, which places laughter as a response to feelings of superiority to something unfortunate, inferior, or grotesque.⁶⁹ However, superiority alone cannot explain all trickster humor; Goodfellow's embellishment of Bottom's nature is just one way that humor appears in trickster stories.

⁶⁸ John Morreall, "A New Theory of Laughter," in *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, SUNY Series in Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 129-130

⁶⁹ John Morreall, "A New Theory of Laughter," 129-130.

Another source of trickster humor can be seen in the origins of these characters, which are sometimes drawn from folk tales and myth. Robin Goodfellow, for example, is more than human; he is linked in multiple stories to the world of fairy, using magic and changing shape at will to carry out his jests. The use of magic allows Robin Goodfellow to perform jests that are beyond human possibility, such as his transformation of Bottom, but that can underscore the very human subjects and messages of the jokes. Perhaps not all tricksters use magic, but all may be magical in the ways they transform social situations for their readers and audiences through jests and laughter.

As folk characters, tricksters also elicit laughter through their enactment of comic ritual and physical humor. Mikhail Bakhtin's work on Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* explains this by suggesting that carnival and folk festival form the basis of language of the body. Instead of superiority, Bakhtin believes that carnival and the language of the marketplace rather than official or formal rituals or language are the keys to understanding Rabelais; this can equally be applied to Robin Goodfellow and other early modern English tricksters. According to Bakhtin, carnival laughter is universal rather than individual, and mocks even as it celebrates;⁷⁰ the dual purpose of laughter aligns well with the trickster function of supporting yet changing tradition. The carnival freedom from

⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN, 1984), 11.

ordinary social structures and hierarchies allows the reader to cross such structures and find the freedom to laugh for laughter's sake. This suggests that Robin Goodfellow's transformation of Bottom might serve as more than humiliation to make the audience feel superior; it could also serve to free the audience just to laugh. Just as Rabelais' jokes about the body are part of this universal laughter, establishing a common denominator for all to see and understand, so too are those of Robin Goodfellow.

But trickster bodies do more than simply generate laughter for laughter's sake; they often startle and surprise the audience, demonstrating what Morreall calls the incongruity theory of humor.⁷¹ This theory, based on work by Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, and others, places humor at the point where what is seen or heard differs from what is expected or known—in other words and for our purposes, when the trickster characters disrupt what is standard or known with something unexpected or out of the ordinary. Not just carnival bodies, Robin Goodfellow and other tricksters have disruptive and incongruous bodies for their early modern audiences. The laughter they cause in their shape-shifting or cross-dressing jolts the audience out of its everyday world into one in which social tensions ease and changes can occur. By inverting normal behavior, tricksters draw on what Gregg Camfield calls “the socially contagious nature of comedy” as it

⁷¹ John Morreall, ed., *A New Theory of Laughter*, SUNY Series in Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 51.

“break[s] down social rigidities”⁷² including those of gender and class. If “the cultural and psychic work of laughter and humor” is, as Camfield states, “to liberate people from the strictures of normalcy,”⁷³ then Robin Goodfellow and his fellow tricksters are good at their work. Trickster bodies are the visual representation of the unusual, working outside of the everyday to make the everyday more comprehensible or acceptable.

However, trickster humor can appear in another layer of meaning and laughter beyond the physical, or description of the physical since we are discussing written works; Henri Bergson differentiates “between the comic *expressed* and the comic *created* by language.”⁷⁴ The first is physical comedy portrayed through language; the second is what Bergson calls wit, driven by intelligence rather than buffoonery. Wit, as Bergson describes it, is the basis for much of the humor in early modern jestbooks and courtesy manuals, which are as Chris Holcomb puts it, “obsessed with jesting.”⁷⁵ With their roots in classical works, early modern jestbooks use wit as described by Cicero to explore social situations. English jestbooks and courtesy manuals use humor to make their points and teach the reader how and when to jest;

⁷² Gregg Camfield, *Necessary Madness: The Humor of Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York, 1997), 170.

⁷³ Gregg Camfield, *Necessary Madness*, x.

⁷⁴ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (Rockville, MD, 2008), 52.

⁷⁵ Chris Holcomb, *Mirth Making: The Rhetorical Discourse on Jest in Early Modern England, Studies in Rhetoric/communication* (Columbia, SC, 2001), 3.

they also warn readers about the “disruptive and chaotic energies” of jesting.⁷⁶ Robin Goodfellow draws on this realm of wit, as do other early modern tricksters.

The challenge to explaining trickster humor is that it is not a single effect but differs based on the social situations and actions described in the stories. And early modern England was an uncertain place, with its rapid urbanization and changing social structures, bringing country people into the city and disrupting the comfortable familiarity of neighborhoods. Each of the theories discussed here displays one facet of trickster humor; none of the theories is sufficient to explain *all* trickster humor in 17th century England, which draws on wit as well as situational and physical factors.

Organization of the Study

Based on a new historicist critical model⁷⁷ which analyzes literature within the historical context of its creation and performance, this work focuses on 17th century tricksters from English literature and theatre and ways these characters can reflect the social conditions of the period in which

⁷⁶ Chris Holcomb, *Mirth Making*, 27.

⁷⁷ The new historicist movement is first evident in 1980 with Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and is later described by Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher in *Practicing New Historicism* as a blending of disciplines, making it appropriate for an interdisciplinary approach to textual analysis, where texts are understood as both literary and non-literary, and where connections between literature and history are a vital part of an analysis which seeks to understand cultural, social, and political ideologies and power through an exploration of contemporary literary works. In addition to Greenblatt, other new historicist scholars influencing my work include Louis Montrose, Jean E. Howard, and Frances Dolan.

they were created. According to Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, new historicism considers culture as text, recognizing that cultural context can be read along with the literary works that culture produces, thus expanding the texts that can be read to include many works that have previously been considered marginal or even non-literary.⁷⁸ Following this rationale, I have identified tricksters both in canonical and less well-known literary works such as plays and ballads, as well as in other material such as news pamphlets and autobiographies, and consider ways that each trickster and its respective play, story, ballad, or pamphlet may be influenced by its historical and cultural context.

This study is limited to a discussion of eight trickster characters. Although there may be other tricksters that fall within the timeframe of the research, I tried to select characters that represent the times and genres of their initial publication. I read extensively in texts that included the terms “trick” or “prank” in the indexed records of the Early English Books Online digital archive and the Huntington Library catalog to choose possible stories, and made my final selections based on the actions of the characters themselves. Another limitation is one driven by the depredations of time; I was only able to select trickster characters and stories from works that still exist in print, either in digital or physical copies. I know that there are other

⁷⁸ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, Paperback ed (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2001), 9.

stories and tricksters that might have been useful to this study, had their books and pamphlets not been lost.

Robin Goodfellow, the quintessential trickster spirit of England, serves as a model for other tricksters in the changing social environment of early modern England. As a mythic spirit, English trickster Robin Goodfellow draws on the elements of magic and myth; at the same time, he reflects broader trickster themes. For example, the fairy attribute of shape-changing and its human counterpart disguise or cross-dressing are common ways that tricksters perform their tricks; wit is also an important tool. The intention to help others is often a factor. Based on Robin Goodfellow's character, for purposes of this study I have defined tricksters as characters who do not act solely for themselves, but who uphold tradition while also suggesting possible social change, addressing contemporary social anxieties by performing some tricks that emphasize common standards of behavior, and other tricks that suggest new ways of behaving. This excludes fools and other characters who play tricks and stir up trouble for the sake of the trouble, but without raising awareness of a specific social anxiety and without providing any social benefit.

Because Robin Goodfellow serves as a model for other tricksters, chapter two explores his character in depth, both to determine how his character functions and to establish a baseline for social concerns addressed by trickster characters. Next are two chapters on tricksters in city comedy

plays, including a discussion of Moll Cutpurse, the one female city comedy trickster in a leading role (in Middleton and Dekker's 1611 *The Roaring Girl*) followed by a chapter on male tricksters in multiple city comedies.⁷⁹ These two chapters allow a comparison of the differences between gendered tricksters in terms of trickster tools and the social issues their tricks address in the first part of the century. The fifth chapter addresses social issues in the middle of the century, following the execution of Charles I and the flight of Charles II; Captain James Hind, a highwayman, demonstrates the transformation of an actual criminal into a trickster and hero through the news stories and statements written by and about him. Finally, chapter six discusses Mary Frith (the real-life source for Moll Cutpurse) and Mary Carleton, a notorious celebrity also known as the German princess, representing trickster characterization following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660; both women wrote their own trickster identities as part of their autobiographies. Combined, these tricksters demonstrate the changes in trickster characters in the literature of early modern England, as well as how those tricksters function to address changing social norms of the 17th century.

⁷⁹ The discussion of city comedies with male tricksters includes Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters*, Middleton's *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, and Lording Barry's *Ram Alley*.

What happens to Robin Goodfellow and his fellow tricksters as they move with the English people through reformation, rebellion, and restoration? Since one trickster attribute is that of supporting social change, how does the trickster figure change as part of the culture that it affects, and what do these changes in turn say about the social needs that gave rise to the earlier trickster? What role does gender play, both for the tricksters themselves and for the social issues they address? Rather than a single common trickster theme or purpose, early modern English tricksters fill a multiplicity of roles, part of the changes they serve. The function and characteristics of tricksters change throughout the seventeenth century, reflecting the dynamism of the period and its major social changes. This analysis points to ways that tricksters' pranks identify social tensions and further, how they suggest ways to resolve those concerns. Such suggestions, potentially "out of step" with existing standards of behavior, complicate and deepen an understanding of the culture that produced them.⁸⁰

Significance

The study of literature through the lens of cultural and historical context reflects an interdisciplinary approach, offering a way to explore human experience and thought through the literature a culture creates and

⁸⁰ Catherine Belsey, "The Poverty of (New) Historicism," in *Literature as History: Essays in Honour of Peter Widdowson*, ed. Simon Barker and Jo Gill, Continuum Literary Studies (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 9, 13.

consumes. Drawing on historical literary scholarship by scholars such as Susan Amussen and Frances Dolan, it brings together the study of social history and literary characters as actors within that history as a way in which social memories and traditions are made tangible and accessible and offers one explanation of how the ordinary people of early modern England adapted to the many and rapid changes within their society. Following one recent trend in historiography, this study uses the perspective of the people at the bottom and middle of society and explores works of culture created for and marketed to that audience, while incorporating theories of popular culture, social history, humor, gender studies, and other focused perspectives. While this approach is not new, the specific focus of the research is, looking at tricksters in a time and place where their role has not yet been fully explored.

Chapter 2: Robin Goodfellow

Robin Goodfellow is unique among English tricksters of the 17th century: the stories and ballads that describe this character rise out of an earlier oral tradition rather than being created by 17th century authors for contemporary audiences. Because the character of Robin Goodfellow was already established at the beginning of the century, and because stories about this character continued to be published, he serves as a benchmark for other 17th century English tricksters, both for how tricksters operated and for identification of the social concerns highlighted by the tricks they played. As closer examination of early Robin Goodfellow sources shows, he was a nature spirit or fairy, most often seen to support community standards of behavior by correcting those who do not conform. Goodfellow also appears to support love matches over arranged marriages. He is understood to be a comic fellow who loves jests and pranks; while the victims of these pranks might not enjoy them, Robin Goodfellow and the audience would. As a trickster spirit, Robin Goodfellow is outside the human community yet works within that community to provide justice, correction, or reward.

Minor White Latham describes early records of this character appearing as early as 1489, where the name Robin Goodfellow is clearly so well-known as to not require any explanation; other early records date from

1564 and 1570.⁸¹ The first printed references to Robin Goodfellow in the late sixteenth century also assume their audience is familiar with him. One such example is *Tarlton's Newes out of Purgatorie. Onely such a jest as his jigge, fit for Gentlemen to laugh at an houre, etc.*, printed in 1590 and again in 1593; this source identifies Robin Goodfellow as the publisher, but otherwise does not give Goodfellow any actions or words. The book is a collection of humorous tales, all of which suggest propriety and correct behavior to the reader; by placing a folktale trickster as the publisher, the author implies ties to tradition. Its prologue compares the deceased actor and comic Richard Tarlton to Robin Goodfellow: “think me to bee one of those Familiares-Lares that were rather pleasantly disposed then endued with any hurtfull influence, as Hob Thrust, Robin Goodfellow, and such like spirites,” going on to promise that Tarlton will “make thee as merry before I part, as ever Robin Goodfellow made the country wenches at their Creame boules.”⁸² This description of Robin Goodfellow identifies his character as a comic spirit: neither human nor evil.

A second early print example of Robin Goodfellow is in *Tell-Trothes New-Yeaes Gift, Beeing Robin Good-fellowes newes out of those Countries*,

⁸¹ Minor White Latham. “Robin Goodfellow.” In *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare*, 219–62. New York: Columbia University Press, 1930. 225-226.

⁸² Richard Tarlton, *Tarlton's Newes out of Purgatorie* (London: T.G. and T.N., 1590), eebo.chadwyck.com. sig A3v.

where inhabits neither Charity nor honesty With his owne invective against Jelosy, also printed in 1593. This source offers another example of audience assumptions about Robin Goodfellow. *Tell-Trothes* places Robin Goodfellow in conversation with the narrator, Tell-Troth, allowing the author to draw on Goodfellow's established moral stance to support the points being made. *Tell-Trothes* offers a clear instance of this use, when Robin Goodfellow agrees with Tell-Troth that arranged marriages can lead to jealousy, especially when "daughters of twentye yeares olde or under" are wed to "rich cormorants of three score or upwards,"⁸³ but for marriages in which the couple chooses each other, jealousy is less likely because the partners value each other—or as the unknown author has Robin Goodfellow put it, "Pretious jewels are chosen, and deere thinges loved."⁸⁴ This example draws on Robin Goodfellow's support for love matches over arranged and inappropriate marriages; the author uses this support to strengthen an "invective against Jelosy"⁸⁵ which the author identifies on the title page as a key purpose of the publication. As these examples demonstrate, Robin Goodfellow was clearly a well-known figure, but a deeper consideration of who or what he was to those

⁸³ *Tell-Trothes New-Yeares Gift Beeing Robin Good-Fellowes Newes out of Thosse Countries, Where Inhabites Neither Charity nor Honesty*. (London: Robert Bourne, 1593), eebo.chadwyck.com. sig A3r.

⁸⁴ *Tell-Trothes New-Yeares Gift*. sig A3v.

⁸⁵ *Tell-Trothes New-Yeares Gift*. Title page.

early modern audiences offers suggestions about the assumptions they would have had about what the inclusion of Robin Goodfellow meant.

One key to the understanding that audiences would have about Robin Goodfellow is provided by *Tell-Trothes*, which offers a description of Goodfellow as “the one, who never did worse harme, then correct manners, and made diligent maides.”⁸⁶ In other words, Goodfellow’s tricks supported the standards of the community, at the worst providing correction to some wayward members who did not conform. *Tell-Trothes* also indicated that Goodfellow “could go invisible” and enter any place he wanted “to a good purpose”⁸⁷—an indication that Goodfellow’s powers were seen as positive rather than otherwise. Because Goodfellow’s actions served the common good, the benefit to the community overrode any accusation of meanness or evil. Although *Tarlton* does not go into as much detail as *Tell-Trothes*, it supports the description of Goodfellow as merry and pleasantly disposed. Possibly due to the limited scope of the Goodfellow character in these sources, neither clearly identifies Goodfellow as a fairy, one of the key elements of his nature identified in works published at the opening of the 17th century.

Fairy Connections

Robin Goodfellow is identified as a fairy in multiple stories; one repeated description is his connection to Oberon, the fairy king. Fairies are “a

⁸⁶ *Tell-Trothes New-Yeares Gift*. sig A2r.

⁸⁷ *Tell-Trothes New-Yeares Gift*. sig A2v.

class of supernatural beings having human form, to whom are traditionally attributed magical powers and who are thought to interfere in human affairs (with either good or evil intent).”⁸⁸ Diane Purkiss expands on the latter point when she states that “rather than good or bad, fairies are more simply and plainly dangerous.”⁸⁹ Goodfellow exhibits all these attributes, demonstrating both good and evil intentions, adding the spice of magic and danger to stories that rely on audience perceptions of fairies and their abilities.

The Mad-Merry Prankes

Possibly published in 1601, a third early source of Robin Goodfellow descriptions is a ballad titled “The Mad-Merry Prankes of Robbin Goodfellow.”⁹⁰ The ballad is one of the first printed examples of Goodfellow’s connection to the fairy king Oberon, indicating that Robin Goodfellow is sent “From Oberon in Fairy Land / the King of Ghosts and shadowes there” (lines 1-2). This sets Goodfellow apart from other early modern English tricksters, as it establishes him as a non-human with ties to fairy royalty. While his magical nature could have been problematic, suggesting a connection to witchcraft or the devil, Robin Goodfellow is portrayed in these first published

⁸⁸ "fairy, n. and adj.". OED Online. September 2019. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/67741?redirectedFrom=fairy> (accessed September 07, 2019).

⁸⁹ Diane Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 8.

⁹⁰ “The Mad-Merry Prankes of Robbin Good-Fellow.” In *Roxburghe Collection*, 1:230–31. London: H. G., 1601. <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu>

sources as a generally beneficial spirit, with an established place in the hierarchy of his own kind, responsible to Oberon his king.

The ballad provides a number of Goodfellow's trickster attributes, including an ability to observe while remaining unseen, the ability to fly "more swift then lightning" (line 11), and the ability to change shape: "Sometimes I meet them like a man, / Sometimes an oxe, sometimes a hound, / And to a horse I turne me can" (lines 31-33). These attributes are critical to Goodfellow's ability to serve Oberon, and to perform the tricks he plays on humans. The ballad also touches on several of Robin Goodfellow's common pranks: Goodfellow commonly tricks people wandering home after "their night sports" (line 22) and punishes women whose houses are poorly kept—the latter mirroring *Tell-Trothes*' description of a Goodfellow who "made diligent maides."⁹¹

While most of the tricks described in the ballad are similarly beneficial to the community, two tricks stand apart from the rest. First, Robin Goodfellow sometimes does household work "the maids to please" (line 51), such as carding wool, pulling flax into threads, grinding malt, and similar women's work. Doing household chores was more commonly attributed to brownies, a different type of spirit usually tied to a specific household, where one of Goodfellow's important attributes is his freedom to move swiftly

⁹¹ *Tell-Trothes* New-Yeaes Gift. sig A2r.

around the world. Further, while having Goodfellow complete their tasks is useful to the specific women he helps, it does not support the broader ideal of a productive community. Second, the ballad includes Robin Goodfellow in the company of fairies who steal new-born babies and leave elf children (changelings) in their places; there is not enough detail in the ballad to determine why he does this. These last two examples may be more closely related to attributes of fairies in general than specifically to Robin Goodfellow, but they do place this character firmly in the magical fairy traditions, with all the assumptions that might have given an early modern audience. William Shakespeare, however, made the most of the audience's prior knowledge of fairy traditions in the development of his Robin Goodfellow character, also called Puck.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Shakespeare's Puck

One of the best-known representations of Robin Goodfellow's character is in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,⁹² performed in 1599 and initially published in 1600. Some elements of Shakespeare's Puck closely reflect the Robin Goodfellow ballad, although it is unclear whether the ballad was produced from earlier oral versions and Shakespeare followed the same tradition, if Shakespeare used the ballad as his source, or whether the ballad drew on *Dream* for these key points. Regardless, the parallels between

⁹² William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Edition (London: Methuen, 2017).

Dream and the Robin Goodfellow ballad would have reinforced audience members' understanding and appreciation of Puck's character as "true to the central tradition of English fairylore."⁹³

The first entrance of Robin Goodfellow emphasizes his relationship to Oberon, as he warns another fairy that Oberon is on his way and to keep Queen Titania away because the royal couple is fighting. The other fairy, a member of Titania's court, reminds the audience of who Goodfellow is:

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.⁹⁴

The description touches on several elements that are familiar from the ballad, but generally takes a negative view of Goodfellow's actions. If Puck is seen as a member of Oberon's court, Titania's fairies would reasonably mirror

⁹³ Katherine M. Briggs "The English Fairies." *Folklore* 68, no. 1 (March 1957): 283.

⁹⁴ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.32-41.

her dislike of Oberon and thus express a negative view of Oberon's followers. Puck's response, however, claims that he serves a more positive role as a "merry wanderer"⁹⁵ who makes Oberon smile. Robert H. Bell calls Puck "Oberon's jester,"⁹⁶ a role that gives Puck license to perform any number of antics and tricks as he both follows his master's orders and his own inclinations. According to Mary Ellen Lamb, this is not a position of "feudal obedience to Oberon"⁹⁷ but rather it is an entry for Puck into the world of the fairy court so that he can trick the king and queen into resolving their differences—fulfilling the role of the trickster. Robin Goodfellow's presence in the fairy court works for both Goodfellow and Oberon; indeed, Oberon calls Goodfellow "My gentle puck"⁹⁸ as he sends him to fetch a flower touched by Cupid's bolt.

Oberon's orders show that Puck is not tied to any one place; this is supported by Goodfellow's claim when says he will "put a girdle round about the earth."⁹⁹ However, with the exception of this offstage trip to fetch the flower for Oberon and his final speeches in the Duke's palace, nearly all of Puck's actions take place in the woods, positioning him firmly as a country

⁹⁵ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.43.

⁹⁶ Robert Bell. *Shakespeare's Great Stage of Fools*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 16.

⁹⁷ Mary Ellen Lamb. *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Jonson*. Routledge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 2. London; New York: Routledge, 2006. 106.

⁹⁸ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.148.

⁹⁹ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.175.

spirit, not an urban one. Puck's mischievous nature is brought to the fore in Act 3, when he comes upon the rude mechanicals preparing their play very near the sleeping Titania, and gives the actor Bottom the head of an ass. This is unusual even for Robin Goodfellow, who transforms himself more often than anyone else. In any case, the mischief is in knowing that Titania sleeps nearby, and that Oberon has anointed her eyes with the magic flower that will cause her to fall in love with an ass. In these scenes, Shakespeare draws heavily on English fairy traditions, and specifically on the Robin Goodfellow tales. Although Kevin Pask suggests that Shakespeare has "transformed [Puck] into Oberon's courtier" in an attempt to "synthesize popular and elite magic,"¹⁰⁰ I would point out that Puck's ties to the fairy king are not necessarily new, depending on when the Robin Goodfellow ballad was composed. In any case, there is not much elite about Puck's magic in *Dream*, even in his responses to Oberon's orders. Instead, Puck's magic and tricks are both simple—he uses a single flower to trick the lovers, not a complex magic potion—and rather earthy, focusing as they do on love, sex, and gender relationships.

In *Dream*, Shakespeare uses Robin Goodfellow's tricks to unite Hermia with Lysander and Helena with Demetrius, disrupting the marriage arranged by Hermia's father. Certainly, one view is that Hermia should be a

¹⁰⁰ Kevin Pask. *The Fairy Way of Writing: Shakespeare to Tolkien*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013: 3.

dutiful daughter, accede to her father's wishes, and marry Demetrius; however, she maintains that she will die a virgin first. This situation presents a social conflict, in which a woman is the property of her father to dispose in marriage as he chooses, but which also privileges her choice of true love over obedience; the sympathy of the scene clearly lies with true love and not obedience. The events in *Dream* act as "part of a carnivalesque popular culture, operating beneath and often in opposition to the official culture of the period."¹⁰¹ The ensuing comedy of mismatched lovers in the play's middle acts is apparently due to Robin Goodfellow's actions, but the play suggests they were mismatched from the beginning. In the end, his tricks sort out the original mismatches to pairs that are more appropriate, all while strengthening the idea that a woman could choose an appropriate partner for herself, based on romantic love instead of filial obedience.

It is one thing to sort unwed lovers into their proper matches; it is quite another to adjust the behavior of a quarrelling married couple who are not even speaking to one another. Robin Goodfellow helps Oberon rekindle Titania's love, re-establishing their proper relationship as king and queen of the fairies. Oberon and Goodfellow use a potion to change Titania's feelings with magic as a way to reassert masculine control over the female within their relationship, in support of the orderliness of appropriate marital

¹⁰¹ Ian Munro, *A Woman's Answer Is Never to Seek: Early Modern Jestbooks, 1526-1635* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT, 2007), xiii.

relationships and saving Oberon from the ridicule of an inverted marriage with a wife who controls her own life. Of course, it is only Titania who must change; Oberon doesn't even have to apologize for his own behavior. This assertion of masculine control in the marriage of Oberon and Titania speaks to the fear of disorder, and especially disorderly women, prevalent in early modern England.¹⁰² Of course, before Goodfellow used magic to help rekindle Titania's love for Oberon, she might have seen his actions from a darker perspective.

The Dark Side of Fairy Magic

Belief in magic included fairies and their kin as well as angels, demons, devils, and familiars. For good or ill, one could call on these beings for assistance; prayer could call on angels, and demons were summoned through witchcraft. Just as Robin Goodfellow does in the ballad, fairies often helped in the kitchen and with manual tasks, provided they were not offended by something a human might do. Helpful or troublesome depending on the circumstances, fairies were neither wholly good nor wholly evil, at the boundaries between the natural world and the supernatural—not quite explicable by ordinary means, but still participating in the everyday. Angels, of course, were wholly good as coming from God, and demons wholly evil,

¹⁰² See chapter 1 in Susan Dwyer Amussen and David Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics in England, 1560-1640: Turning the World Upside Down* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017).

coming from Satan. However, popular literature blurred the lines between these various figures, often attributing similar actions to demons and fairies such as Robin Goodfellow who sometimes punished or tricked humans.

That Goodfellow was linked in the ballad to the theft of babies and the substitution of changeling elves points to a darker side of this trickster. Although most of Robin Goodfellow's appearances can be read as positive or neutral, some portrayals tie the mischievous spirit to the darker side of magic behavior, suggesting connections to the devil or demons. In 1606, William Warner included a dark Robin Goodfellow in his collection of historical tales *A Continuance of Albions England*. An extension of his earlier history of England, the *Continuance* included "A Tale of Robin-goodfellow" as chapter 91, nested between a discussion of the "Confedracie betweene the French and Scots against the English" and a description of the end of the Picts. This tale offers an image of Goodfellow as one of a group of fairies and spirits seen by a shepherd: "Mongst them, of bigger bulke and voyce, a bare-breecht Goblin was, / That at their Gamboles laughed, like the braying of an Asse."¹⁰³ This larger, rougher Goodfellow treats the poor shepherd like a chair, sitting on his face with his "buttocks bare."¹⁰⁴ Warner compares Robin Goodfellow to Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest who presided at the trial of Jesus, and has

¹⁰³ William Warner. "A Tale of Robin-Goodfellow." In *A Continuance of Albions England: By the First Author, W. W.*, 367–70. London: Imprinted by Felix Kyngston for George Potter, 1606, 367.

¹⁰⁴ Warner. "A Tale of Robin-Goodfellow." 368.

Goodfellow wish for the “merrie world” when “Mary wore the Crowne,”¹⁰⁵ suggesting that the empty beliefs of Catholics were no threat to such spirits. By linking Robin Goodfellow to the Catholic faith, Warner compares the Catholic beliefs to fairy stories—beliefs for fools and country peasants. Warner emphasizes this point by conflating traditional Goodfellow attributes, suggesting that rather than rewarding some maids by helping with their chores and punishing others who did not keep their houses clean, his treatment was arbitrary and unpredictable. Although Warner does not present England as perfect in Goodfellow’s eyes, he does say that “this Realme is in the Right, Rome in the wrong for Loore,”¹⁰⁶ a blatant use of the trickster figure to support Protestant ideology. Warner goes on to have Goodfellow complain about problems such as landlords raising rents but wasting money on tobacco smoking, suggesting that there were many sins which did not exist during Elizabeth’s reign, being then “religiously refraind.”¹⁰⁷ By having Robin Goodfellow absent during Elizabeth’s reign, only to reappear after James became king, Warner wants to associate Elizabeth’s reign with the best Protestant ideals and to warn of the more recent, and more Catholic, Scottish influence. Further, placing this tale between the stories of Scots and Picts, Warner implies that the Scots and

¹⁰⁵ Warner. “A Tale of Robin-Goodfellow.” 368.

¹⁰⁶ Warner. “A Tale of Robin-Goodfellow.” 368.

¹⁰⁷ Warner. “A Tale of Robin-Goodfellow.” 370.

their king were the sort of rude country people who would believe such fairy tales. The tale uses magic but little trickery to advance the author's goals, maintaining the traditional character of Robin Goodfellow but focusing on the darker side of his fairy nature by calling him a goblin.

Other Works

Despite arguments that fairies were “notably out of date as objects of belief,”¹⁰⁸ ballads, plays, and stories about Robin Goodfellow continued in print throughout the 17th century. Richard Strier points to works such as Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 1584, which had a “presumably upper-class, sophisticated, male” reader as proof of a disbelief in Robin Goodfellow.¹⁰⁹ However, Keith Thomas points to works by John Aubrey and Sir William Temple in the mid to late 17th century as suggesting that disbelief in fairies was a relatively recent occurrence.¹¹⁰ Diane Purkiss further separates fairy stories and beliefs into elite versus popular, suggesting that “the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were beginning to treat ‘popular’ beliefs as amusing curiosities,” in which “only the really urban sophisticate could take an obsessive interest in the hilarious fancies of his forebears.”¹¹¹ In any case, whether disbelief in fairies was in the more distant

¹⁰⁸ Richard Strier, “Shakespeare and the Skeptics.” (*Religion & Literature* 32, no. 2, Summer 2000): 176.

¹⁰⁹ Strier, “Shakespeare and the Skeptics.” 176-77.

¹¹⁰ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 2003), 725.

¹¹¹ Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 198.

past as Scot suggests, or more recent and elite, still-extant copies of the Robin Goodfellow ballad, printed as early as 1601 and reprinted multiple times through the beginning of the next century demonstrate the continued popularity of the character. As Tessa Watt indicates, a “close relationship existed between ballads and books, as the favourite stories floated from one medium to the other.”¹¹² For example, as late as 1692, Henry Purcell took Shakespeare’s *Dream* and turned it into an opera, *The Fairy Queen*, retaining the plot and main characters including Puck. Whether the audience believed in fairies or not, stories and songs about Robin Goodfellow maintained their popularity, as demonstrated by their persistent appearance in print throughout the seventeenth century, including both reprints of older works and new publications that expanded on the Robin Goodfellow corpus.

The Jestbook: Robin Goodfellow as Communal Authority

In what is the largest collection of Robin Goodfellow stories, two printings of a jestbook based on the Robin Goodfellow ballad occur during the reign of Charles I; the first of these was printed in 1628, and the second in 1639. The jestbook offers more detailed stories of Goodfellow’s actions that are only briefly mentioned in the ballad, as well other tales not previously published. Where the Robin Goodfellow ballad points to social concerns in brief, the Goodfellow jestbook expands on those same issues, spelling out both

¹¹² Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 257.

concerns and solutions for the reader. According to Ian Munro, jestbooks and “jesting had a pervasive social and cultural presence in early modern England.”¹¹³ Stories of Robin Goodfellow are part of this jesting literature, as demonstrated by the title of the 1628 chapbook, claiming the stories are “Full of honest Mirth, and is fit Medicine for Melancholy.”¹¹⁴ Munro also argues that jestbooks were not just for the amusement of the reader, but were also used to discuss important social issues, using the dialogue of the stories to present the issues “sketched in miniature.”¹¹⁵ Sometimes Goodfellow’s pranks and tricks appear to be “simply mischievous pranks, as in his misleading of night travelers.”¹¹⁶ However, Mary Ellen Lamb suggests an alternate understanding of Robin Goodfellow’s pranks which presents him as a “hero who rights the wrongs suffered by the powerless and the poor.”¹¹⁷ This righting of wrongs reveals the underlying social commentary, appropriate to his trickster nature as a culture hero.

In one story, for example, Robin Goodfellow tricks a group of young men who were going home after they had been “making merry with their

¹¹³ Munro, *A Woman’s Answer Is Never to Seek*, x.

¹¹⁴ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks and Merry Jests, Full of Honest Mirth and Is a Fit Medicine for the Melancholy*. London: Printed for F. Grove dwelling on Snow-hill over against the Sarazens head., 1628. The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

¹¹⁵ Munro, *A Woman’s Answer Is Never to Seek*, xi.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Gil Harris, “Puck/Robin Goodfellow,” in *Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. Vicki K. Janik (Westport CT, 1998), 358.

¹¹⁷ Mary Ellen Lamb, “Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 300.

sweethearts” by leading them “in the shape of a walking fire” so long that they were lost on a heath all night.¹¹⁸ This episode reflects a similar event in the earlier ballad:

If any wanderers I meet
 that from their night sports doe trudge home
 With counterfeiting voice I greet,
 and cause them on with me to roame
 Through woods, through lakes,
 Through bdgs, [*sic*] through brakes¹¹⁹

Calling on Robin Goodfellow’s reputation as a trickster in the will-o-wisp tradition, this image of a group of rowdy young men led astray suggests that if they had remained soberly at home, Robin would not and could not have tricked them. Young men did not always behave with the proper diligence and sobriety that their elders would wish, lending credence to the concerns of the elite and their accusations of idleness. A “drive to tame and train youth... was hammered home in new forms of literature” including “a flood of cheap print and conduct books whose aims included putting teenagers on the right road.”¹²⁰ The concern was about young men who “subverted patriarchal concepts of manhood rooted in thrift, order, and self-control

¹¹⁸ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*. sig C3r.

¹¹⁹ “The Mad-merry Prankes of Robbin Good-fellow”. 230.

¹²⁰ Paul Griffiths, “Tudor Troubles: Problems of Youth in Elizabethan England,” in *The Elizabethan World*, The Routledge Worlds (New York, 2011), 320.

through rituals of excess.”¹²¹ Indeed, Alexandra Shepard shows that concerns about excessive drinking were more focused on lack of thrift than on drunkenness.¹²² Further, the relative mildness of the trick—after all, the young men would likely be able to find their way home in the morning—suggests an ambivalence toward this specific rowdy behavior. As Shepard indicates, the consequence of such youthful indiscretion was not severe, with excessive drinking seen as “an intrinsic part of male youth culture and of the rites of passage into manhood.”¹²³ In addition, older men may have recognized their own youthful selves in the actions of younger men. While the Robin Goodfellow stories are not conduct books, this story in particular suggests that rowdy drunken behavior might lead one astray from the path to manhood; Goodfellow’s trick of leading young men astray after a night of drinking serves as a punishment that is emblematic of the fault of rowdy behavior. In this case the punishment is not official but communal, if one accepts Robin as part of the community.

When Robin Goodfellow carries out such punishment of disorder, he is upholding the good of the community: he “does the right thing. Perhaps more importantly, *he knows what the right thing is.*”¹²⁴ In this, Robin is a kind of

¹²¹ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 96.

¹²² Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 103.

¹²³ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 103.

¹²⁴ Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 17.

community hero, stepping in where authority does not, teaching the young men about the right way to act. Certainly, what is right can vary depending on one's viewpoint; in this story, the view that Robin takes is that of a desire for orderliness. This seems to be at odds with the representation of Robin Goodfellow as a prankster, but while his prank may be disorderly itself, at least from the perspective of the person being punished, ultimately it supports the idea of an orderly community.

In addition to highlighting concerns over disorderly actions, Robin Goodfellow's pranks are often direct punishment for inappropriate behavior. For example, Robin Goodfellow punishes maids for not keeping a clean house:

When house or harth doth sluttish lie,
 I pinch the Maids there blacke & blew,
 And from the bed the bed-cloathes I
 Pull off, and lay them naked to view:
 Twixt sleepe, and wake
 I doe them take
 And on the key cold floore them throw.¹²⁵

While not as noisy and public as rowdy young men, lazy maids can also be disruptive to the community (or at least to their households), and so earn Goodfellow's tricks to remind them about community standards.

¹²⁵ "The Mad-merry Prankes of Robbin Good-fellow." 231.

The nature of Robin Goodfellow's pranks also appears in his actions against wealthy men when their behavior injures the community. Two stories use this theme: in one, Robin Goodfellow cheats a tapster who has been cheating his customers; in another, Robin turns a "miserable Usurer to a good house-keeper."¹²⁶ In this first case, the tapster had already been "under the hand of authority" for cheating his customers by "nicking of the pots."¹²⁷ In other words, the tapster foamed the beer in the pouring so that the customers received less beer in their cups, which were already smaller than they should have been. The tapster did not change his behavior because he made so much extra money by this cheat, despite official reprimands. Robin Goodfellow, using his fairy powers, transformed himself so that he looked like the brewer who supplied the tapster, and demanded payment for a recent delivery. Robin then took the money and "gave to the poore of the Parish."¹²⁸ Of course, when the real brewer demanded payment, the tapster lost his unearned profits when he discovered that Goodfellow had tricked him. This story shows Robin Goodfellow as an anti-authoritarian arbiter of morality and justice. Where the official authority could not get the tapster to stop cheating his customers, Robin was able to provide justice by getting some of the money back into the hands of the poor folk of the neighborhood. Robin

¹²⁶ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig C3v.

¹²⁷ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig D3r.

¹²⁸ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig D3v.

Goodfellow's use of transformative powers to bring justice to the tapster's poor customers is a clear example of how he supports the common good in ways that ordinary authority cannot.

The second story in which Robin Goodfellow tricks a wealthy man brings Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* to mind. The "miserable usurer" was "hated of all his neighbors" and Robin Goodfellow "grieved to see a man of such wealth doe so little good."¹²⁹ Robin pretended to be a ghost and haunted the wealthy man, saying:

I doe come to doe thee good,
 Recall thy wits and starkled blood:
 The mony which thou up dost store,
 In soule and body makes thee poore:
 Doe good with mony while you may,
 Thou hast not long on earth to stay¹³⁰

Just as Ebenezer Scrooge would later change his ways after he is haunted by three spirits, the wealthy man haunted by Goodfellow became a good neighbor. Robin Goodfellow's actions enforced proper behavior. Turning these situations to improve the common good demonstrates Underdown's view of inversion as "a conservative attempt to restore lost order."¹³¹ The

¹²⁹ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig C4r.

¹³⁰ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig C4r.

¹³¹ Susan Amussen, "Turning the World Upside Down: Gender and Inversion in the Work of David Underdown," *History Compass* 11, no. 5 (2013): 397, doi:10.1111/hic3.12036

right thing in these cases was that wealthy men should be appropriately charitable to the lower sorts. The jestbook tricks discussed thus far demonstrate Goodfellow's role as communal authority, with punishments usually tailored to the offense; other tricks, however, focus on a type of disorder that calls for a specific punishment, and that is the lack of sexual and gendered order within a household.

Gender, Marriage, and Disorder

Within marriage, women were expected to be orderly, and husbands expected to maintain that order. A disorderly woman was more than a problem for her husband within their marriage, because her behavior reflected the husband's ability to maintain his household in proper order. Ridings were used to mock weak husbands who could not keep order in their marriages: the weak husband or a neighbor representing him was placed on a horse (often backwards) and ridden through town while neighbors mocked him and made raucous noise or rough music. That husbands were responsible for their wives' behavior is demonstrated when Robin Goodfellow tricks a weaver because he cannot control his wife. To a modern reader, this particular trick might not seem fair, because Robin first became a servant to the weaver, and then seduced the wife so that "shee at last did fancy him."¹³² However, to a patriarchal early modern audience, fault also lies with the

¹³² *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig Dr.

husband. The weaver did not chastise his wife, but instead sought revenge on Robin Goodfellow by trying to drown him. Goodfellow's tricking meant that instead of revenge, the weaver threw a bag of his own material goods into the river, and followed it in. In this way, Goodfellow's actions supported the common understanding of the roles of married couples, while the weaver's actions went against custom. In addition, that Goodfellow pushed the weaver into the river suggests the end of a riding, which often ended in a pond or ditch.¹³³ Robin Goodfellow was doing nothing different than neighborhoods would do for themselves, in acts of rough music, skimmingtons, and ballading, which mocked weak men and cuckolds (men with adulterous wives). In dunking the weaver, Robin Goodfellow was doing the right thing, as any good neighbor would, using the same type of punishment.

The story of the weaver is not alone in connecting Robin Goodfellow with the social punishment of a riding. That Goodfellow enacts ridings as part of his tricks further embeds him in the traditional culture. E. P. Thompson indicates that ridings are "a property of a society in which justice is not wholly delegated or bureaucratized, but is enacted by and within the community."¹³⁴ Martin Ingram agrees, suggesting that ridings are part of "a folkloric tradition that the populace had the right to supplement the legal

¹³³ E. P. Thompson, "Rough Music Reconsidered," *Folklore* 103, no. 1 (1992): 4.

¹³⁴ Thompson, "Rough Music Reconsidered," 20.

system.”¹³⁵ By the inclusion of ridings in his tricks, Robin Goodfellow further establishes himself as part of the community, which gives him the right to punish those whose actions disrupt that community.

One clear instance of Robin Goodfellow performing a riding is the story which appears in the 1628 jestbook: “How Robin Good-fellow helpt two lovers, and deceived an old man.”¹³⁶ This story concerns unnatural lust, because the old uncle would not give permission to his niece to marry unless she first had sex with him; that the uncle was old was inappropriate according to social standards. Taking on the appearance of the young woman, Goodfellow did her work, and in this guise, told the old lecher that she “consented to that which you have so often desired of me”¹³⁷ in order to get permission for the young lovers to wed. Taking on the physical form of the woman would not have seemed strange to an early modern audience, resembling the cross dressing used in the theatre where male actors typically dressed as women for the female roles. Further, “cross dressing was not only a stage-practice: in a society where clothes were a marker of identity, cross-dressing was a familiar practice in fact and in story.”¹³⁸ The completeness of Robin Goodfellow’s transformation enabled Robin to lure the uncle into a barn

¹³⁵ Martin Ingram, “Ridings, Rough Music, and the ‘Reform of Popular Culture’ in Early Modern England,” *Past & Present* 105, no. 1 (1984): 93.

¹³⁶ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig B3v.

¹³⁷ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig B4r

¹³⁸ Amussen, “Turning the World Upside Down,” 399.

where he thought he would satisfy his lust. Instead, after proving the uncle's lechery, Goodfellow took immediate action. Goodfellow picked up the uncle and carrying him, "drew he him thorow a Pond to coole his hot bloode."¹³⁹ Carrying the uncle in this manner fits the model of rough folk justice, which used skimmingtons, ridings, or ducking in the cucking-stool to punish those who did not meet the moral and behavioral standards of the community.¹⁴⁰

Another use of his transformative powers shows Robin Goodfellow in a riding when he "served a Leacherous Gallant."¹⁴¹ As the stories often repeat, "Robin always did helpe those who suffered wrong."¹⁴² In this story, Goodfellow saw a man forcing himself on a young maiden, who cried for help. The maiden was clearly an honorable victim deserving of his help; she "in no wise would yeelde."¹⁴³ Goodfellow transformed himself first into a hare to run between the man's legs, and then into a horse in order to carry him away. Further mimicking a skimmington ride, which was often accompanied by beatings and other physical abuse, Goodfellow carried the man into a hedge and left him there "prickt and scratched" as part of his punishment.¹⁴⁴ In this riding, Robin Goodfellow actually embodies the physical form of the riding, becoming both the punisher and the horse. The ritual of rough music,

¹³⁹ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig B4v.

¹⁴⁰ Thompson, "Rough Music Reconsidered," 4.

¹⁴¹ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig C3v.

¹⁴² *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig C3v.

¹⁴³ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig C3v.

¹⁴⁴ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig C3v.

including the more physical form of a riding, “announces disgrace, not as a contingent quarrel with neighbours, but as judgement of the community.”¹⁴⁵ Goodfellow’s dumping of the gallant into the hedge at the end of the ride marked the man for the community to see. In this action, Robin Goodfellow took on the role of the community by providing immediate judgment and subsequent punishment of the gallant, whose behavior was both disgraceful and disorderly.

In another instance, however, Robin Goodfellow’s embodiment of a riding ignores the usual purpose of this punishment: Goodfellow “served a clownish fellow”¹⁴⁶ by turning himself into a horse, allowing the fellow to catch and ride him into water, where he transformed into a fish and dumped the fellow. The reason for this punishment was simply that the fellow answered Goodfellow rudely. While rudeness might deserve a response, this example does not follow the pattern of ridings as punishment for gendered disorder.

The most telling feature of these particular Robin Goodfellow stories comes from the *form* of his actions, not from their purpose. Goodfellow’s use of the skimmington ride comes from the lives and communities of the lower sorts where it was enacted; however, he does more than perform the skimmington ride, he transforms himself into a living embodiment of it. In

¹⁴⁵ Thompson, “Rough Music Reconsidered,” 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks*, sig B2v.

this way, Robin Goodfellow transforms into a hero for the lower sorts, providing the punishments that they would give if they knew of the situation. David Underdown describes the skimmington as a community method of dealing with unruly women,¹⁴⁷ going on to say that skimmingtons were performed by the lower elements of society, while “most people of higher rank” saw them as disorderly. Indeed, Underdown continues with the assertion that “most people of higher rank—especially Puritans—disliked them for the same reasons that they disliked other disorderly features of the old culture.”¹⁴⁸ That Robin Goodfellow physically embodies the skimmington through his transformational powers implies that in this, at least, the stories were written for the lower sorts in support of traditional customs and behavior when official authority could not act effectively.

However, the underlying meaning of Robin Goodfellow’s actions also portrays him as a hero for the middling sorts, with his encouragement of proper social action and behavior. Robin Goodfellow’s support of custom and tradition works for both sorts and offers comic relief for life’s struggles. By providing immediate punishment when he sees a need, Robin Goodfellow works outside of official authority as well as outside of customary communal justice. This allows the audience to believe that proper order and harmony

¹⁴⁷ David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1987), 100.

¹⁴⁸ Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion*, 103.

can still exist, even as Robin suggests that communal justice is no longer in the hands of the community but in the hands of a higher power—his own.

Harris sees Robin Goodfellow as demonstrating “three competing conceptions of the world turned upside down:” the carnival world of a practical jokester, a “utopian” and “morally preferable” world, and a world of demonic destruction.¹⁴⁹ Depending on one’s perspective, Robin could be all of these. That Goodfellow tricks and pranks his way through the world certainly demonstrates the essence of carnival, but that is not all his tricks are; they have a purpose beyond frivolity and fun. Robin Goodfellow’s actions uphold orderly social behavior, punishing those who do not fit into an orderly society, but as a fairy, spirit, or demon, Goodfellow himself is not wholly a part of that society. While some see Goodfellow’s tricks as demonic, because he is not human, those same tricks prove him a champion of some segments of society. For example, while Robin Goodfellow appears at first to be a voice for women by supporting them against inappropriate marriages and lecherous men, his is not a female voice, but a voice for proper behavior between the genders. Goodfellow could also be a voice for the poor when he acts against the wealthy in support when they do not act with charity. This, too, demonstrates support of custom, which directs those with means to provide for those without; Goodfellow does not act against the wealthy or better sorts *unless*

¹⁴⁹ Harris, “Puck/Robin Goodfellow,” 358.

their behavior is against custom. That the Robin Goodfellow stories appeared repeatedly in the cheapest print speaks to their popularity among even the poorest consumers; that the stories provide a hero who stands up for the poor may be one factor in this popularity. However, Goodfellow's support for custom and tradition also gives him standing with those from higher classes, as his actions help ensure a smoothly functioning society.

Politics and other Subversions: Loss of Trickster Status

Like Warner in *Albions England*, later writers used the Robin Goodfellow character to provide commentary on political situations, but they sometimes eliminate his role as a trickster. A later example of Robin Goodfellow being used for political commentary is *The Mid-Nights Watch*¹⁵⁰ which was published in 1643. It offers a Robin Goodfellow laughing at the boasting statements of both sides in the ongoing civil war, and decrying the “unnaturall quarrels” within families split by politics.¹⁵¹ Continuing the line of Goodfellow tales used for politics, the 1680 pamphlet *Will with a Whisp to Robbin Goodfellow* complains about the many “Scandalous and Scurrilous Pamphlets” being published following the relaxation of licensing laws following the restoration of the monarchy.¹⁵² *Will with a Whisp* goes on to

¹⁵⁰ *The Mid-Nights Watch, Or, Robin Good-Fellow His Serious Observation*. London: Printed for George Lindsey, 1643. eebo.chadwyck.com.

¹⁵¹ *The Mid-Nights Watch*, sig A3v

¹⁵² *Will with a Whisp to Robbin Goodfellow*. London: Printed for T. Davies, 1680. eebo.chadwyck.com: 2.

warn Robin Goodfellow as the supposed author to be cautious because of the possibility of petitions that might encourage Parliament to take action against “Petulant and Malapert Railers, Malicious and abusive Writers, bold and impudent State-Quacks, and Mountebanks, perpetual Scribblers, and other such like Vermin, as a Nuisance and Offence to the Nation.”¹⁵³ Although the authors of these two pieces included some of Goodfellow’s normal attributes, such as remaining unseen or invisible, these Goodfellows are not the tricksters of the ballad but are the tools of the authors for their own political ends.

Warner’s “Tale of Robin-goodfellow” and other politically-oriented uses of the character subvert the traditional Robin Goodfellow stories to make specific points; the play *A Pleasant Comedie, Called Wily Beguilde*,¹⁵⁴ first published in 1606, also attempts to subvert the Robin Goodfellow tales, though the intent is humor rather than politics or religion. The basic plot is common enough, with two fathers Gripe and Plodall trying to match their children into a marriage based on money, land, and inheritance, and an interfering lawyer, Churm, who wants the girl for himself even as he pretends to help both the fathers toward their goals. What is unusual is the insertion of Robin Goodfellow into the lawyer’s plot as his ally, with

¹⁵³ *Will with a Whisp*, 4.

¹⁵⁴ *A Pleasant Comedie, Called Wily Beguilde*. London: Printed by H. L. for Clement Knight, 1606. 79895, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Goodfellow promising to trick the younger Peter Plodall, Lelia's suitor, while the lawyer works on gaining Lelia's acceptance of his own hand, with or without her father's permission. Lelia's brother offers a further complication, as he returns from military service unknown to his father, and offers to help Sophos, Lelia's true love. Placing Goodfellow on the side of the lawyer, Churms goes against his traditional attribute of supporting true and appropriate love matches.

Wily Beguilde mimics typical Robin Goodfellow tricks, including the use of a powder to make someone fall in love and appearing as something other than himself. Curiously, however, while Goodfellow offers the powder to help Peter Plodall, he does not actually produce it. Further, although Goodfellow appears in the guise of a devil to Sophos, it is just a disguise, not a shape-change; the result does not change anyone's mind or heart but ends with Robin Goodfellow as devil being beaten off by Lelia's brother. Here, Goodfellow is not a demon but a fake. And in the end, while the true lovers are finally matched with the blessing of Lelia's father, it is not due to Robin Goodfellow's tricks but rather through the assistance of her brother. He does not leave the play laughing but runs away with the lawyer: "lets go into some place where wee are not knowne, and there set up the art of knaverie."¹⁵⁵ Aligned with the greedy and lecherous lawyer and taking money from the

¹⁵⁵ *A Pleasant Comedie, Called Wily Beguilde*. 66.

foolish Peter Plodall, this Robin Goodfellow is not the trickster of other stories, nor does he have fairy magic to beguile the other characters into proper behavior; they have to find their solutions themselves. Wrongdoing is not punished except by the failure of a plot; good finds its own reward.

One possible explanation for the loss of Goodfellow's trickster status in *Wily Beguilde* is that this one play places him into an urban rather than a country setting, suggesting that country and city comedy depend on a different type of humor. Whether or not that is so, a character is not a trickster if he or she does not successfully trick other characters. Even while drawing on the audience's awareness of Robin Goodfellow, the author of *Wily Beguilde* eliminates Robin Goodfellow's fairy magic and his success at tricking and turns him into just another supporting character.

Where *Wily Beguilde* dresses Robin Goodfellow in *disguise* as a devil, the later play *Grim the Collier of Croyden* makes him an actual devil, although as Robert Weimann indicates, such instances in which Goodfellow was identified as a devil can be understood as merely "playful euphemisms for his non-Christian origins"¹⁵⁶ at least as far as early modern theatre was concerned. In fact, Goodfellow's behavior in *Grim* is less of the devil and more of the country spirit. He supports the collier Grim and his girl Jone, saying "I

¹⁵⁶ Robert Weimann. *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*. Edited by Robert Schwartz. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987. 193.

like this Country Girle's condition well, / She's faithfull, and a Lover but to one, / Robin stands here to right both Grim and her"¹⁵⁷ as he beats off a miller and a priest who each try to lure Jone away. In this case, Robin Goodfellow's portrayal as a devil specifically points to the priest's actions and suggests anti-Catholic concerns in the early years of the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II. Goodfellow's support of Jone against the lecherous priest might reposition him in the role of trickster, although he is identified as a devil. However, instead of tricks, Goodfellow as devil uses physical violence as he helps Grim and Jone and punishes the lecherous men: "T'le thresh you for your Knavery; / If any ask who beat thee so, / Tell them 'twas Robin Goodfellow."¹⁵⁸ Robin Goodfellow neither tricks the lechers nor uses shape-shifting powers; instead, he beats them.

Conclusion

Robin Goodfellow was a well-known traditional character; early modern authors deployed him knowing that audiences would recognize immediately that he is not human, and full of mischief. That he changes shape is normal for a fairy; indeed, while commonly referred to as male, he appears in different stories as male, female, animal, and even as a will-o-the-

¹⁵⁷ William Haughton. "Grim the Collier of Croyden." In *Gratiæ Theatrales, or A Choice Ternary of English Plays, Composed upon Especial Occasions by Several Ingenious Persons*. London: Printed by R.D., 1662. Literature Online, Chadwyck-Healey, Cambridge, 1994. 54.

¹⁵⁸ Haughton. "Grim the Collier of Croyden." 55.

wisp. While shape-shifting is normal for a fairy, however, the disruption of his changes startles the audience members and catches their attention; further, as Bart Keunan states, in such “simply-structured, moralistic stories” the disruption leads to a resolution of the narrative tensions. As Keunan continues, “this behavior is first and foremost placed in the service of a higher goal, namely, the affirmation of collective values.”¹⁵⁹ While Robin Goodfellow could perhaps have done simple tricks without magic, it is an important aspect of his pranking that he used powers ordinary humans do not have. In this, he was more than humanly heroic; he could even be called a superhero, since “the superhero must also possess skills and abilities normal humans do not.”¹⁶⁰ Robin Goodfellow uses two key super-human powers in his tricks. First, he uses super-human speed in completing women’s work much faster than they could have done it, finishing hours of work in a short time. This power also comes into play when Oberon asks him to collect a particular herb; Goodfellow tells him, “I’ll put a girdle round about the earth / in forty minutes.”¹⁶¹ However, Robin Goodfellow’s superhuman power of transformation is what most often allows him to act as the conscience of the community. Robin Goodfellow presents the extraordinary in a way that

¹⁵⁹ Bart Keunan, “Plot, Morality, and Folk Psychology Research,” in *Stories and Minds: Cognitive Approaches to Literary Narrative*, ed. Lars Bernaerts et al., Frontiers of Narrative (Lincoln, NB, 2013), 185.

¹⁶⁰ Fingerioth, *Superman on the Couch*, 17.

¹⁶¹ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2.1.175-176.

suggests his purpose is to uphold custom and tradition, while also suggesting alternatives or explanations that potentially help people work out their relationships to a new social order where custom and tradition no longer hold true.

Shakespeare's Puck provides examples of both these principles. First, in support of commonly-held beliefs about gender roles in marriage, Puck points to Puck's speech in act 3 "The man shall have his mare again, / And all shall be well." as providing "the more general formula of male domination in marriage."¹⁶² Even more, this short passage identifies the female as property when it calls her a "mare."¹⁶³ This shows that, ideally at least, women were firmly subordinated, and were controlled by their husbands much as a mare is controlled by her (male) rider; of course, this ideal did not always reflect actual practice and was itself a matter of disagreement. However, even as Puck articulates this stance, his tricks with the Athenian lovers help to remove the control of marital choice from fathers and instead offers the choice to daughters, by rewarding both Hermia and Helena with the young men they desire. This provides the audience with a possible alternative to the custom of parental control over a daughter's marriage choice. In both cases, however, Puck's words and actions point to gender-biases in marriage and consistently maintain the dominance of a husband over his wife.

¹⁶² Pask, *The Fairy Way of Writing*, 23.

¹⁶³ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.2.463-4.

Other Robin Goodfellow tricks are also gender coded. Based on his tricks, houses are supposed to be properly maintained by women; women who do not keep house to community standards are punished, while others are rewarded by having their chores completed while they sleep. Curiously, Robin Goodfellow does not complete the work of men; this might be an indication that women's work was perceived as something anyone could do. Further, where Goodfellow does involve himself in the work of men, it is to punish men who use their professional position to harm the community, such as the cheating tapster or the usurer; in these cases, the punishment is focused on inappropriate use of power or position over others, not on inaction or leaving work undone. For women, the message is to do their proper work for their families and households; for men, the message is to do their work honestly and fairly for the community. In these and other situations, Goodfellow's tricks provide a baseline of gendered social standards from which other tricksters move as they develop new ideas of social interactions. Robin Goodfellow offers traditional ideas of community order, transposed into an imaginary world of nostalgia; the punishments he provides are outside the control of the community but still ensure harmony for that community. The ideas embodied by Robin Goodfellow deal with serious moral and ethical issues in ways that help the audience think about them, possibly in new ways. But it is the laughter caused by Goodfellow's disruptive trickster body

that helps the audience know that social order and harmony are recreated, at least for the moment.

Goodfellow is not the only early modern trickster, although he is the one trickster drawn from earlier oral traditions. His tricks point to community ideals and gender biases developed over time, brought from country to city with the incoming of migrants from rural areas. But because 17th century London was a site of significant social change, some of it caused by that very immigration, other tricksters will appear in subsequent chapters that speak more directly to city and urban issues, and to ways that London as a larger community perceived itself. Where Goodfellow is a mythic country spirit, tricksters in the city comedies are stylized characters representing the city itself.

Chapter 3: Moll Cutpurse, the Roaring Girl

Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's 1611 play *The Roaring Girl* falls within the group of plays usually considered to be city comedies, but their character Moll Cutpurse is different enough from other city comedy tricksters to warrant individual consideration; the most obvious of these differences is that she is female, where other city comedy tricksters are commonly male.¹⁶⁴ Moll Cutpurse is a trickster, displaying many of the same characteristics as Robin Goodfellow: she plays tricks on other characters in support of a love match or in defense of women as does Goodfellow, and through cross-dressing, evinces trickster shape-changing attributes. Moll is a roaring girl—like a roaring boy, given to noisy, riotous behavior¹⁶⁵—quite human even though she does not keep to her proper gendered place. While much attention has been paid to her gender-related disorderliness, focusing on her trickster qualities allows us to see the specific social tensions her actions highlight through humor. Many critics have focused on Moll's disruption of gender roles, seeing her as a kind of woman warrior, but a consideration of her as a trickster shows that she does more than simply disrupt, and that her tricks highlight multiple social anxieties through her

¹⁶⁴ See chapter three for an extensive discussion of male city comedy tricksters, including male tricksters developed by Middleton and Dekker.

¹⁶⁵ "roaring, adj. and adv.". OED Online. June 2019. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166563?redirectedFrom=roaring+boy> (accessed September 02, 2019).

choice of clothing as well as in her actions. This chapter will explore the social tensions that Moll Cutpurse addresses, as well as ways in which her character both mimics other tricksters and yet differs from them.

Mary Frith, the original Moll Cutpurse¹⁶⁶

While Middleton and Dekker's Moll Cutpurse is a fictional trickster, her character was based on a living human: Mary Frith, an actual roaring girl, who was noisy, riotous, and wore men's clothes. Thus, some attention to the actual Mary Frith may offer insights into the fictional Moll, as well as into the social anxieties that her character addresses. Evidence shows that Frith was aware of the play and may even have appeared on the stage at one performance. It is also probable that Middleton and Dekker used Mary Frith's notoriety to increase the play's audience appeal.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, the character of Mary Frith as Moll Cutpurse was popular enough to be included in Nathan Field's play *Amends for Ladies*,¹⁶⁸ albeit only for a brief appearance. She also appears in a play by Thomas Dekker, which refers to Mary Frith's punishment for appearing on stage at the Fortune theatre.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Moll Cutpurse was an alias for Mary Frith; to avoid confusion, I will use Moll Cutpurse throughout this chapter to indicate the fictional character, and Mary Frith to indicate the historical figure.

¹⁶⁷ Mary Beth Rose, "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in *The Roaring Girl*," *English Literary Renaissance* 14, no. 3 (September 1984): 379.

¹⁶⁸ Nathan Field, *Amends for Ladies. With the Humour of Roring. A Comedie. As It Was Acted at the Blacke Fryers, Both by the Princes Servants, and the Lady Elizabeths*. (London: G. Eld for Math. Walbancke, and are to be sold at his Shop, at the new Gate of Grayes-Inne, or at the old., 1618).

¹⁶⁹ Gustav Ungerer, "Mary Frith, Alias Moll Cutpurse, in Life and Literature," *Shakespeare Studies* 28, no. 1 (2000): 42–84. 67.

However, *The Roaring Girl* is nearly the only source to portray Moll Cutpurse as a trickster; most other descriptions are brief or portray Mary Frith rather than the fictionalized Moll.

That the imagined Moll Cutpurse appears in more than one source, unlike other city comedy tricksters, is a further indication that this character caught the imagination of both early modern writers and their audiences. Perhaps, as Helen Wilcox puts it, because Mary Frith existed, “the texts depicting her fictionally, therefore, [could] claim the authority of truth, or at least of some relation to fact, as a means of strengthening the image of her created in print or on stage.”¹⁷⁰ Indeed, Nina S. Levine suggests that *The Roaring Girl* became “a kind of local reporting” that claimed “contemporaneity itself as a subject,” focusing attention on then “present-day London, as distinct from as well as connected to a remembered past and an anticipated future.”¹⁷¹ Michelle O’Callaghan even argues that Mary Frith collaborated with Middleton and Dekker to create *The Roaring Girl*, based largely on Frith’s on-stage performance at the Fortune, further emphasizing the reality and notoriety of the character.¹⁷² Mary Frith was an awkward

¹⁷⁰ Helen Wilcox, *1611: Authority, Gender and the Word in Early Modern England* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 132.

¹⁷¹ Nina S. Levine, *Practicing the City: Early Modern London on Stage*, First edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 109.

¹⁷² Michelle O’Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton, Renaissance Dramatist*, Renaissance Dramatists (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 47.

truth that audiences could enjoy as the fictional and entertaining Moll Cutpurse on the relatively safe space of the theatrical stage.

Much of the critical work on *The Roaring Girl's* Moll Cutpurse focuses on the character as a reflection of Mary Frith as a cross-dressed woman. According to Wilcox, Frith's crossdressing is the female counterpart to "the court of King James [which] was characterized by a homoerotic culture and an effeminacy of style for men."¹⁷³ Although neither members of James' court nor Frith herself denied their sex by pretending to be what they were not, men in effeminate clothing and women like Frith in masculine clothing blurred the lines between clear gendered identity, creating in turn a threat to the stable view of gendered society. As Jean E. Howard, puts it, "the Renaissance needed the idea of two genders; one subordinate to the other, to provide a key element in its hierarchical view of the social order and to buttress its gendered division of labor."¹⁷⁴ Jane Baston supports this view when she indicates that male clothing hid "overt signs of sexuality" that proclaimed a woman to be female, creating a "challenge to established norms."¹⁷⁵ Mary Frith's choice of clothing certainly seems to be such a challenge. In addition, according to legal records, Mary Frith used a mixture

¹⁷³ Wilcox, *1611*, 134.

¹⁷⁴ Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 423.

¹⁷⁵ Jane Baston, "Rehabilitating Moll's Subversion in *The Roaring Girl*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Tudor and Stuart Drama, 37, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 320.

of both male and female clothing, further confusing her performance of gender, and increasing her notoriety.¹⁷⁶ This notoriety and the challenge to gender norms is reflected by the fictional Moll Cutpurse, who also commonly wears a mixture of male and female attire.

However, Middleton's address to the reader in the 1611 quarto makes clear that while the play draws on Mary Frith's activities and behavior, the character of Moll Cutpurse is not Mary Frith, but an improvement on the original.¹⁷⁷ Lloyd Edward Kermode offers one key example of this improvement, pointing out that Moll "knows the law and the tricks of each trade too well to put herself at serious risk of punishment" in contrast to Mary Frith, "who served more than one prison term."¹⁷⁸ Rather than working within the law, Frith's behavior resulted in a short sentence in Bridewell as well as a second arrest; Susan E. Krantz indicates that Frith's intent in cross-dressing was "to disrupt society and to challenge its categories,"¹⁷⁹ not to live within societal norms. This challenge to accepted behavior was demonstrated even in Mary Frith's supposed cooperation with the law when she was sentenced to perform public penance. John Chamberlain's letter to Sir Dudley

¹⁷⁶ O'Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton*, 48.

¹⁷⁷ Rose, "Women in Men's Clothing," 379.

¹⁷⁸ Lloyd Edward Kermode, "Destination Doomsday: Desires for Change and Changeable Desires in *The Roaring Girl*," *English Literary Renaissance* 27, no. 3 (September 1997): 432, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6757.1997.tb01113.x>

¹⁷⁹ Susan E. Krantz, "The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* and in London," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* XIX, no. 1 (1995): 17.

Carleton in 1612 describes the penance of Mary Frith as showing the “external signs of conformity” in her weeping and penitence, but in actuality subverting the “intended display” of power.¹⁸⁰ Descriptions of Frith’s drunken penance at Paul’s Cross—she was reported to have drunk a quantity of sack prior to reporting for penance—are consistent in one clear feature: its theatricality. As Anthony B. Dawson puts it, Frith “presents herself as a phenomenon, a spectacle to be wondered at.... she was aware of her effects and deliberately exploited them.”¹⁸¹ Middleton and Dekker in turn exploited Frith’s effects in creating the character of Moll Cutpurse. And while O’Callaghan sees Frith as fully “capable of resisting and undermining her appropriation and commodification as Dekker and Middleton’s *Roaring Girl*,”¹⁸² it is clear from her willingness to appear on the stage as the epilogue announced, that instead of undermining the production she was ready to exploit it in turn. Thus, with Frith’s possible appearance on stage as promised in the epilogue, the lines between reality and fiction are blurred, and audiences are left to wonder about what is real and what is fiction.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ John Chamberlain in Baston, “Rehabilitating Moll’s Subversion,” 317-318.

¹⁸¹ Anthony B. Dawson, “Mistris Hic & Haec: Representations of Moll Frith,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama, 33, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 389.

¹⁸² O’Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton*, 59.

¹⁸³ Wilcox, *1611*, 144.

Moll Cutpurse as Trickster

While Middleton and Dekker based the character of Moll Cutpurse on the person of Mary Frith, it is the actions ascribed to the fictional character that make Moll Cutpurse into a trickster and a figure larger than life.¹⁸⁴ This mythmaking creates Moll Cutpurse the trickster, separate from the actions of Mary Frith or her reasons for them. As the play's prologue proclaims: "A Roaring Girle (whose notes till now never were) / Shall fill with laughter our vast Theater, / That's all which I dare promise."¹⁸⁵ The prologue thus identifies the purpose of Moll Cutpurse the roaring girl: to generate laughter. The laughter created by Moll Cutpurse in her attire and actions is integral to her trickster identity, which contests social gendered norms using that laughter to diffuse anxiety and help the audience accept the ideas she portrays, at least for the moment.

Cross-dressing and disguise

One of the first and most obvious ways that the character of Moll Cutpurse creates laughter for an audience is in her clothing. Tricksters often appear as something they are not, as we saw with Robin Goodfellow's ability to turn into a hare, a horse, or a woman. Similarly, Moll Cutpurse portrays a

¹⁸⁴ Ungerer, "Mary Frith, Alias Moll Cutpurse, in Life and Literature," 45.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, *The Roaring Girle, or Moll Cut-Purse. As It Hath Lately Beene Acted on the Fortune-Stage by the Prince His Players*. (London: Printed at London for Thomas Archer, and are to be sold at his shop in Popes head-pallace, neere the Royall Exchange., 1611), sig A4r.

resistance to the social restrictions of a woman's identity by claiming the freedom of male power through her clothing. Although the image on the front of the play's 1611 edition shows a woman in male attire, the Moll Cutpurse who first appears onstage wears a mixture of male and female clothing specifically identified in the stage directions, creating what Heather C. Easterling calls a "distinctive effect" that incites both interest and suspicion in the other characters.¹⁸⁶ This blending of male and female creates a carnival-like image of a masculine woman who does not successfully fit into either gendered role. By wearing both types of clothing at the same time, Moll displays her identity rather than masking it, while suggesting a contemporary "intense, often bitterly funny debate about women wearing men's clothes."¹⁸⁷ Moll is clearly a woman, but by wearing some men's clothing, she claims the right to act outside of the expected roles of a woman.¹⁸⁸ Rather than crossdressing as a way to claim wholly male status, by wearing mixed-gender clothing Moll Cutpurse claims both her own female identity and the freedom to behave as a man. In claiming both male and female attributes with her clothing, Moll's cross dressing exhibits the

¹⁸⁶ Heather C. Easterling, *Parsing the City: Jonson, Middleton, Dekker, and City Comedy's London as Language*, Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory (New York: Routledge, 2007), 87.

¹⁸⁷ Rose, "Women in Men's Clothing," 367.

¹⁸⁸ Howard, "Crossdressing," 436.

trickster trait of pointing to an issue of social concern even as it generates laughter in the audience.

There are, however, two instances in *The Roaring Girl* when Moll Cutpurse dresses in wholly male or wholly female clothing. While her clothing does not generally disguise her—no-one has any trouble identifying who she is most of the time—the stage directions specify that she enter “like a man”¹⁸⁹ for her arranged meeting with Laxton at Grays-Inn fields. The result of this change of clothing is that Laxton does not recognize her but sees her as an unknown man, delaying his recognition of who she is.¹⁹⁰ This trick of clothing allows Moll to surprise Laxton and the audience, taking for herself the role of a man for this meeting, using clothing to become something other than her normal self so that she can treat Laxton as he deserves. Shortly afterward, while she is still at Grays-Inn fields, the same disguise works on Trapdoor, who also does not recognize Moll while she taunts him, trying to learn what he really wants of her. The second time that Moll sheds her mixed-gender clothes for a single gender is in the final scene of the play, when she appears in full female attire. In this case, her change of clothing is intended to trick Sir Alexander Wentgrave into thinking her a suitable spouse for his son. She is in effect in disguise, “most clearly female and least

¹⁸⁹ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig E3v.

¹⁹⁰ Kermode, “Destination Doomsday,” 433.

clearly ‘herself.’”¹⁹¹ Moreover, in this scene female clothing makes Moll “conventionally acceptable” even to Sir Alexander, at least until he realizes who she is.¹⁹² In both these instances, Moll’s clothes are a disguise that helps her trick someone, her own way of changing shape to fulfill her trickster role.

It is also worth considering the way Moll Cutpurse would have appeared on stage to the audience. Since men or boys played female characters in early modern England, at least before the Restoration, the character of Moll Cutpurse presents a doubled pretense: a man pretending to be a woman dressed (at least in part) like a man. This confusion gives Moll’s character some of the same visual disruption of Robin Goodfellow’s shapeshifting, although the level of disruption would depend on the actor filling the role. If the role is played by a young or effeminate boy, then the sight of Moll in men’s clothing is less visually disruptive; if the role is played by a more masculine actor, further disruption comes from interactions with other characters as the masculine features of this woman are exaggerated. O’Callaghan’s assertion that Moll “adopts the behaviour of an *adult* male”¹⁹³ rather than that of a youth adds credence to the possibility of a more masculine actor in the role. Some scholars also suggest the possibility that

¹⁹¹ Easterling, *Parsing the City*, 92.

¹⁹² Easterling, *Parsing the City*, 92.

¹⁹³ O’Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton*, 51.

the real Mary Frith might have played Moll Cutpurse at least once;¹⁹⁴ this would have given the audience the greatest disruption of all. In describing this possibility, Mark Hutchings asserts: “Indeed, the inversion would work on several levels: a female figure, notorious for her cross-dressing, played on a public stage by a male actor as a woman, disguised as a man, and in turn replaced by the cross-dressed figure herself, a woman, in male dress, playing ‘herself.’”¹⁹⁵ In nearly all these cases, the situation calls for laughter as the costume and character clash. For the audience, the layered visual disruption of Moll Cutpurse’s player’s body and mixed-gender clothes could signal a serious consideration of the validity of gender roles, along with laughter at the incongruity on display.

While Moll Cutpurse’s portrayal on stage draws attention to and questions gendered roles and attire, it does not provide direct or immediate resolution for the gendered issues it raises. The concern over masculine women and effeminate men continued a decade after the initial publication of *The Roaring Girl* with the publication in 1620 of two pamphlets: *Hic Mulier*,

¹⁹⁴ Alicia Tomasian, “Moll’s Law,” *Ben Jonson Journal* 15, no. 2 (November 2008): 205–31, doi:10.3366/E107934530800028X, 214.

¹⁹⁵ Mark Hutchings, “Mary Frith at the Fortune,” *Early Theatre* 10, no. 1 (2007): 89–108. 96.

or, *The Man-Woman*¹⁹⁶, and *Haec-Vir, or, The Womanish-Man*.¹⁹⁷ These pamphlets laid out arguments for and against cross-dressing as expressions of freedom from gendered roles. *Hic Mulier* argues against cross dressing for women because it allows them to behave like men. While *Haec-Vir* defends women who do not fit gender norms, it places some blame on effeminate men, and ends with a return to normative gender roles.¹⁹⁸ While the continued debate helps demonstrate that tricksters do not resolve problems but rather calls attention to them, *The Roaring Girl* and trickster Moll are at least one voice in the conversation. Moll Cutpurse's mixed-gender clothing suggests that gender roles are not as firmly fixed as they seem but does not provide a solution.

However, neither Moll Cutpurse's normal mixed-gender clothing nor a single-gendered disguise is necessary for the ongoing trick of mocking gallants for their spendthrift and foolish actions, another trick comparable to Robin Goodfellow's treatment of foolish young men.

¹⁹⁶ *Hic Mulier: Or, The Man-Woman* (London: Printed at Eliot's Court Press for I. Trundle and are to be sold at Christ Church gate, 1620). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

¹⁹⁷ *Haec-Vir: Or, The Womanish-Man* (London: Printed at Eliot's Court Press for I. Trundle and are to be sold at Christ Church gate, 1620). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

¹⁹⁸ For a discussion of early modern debates about gender and dress, see Amussen and Underdown, *Gender, Culture, and Politics in England, 1560-1640*, particularly chapters 1-2; also see Clark, "Hic Mulier, Haec Vir, and the Controversy of Masculine Women" for a list of other relevant contemporary publications and plays, as well as the place of Moll Cutpurse in the discussion.

Gallants mocked

In creating the character of Moll Cutpurse, Middleton and Dekker drew on stereotyped ideas about male gallants to shape Moll's character, thus adding another layer of gendered social commentary because of the way that Moll mocks the male behavior of those gallants. The trickster Moll is portrayed as more gallant than the gallants. Dekker likely borrowed material from his own *Guls Horn-booke*, a satirical pamphlet on the behavior of gallants published in 1609, just two years prior to publication of *The Roaring Girl*. Anna Bayman suggests that "Dekker makes a very fine distinction between the foolish gull and the experienced gallant" in the *Horn-booke*, but "the most successful rogues in Dekker's pamphlets become gallants, a transformation which might have worried those who assumed that gallants were of gentle origin."¹⁹⁹ Because they blurred distinctions between classes, gallants were clearly a source of anxiety in early modern London, where gallants as well as others including citizens "all operate... according to a distinct, and in many ways peculiarly metropolitan, set of rules, some of which invert normal social structures and imperatives."²⁰⁰ In her successful mocking, Moll is a rogue who becomes a gallant, crossing lines of class as well as gender. One way that the character of Moll Cutpurse borrows from these

¹⁹⁹ Anna Bayman, *Thomas Dekker and the Culture of Pamphleteering in Early Modern London* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 93, 100.

²⁰⁰ Bayman, *Thomas Dekker*, 101.

stereotypes is in her first appearance, which characterizes her as a typical male gallant, even as she insists on her identity as a woman.

Based on the shops where she and other male gallants appear, Moll follows the instructions given in the *Horn-booke* to would-be gallants, where Dekker tells gallants to be seen in “the Sempsters shops, the new Tobacco-office, or amongst the Booke-sellers.”²⁰¹ In *The Roaring Girl*, much of the action and Moll’s first appearance occurs next to a sempster’s shop and an apothecary’s shop that sells tobacco; further, Moll is clearly well known to the shop keepers, implying that she frequents the shops rather than first discovering them when she appears on stage. Another example of this borrowing ties to Dekker’s suggestion in the *Horn-booke* that when a gallant wants to buy a new suit, he should discuss it with his tailor in a public place, and that it should of course be only in the newest fashion.²⁰² When Moll Cutpurse wants new clothes, the tailor attends to her in the presence of Sir Alexander, measuring her in this public setting for a pair of “breeches” in the new Dutch fashion.²⁰³ The inclusion of this type of detail serves to characterize Moll Cutpurse, although female, as a typical gallant, making her purchase of the stylish new breeches a thoroughly public affair. Moreover, being fitted for the newest fashion points to the problem of changing fashions,

²⁰¹ Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horne-Booke: Stultorum Plena Junt Omnia. Al Sauio Meza Parola, Basta*. (London: R. S., 1609). 19.

²⁰² Thomas Dekkar, *The Guls Horne-Booke*. 20.

²⁰³ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig Ev.

which Valerie Forman notes are “a target of both moralistic pamphlets and sumptuary legislation that worried about fashion as a source of economic and social instability in general.”²⁰⁴ Moll Cutpurse thus “points a direction” to a path between increasing commercialism and nostalgia; she “invoke[s] pre-capitalist values” even as she “actively participates in city commerce.”²⁰⁵ These scenes satirize foolish male gallants and their lack of thrift by dressing a woman in a gallant’s clothes and actions, establishing Moll as a defender of older values which imagined that rogues could not be gallants and young men would not waste their incomes on foolish new fashions and other such frivolities.

Of course, Moll Cutpurse is not the only gallant in *The Roaring Girl*; she is joined by male gallants including Laxton, Goshawk, and Greenwit, as well as Jack Dapper and his friends Sir Beauteous Ganymede and Sir Thomas Long. These men behave in what one might consider typical gallant fashion, focusing on personal desires and appetites. Moll even spends time with some of the male gallants as they stroll around town; this is another nod to the *Guls Horn-booke*, which recommends being seen with other gallants of equal or better rank as important to building one’s reputation.²⁰⁶ In addition, while walking with the gallants, Moll Cutpurse saves them from having their

²⁰⁴ Valerie Forman, “Marked Angels: Counterfeits, Commodities, and The Roaring Girl,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001): 1546.

²⁰⁵ Levine, *Practicing the City*, 126.

²⁰⁶ Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horne-Booke*. 20.

pockets picked when she recognizes the members of a group of rogues pretending to be gallants, underscoring the concern that some apparent gallants may not actually be gentlemen. This act places Moll on the side of the law as it highlights the anxiety that gallants might be rogues, crossing class lines to perform their thefts and so blurring the lines of class for all gallants even as Moll Cutpurse's blurred and cross-dressed gender blurred the lines between masculine and feminine expectations. Still, Moll Cutpurse's actions as well as her gender separate her from other gallants, especially when it comes to what she desires. Certainly, Moll's actions as a pseudo-gallant draw attention to the behavior of men, who as O'Callaghan indicates are "often under-performing" in the "proper codes of behavior and appearance."²⁰⁷ While both Mary Frith and Moll Cutpurse are unusual and brash, purposefully drawing the attention of their respective audiences,²⁰⁸ Middleton and Dekker use trickster attributes to design the character of Moll Cutpurse. Her dress and actions mock the behavior of gallants, a source of class and economic anxiety in early modern London. More broadly, these blurred lines of gender and class speak to the anxiety about choice of dress outside one's proper sphere, including dress across lines of gender and class as used in theatrical performance. As a trickster, however, Moll has other

²⁰⁷ O'Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton*, 51.

²⁰⁸ Tomasian, "Moll's Law," 206.

tricks to play, at times following the path of Robin Goodfellow; for example, she supports a love match, a common theme for tricksters.

Support of a love match

Much like Robin Goodfellow, the trickster Moll also cooperates in a trick to support Sebastian Wengrave's marriage to his chosen bride against his father's refusal. In the romantic plot of *The Roaring Girl*, the marriage of Sebastian and Mary Fitzallard was forbidden by Sebastian's father, Sir Alexander, in spite of his previous agreement. Sebastian described why Sir Alexander changed his mind:

... he reckond up what gold

This marriage would draw from him, at which he swore,

To loose so much bloud, could not grieve him more.

He then diswades me from thee, cal'd thee not faire,

And askt what is shee, but a beggars heire?

He scorn'd thy dowry of (5000) Marks.²⁰⁹

These lines describe a man controlled by greed even in the face of a substantial dowry: Ryan Singh Paul points out that his rejection of Mary Fitzallard is "because of his own greed"²¹⁰ and Jennifer Panek calls Sir

²⁰⁹ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig B2r.

²¹⁰ Ryan Singh Paul, "The Power of Ignorance and The Roaring Girl," *English Literary Renaissance*, 2013, 532.

Alexander “just plain greedy.”²¹¹ Although there may be a fine line between making decisions for the good of a child and what the parent simply wants, in this case Sir Alexander had already agreed to the marriage, arranging it with Mary Fitzallard’s father, and backed out of his agreement. As with other city comedy tricksters, this points to a situation where the older generation puts its own interests above that of the younger, and so delays the younger man’s marriage and attainment of adult householder status.

Moll Cutpurse is not initially involved in resolving the problem for Sebastian and Mary, until Sebastian uses Moll’s reputation to frighten Sir Alexander into returning to his original agreement about Mary. Although Sebastian’s plan was originally made without her knowledge, when Moll learns of the plan to present her as his new love, replacing Mary, Moll goes along with the idea. “In [Sebastian’s] plan, Moll is simply a tool, the medium through which he will work, but the play turns this arrangement on its head and makes Moll, rather than Sebastian’s impending marriage to Mary, its center.”²¹² In the final scene, Moll Cutpurse appears first in her usual clothes, then in disguise as a masked woman, pretending to be Sebastian’s chosen bride. Sir Alexander is dismayed by Moll’s first appearance, but is fooled by her second entrance, saying that she is “a goodly personable creature, / Just

²¹¹ Jennifer Panek, “Women’s Life Stages: Maid, Wife, Widow (Whore),” in *Thomas Middleton in Context*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 273.

²¹² Forman, “Marked Angels”, 1531.

of her pitch was my first wife his mother.”²¹³ Sir Alexander goes on to tell Sebastian how happy he is—that is, until Moll is unmasked and revealed for who she is. Moll tells Sir Alexander how lucky he should be to have a daughter like her, since everyone will fear him for her sake. When Mary Fitzallard finally enters, Sir Alexander is duly grateful as Sebastian tells him “This still was shee, for whom true love complain’d.”²¹⁴ By presenting herself as a potential resolution to the romantic marriage plot, both masked and as herself, Moll tricks Sir Alexander into satisfaction with Mary Fitzallard as Sebastian’s true bride, in spite of his previous greedy distaste for what he saw as her lack of worth.²¹⁵ Moll’s cooperation with Sebastian’s plan to trick his father was effective; without Moll’s appearances, Sir Alexander would not have accepted Mary Fitzallard so readily nor would he have promised that Sebastian would have “all those lands / My first love lotted him, he shall straight possesse”²¹⁶ upon his refusal to wed Moll Cutpurse. Moll’s intervention resolves the tension between Sebastian and his father and sets the love match between Sebastian and Mary Fitzallard on the path to marriage.

At first, Moll’s involvement in the romantic plot appears to be fully supportive of the status quo regarding gendered roles in marriage as well as

²¹³ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig L4v.

²¹⁴ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig Mv.

²¹⁵ Forman, “Marked Angels,” 1550.

²¹⁶ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig L4r.

supporting love matches; however, some of her statements raise questions about what the character really supports. When she first talks with Sebastian, for example, Moll says “I have no humor to marry, I love to lye aboth sides ath bed my selfe,” and continues with “a wife you know ought to be obedient, but I feare me I am too headstrong to obey, therefore Ile nere go about it.”²¹⁷ O’Callaghan sees these statements as evidence of “gender conservatism” limiting Moll’s disruptiveness.²¹⁸ Dawson agrees, stating that “As a social critic, Moll remains rather more ambivalent than those searching for protofeminist sentiment might wish.”²¹⁹ Taking a somewhat different approach, Viviana Comensoli states that Moll rejects marriage “because it denies a woman freedom to act as she pleases in the world.”²²⁰ In effect, these and other critics suggest that Moll Cutpurse upholds marriage for others, but not for herself, reading the rejection of marriage as a personal issue for Moll, and so a reduction of her social disruptiveness. However, Moll’s words near the end of the final act present a somewhat different perspective.

When asked about her own possible marriage—“when wilt marry”—Moll Cutpurse replies:

I’le tell you when ifaith,

²¹⁷ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig Er.

²¹⁸ O’Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton*, 52.

²¹⁹ Dawson, “Mistris Hic,” 394.

²²⁰ Viviana Comensoli, “Play-Making, Domestic Conduct, and the Multiple Plot in *The Roaring Girl*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 27, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 258.

When you shall heare,
 Gallants voyd from Serjeants feare,
 Honesty and truth unslandred,
 Woman man'd, but never pandred,
 Cheates booted, but not coacht,
 Vessels older e're they'r broacht.
 If my minde be then not varied,
 Next day following, I'le be married.²²¹

In other words, Moll is willing to marry only when the world is a better place, including women matched to men but not sold / pandered, and drink left to age in its “vessels” rather than being consumed immediately (a reduction of excessive drunkenness, perhaps). The response to this pronouncement is that it “sounds like domes-day” or the end of the world. Instead of waiting for marriage for the personal freedoms she mentioned to Sebastian early in the play, Moll Cutpurse is waiting until society itself is reordered.²²² This restructuring of society is one that Moll herself is working toward; more than just pretty speeches, Moll puts herself directly into the action, offering specific and individual justice to men she perceived as mistreating women.

²²¹ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig M2r.

²²² Kermode, “Destination Doomsday,” 441.

The woman's warrior

Particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, criticism of *The Roaring Girl* focused strongly on Moll Cutpurse as a female warrior, positioning her, as Heather Hirschfeld puts it, “in the vexed terrain of gender relations in early modern England, where rapid economic and religious upheaval provided the backdrop” for anxiety over gendered roles.²²³ As portrayed by Middleton and Dekker, Moll Cutpurse is a cross-dressing woman who operates wholly outside of the acceptable gendered conventions of society, countering the objectification of women in a one-woman rebellion against patriarchal hegemony over women’s bodies and lives. Moll Cutpurse’s rebellious behavior thus offers a critique of gender norms of violence between men and women.

If the most obvious way that the character of Moll Cutpurse destabilizes gender roles is through cross-dressing, which visually places her character at least partially with the socially dominant gender, she also claims dominance through her use of swordplay, something highly unusual and thus disruptive for a woman to do. Moll Cutpurse duels in her first appearance, against an un-named man who appears in front of the neighborhood shops wearing a long rapier. Moll immediately draws her sword and challenges him, claiming that he insulted her in a tavern a few days earlier. Instead of submissively looking for male assistance to protect her reputation, she fights

²²³ Heather Hirschfeld, “What Do Women Know?: ‘The Roaring Girl’ and the Wisdom of Tiresias,” *Renaissance Drama* 32 (2003): 124.

in her own defense, and drives the fellow away. Laxton's line says it all: "Gallantly performed, i'faith, Moll, and manfully!"²²⁴ The beautiful irony of that line is only apparent later in the play, when Moll turns her sword against Laxton himself. While Laxton initially supports Moll Cutpurse's agency as she fights the man who insulted her, he turns out to do nothing of the sort, and assumes that she is sexually available because she wears men's clothes and acts outside expected gender roles.

While Moll Cutpurse's actions against the unnamed fellow are spontaneous, her actions against Laxton are quite the opposite. When Laxton asks her to meet him for sex, she agrees to the meeting, but uses the opportunity to set up a suitable punishment for his treatment of her and of other women. Her actions are deliberate and planned, suggesting an intentional ethical response to Laxton's lechery rather than an impromptu immediate punishment. Laxton arranges a meeting with Moll Cutpurse, paying her to whore for him, but she never intends to sleep with him, claiming, "I scorn to prostitute myself to a man."²²⁵ Moll challenges Laxton to a duel for the money he gave her, doubled with her own money to increase the stakes. But money is not the reason she gives for the duel. In a lengthy speech of nearly 50 lines, Moll Cutpurse tells Laxton that her purpose in fighting him is: "To teach thy base thoughts manners: th'art one of those /

²²⁴ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig D2v.

²²⁵ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig E4v.

That thinkes each woman thy fond flexable whore / If she but cast a liberall eye upon thee.”²²⁶ After calling him a lecher, Moll continues: “How many of our sex, by such as thou / Have their good thoughts paid with a blasted name.”²²⁷ Finally, Moll draws her sword and fights with Laxton, wounding him. Laxton yields “both purse and body”²²⁸ and Moll ends by sparing his life; the lecher is punished painfully, pricked by her sword for his pricking. This response to Laxton’s lecherous behavior offers the audience two lessons: that lechery is wrong, and that that anyone—even a woman—can stand against it.

The text also suggests that Moll Cutpurse is something more or other than human; Laxton says, “Heart I thinke I fight with a familiar, or the Ghost of a fencer.”²²⁹ While the character on stage does not change her shape as a supernatural mythic trickster does, this line suggests to the audience that Moll Cutpurse has the more than human powers of a spirit. However, Moll Cutpurse moves in the everyday world of shopkeepers and thieves, showing no other signs of being anything other than a human woman. Still, the suggestion of supernatural ability ties the character of Moll Cutpurse more closely to mythic tricksters, and particularly to Robin Goodfellow.

Moll Cutpurse’s character and the punishment of Laxton present the audience with several contradictions. Moll insists on separation from

²²⁶ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig E4r.

²²⁷ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig E4v.

²²⁸ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig Fr.

²²⁹ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig Fr.

community standards through her partial masculine attire, but she is clearly a member of the community through her knowledge of and interactions with the neighborhood shopkeepers, all of whom she addresses familiarly by name. If she is a member of the community, then she is right to support that community by punishing its members who do not keep order. However, the punishments she gives Laxton and the unnamed fellow are not that of a woman or of the community, but of a gentleman; further, she claims to fight Laxton not only for herself but on behalf of all the women he and others like him have hurt with their lechery and assumptions about women's reputations. By dueling with Laxton and claiming to punish him for his lechery with many women, Moll mocks the ideal of chivalry where gentlemen uphold the honor of ladies with their swords; instead, it is a woman—and most definitely not a lady—who holds the sword. Here, Moll is more than herself; she “represents the potential prodigiousness of all women.”²³⁰ In the face of such prodigiousness, Laxton yields after Moll wounds him, yielding both his manhood and his sword. The reversal of normal gendered behavior uses incongruity to draw on the social functions of humor to help the audience laugh as it considers ideas of gender and class.²³¹ And as Patricia Shaw states, when Moll is the victor over men, her victory is comic because

²³⁰ Paul, “The Power of Ignorance,” 531.

²³¹ Gregg Camfield, *Necessary Madness: The Humor of Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). 170.

Moll is a woman: “such episodes protagonised by men would not, of course, be funny, the essence of humour being, precisely, topsy-turvydom with a vengeance!”²³² Despite her choice of clothing, Moll Cutpurse never denies being female. Although her actions fall outside of Moll’s gender and class, these trickster behaviors support a social order that frowns on lechery but uses the audience’s laughter to make room for new possibilities.

Conclusion

Trickster figures in literature often appear to support traditional ideas of behavior, while simultaneously suggesting alternatives or explanations that potentially help individuals work out their relationships to the new social order. However, literary tricksters are also characters at the edge; they generally do not obey the rules of conventional behavior or society, playing tricks and jests for their own purposes, by their actions pushing the borders of what is normal. Moll Cutpurse is not a typical trickster, based as she is on a living human rather than some mythic figure, but Moll’s actions subvert gender roles as she brings about change, making mischief as she pursues her own ends.

However, in true trickster fashion, Moll Cutpurse’s actions seem repeatedly to place her on the side of an ethically grounded order. Moll embodies the moral order as she uses her influence to keep the constables

²³² Patricia Shaw, “Mad Moll and Merry Meg: The Roaring Girl as Popular Heroine in Elizabethan and Jacobean Writings,” *Sederi* VII (1996): 147.

from arresting another character on false charges and saves him and his friends from having their pockets picked by warning them of the dangers and even identifying the nearby pickpockets. By acting as a gallant throughout the play, the character of Moll Cutpurse points to concerns over London's gallants and their spendthrift behavior as socially disruptive. Like other city comedy tricksters, Moll helps to punish a father for his greed, which he mistakenly identifies as a desire for financial security; simultaneously, her tricks recognize and support a love match by helping Sebastian and Mary Fitzallard to marry. Moll has been described as "an agent of orthodoxy" whose purpose is to help Sebastian marry his true love despite his father's original wishes to the contrary.²³³

But to view Moll Cutpurse only as support for normal social relations ignores her role as a disruption to those same relationships. Even while she helps Sebastian and Mary, she asserts that she herself will not marry, confirming that possibility for other women, a disruption of expected gendered roles for women. Also, where other city comedy tricksters solve the problem of prostitution by finding husbands for whores to regenerate their personal credit in the community, Moll instead delivers justice to men who treat women as objects, at least partially shifting the blame for prostitution away from women. As Pascale Drouet puts it, Moll Cutpurse is a "sort of

²³³ Hutchings, "Mary Frith at the Fortune," 93.

popular mythical construct”²³⁴ balanced between changing and supporting social order; like any good trickster, she selectively supports and counters tradition to highlight areas of tension and suggest possible alternatives.

A primary function of Moll Cutpurse as trickster is to destabilize patriarchal power over women’s bodies and lives; Moll’s actions demonstrate this function as she claims power over her own life. Moll is quite content to be her own woman, something she does not reject even when she dresses as a man. When she says, “I have no humor to marry, I love to lye aboth sides ath bed my selfe,”²³⁵ Moll is claiming both the masculine and feminine sides of herself. She does not try to live only as a man; just as when she says, “I have the head now of my selfe, and am man enough for a woman,”²³⁶ her actions throughout the play show that the woman she is man enough for is herself.

Moll Cutpurse’s body is disruptive for her early modern audiences. The laughter she causes in her cross-dressing jolts the audience out of its everyday world into one in which social tensions can be eased and changes can occur. If “the cultural and psychic work of laughter and humor” is, as Camfield states, “to liberate people from the strictures of normalcy,”²³⁷ then

²³⁴ Pascale Drouet, “Appropriating a Famous Female Offender: Mary Frith (1584? - 1659), Alias Moll Cutpurse,” in *Female Transgression in Early Modern Britain: Literary and Historical Explorations*, ed. Richard Hillman and Pauline Ruberry-Blanc (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 93.

²³⁵ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig Er.

²³⁶ Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, sig Er.

²³⁷ Gregg Camfield, *Necessary Madness*. x.

Moll is good at her work. Her body is the visual representation of the unusual, working outside of everyday to make the everyday more comprehensible or acceptable.

Trickster figures often exaggerate and surprise as they demonstrate alternative actions or decisions, seeming to support traditional social structures while bending those structures into new shapes. Tricksters such as Moll Cutpurse offer ways that early modern audiences could use to deal with changing social order—drafts of behavior for the audience to try in imagination. Moll's actions surprise her audience into looking at new ways of coping with a changing world, as she moves outside of her own gender and class, pushing the boundaries of what is possible. The ideas that Moll embodies deal with serious moral and ethical issues in ways that help the audience think about them, possibly in new ways. But it is the laughter caused by her disruptive trickster body that helps the audience know that social order and harmony are recreated, at least for the moment.

Chapter 4: City Comedies City Tricks, or Middleton's Men and More

If Robin Goodfellow broadly defines the trickster for early modern England, city comedies hone that character type into a trickster specifically concerned with London and its urban-centric social issues, as shown by the discussion of Moll Cutpurse. This chapter will examine in detail the ways that specific city comedies present the mercenary city of London, focusing on the actions of tricksters to spotlight social and economic anxieties and challenges. City tricksters are most often the gallants and rogues, with their attraction based on “their participation in the archetypal appeal of the trickster.”²³⁸ *A Mad World, My Masters* (1608) by Thomas Middleton offers the trickster Richard Follywit as a spendthrift gallant with expectations—if only his rich grandfather would die. Middleton’s *A Tricke to Catch the Old-one* (1608) presents Wit-good, a gentleman intent on out-foxing the “olde Foxe” his uncle. *Ram Alley* (1611) by Lording Barry has William Smallshankes, who has been cheated of his property by a thieving pseudo-lawyer—and of course, he wants it back with interest. All three plays present a young gallant intent on marriage, but held back by a lack of money that they brought on themselves; all three gallants are hindered rather than

²³⁸ Wendy Griswold, *Renaissance Revivals: City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theatre, 1576-1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 34.

helped by their older male relatives, who themselves have not managed to change their behavior from the wasteful ways of their own youth. All three plays also include a mistress or courtesan in a supporting role to the young gallants; where the gallants are the instigators of tricks, these women serve to further those tricks. The courtesan subplots also highlight anxieties about female sexual misconduct and consider ways for women to recover their social standing.

City comedies offer a snapshot of London in all its mercenary glory in the first decade of the 17th century; for example, allusions abound to the Cheapside district's buying and selling of anything, including sex, happiness, and honor in Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. In his genre-defining book on city comedy, Brian Gibbons describes city comedies as plays that "are all satiric and have urban settings, with characters and incidents appropriate to such settings" and that draw on other popular literature such as jest books and pamphlets.²³⁹ More recently Robert D. Hume rightly criticizes what are often too-narrow definitions of city comedy when he says that it is "a nebulous and inconsistent set of modern constructions, not an early seventeenth-century subgenre."²⁴⁰ That is, city comedy is not as rigid a genre or subgenre as Gibbons and other critics have suggested. Even though

²³⁹ Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1968), 24.

²⁴⁰ Robert D Hume, "The Socio-Politics of London Comedy from Jonson to Steele," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (June 2011), 189.

Gibbons' description of city comedy as a specific and clearly defined subgenre may be too narrow to explain these plays fully, they are certainly not country comedy; using settings, characters, and social concerns dealing with life in London they use comedy to focus audience attention on specific aspects of city life.

A defining feature is the setting, which is a publicly known place, a place which does not necessarily have a reputation for a specific vice such as sex, but rather has an "established notoriety."²⁴¹ Where city comedies provide locations, they represent the city already known to their audiences, even as their audiences makes sense of the comedies based on their understanding of the city—a kind of inside joke that shows how well the audience knows the city.²⁴² This combination of setting, characters, and events enables the comedies to consider the "immediate, everyday reality"²⁴³ of life in London and offer audiences a chance to consider their city and their lives. Theodore B. Leinwand suggests that the action and characters in city comedy are part of the ongoing self-discovery and self-awareness that London and Londoners

²⁴¹ Laura Gowing, "The Freedom of the Streets': Women and Social Space 1560-1640," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, ed. Mark S. R. Jenner and Paul Griffiths, Politics, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain (Manchester: New York: New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed exclusively in the USA by St. Martin's Press, 2000), 145.

²⁴² Theodore B. Leinwand, *The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy, 1603-1613* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 13.

²⁴³ Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, "Our Scene Is London...." in *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, ed. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 3.

had about themselves.²⁴⁴ More specifically, he sees city comedy as part of the dialogue in which urban roles are held up for consideration and possible change. Leinwand argues that “the performance on the stage both parodies and refracts the actual social role: it develops a contemporary version of a role through stage conventions” and so allows audiences to question it.²⁴⁵

This view supports Gibbons’ belief that the plays’ realism is based on creating patterns out of day-to-day city life, thereby suggesting possibilities for change.²⁴⁶ This ability to suggest change makes city comedy a fertile ground for the trickster, whose role is both to identify areas of social conflict and to present options for change, usually through tricks or pranks played on characters representing common attitudes or beliefs, like gendered ideas about the roles of women or men within a society.

The connection between sexual misconduct and commercialism was a fruitful theme for playwrights of city comedies, but a proliferation of sexual commercialism is only part of the picture. Underlying issues of anxiety over order and disorder further complicate the image of London created in city comedies. City comedies blur the lines between women with good credit and those who might be acquired for the right price; Jean Howard draws on Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* with its puns on (w)holesaling that

²⁴⁴ Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 20.

²⁴⁵ Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 10, 13.

²⁴⁶ Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 17.

simultaneously mock commercialism and prostitution to make this point.²⁴⁷ In addition to frequently featuring female prostitutes, city comedy positions other women as fortune hunters who sought to marry richly, perhaps an attempt to set their own price in the marriage market. By suggesting that fortune hunting women are like prostitutes—both can be had for the right price—city comedy differentiates them from women of good social credit, challenging no women’s abilities to recover from damage to social positions. However, Eleanor Hubbard indicates that marriage to a wealthy man could help a young woman to improve her financial status and so improve her reputation or credit.²⁴⁸ Gowing also suggests that “the anonymity of the city”²⁴⁹ offered an escape from past mistakes, allowing maids to rise out of poverty or to rebuild a reputation stained by childbirth out of wedlock. By suggesting that there are no clear differences between prostitutes and women who consider finance in choosing marriage partners, city comedies underscore the complexity of gender issues for women in the commercial metropolis.

In the city comedies, gender trouble is not confined to women, but both genders vary from their preferred or ideal behavior. Jokes about sex target men and women differently, pointing to perceived differences in gender roles

²⁴⁷ Jean Elizabeth Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642*, 1. paperback ed (Philadelphia, Pa: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 133.

²⁴⁸ Eleanor Hubbard, “‘I Will Be Master of What Is Mine Own’: Fortune Hunters and Shrews in Early Modern London,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* XLVI, no. 2 (2015): 334–5.

²⁴⁹ Gowing, “The Freedom of the Streets,” 132-3.

related to order. Men are often scorned as cuckolds, unaware or uncaring of when their wives have sex with someone else, while women are most frequently scorned as whores. In other words, women are targets of humor for what they *do*, while men are targets for what they do *not* do, or what their wives do. Anu Korhonen sees the relationship between men and women—and especially between husbands and wives—as crucial to understanding early modern gendered comedy.²⁵⁰ In this, she concurs with Susan Amussen, who indicates that sexual jests focused on men as cuckolds “[reflect] early modern assumptions about order”²⁵¹ particularly as those assumptions relate to hierarchy. That is, men were expected to control their families and especially their wives; if a wife cuckolded her husband, the fault was his as much as hers because he did not control her behavior. Korhonen also notes that sexual jests about women target women in their activities outside the home,²⁵² agreeing with Gowing who suggests that economic anxiety over ever-increasing commercialism was often directed toward women and their roles in the urban economy.²⁵³ Even though the ideal was for women to be

²⁵⁰ Anu Korhonen, “Laughter, Sex, and Violence: Constructing Gender in Early Modern English Jestbooks,” in *Laughter, Humor, and the (Un)making of Gender: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Anna Foka and Jonas Liliequist (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 136.

²⁵¹ Susan D. Amussen, “Cuckold’s Haven: Gender and Inversion in Popular Culture,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. R. Malcolm Smuts, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 530.

²⁵² Korhonen, “Laughter, Sex, and Violence: Constructing Gender in Early Modern English Jestbooks,” 138.

²⁵³ Gowing, “The Freedom of the Streets,” 131.

subordinate to their husbands or fathers, real world necessity put women into many roles, not just meek or subordinate ones, resulting in anxiety over what constituted an orderly woman.²⁵⁴ Clearly, gender issues were complex, allowing tensions between expectations and necessity to appear as the focus of humor in the city comedies.

Early modern men could fail in other ways; while cuckolds were married men, there were equal anxieties about unmarried men. London gallants—fashionable young men who often spent their money on drink, prostitutes, and clothing beyond their means—became symbols of excess and disorderliness, and a concern to the stability and order of the community. Wendy Griswold connects the city comedy gallants to actual young men, particularly younger sons or cadets of country gentry, who were then flooding into London. These were “younger or otherwise financially incapacitated sons forced to come to London and make their fortunes by their wits rather than by their lands.”²⁵⁵ Alexandra Shepard also indicates that such young men “subverted patriarchal imperatives of order, thrift, and self-control.”²⁵⁶ The level of anxiety about gallants was reflected in their inclusion as characters

²⁵⁴ Amussen, “Cuckold’s Haven: Gender and Inversion in Popular Culture,” 542.

²⁵⁵ Wendy Griswold, “The Devil’s Techniques: Cultural Legitimation and Social Change,” *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 5 (October 1983): 673.

²⁵⁶ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 94.

in many city comedies as well as in contemporary pamphlets and sermons that decried their behavior.

Related to the problem of gallants and their disorderliness was the issue of how such young men could move beyond their youthful follies and become fully adult householders. Shakespeare's Falstaff notwithstanding, young men do eventually become older, and are expected to move beyond their early lives of rebellion and frivolity. If a young man was so wasteful as to spend all his income and mortgage his property, he would not have the funds necessary to marry and establish his own household. Older male relatives, who might reasonably be expected to at least understand youthful excess based on their own younger days, either supported the young men and helped them re-orient to a more settled life—or did not. Stepping into the breach is the trickster, who points to problems of both sexes, and offers idealized resolutions to re-order the disordered city.

City Tricksters Introduced

Thomas Middleton makes frequent use of the trickster in his city comedies; in addition to the character of Moll Cutpurse in *The Roaring Girl*, he includes tricksters in several other plays. Middleton is not alone; city comedies by both John Day (1606) and Lording Barry (1608-11) include a trickster figure. However, unlike tricksters such as the mythic Robin Goodfellow or Moll Cutpurse (based on real life Mary Frith) who caught the imagination of writers or audiences, appearing in multiple sources, city

comedy tricksters appear in a single work. Three examples of this singular appearance are the characters William Smallshankes in Lording Barry's *Ram Alley*, Richard Folly-wit in Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World my Masters* (*Mad World*), and Theodorus Wit-good in *A Tricke to Catch the Old-one* (*Tricke*). First appearing about the same time as *The Roaring Girl*, all three plays were published twice. *Mad World* was published in 1608 and 1640; the former title page indicates performances at Pauls, and the latter shows performances at Salisbury Court. *Tricke* was published in 1608/9 and again in 1616, and was initially performed by the Children of Paul's then transferred to the children of Blackfriars; the title page also claims to have been presented to James I. Finally, *Ram Alley* was published in 1611 and again in 1636; the title pages indicate performances by the Children of the King's Revels. These multiple performances and reprints suggest some level of popularity, nevertheless, none of these tricksters appear in other works. The singular appearances of these city comedy tricksters suggest that they are different than the tricksters previously discussed, although they do show commonalities with each other (and to Middleton's other city comedy tricksters).

Rather than the more universal issues marked by Robin Goodfellow's tricks (e.g., cheating the poor, lechery), their concerns are driven by city issues, such as the paired problems of spendthrift young men and their less-than-forgiving elder male relatives, or the city as a place where prostitutes

and others can change their fortunes, drawing on the anonymity of the city to create new lives. Further, these city tricksters differ from Robin Goodfellow and Moll Cutpurse in that they often benefit directly from the tricks they play, conflating the roles of problem, victim, and trickster to become their own heroes. Still, their tricks do help the various courtesans and prostitutes, as well as providing lessons to the older men they trick. They are tricksters, but with a great deal of cynicism about the urban issues they address. Nonetheless, they fit within a broader definition of trickster narrative, which often “starts with the cunning creature being or feeling restricted” and after numerous adventures and tricks, finishes with the “transformation of the trickster.”²⁵⁷ These three plays, discussed in detail below, focus on issues of gender, sex, and money, portraying the commodification of women’s bodies, cuckoldry, appropriate marriages, revenge for greed, and cheating others out of money or land. Such social concerns are at the heart of city comedy as a genre—what Heather Easterling calls the “complex problem of the changing, at times incoherent, city.”²⁵⁸ *Mad World* also includes the trickster being tricked—the trickster Richard Follywit is the one who ends up married to the courtesan—which is justice for Follywit’s actions, even as it

²⁵⁷ Helena Bassil-Morozow, “Loki Then and Now: The Trickster against Civilization,” *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 9, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19409052.2017.1309780>

²⁵⁸ Heather C. Easterling, *Parsing the City: Jonson, Middleton, Dekker, and City Comedy’s London as Language*, *Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1.

offers rehabilitation of the courtesan's status to that of wife. In *Ram Alley* it is a false lawyer who deserves what he gets, and a usurer in *Tricke*. The plays thus offer different suggestions about the possibility of rehabilitation for whores and raise the question about whether marriage to the right person can remake or restore a woman's sullied reputation. Underlying the comic action and satiric wit of both plays are serious issues of women for sale, either directly or in the marriage market, with tricksters highlighting the cost of both.

At the same time, these city tricksters illustrate serious social issues for men, focused on greed, money, and the to-be-desired shift from young man to responsible householder. In city comedies, the latter shift is often unexpectedly hampered by their older male relatives, who should be encouraging and helping young gallants to settle down. Brian Gibbons draws a distinction for city comedies as "dramatising conflicting forces" rather than "merely reflecting manners."²⁵⁹ Certainly, intergenerational conflict challenged both young men and the older generation. As Middleton and Barry portrayed them, young men lacked the wisdom to keep their portions and as a result were unable to marry and so move to householder status, while older men, often fathers and uncles, kept or took the money and land that younger men lost. As Gibbons puts it, "the usurer is the villain in the

²⁵⁹ Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 17.

City Comedy because he symbolises forces of aggression, ruthless materialism, aspiration and anarchy in Jacobean society.”²⁶⁰ Eleanor Hubbard points to the seriousness of this conflict when she says: “Misbehavior by married men posed a very real threat to early modern society, particularly when young men failed to make successful transitions from carefree bachelors to responsible adults.”²⁶¹ If fathers and uncles can be usurious villains, then the challenge for young men to become responsible adults is that much more difficult.

Thomas Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Masters* (1608)

Middleton’s trickster, Follywit, opens the play with a self-identification as the trickster: “’tis I must cast your plots into forme stil; tis I must manage the Pranck.”²⁶² Follywit is a typical gallant, drinking and wasting time on frivolities; after his grandfather Sir Bounteous Progresse refuses to support him, Follywit initially throws himself in a life of carousing, saying that now he will “sit up late till it bee early, drinke drunke till I am sober, sincke downe dead in a Taverne, and rise in a Tabacco-shop.”²⁶³ Having been cut off from family funds, Follywit decides to gull his grandfather, using Sir

²⁶⁰ Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 30.

²⁶¹ Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 128.

²⁶² Thomas Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters. As It Hath Bin Lately in Action by the Children of Paules*. (London: Henry Ballard for Walter Burre and are to be sold in Paules Church-yard, at the signe of the Crane., 1608). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. sig A2r.

²⁶³ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig A2r.

Bounteous's own vices as the means to punish him and get some of what Follywit believes Sir Bounteous should freely give. In trickster mode, the play is shaped around Follywit's use of a different disguise targeted to "each kind of foolish act his grandfather commits."²⁶⁴ In addition to highlighting social concerns in his grandfather's behavior, Follywit's planned pranks also point to the problem of gallants and their elder male relatives, where fathers, grandfathers, and uncles refuse to help their younger kin; without this support, the young gallants have no real means of settling down and becoming productive adults and householders.

The trick against excessive hospitality and social climbing

Sir Bounteous keeps a lavish and open house, especially hoping for visits by nobility; however, despite having made Follywit his heir, Sir Bounteous won't give him anything to live on. For his first trick, Follywit determines to visit Sir Bounteous in disguise as a lord, with his friends as servants. When Sir Bounteous discovers that he is to be visited by Lord Owemuch—Follywit in disguise—he orders food and music to entertain this supposed lord. As Leinwand puts it, "As an urban good housekeeper without rival, Sir Bounteous opens up a space in which Follywit may play out his repertory of tricks."²⁶⁵ When Follywit / Sir Owemuch enters, Sir Bounteous

²⁶⁴ William W. E. Slights, "The Trickster-Hero and Middleton's 'A Mad World My Masters,'" *Comparative Drama* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1969), 91.

²⁶⁵ Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 104.

talks about his grandson Follywit, saying the boy has been wild with “some comick prancks he has bin guilty of,”²⁶⁶ but that Follywit is his heir in any case. Follywit then indicates his own readiness for adult responsibility by offering as Sir Owemuch to “reserve a place for him [Follywit] neerest to my secrets” which Sir Bounteous understands as a position as secretary.²⁶⁷ This scene points to the conflict between Sir Bounteous the lavish and Sir Bounteous the stingy, spending his money on his own attempts to climb the social ladder by entertaining nobility while his own grandson is in need.

Having gotten into Sir Bounteous’s house in disguise as a lord, Follywit and his men further disguise themselves with masks, and rob Sir Bounteous. They tie him up and take his money, hiding it in Sir Owemuch’s chest. One man ties up all the rest in their disguises as Sir Owemuch and his servants; the last man is the footman who says he escaped because he slept with his clothes on. So far, at least, this trick is successful. Once the robbery is discovered and everyone is untied, one of Follywit’s men tells Sir Bounteous that the thieves took a jewel and 200 crowns from Lord Owemuch. Sir Bounteous says that he will “make that whole againe in so much money.”²⁶⁸ With this trick, Follywit “comes closest to undermining his grandfather’s fantasy of an open-house world.”²⁶⁹ In other words, the trick

²⁶⁶ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig B4v.

²⁶⁷ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig C1r.

²⁶⁸ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig D1v.

²⁶⁹ Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 105.

failed because it did not convince Sir Bounteous that his attempted social-climbing through hospitality to an unknown lord was as wasteful as Follywit's own youthful follies, especially the typical gallant practice of spending money on chance companions, preferably those higher in rank.

The trick against lechery

After successfully robbing Sir Bounteous but failing to change his attitude, Follywit realizes that his grandfather has a mistress, and worries that she will take most of the old man's money before Follywit can inherit. If lavish hospitality doesn't take all the wealth, surely the mistress will. Note that this behavior also mirrors that of a youthful gallant, further suggesting that Sir Bounteous has not outgrown his own early attitudes. Gullman is identified as Sir Bounteous's mistress when he visits her in her chamber. With this, Sir Bounteous demonstrates his own failure to support traditional values. According to P. K. Ayers, "Starving his kin, but keeping a whore, he is as potentially destructive of traditional social values as Follywit himself."²⁷⁰ In response to this challenge, Follywit determines to trick his grandfather by appearing in disguise as Gullman. He puts on a woman's dress, and picks some of his men to be his pimps—the basic plan is to pretend to be a whore and Sir Bounteous's mistress. Interestingly, Follywit's tricks are always in

²⁷⁰ P. K. Ayers, "Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord in 'A Mad World, My Masters' and 'A Trick To Catch the Old One,'" *Modern Language Quarterly: A Journal of Literary History* 47, no. 1 (March 1986), 7.

disguise, and his grandfather is always convinced by those disguises,²⁷¹ including his disguise as Gullman, underscoring the idea that what one wears indicates who one is. However, while Follywit's grandfather is convinced by the Follywit's disguises, the audience sees them as disguises, underscoring a concern about dressing outside of class and gender and the possibility that people are not who they appear to be. However, while the grandfather does not recognize Follywit, Follywit's disguises support his tricks, with the goal of getting the grandfather to put family before strangers.

Back at Sir Bounteous's home, a servant enters and tells him his mistress is come, but it is actually Follywit in disguise. The servant takes Follywit to Sir Bounteous's closet, making an assignation for himself as well, which is apparently normal. The closet contains a chest of jewels; after the servant leaves, Follywit takes the jewels and leaves. Sir Bounteous comes in, expecting his mistress, but sees the open chest instead. He complains of Gullman, saying that she didn't want for anything: "that's an old mans sinne, / Weele feast our Lechery, though we starve our kin."²⁷² In this speech, Sir Bounteous directly admits his folly and lack of appropriate support for his grandson, showing that he knows his practice is wrong, but not that he plans to change it. Sir Bounteous decides not to press charges against Gullman because that would make him a laughing stock, "But whilst I live, ile neyther

²⁷¹ Slights, "The Trickster-Hero and Middleton's 'A Mad World My Masters,'" 92.

²⁷² Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig F4v.

love nor trust her.”²⁷³ At this point, Sir Bounteous doesn’t plan to change his actions, but it is the first sign that Follywit’s tricks are making a difference, creating a rift between Sir Bounteous and Gullman, potentially resulting in a reduction of the money wasted on lechery.

The trick to save a whore

At this point in act 4, the possible tricking of Follywit occurs, when he sees Gullman on the street and chases her. Follywit is apparently struck by what he sees as Gullman’s modesty and finds himself falling in love with her. This love seems both unexpected and unlikely; David B. Mount, for example, believes that the tricks in *Mad World* “play themselves out by the end of the third act,” and sees the marriage of Follywit with Gullman to be a “rather unconvincing fourth-act expedient.”²⁷⁴ It should be noted that Follywit is not the only possible trickster in *Mad World*. Kate Aughterson sees the prostitute Frank Gullman as a trickster: “Her ‘occupation’ (her ownership of the space and her serial accumulation of male protectors) symbolizes her function in the play and the performed and generative status of a female trickster.”²⁷⁵ Yet, while Gullman does trick multiple clients with her renewable virginity, and possibly tricks Follywit himself into marriage, these actions are solely for

²⁷³ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig F4v.

²⁷⁴ David B. Mount, “The ‘[Un]reclaymed Forme’ of Middleton’s *A Trick to Catch the Old One*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama, 31, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 268.

²⁷⁵ Kate Aughterson, “The Courtesan and the Bed: Successful Tricking in Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Masters*,” *Modern Language Review* 109, no. 2 (2014), 346.

her own self-improvement, to collect a dowry so that she can marry and so escape her life of prostitution; there is no suggestion that Gullman's actions point to any resolution of social anxieties. In addition, choosing a life of prostitution in order to leave that life is not an optimal solution and seems doomed to failure. Further, Middleton includes some doubt as to whether a prostitute can be reformed: Gullman says that "in common reason one keeper cannot be enough for so proud a parke as a woman."²⁷⁶ This supports contemporary thinking that women in general (and Gullman in particular) are sexually insatiable, that one man will not be able to satisfy. While Gullman's potential marriage is beneficial to Gullman herself, her use of prostitution to earn a dowry mocks marriage as a way to rehabilitate female reputations: it does not suggest a reasonable solution for others.

However, while both Aughterson and Chantal Schütz²⁷⁷ identify Gullman as a female trickster, the scene and Gullman's status as a trickster are open to interpretation, depending on how it is played. If the lines are read as satire, Follywit recognizes Gullman, whom he met in act 1. If delivered satirically, this scene depicts Follywit the trickster deceiving Gullman into what she really wants, in effect rescuing her from herself. Her mother brings in Gullman, saying that the gentleman means only true and honest love, and

²⁷⁶ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig A4r.

²⁷⁷ Chantal Schütz, "The Courtesan and Her Mother in Middleton's 'A Mad Word, My Masters,'" in *The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature*, ed. Sophie Chiari (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 81.

he agrees. Follywit wants Gullman for a wife and tells her about his grandfather who will leave him thousands as his heir. Leinwand states that “we have reason to think that Middleton himself sees similarities in the careers of Follywit and the courtesan.”²⁷⁸ Indeed, it is this likeness that makes Follywit the trickster a suitable husband for Gullman. The mother says, “I know your Grandsire well; she knowes him better.”²⁷⁹ This line is that much funnier if we assume that Follywit is aware of Gullman’s identity and her position as Sir Bounteous’s mistress. Mother suggests sending for a priest and holding the wedding within the hour, and Follywit agrees. With this wedding, Gullman moves “relatively easily from one female category to the next... The Courtesan becomes a Wife when she marries Follywit.”²⁸⁰ Gullman is at last made honest. In addition, since Follywit’s previous trick is responsible for Gullman’s loss of her wealthy client Sir Bounteous, this trick repays her since marriage to Follywit will eventually restore her wealth, though not her livelihood.

The final trick

In the last act, Sir Bounteous welcomes most of the other characters to a feast, including Gullman his former mistress and her mother. Sir

²⁷⁸ Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 174.

²⁷⁹ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig G3v.

²⁸⁰ Schütz, “The Courtesan and Her Mother in Middleton’s ‘A Mad Word, My Masters,’” 83.

Bounteous greets her as “Theefe, Queane, and Bawd,”²⁸¹ so there is no doubt that he is aware of her identity and her profession, as well as indicating his new distaste for her. When Gullman’s mother tells Sir Bounteous that Gullman is married now, he says (still believing that Gullman took the jewels from the chest in his closet), “I perceive how my jewels went now, to grace her marriage.”²⁸² In one sense, perhaps they did, since she is now married to Follywit. Follywit and his friends enter dressed as players seeking to provide the entertainment and set up the final trick. When asked whose company they are, they answer that they serve Lord Owemuch, which makes Sir Bounteous welcome them doubly, as it plays on both his desire to entertain lavishly and his desire to be connected to nobility. As Aaron Kitch argues, “Follywit and his companions exploit the desire of Bounteous for prestige. They convince him that their performance of *The Slip* will buttress ‘the credit of your worship’s house’ (V.i.125).”²⁸³ Follywit asks Sir Bounteous for help with the play—they need a chain, a ring, and a watch—and Sir Bounteous hands them over without question, completely trusting Follywit in his disguise as the actor in service to Lord Owemuch.

The play within a play begins. Having sent his men away ahead of himself, Follywit gives the prologue to give them more time to get away.

²⁸¹ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig H1r.

²⁸² Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig H1r-v.

²⁸³ Aaron Kitch, “The Character of Credit and the Problem of Belief in Middleton’s City Comedies,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 47, no. 2 (Spring 2007), 417.

Follywit gives a short prologue, which ends: “So to conclude, and give the name her due, / The play being calld the Slip, I vanish too.”²⁸⁴ This final trick runs into some difficulties, however, as Follywit’s friends are caught on suspicion and are brought back by a constable. Rather than let them pay for his tricks, Follywit returns as the Justice, pretending that the whole thing is part of the play—there *is* honor among thieves when one of them is a trickster. The constable speaks to Sir Bounteous, who thinks the constable is a new player who doesn’t know how to act. After some dialogue, in which Follywit confuses the issue and makes it seem part of the play, Follywit says to bind up the constable, which his friends do, also gagging him. Sir Bounteous laughs at the play, and Follywit and his company leave. After a lot of laughing at the play and the constable, Sir Bounteous and his guests figure out that the players were thieves, and not likely to return.

To finish the trick, Follywit and friends return as themselves, Follywit asking his grandfather for a blessing. Still in his role as host, Sir Bounteous says he wishes they had come sooner, and tells about the play and the loss of his chain, watch, and ring. Sir Bounteous remains unchanged by all the tricks, until the watch chimes and shows him that Follywit’s friends are the actors. At this, Sir Bounteous says it is time that Follywit be true, since he’s been a thief already; Follywit says he has taken a wife to ensure his future

²⁸⁴ Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*. sig H2v.

stable life. The company laughs because they know her past, but Gullman says she has given up that life. The trickster is apparently tricked, with Follywit gulled as he has gulled Sir Bounteous. Although Ayers suggests that Follywit is discomfited by the discovery that Gullman is a whore,²⁸⁵ if Follywit's marriage to Gullman is a trick as I have suggested, the lines "By my troth, she is as good a cup of Nectar, as any Batchelor needs to sip at" portray a trickster satisfied with the outcome, not, as Ayers implies, as having a "debased appetite."²⁸⁶ It is the ridiculous surprise of Follywit as a player married to his own former whore that makes Sir Bounteous finally forgive his grandson and do the right thing by generously supporting the newlyweds with 1000 marks.²⁸⁷ Marriage to the prostitute spells the end of poverty for the gallant Follywit in *Mad World*; however, when the prostitute marries the gallant in Middleton's work, the prostitute also benefits, in an honorable marriage to a wealthy young man.

Follywit as Trickster

Middleton's *Mad World* draws on foundations established by earlier tricksters such as Robin Goodfellow to transform the gallant Follywit into a trickster, resulting in the identification of several social concerns for early modern Londoners: the wasteful dissolute self-indulgence of young male

²⁸⁵ Ayers, "Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord," 6.

²⁸⁶ Ayers, "Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord," 6.

²⁸⁷ Slights, "The Trickster-Hero and Middleton's 'A Mad World My Masters,'" 93.

gallants, the similarly self-indulgent and wasteful behavior of older men of means who spend their money on lechery and social climbing, the lack of familial support for younger men by their older relatives, and the problem of female prostitutes. Each of the tricks performed by Follywit as trickster highlights one or more of these social concerns. While Follywit's tricks are self-serving, they also point more broadly to possible corrections for older men who have clung to their own youthful misbehavior.

Ayers states that Sir Bounteous represents "an older world threatened by the corruptions of the metropolis" but also that those older values "are defined by the same context and are at least as suspect."²⁸⁸ Follywit's tricks succeed in changing some of Sir Bounteous's behavior, in part "by virtue of his ability to make people 'believe' in his disguise."²⁸⁹ In the end, Sir Bounteous understands that all the tricks were played by Follywit. Because of those tricks, especially the trick to save Frank Gullman, Sir Bounteous changes how he treats his grandson, in the end restoring the traditional value of supporting one's younger male relations, even as the dissolute Follywit takes the first steps towards stability as an adult male through his marriage. At the same time, Frank Gullman's marriage to Follywit suggests

²⁸⁸ Ayers, "Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord," 7.

²⁸⁹ Kitch, "The Character of Credit and the Problem of Belief in Middleton's City Comedies," 415.

that prostitution does not have to mark a woman for life; marriage to the right husband can provide a suitable salvation.

Thomas Middleton's *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One* (1608)

The trickster and his pranks in *Tricke* are similar to those presented by Middleton in *Mad World*. Once again, the impoverished young gallant (Wit-good) moans about not having any money, in this case lost to his uncle Lucre, identified early in the play as a usurer who took the mortgage on Wit-good's lands. Certainly, Wit-good is not without blame in the situation—one of the “right worshipful Seniors of our Country” asks “Whose that?” about Wit-good, and another senior says “Oh the common Rioter, take no note of him.”²⁹⁰ Although Wit-good is a “Rioter” who deserves some punishment for his way of life that goes against community standards as expressed by the seniors, Lucre is worse because he not only does not support his nephew, he goes beyond simply cutting off Wit-good, and exploits his nephew rather than fulfilling his family responsibility toward the younger man.²⁹¹ Much like *Mad World*, the older male is shown to ignore family duties for greed, turning to theft from his nephew to satisfy his own desires.

²⁹⁰ Thomas Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*. (London: George Eld and are to be sold by Henry Rockytt, at the long shop in the Poultrie under the Dyall., 1608). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. sig A4v.

²⁹¹ Alan Brissenden, “Middletonian Families,” in *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, ed. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 28.

With Wit-good's complaint, Middleton establishes him as the prodigal who will be redeemed. However, Wit-good is more than just the prodigal gallant; throughout the play, in addition to his name and his position as the protagonist, the tricks he plays to fix his own and others' problems show that he is also the trickster.²⁹² Indeed, Ayers calls Wit-good "a model of the well-bred trickster hero with whom... the private-theater audience would naturally tend to identify."²⁹³ Leonidas explains that Wit-good "speaks of his wit, his art, his invention, and his plotting," all positive attributes of a trickster.²⁹⁴ The first of these, wit, is perhaps the most important for city comedy tricksters, the one skill on which all other aspects of their tricking relies.

For Wit-good, however, the most important attribute is actually his relationship to his mistress, known only as Curtizan (Courtesan). In the first act, Wit-good develops a trick in collaboration with Curtizan that should resolve both of their financial woes: Curtizan is to get in his uncle's good graces by pretending that she is a rich widow, Jane Medler, while Wit-good pretends to be her suitor. This trick is intended to raise Lucre's greed for the widow's wealth, so that he will help Wit-good to marry her, in order to

²⁹² Scott Cutler Shershow, "The Pit of Wit: Subplot and Unity in Middleton's 'A Trick to Catch the Old One,'" *Studies in Philology* 88, no. 3 (Summer 1991), 371.

²⁹³ Ayers, "Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord" 11.

²⁹⁴ Eric Leonidas, "The School of the World: Trading on Wit in Middleton's Trick to Catch the Old One," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 12, no. 3 (January 2007), para 16, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/12-3/leontri2.htm>.

eventually acquire the widow's wealth in addition to what he has already taken from Wit-good. According to Leonidas, that Wit-good includes Curtizan in the trick implies that he "recognizes both a legal and moral commitment to the young woman he seduced, and his 'trick' will seek to satisfy both.... These commitments, in fact, are emphasized by her inclusion in the scheme."²⁹⁵

This reading implies that Wit-good will share his recovered wealth with Curtizan. Other critics are less complimentary of Wit-good, however. For example, Kitch believes that Wit-good's involvement of Curtizan in the trick "translates her from one masculine sexual fantasy to another while at the same time converting her from rental property into real estate,"²⁹⁶ anticipating that once his wealth is restored, Wit-good will sell off this no-longer-desired property.

The latter reading fits with the first view Middleton offers concerning their relationship. The trick to punish Lucre is heavily dependent on Wit-good's long-term relationship with Curtizan; however, the initial impression is not of cooperation but of distaste, at least on the part of Wit-good. When Wit-good and Curtizan first appear together, she calls him "My love" and he replies "My lothing."²⁹⁷ After Wit-good mocks the Courtesan in this manner, she responds that she has been faithful; she also points out that while land

²⁹⁵ Eric Leonidas, "The School of the World," para 18.

²⁹⁶ Aaron Kitch, "The Character of Credit," 418.

²⁹⁷ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig A3r-v.

and money can be regained, “honesty once pawnd, is nere redeemd.”²⁹⁸ In response, Wit-good asks Curtizan to forgive him. Brissenden sees this request for forgiveness as an indication that “the prodigal’s reformation has begun”²⁹⁹ but doubts Wit-good’s intentions. Brissenden focuses on Wit-good’s reply as the beginning of his repentance, but Curtizan’s response to Wit-good’s earlier repetition of common phrases about whores is a more appropriate focus, pointing to her essential loyalty rather than to his reputation. Leinwand also suspects Wit-good’s sincerity and believes that he “makes up to the courtesan merely to take advantage of her”³⁰⁰ even though the trick is developed by Wit-good and Curtizan together. In suspecting Wit-good, both Brissenden and Leinwand forget the all-important facet of Wit-good’s character: his wit. If the conversation between Wit-good and Curtizan is played as an exchange of wit, Brissenden comes closer than other scholars when he says that they “work together as a well-practiced team, sharing jokes, pooling ideas, looking after each other.”³⁰¹ Even if Wit-good and Curtizan are not passionately in love, they demonstrate a comfortable level of caring for one another, a relationship that creates the possibility that Wit-good later uses to restore Curtizan’s honesty, if not her virginity, by finding her an appropriate husband to redeem her reputation.

²⁹⁸ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig A3v.

²⁹⁹ Brissenden, “Middletonian Families,” 28.

³⁰⁰ Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 108.

³⁰¹ Brissenden, “Middletonian Families,” 28.

The trick to punish greed and mistreatment of kin

However, well before there is a possibility of a better future for Curtizan, she is in full cooperation with Wit-good's plan to trick Lucre; she agrees with Wit-good that his uncle is not acting as family should when she says: "...for in these days an olde mans love to his kindred, is like his kindnesse to his wife, tis alwayes done before hee comes at it."³⁰² Curtizan's statement spells out potential concern about failure to meet family responsibilities. Even more, instead of supporting his family, Lucre goes further by taking Wit-good's land when he could have simply cut off his nephew. Wit-good's plot serves justice because it will potentially punish his uncle for being greedy enough to ignore his familial responsibility. Curtizan's words suggest that Lucre's behavior is a common social problem in the changed world of early modern London, not just the actions of one greedy uncle. Their trick will thus right the world beginning with Lucre by humiliating Wit-good's uncle where it hurts: in his purse. Here, Middleton addresses the first of the social problems that the trickster will highlight for the audience: the harmful financial treatment of younger men by their older male relations, a problem he also portrays in *A Mad World, My Masters*.

In act 2, Lucre takes the bait, and asks to see his nephew. Perhaps to make the trick seem more plausible, Wit-good puts Lucre off at first, but then

³⁰² Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig A4r.

goes to see him. Wit-good says that he didn't let Lucre know about his involvement with the rich widow because of his creditors, an idea easily accepted by the greedy uncle, who assumes the worst of Wit-good and sees the rich widow as a potential way to increase the profit he can take from Wit-good. Instead of helping Wit-good marry wealth and redeem his mortgage, Lucre hopes only for additional profit.

When Curtizan enters in disguise as the widow Medler, Lucre's family greets her. While Lucre tells the "widow" that Wit-good is likely to be his heir, building up Wit-good's prospects so he can eventually get her property too, Lucre's wife instead plots to help her own son from a previous marriage; in this, Middleton points to yet another social problem—the potentially uncertain financial position of a child whose mother remarries after the death of its father. *Tricke* does not indicate whether this son has any inheritance of his own or not, although his father should have provided for him. In this case, Lucre's wife does not trust Lucre to provide for her son but is looking for other ways to help him, or to increase his inheritance. Because Lucre's wife believes the widow is worth more, she tells her son to withdraw his interest in Hoord's niece, so he can court the widow. She tells her son to take a gold chain and a diamond and follow the widow to her house. However, while this action helps Wit-good, who is himself interested in Hoord's niece, the social issue of a widow's children is not resolved. This family scene pits wife against husband, cousin against cousin, and uncle against nephew; clearly, the ideal

of family members supporting one another is absent, as Middleton mocks the social problem his trickster Wit-good is working to resolve. Although Levin sees Lucre as a family man,³⁰³ Middleton really shows us a dysfunctional family in need of the trickster's interventions.

The trick to save the whore

At this point in the play, Wit-good's trick to punish his uncle is complicated by the introduction of Hoord, another usurer who is Lucre's rival and adversary. Lucre is secretly happy to help Wit-good because it will astonish Hoord. When Hoord discovers that Wit-good is courting a rich widow, he determines that it won't be Wit-good or his rival Lucre who gains the widow's property, it will be Hoord himself. Hoord gloats: "I have not onely the means layde before me, extreamely to crosse my adversary, and confound the last hopes of his Nephew, but therby to enrich my state; augment my revennewes, and build mine owne fortunes greater, ha ha."³⁰⁴ Hoord's joy is that he will be able simultaneously to increase his own wealth and cheat his rival out of the widow's money. Middleton introduces this complication to set up Wit-good's second trick, as the trickster arranges the reclamation of a whore through her legitimate marriage to a wealthy but foolish man. Brissenden identifies Curtizan as "perhaps the most attractive character,"

³⁰³ R. Levin, "The Dampit Scenes in a Trick to Catch the Old One," *Modern Language Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (January 1, 1964): 146.

³⁰⁴ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig D1v.

basing this assessment on “her intelligence and her loyalty to Witgood,”³⁰⁵ which positions Curtizan as worthy of reclamation. While Hoord might not be the perfect husband, his wealth and position will serve Curtizan as she seeks to improve her social status.

Curtizan tells Wit-good that as the widow, she now has suitors including Hoord. Wit-good suggests that Curtizan marry Hoord, who is rich: “twould bee a great comfort to me to see thee do well ifaith, --- marry him, twould ease my conscience well to see the well bestowd, I have a care of thee ifaith.”³⁰⁶ Even though Curtizan lost her reputation for Wit-good the gallant, his statement shows that he is at least concerned enough to help her. By suggesting that she marry Hoord as the finale of this trick, Wit-good meets his commitment to Curtizan to provide a resolution for her social status. Although Jennifer Panek sees Curtizan’s masquerade as Widow Medler to portray elements of the commonly-held male fantasy of the lusty widow, and states that Curtizan is “just doing what a courtesan does—trading her sexual favors (this time, in marriage) for a man’s money,”³⁰⁷ this is only part of Curtizan’s role in *Tricke*. Because she is working in support of Wit-good’s tricks, and accepts his guidance about which suitor to marry, Curtizan is beginning to step into the role of a respectable woman she hopes to become,

³⁰⁵ Brissenden, “Middletonian Families,” 39.

³⁰⁶ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig D3v.

³⁰⁷ Jennifer Panek, *Widows and Suitors in Early Modern English Comedy* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 165.

obeying the guidance of the man who (apparently) has the right to direct her life. The lusty widow elements are there as part of the trick but subordinate to Curtizan's supposed wealth and to the goal of restoring Curtizan's reputation. As the trickster, when Wit-good helps Curtizan to resolve her social standing, he is also supporting marriage as an option for other women in similar positions.

So that he can persuade the widow to break her pretended engagement to Wit-good, Hoord brings witnesses to Wit-good's folly and the evil of his uncle Lucre; following Wit-good's previous advice, Curtizan renounces Wit-good. Once again proving her worth as an honest woman, when Hoord offers to marry her, Curtizan tells him that she has nothing; however, Hoord believes that she is being modest, not honest, and is still interested in marrying her wealth. Hoord and Curtizan marry. Merging the two tricks, Wit-good tells Lucre that Hoord carried away the widow, playing the two rivals against each other; Lucre says he will spend his fortune to stop Hoord, thus falling into Wit-good's trick. Even though she is married to Hoord, Curtizan is still helping Wit-good trick his uncle. She tells Lucre that she chose Hoord because Wit-good wasn't wealthy as promised, since Lucre held his mortgage. Unaware that Hoord is already her husband, Lucre says he will restore the mortgage to Wit-good and bind Wit-good as his heir. She promises to keep herself as she is (married or chaste, depending on each character's viewpoint) until she gets word back that he has done as promised.

The audience, of course, sees both perspectives; this is one example of the festive comedy of the play that supports the trickster functionality. While Wit-good moans about his loss of the widow, Lucre gives Wit-good the mortgage as he promised. So far, the tricks are working to resolve the issues, with Lucre returning his nephew's property and so providing the familial support he should have given in the beginning. Also, Curtizan is married to Hoord, which will eventually give her the respectable position she deserves and desires. Wit-good is not out of trouble yet, but the stage is set for the final resolution of all his tricks.

The tricks merge

Although Wit-good's mortgage is restored, he still owes other creditors. Unaware that the widow is actually a whore, Hoord crows over getting the widow and her money away from Wit-good. But Wit-good says he will bring in the law for injurious detaining of a pre-contract. Hoord calls for Wit-good and his creditors. Curtizan tells Wit-good that Hoord will pay to break the contract between the widow and Wit-good; Hoord confirms this, saying, "release you her of her words, and ile release you of your debts sir."³⁰⁸ Wit-good and his creditors agree, and Hoord has his own scrivener write a contract releasing the Widow Medlar from any claim by Wit-good.

³⁰⁸ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig G2r.

In a brief reflection of the first scene between the Curtizan and Wit-good, when Hoord's niece appears, he calls her "My life."³⁰⁹ Although their relationship is not fully staged, Hoord's niece is the true love interest that Wit-good desired at the beginning of the play but was not able to pursue for fear of his creditors. This is Wit-good not as trickster, but as spend-thrift gallant, potentially losing his true love because he has wasted his fortune. However, the tricks he plays as Wit-good the trickster will serve the gallant well, not punishing him for his folly but restoring his wealth and giving him the chance to marry his true love, demonstrating the traditional trickster goal of supporting true love matches. In *Tricke*, Middleton does not emphasize this goal, but it supports the identification of Wit-good as the trickster, as well as suggesting that the rewards of a repentant gallant might include a wife, and subsequently, householder status.

In the final act, Wit-good tells Lucre that Hoord has married a whore, while Hoord continues to play the wealthy lord proud of his marriage to a rich widow. At the wedding feast, Hoord's brother and his friends recognize Curtizan as a "strumpet" and "Wit-goods queane."³¹⁰ His first response, "Oh, nor Lands, nor living?"³¹¹ focuses on the loss of her assumed wealth, not on her reputation, but that isn't far behind as Hoord wails, "A dutch widdow, a

³⁰⁹ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig G3r.

³¹⁰ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H2v.

³¹¹ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H2v.

dutch widdow, a dutch widdow”³¹² meaning a whore. The primary result of this trick is the punishment of a greedy man in the way it will hurt the worst—in his purse. For Hoord, wealth is shown to be more important than any woman’s reputation, including that of his new wife.

As Hoord is discovering the folly of his greed, Lucre and Wit-good come to the wedding feast; Hoord tells them to get out, that Wit-good has abused him by connecting him to a “common strumpet.”³¹³ Wit-good says she was never common: “shee nere had common use, nor common thought.”³¹⁴ Curtizan stands up for herself by putting the push for their marriage onto Hoord: “Despise me, publish me, I am your wife, / What shame can I have now but youle have part, / If in disgrace you share, I sought not you.”³¹⁵ She follows that by pointing out that she was honest with him: “Nor did I ever boast of lands unto you, / Money or goods: I tooke a playner course: / And told you true ide nothing, / If error were committed twas by you.”³¹⁶ The speech further emphasizes Hoord’s greed, since he would not be married to a whore if he had not been greedy for the widow’s money.

Wit-good says that he was “prick’t in conscience see her well bestowd” and that “excepting but my selfe, I dare sweare shees a Virgine”—further,

³¹² Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H3r.

³¹³ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H3r.

³¹⁴ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H3r.

³¹⁵ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H3r.

³¹⁶ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H3r.

Wit-good tells Hoord that he has married Hoord's niece, making Curtizan his aunt, and so sexually off limits.³¹⁷ Both Curtizan and Wit-good swear that they are reformed. Mount proposes that Curtizan's repentance is not wholly sincere, based in part on her use of the word "form" in her speech in the final act of the play; Mount also focuses on the performative act of falling to her knees, but proposes that this is "not necessarily tantamount to inner regeneration."³¹⁸ However, Alwes points out that audiences would have taken Curtizan's final vows as true, and so a sign of her redemption, based on an earlier aside in which she stated that if she were to give her vow, she would remain true to her word.³¹⁹ In addition, where most of Wit-good's and Curtizan's dialog is prose, both repentance speeches are in rhymed verse, adding to their formality and suggesting to the audience that these words are both important and true.

Wit-good as Trickster

Wit-good is clearly the trickster of *Tricke*, although his tricks benefit himself as well as serving as punishment for social ills; he is clearly not a disinterested trickster. Wit-good comes through all the tricks with money and a wife, while both Lucre and Hoord are punished for their greed and lack of family feeling, losing both money and reputation. Indeed, Leinwand states

³¹⁷ Middleton, *A Tricke to Catch the Old-One*, sig H3v.

³¹⁸ Mount, "The '[Un]reclaimed Forme'" 261.

³¹⁹ Derek B. Alwes, "The Secular Morality of Middleton's City Comedies," *Comparative Drama* 42, no. 2 (2008): 114, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.0.0002>

that Lucre and Hoard “are caricatures of anticomic type” who “might be allowed by an audience as adequate models for actual citizens.”³²⁰ Wit-good as trickster is perhaps less obvious than tricksters in other works because he appears more self-serving; for example, David B. Mount sees “Wit-good and the Curtizan, as the play’s most obviously successful tricksters” but sees the world of the play as permeated by evil and without a “moral center.”³²¹ In identifying Wit-good as a trickster, Mount is on the right track, but his definition of trickster solely as a successful prankster is too broad to easily explain Wit-good’s overarching role in the play as social commentator and arbiter, who restores the moral center in certain specific situations such as helping Curtizan restore her reputation or focusing audience attention on Lucre’s and Hoard’s greed. Similarly, Ayers sees Wit-good as “A familiar type of the prodigal son ruined in the fleshpots of the city” and indicates that “he is distinguished... by his lack of innocence.”³²² Even more, Ayers sees Wit-good’s tricking as part of a “grim” battle between wit and relentless scheming “fought in an impersonal, dehumanized world”—an “urban machine.”³²³ Leonidas concurs, suggesting that “the ostensibly good characters are as deceptive and manipulative as the obviously unsympathetic ones.”³²⁴ Such a

³²⁰ Leinwand, *The City Staged*. 60.

³²¹ Mount, “The [Un]reclaymed Forme,” 260.

³²² Ayers, “Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord,” 11.

³²³ Ayers, “Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord,” 12.

³²⁴ Leonidas, “The School of the World, para8.

view disregards the purpose behind a trickster's actions, to point out social ills and suggest alternatives that might prove solutions to those problems. Rather than a no-win battle between wit and greed, Wit-good's words and actions point to social issues and resolves those tensions, at least within the play.

Yes, Wit-good is, as Ayers puts it, an "urban wastrel" who sees marriage as a solution for Curtizan and himself.³²⁵ But he is also, for the duration of his tricks, the trickster, who uses his wits to illustrate social problems and suggest resolutions for them. Wit-good's wit is his magic, his witty language used to manipulate the other characters so that they and the audience can recognize the social issues and accept the resolutions presented. In addition, as Shershow indicates: "Witt-good reacts to events and modifies his trick accordingly; his flexibility speeds the pace of the play and makes it a convincing simulation of 'reality.'"³²⁶ For the audience to accept the potential solutions to its own social issues, the tricks need to be believable, and the solutions plausible.

As he does in *Mad World*, Middleton draws on earlier tricksters in *Tricke* to portray the gallant Wit-good as a trickster. Middleton also identifies the same generational tensions as he does in *Mad World*, between impecunious young male gallants and older men of means who retain some

³²⁵ Ayers, "Plot, Subplot, and the Uses of Dramatic Discord," 11.

³²⁶ Shershow, "The Pit of Wit," 370.

(mis)behaviors from their own youth and who fail to provide familial support for younger relatives; he also points to the problem of female prostitutes. In *Tricke*, the tricks set up by Wit-good merge into one all-encompassing trick that deals with all of these issues. Unlike *Mad World*, Middleton includes one traditional trickster goal, the support of true love matches.

The social issues in *Tricke* are also gendered. First, the play hints at the male fantasy of a lusty widow but also provides the figure of Curtizan the whore in disguise as a widow, conflating the two images. To add further confusion, the whore in *Tricke* is in love with Wit-good, the man who seduced her. In relation to women, then, the larger social issue here is the limited employment prospects of young women and the urban seduction of country women, but with the possibility of reclamation for those who are loyal. The social issues regarding men are the paired problems of dissolute gallants and their stingy older relatives, where the gallants need to be reclaimed for adult householder status, and the older men need to remember the responsibilities of that status to their younger male relations.

Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* (1611)

Although Middleton probably wrote more tricksters into his city comedies than any other single author, still, other tricksters do appear. One example of these other tricksters comes in Lording Barry's *Ram Alley*, which follows the two Middleton plays already discussed and is understood to be an

adaptation of *Tricke*.³²⁷ Gibbons calls *Ram Alley* a “wholly undistinguished conventional play” yet sees it as “manifestly actable and effective.”³²⁸ It’s effectiveness may lie in Barry’s use of the trickster, not always present in city comedies, to ensure that the end provides appropriate resolution to social conflicts, where appropriate is both traditional and ideal. The overall plot of *Ram Alley* is similar to both *Mad World* and *Tricke*, with William the penniless gallant and Francis the prostitute. However, Barry gives the role of greed to Throte, a lawyer, even as he portrays William’s father Sir Oliver as unsupportive, focused on his own entertainments.

The first trick in *Ram Alley* is set up in the first act, which opens with Constantia dressed as a page; she gives Boutcher a letter from herself, urging him to take the supposed boy in service. In her disguise as a page, she goes with Boutcher as he talks with William Smallshankes, a gallant and the son of a knight, Sir Oliver Smallshankes. William³²⁹ has Boutcher tell the lawyer Throte that William has hopes of winning the hand and fortune of the daughter of Sir John Sommerfield—in other words, Constantia herself—announcing that Sommerfield is lately dead. He plans to trick Throte into helping him to win back the property that Throte took. At first glance

³²⁷ Valerie Wayne, “Introduction: A Trick to Catch the Old One,” in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, Paperback [ed.], The Oxford Middleton (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 373.

³²⁸ Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 151.

³²⁹ I refer to William Smallshankes by his given name to avoid confusion, since the play includes both his father (Sir Oliver Smallshankes) and brother Thomas Smallshankes.

Constantia is a candidate for the trickster as a woman dressed as a page, since disguise or shape changing is often used by tricksters to manage their pranks—a nice use of tricking the audience—but it is William Smallshankes who pretends and tricks his way through the play, until everything works out as he designs.

The trick to punish a cheater and save a whore

The underlying theme of *Ram Alley's* plot is sex, including disguise and the commodification of women's bodies as the currency of social advancement.³³⁰ The women themselves are not as important as what they are worth. Indeed, William Smallshankes' very first trick in Act 1 uses the *idea* of Constantia as the means to trick the false lawyer Throte. William's instruction to Boutcher is the first step in an extended trick on Throte, through which William plans to get Throte to help him to win back his property, property that Throte himself took. While William believes that Constantia is absent, and therefore potentially fair game for use in a prank, she is present but in disguise as Boutcher's page, thus doubling her absence as a woman. This is not the end of Constantia's negation; in act 2, William brings in his whore Francis, and has her pretend to be Constantia to move the trick against Throte forward. Notably, Constantia is the only female

³³⁰ Robert Duncan Fraser, "Ram Alley, or Merry Tricks (Lording Barry, 1611): A Critical Edition" (PhD dissertation, University of Sussex, 2013), <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/47147/>, 127.

character who represents the ideal woman: chaste, romantic, and subservient to her man even though she must disguise herself to serve him.

If Constantia is valuable as an idea of herself more than she is as an actual woman, Francis is necessary as the embodiment of both Constantia and of sex, of which Constantia is seemingly innocent until her marriage at the end of the play.³³¹ As the false Constantia, Francis appears to be a rich young woman, highly marketable for both her money and her sexual desirability; Robert Duncan Fraser identifies Francis in this guise as “an object of exchange.”³³² As William’s whore, however, Fraser sees Francis as “primarily a tool” for William to use in his trick against Throte, with William’s plan spending Francis’s “debased value” as Throte’s punishment. However, this latter view disregards Francis’s complicity in the action; Francis has her own goals in going along with William’s plans. The prize for Francis is potentially a way out of prostitution through a proper marriage. Unfortunately for Francis, the prize is somewhat tarnished, since she ends up married to the false lawyer Throte who is working his own set of cheats. In this, *Ram Alley* suggests that for prostitutes, while reputation—credit—can be regained through marriage, a wedding can only go so far in recovering what has been sold. This is similar to Middleton’s marriage of the Curtizan to

³³¹ This appearance is contradicted by Constantia as the page telling bawdy stories to Taffata’s maid. However, there is nothing to suggest that Constantia is not a virgin.

³³² Fraser, “Ram Alley, or Merry Tricks (Lording Barry, 1611),” 127.

Hoord in *Tricke*, where the bridegroom is also less than an ideal match. Still, like the Curtizan, in cooperating with William's trick, Francis does gain something, even though her cooperation with William is what lost her reputation in the first place.

In her cooperation with William, Francis is rather ambiguously positioned as a whore. Andrew Griffin suggests that the status of city women "as urbanites suggests that they're somehow disarticulated from traditional roles, like Frances, the country girl who remains ideally pure, she claims, until the city and William Smallshankes turn her to prostitution."³³³ Francis does tell William, "You know sir, / I did injoy a quiet country life, / Spotlesse and free, till you corrupted mee, / And brought me to the Court."³³⁴ Yet, even if Francis does believe that William corrupted her, other lines show that she loves William in her own way, and offers to do whatever will help him. Speaking to Boutcher, Francis says: "And you shall finde such reall worth in me, / That rather then Ile live his hindrance, / I will assume the most penurious state / The Citty yeelds, to give me meanes of life."³³⁵ In these lines, Francis almost follows a traditional path in supporting her man,

³³³ Andrew Griffin, "'Ram Alley' and Female Spectatorship," *Early Theatre* 9, no. 2 (December 2006), 93.

³³⁴ Lording Barry, *Ram-Alley: Or Merrie-Trickes A Comedy Diuers Times Here-to-Fore Acted by the Children of the Kings Reuels*. (London: G. Eld for Robert Wilson, and are to be sold at his shop in Holborne, at the new gate of Grayes Inne, 1611). The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Sig B1v.

³³⁵ Barry, *Ram-Alley*, sig B2r.

although she is not his wife. William, too, fulfills this tradition, also untraditionally, by saying that he plans to “place her to her owne content,”³³⁶ taking responsibility for keeping Francis until then, much like Wit-good and Curtizan in *Tricke*. This is one point in which the trickster wins out over the gallant, supporting a gentleman’s responsibility for woman over the modern gallant’s selfish view.

In her role as wealthy heir engaged to William Smallshankes, Francis asks Throte if there is a way out of her promise of marriage, if she can wed someone else worthier. Tricked by her disguise, Throte tells Francis / Constantia that all he has is hers if he were worthy to be her husband. Throte then comes up with a plan to keep William from marrying the heir, thus falling in with the trick William and Francis arranged. For Throte, this is just one more way to cheat William, but for William the trickster, it is the successful continuation of his trick. The trick continues in act 3, when Throte marries Francis, believing her to be Constantia. Marriage alone is not enough, however, for either William or Francis; further trickery is required. William still has not regained the property that Throte stole. When William is threatened with arrest for his debts—the ultimate price for gallantry over thrift and responsibility—Throte offers to pay the debt and release William’s mortgage if William will sign a release of all claim to Mistress Sommerfield.

³³⁶ Barry, *Ram-Alley*, sig B2r.

Francis/Constantia steps in and announces that she and Throte are wed, and that William should sign the release. William gives in and the documents are signed. Because William recovers his property and his debts are paid, one might think he is now free to end the trick. Francis, however, remains at heart a prostitute; she has after all just married for the profit it will give William. Her life as a prostitute is not so easily put aside. For example, when a sergeant enters and tells Francis about a debt owed to her former bawd for board and the loan of a red taffeta gown, she promises to give the sergeant pleasure if he forgets he saw her. Francis has married a man she willingly chose, fulfilling William's commitment to place her where she will be content, but her behavior is unchanged, giving her no increase in reputation.

The end of this extended trick does not come until act 5. Lady Sommerfield accuses William of stealing her daughter, but William says he never saw Constantia. Sir Oliver agrees with Throte that William had stolen Constantia, but that Throte had subsequently married her, releasing her from her promise to William. William then tells Throte the woman he married was a whore, not Constantia. Throte realizes he has been gulled: Francis, not Constantia, is really his wife. The trick played by William with Francis's help achieves its goals: William recovers his property, Francis marries, and Throte suffers humiliation at the hands of the man he cheated. These results, however, are rather tarnished: William still needs money, Francis does not regain her reputation, and while Throte is humiliated, it is

difficult to believe that he learned his lesson about cheating others.

Fortunately for William, at least, the play presents a second major trick, involving Taffata, a young widow.

The trick against an unsupportive father and a lusty widow

Much as Francis serves as the means for William to complete his first trick against the lawyer Throte, Taffata serves as the heart of the second trick, this one against Sir Oliver. While Leinwand believes that Taffata is a conventional idea of a widow rather than a parody (she is “mocked then ‘rewarded’ for her conventional widow’s lust and wealth”³³⁷), when she leans out of her window to flirt with Boutcher, giving her home the appearance of a bawdy house, Barry clearly portrays her as a parody of a whore. However, unlike Francis, she is not actually a whore; she wants to marry for love or lust instead of money, which she already has. According to Elizabeth Hanson, city comedies incorporate a pattern of the rich widow ending up married to a penniless young man.³³⁸ Hanson goes on to say that “the winning of these widows is with one or two exceptions remarkably without much disciplinary flavor, emphasizing not the humiliation but the happiness of the widow who, as a high status woman, can get everything she wants, including a sexually

³³⁷ Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 180.

³³⁸ Elizabeth Hanson, “There’s Meat and Money Too: Rich Widows and Allegories of Wealth in Jacobean City Comedy,” *ELH* 72, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 219.

potent man for her bed.”³³⁹ However, the subplot involving Taffata and Sir Oliver breaks both of these patterns, at least in part.

First, when William woos Taffata, he has already recovered his property from Throte, so he is not the penniless young gallant Hanson predicts. Jeremy Lopez describes William’s initial appeal to Taffata as that of a gallant: “the epitome of social, sexual success and exactly what a rich widow needs.”³⁴⁰ Taffata mocks William for this description, saying that gallants are empty, perhaps alluding to their purses. If William were the typical poverty-stricken gallant, this might have held true, making Taffata into an “allegory of wealth,”³⁴¹ paying for her relative freedom with her money, and making William into the prodigal who seeks her for the social reclamation that her money can give him. But by the time William beds and weds Taffata, he has already recovered his property, suggesting that his relationship with Taffata has another motive. The wooing of Taffata can be seen as part of William’s trick against his father, who shares some of Throte’s guilt, since he refuses to give William any more money, potentially keeping William from being able to establish himself as an adult householder. Much as William’s first trick uses Francis to punish Throte, his second trick uses

³³⁹ Hanson, “There’s Meat and Money Too,” 221.

³⁴⁰ Jeremy Lopez, “Success the Whitefriars Way: ‘Ram Alley’ and the Negative Force of Acting,” *Renaissance Drama*, New Series, 38 (2010), 201.

³⁴¹ Hanson, “There’s Meat and Money Too,” 210.

Taffata to punish Sir Oliver. Taffata is a perfect tool for William, as she toys with Boutcher, Sir Oliver, and others in her desire for a husband.

Taffata herself is complicit in mocking Sir Oliver, scorning him as old: “strong enough to father children / but not to get them.”³⁴² In other words, he is able to be a father to children that she gets through sex with others, while she gets his money. Sir Oliver is not the brave knight one might expect, either. When he is in Taffata’s chamber asking her to marry him, another suitor enters and Sir Oliver hides under Taffata’s farthingale skirts. Both Taffata’s opinion of Sir Oliver and her willingness to hide him under her skirts further identify her not just as the typical lusty widow, but as the whore who considers money or payment first in her decision about whom to marry. It is only when the suitor threatens Taffata with “Thus will I kick thee and thy Farthingales”³⁴³ that Sir Oliver pops out, when discovery is inevitable. In spite of all this, Taffata agrees to marry Sir Oliver; at this point, William steps in, seeking to humiliate Sir Oliver.

The second way that William and Taffata’s relationship breaks down the typical pattern of the rich widow and impoverished gallant described by Hanson is that William’s wooing of Taffata is violent, described by some scholars as rape. When William determines to wed Taffata, he takes Taffata a chain stolen from his father, to gain access to her. William asks Taffata’s

³⁴² Barry, *Ram-Alley*, sig D1r.

³⁴³ Barry, *Ram Alley*, sig E3r

maid to give her the chain and say that William brought it from Sir Oliver for her to wear at their wedding. When Taffata appears, William kneels and begs for her love. Taffata tells him to stand; she doesn't want a lover who cringes and creeps. William then threatens her with a blade, makes her kiss him, and asks her to marry him. She says she will tomorrow. He says that a promise is as good as a contract; they go to bed and so legally consummate the marriage. Lopez sees William's actions and Taffata's acquiescence as "naked, economically motivated sexual aggression... rerouted into a new generic machine—a lusty widow's quest for the most sexually aggressive suitor."³⁴⁴ Given Barry's careful portrayal of Taffata as available, if not actually a prostitute, Lopez's analysis offers one useful interpretation, and supports the play's overall portrayal of women as commodities.

Lucy Munro, on the other hand, draws on the fact that a children's company initially performed *Ram Alley*. Munro suggests that the limited age differences of the players allowed the threats by William Smallshankes and the capitulation of Taffata to be seen as a game, keeping the scene "safely within its comic mode" in which both sides can win.³⁴⁵ If William's aggressive treatment of Taffata and her subsequent willingness to marry him are indeed

³⁴⁴ Lopez, "Success the Whitefriars Way," 212.

³⁴⁵ Lucy Munro, "The Humour of Children: Performance, Gender, and the Early Modern Children's Companies," *Literature Compass* 2, no. 1 (January 2005), 16.
doi:10.1111/j.1741-4113.2005.00132_2_1.x

part of what Munro calls “the comic game”³⁴⁶ then William’s description of this and other activities as tricks makes sense.³⁴⁷

William Smallshankes as Trickster

By the end of the play, William is pleased with how everything turned out, saying: “Strike up Musicke, lets have an old song, / Since all my tricks have found so good successe, / Weele sing, dance, dice, and drink downe heavinesse.”³⁴⁸ His tricks have successfully humiliated Sir Oliver and Throte, and moved himself into householder status, while giving both Francis and Taffata what they seemed to want. All is not as rosy it appears, however. Francis may be married, but William’s use of her to humiliate Throte leaves her unrehabilitated. In this, William’s tricks point to the possibility of restoration through marriage for the reputation of women fallen into prostitution, but doesn’t deliver, at least for Francis, whose past life continues to affect her actions after her marriage. Taffata’s situation is also less than the audience might desire. For Taffata, Barry draws on the stock character of the wealthy widow, a marginal social position in terms of propriety due to the relative freedom of such a widow to remarry according to

³⁴⁶ Munro, “The Humour of Children,” 18.

³⁴⁷ Actually, all three of these city comedies were first performed by children’s companies; Munro’s suggestions about the issues of sex and power in *Ram Alley* as games could apply more generally to Middleton’s plays as well, although her comments are specific to the threats against Taffata. The inclusion of city comedies in the repertoire of the young men of these children’s companies adds an interesting note to their education about the roles of men and women.

³⁴⁸ Barry, *Ram-Alley*, sig I3v.

her own desires: Taffata epitomizes the lusty widow, flirting with passersby and entertaining wealthy older men in her chambers and under her skirts. However, when William uses her desire for a young lover to humiliate his father, the excessive violence of his supposed wooing denies Taffata her choice of lovers, removing what little freedom such a woman might find in the marriage market. This suggests that for some widows, the choice about remarriage is not as flexible as it might seem, and that there can be other restrictive forces at work. Still, the young widow does end up with her young lover as husband, and he doesn't rely solely on her income but brings his own recovered fortunes to the marriage bed.

This last is the one place where William's tricks bore the most fruit. In humiliating both Throte and Sir Oliver, William's tricks suggest that the older generation would do better to treat young gentlemen with more honor, not cutting them off but helping them attain adult householder status. One does have to wonder about the depth of William's conversion to adult status, though, since his final words are telling the company to sing, dance, dice, and drink; despite being a newly married householder, William still has the attitudes of a gallant.

Conclusions: City Comedies City Tricksters

What sets these three plays apart from other city comedies is their inclusion of a trickster character—one whose tricks identify social problems and offer possible solutions that can bring about positive social change to

correct some of the negatives caused by London's rapid urbanization, even if those solutions only serve to resolve dramatic tensions within the plays. The plays use the festive comedy of the trickster to address specific ethical concerns of the city.³⁴⁹ One crucial way in which city comedy tricks and tricksters differ from the earlier mythic Robin Goodfellow is that the tricksters are the young gallants themselves. While Robin Goodfellow might perform a trick for the humor alone, generally his activities point to societal concerns, while city tricksters usually play tricks because they want something for themselves. However, while the tricksters in these city comedies do benefit from the tricks they play on other characters, they also serve to point out social concerns. One explanation for why the tricksters are the same characters that are part of the problem is London's economy and its rapidly expanding world of commerce. Leinwand believes that "In an economy in which money has made a victim of gallants as well as the usurer, we find that both types look to wit for still another medium of one-upmanship."³⁵⁰ If the gallants are victims, then they are likely targets of trickster aid, especially since the men who should help them—uncles, fathers, grandfathers—are also part of the problem, with their lack of support for family members and the ways they continue the indiscretions of their younger days. Where Robin Goodfellow is often seen in the community but is

³⁴⁹ Alwes, "The Secular Morality," 102.

³⁵⁰ Leinwand, *City Staged*, 60.

not of it, the city comedy tricksters are fully embedded in the community they seek to alter, and work to become adult members of that community as they strive to move beyond their youthful follies into householder status.

Another aspect of city comedy tricksters that differs is that their magic is chiefly in their tongues rather than any supernatural ability. For all three of these city tricksters, wit is the primary weapon, and with it the ability to persuade others. For example, Mount emphasizes the “magical quality of Witt-good’s power of language: he is always ‘conjuring’ his wits” in *Tricke*. Mount also indicates that this power of wit is “impossible in the real world” and that “once assimilated into society [Wit-good] will lose the privileged position he enjoyed while on its fringes.”³⁵¹ This possible loss of Witt-good’s magical power of wit may also indicate the end of his trickster role—the trickster taking on the form and role of Witt-Good and moving on when the tricks are done and the social situations resolved.

Further, where Robin Goodfellow could change shape or go invisible, the city tricksters must use disguise, although this is quite effective for them; in *Mad World*, Follywit is able to convince both his grandfather and a servant that he is Frank Gullman, his grandfather’s mistress. Follywit also goes in disguise as Lord Owemuch and as a player, disguises to match his grandfather’s vices. While Wit-good and William Smallshankes do not

³⁵¹ Mount, “The [Un]reclaimed Forme” 270.

disguise themselves, they both persuade a whore to pretend to be someone else: a rich widow in *Tricke* and a young virgin who is a wealthy heir in *Ram Alley*. In both cases, the disguise is effective and the trick successful. Where Goodfellow could use magic, the city tricksters use disguise and wit.

The tricks in the city comedies here offer suggestions for gender-coded social ills, although different social issues than those targeted by Robin Goodfellow. First, because the movement of a younger man into marriage and thus into householder status was considered a marker of male adulthood, the ability or inability of the younger generation to move into full manhood was a source of concern. Although a woman's dowry might help pay for the cost of setting up a household, establishing the household was generally the responsibility of the husband.³⁵² During this period the ability to establish such economic independence was becoming difficult if not impossible for some men.³⁵³ The relationship of younger and older males within families was a potential problem when older males withheld financial support from younger males, resulting in the inability of younger males to move into full householder status because they could not afford to marry. That these same older men behaved in some ways as if they were themselves still youthful gallants further highlights the ambiguity and difficulty of becoming a householder and fully adult. In each of the city comedies discussed, an older

³⁵² Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, 50.

³⁵³ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 206.

male (grandfather, uncle, father) withheld or stole money and property from a younger man; only the intervention of trickster pranks allowed those young men to attain the desired adult householder status and restore the patriarchal ideal, as they pointed out the older men's vices and acquired the necessary capital.

The vices of older men are one point of difference among the plays. In *Tricke* and *Ram Alley*, financial greed is a clear problem, with the older men willing to cheat and steal to get more money. In *Mad World*, however, Sir Bounteous wasn't particularly greedy for money but for rank and status. He was in some ways a reflection of the gallant he might have been as a younger man, interested in entertainments and social climbing. Certainly, money is useful for that, and he chose to spend his wealth on his own entertainments rather than to help his grandson succeed in life. So while finance was an issue, in this case it was a supporting factor rather than the primary goal.

Where these three plays may be most interesting, however, is in their presentations of prostitutes. Jennifer Panek suggests that Middleton's comedies "offer an alternative to the common and degrading belief that a woman's passion outweighed her reason, subjecting her to the demands of her sexual needs—a myth neatly embodied by the widow whose financial or ethical scruples about a suitor could be overcome with sexual audacity."³⁵⁴ If

³⁵⁴ Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, 198.

there is an emblem of the over-sexual woman it is the whore, who brings together multiple troublesome elements of the early modern woman: sex, disorderliness, and involvement in commerce. In both *Mad World* and *Tricke*, the overtly sexual courtesan gives up her life of sexual commerce to be married. In *Mad World* and *Ram Alley*, moreover, the whores demonstrated loyalty to the trickster gallants, helping them succeed in their tricks. All three plays show a woman pulled into a life of prostitution—a risk for young women coming to London from rural areas as well as for those born in London—seeking a path to the respectability generally found in marriage. In all three cases, their loyalty to the trickster earns the reward, although the respectability can only come to those who repent of their previous lives.

Closely related to the three courtesans is *Ram Alley's* Taffata, a stereotypically lusty widow whose behavior borders on the commercial; she is clearly not one of Panek's perceived alternatives to commonly held beliefs about women and lust. At the end of the play, she marries William Smallshankes the trickster; however, while Taffata does end up with the young lover she purportedly desired, William's choice of Taffata as a wife is at least as much a way to trick his father as to reward Taffata. As such, the identification of the fantasy of the lusty widow does not truly point to a social problem in need of correction; from a male perspective, perhaps it didn't.

While the characters of prostitutes are clear participants in tricks and targets for rewards, however, the roles of honest women are more confused.

Indeed, *Mad World* does not even have an honest woman; there is only Mistress Harebrain, whose husband believes she will cuckold him, which she of course does in the sub-plot that helps to develop the character of Frank Gullman. *Tricke* has Hoord's niece Joyce, who ends up married to trickster Wit-good, the one she truly loves, in a nod to the trickster attribute of supporting true love matches. And finally, *Ram Alley* has Constantia, less a person in her own right than the identity used by Francis the whore in disguise. Constantia is never presented as anything other than a gentlewoman, but her behavior in running away in disguise to be with the man she loves suggests a level of disorderliness. Constantia does marry her true love Boutcher, much to the surprise of William, whose tricks *used* Constantia, but did not help her. Overall, the lack of involvement in the trickster plots suggest that these women do not represent a major source of anxiety, at least for the authors of these plays and the tricksters who represent them.

Finally, one last difference among the city tricksters is whether or not their tricks create viable solutions to the problems they address. While Middleton's tricksters suggest that effective solutions may be possible, Barry's does not. In *Tricke*, Lucre has restored Wit-good's property, and both Wit-good and Curtizan are married and thus beginning their reclamations. In addition, the gallant and the whore vow repentance in the final act, and as suggested above, the audience would likely have believed the vows. The

tricks in *Mad World* also provide workable solutions, with similar results: Sir Bounteous supports the newlyweds Follywit and Frank Gullman, who with their marriage are both on the path to respectability and for Follywit, adult householder status. Barry's play, however, presents a less hopeful ending. Although William Smallshankes recovers his fortune and marries Taffata, he continues to exhort the company to the excesses of a gallant, and one has to wonder how long his and now Taffata's wealth will last. Further, that Taffata has married her young lover supports the common belief that widows were driven by their sexual needs rather than common sense; the one note of hope here is that William is no longer an impoverished gallant, so perhaps one can read a small bit of logic in the choice. Unfortunately, William's behavior is unlikely to change, and so Taffata appears at the end to be the typical lusty widow, not a woman of reason. The reclamation of Barry's prostitute is also incomplete, as Francis continues to offer herself as payment, even after her marriage to Throte. Where Middleton's tricksters create situations that allow the other characters to change for the better, Barry's trickster punishes those who disrupt the stability of the community but does not provide effective answers to the underlying problems. Barry's play is pessimistic about the ability of an individual or community to resolve social issues, suggesting that the possibility of positive change exists but that no-one will fulfill it; Middleton's plays provide some hope, if the individuals themselves follow through with their own reclamation.

Andrew Gordon says of Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* that it is "structured around the experiences of a series of newcomers to London exploring the transformation in their behaviour and circumstances as they adapt to, or are consumed by the cultural life of the city."³⁵⁵ Gordon's understanding of that one play can be applied to other city comedies as well, as they focus on the difficulties of different types of persons or issues of concern in the early decades of the 17th century. Ultimately, all three city tricksters are distinguished by their artificiality, fabricated by the playwrights to exemplify the urban figure of the gallant to satirize the problems they present to London society. Although drawing on earlier fictional tricksters, these city tricksters lack the depth of characterization that comes from either the lengthy history of Robin Goodfellow or the details of Mary Frith's life to create Moll Cutpurse. Perhaps the transformation of James Hind, a highwayman, is the next logical step for 17th century tricksters, taking a living human and transforming him into a larger-than-life hero.

³⁵⁵ Andrew Gordon, *Writing Early Modern London: Memory, Text and Community* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 158.

Chapter 5: Captain James Hind, Highwayman

Broad changes in the middle of England's 17th century focused heavily on the political. Civil wars, regicide, and the parliamentary interregnum resulting in the collapse of censorship in the 1640s raised the public appetite for current information. A proliferation of newsbooks filled this gap, as did numerous other pamphlets and broadsides, building on the what Joad Raymond called the "widespread assumption of the right to read, hear, and discuss news."³⁵⁶ Jason Peacey agrees that news was evident in the "ever-greater numbers of tracts and pamphlets which can be described as 'popular' in form and genre."³⁵⁷ According to Diane Purkiss, during the 1640s "the London print trade, liberated by the absence of the Licensing Act, was mushrooming, fueling hectic political discussion and religious innovation"³⁵⁸ as well as providing entertainment. A major development of this bustling world of print was the publication of news: the first English newspapers and newsbooks. Much like today's newspapers, these publications generally had an editorial bias, for example either royalist or parliamentarian, pro- or anti-Puritan, and so on; such biases are often quite clear from the texts, despite

³⁵⁶ Joad Raymond, "The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century," *Prose Studies* 21, no. 2 (August 1998): 128, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440359808586641>

³⁵⁷ Jason Peacey, "Print and Public Politics in Seventeenth-Century England," *History Compass* 5, no. 1 (January 2007): 85–111, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2006.00369.x>

³⁵⁸ Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War: Papists, Gentlewomen, Soldiers, and Witchfinders in the Birth of Modern Britain* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 408.

attempts to publish facts. According to Frances E. Dolan, “The ongoing aftershocks of the Reformation and the political conflicts that led to revolution, regicide, and Restoration created both an urgent need to persuade and a nagging awareness that truth claims vary by party.”³⁵⁹ As Sarah Covington indicates, news publications were “given over to their own fictitious overlays” with “fact and fiction freely mingled, with different political and polemical narratives manipulating the news toward their own ends.”³⁶⁰ Biases notwithstanding, the mid-century news publications often provided evidence such as confessions under examination, eyewitness accounts, and reproductions of written texts, with biases represented both in the choice of evidence and the words chosen to present or frame it.

Mid-century politics and the rapid expansion of printed news did not produce a commensurate number of literary tricksters. Some use was made of existing trickster characters such as the politicization of Robin Goodfellow in *The Mid-Nights Watch*, discussed in chapter two. In this work, instead of playing tricks Robin laughs at both royalists and parliamentarians as they brag and lie about their great victories, suggesting that the reality of every battle or political situation was different than either side might wish and so

³⁵⁹ Frances E. Dolan. *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 4-5. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucm/detail.action?docID=3442054>.

³⁶⁰ Sarah Covington, “‘Realms so Barbarous and Cruell’: Writing Violence in Early Modern Ireland and England: Writing Violence,” *History* 99, no. 336 (July 2014): 487–504, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.12058>

contesting the idea that there was a single truth in the reporting of events. Goodfellow does not need to perform any pranks to serve as a trickster; instead, he points to people tricking themselves while his laughter highlights the issue of what constitutes truth, with both sides lying in order to appear in the best possible light. However, while almost no new trickster characters appeared during the civil wars and the rule of parliament, one possible exception is the character of Captain James Hind, a well-known thief and highwayman. The development of the highwayman Hind into a trickster and royalist unfolded during gaps in censorship (that is, the relative ineffectiveness of Parliament in the enforcement of censorship and pre-publishing licensing laws) and the rapid growth of news media, through the publication of ever more fantastic claims about his actions.

Captain James Hind, Highwayman

James Hind was the subject of numerous newsbooks and pamphlets in 1651 and 1652. Although he was not the only highwayman-hero to catch the attention of publishers, he stands out as the one pamphlet figure that could be called a trickster. As Jerome Friedman points out, “Pulp pamphlets devoted no space to King Arthur and Robin Hood as examples of enlightened and wise leadership and wrote instead of Captain James Hind, Richard Hannam, and other criminals successfully mocking the social order.”³⁶¹

³⁶¹ Jerome Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford's Flies: Miracles and the Pulp Press during the English Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 15.

Friedman even identifies Hind as “the first popular bandit-hero actually created and made famous by the popular press of his day.”³⁶² Karsten H. Piep agrees with this assessment, stating that “it was the emerging pulp press that carefully and deliberately fashioned the wayward butcher apprentice of Chipping-Norton into a chivalric folk hero.”³⁶³ Like Moll Cutpurse, James Hind was a real person transformed into a literary character, as the protagonist of nearly 20 cheap pamphlets and newsbooks published in late 1651 and early 1652. Like Mary Frith, the source for Moll Cutpurse, Hind was not an upstanding citizen; he was clearly a robber, a runaway apprentice who joined a band of London thieves where he learned a new trade. The band taught him to use disguise to approach his victims without frightening them; in the mid- to late-1640s, for example, Hind dressed as a “royalist officer selling protection to merchants.”³⁶⁴ Although he was a highwayman, Hind was ultimately executed for treason based on his support of the Stuart monarchy in general and his supposed assistance to Charles II in his escape after the battle at Worcester. Before his execution, however, Hind was both news and entertainment, as his character was inscribed with a variety of

³⁶² Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs*, 203.

³⁶³ Karsten H. Piep, “The Merry Life and Mad Exploits of Capt. James Hind,’ or, How the Popular Press Created Its First Outlaw-Hero in the Wake of the English Revolution,” *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 35, no. 1 (2004): 127, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cjm.2004.0027>

³⁶⁴ Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs*, 207.

traits that served the political bias of each publisher. These traits ultimately combined to complicate Hind's partially factual, partially fictional character.

James Hind as News

The first documents mentioning James Hind were newsbooks, where the information might be supposed to be reasonably factual. Countering this assumption, Joseph Frank notes that the *Faithful Scout*, edited by Daniel Border, “ran some sensational bits that other editors missed or ignored, like the account of the body of a giant found in Sussex, or a series of adventures in which James Hind was involved,”³⁶⁵ and that *A Perfect Account* “ran several stories on James Hind, the day’s most famous highwayman,”³⁶⁶ reflecting the editor’s interest in crime news. Peacey indicates that such publications were “subject to political manipulation,”³⁶⁷ suggesting that the content was designed to support the political position of the publisher. One interesting note about these and other publications is that “their authors did not feel obliged to explain who Hind was.”³⁶⁸ James Hind was clearly known, and clearly news. Probably printed in September 1651³⁶⁹, the newsbook *Another*

³⁶⁵ Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper 1620-1660* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 227.

³⁶⁶ Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper*, 223.

³⁶⁷ Peacey, “Print and Public Politics in Seventeenth-Century England”, 87.

³⁶⁸ Lena Liapi, “Loyal Hind,’ ‘The Prince of Thieves’ Crime Pamphlets and Royalist Propaganda in the 1650s,” in *News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections*, ed. Simon Davies and Puck Fletcher (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 101. Accessed April 5, 2018. ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁶⁹ G. K. Fortescue, ed., *Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books, Newspapers, and Manuscripts Relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration, Collected by*

Victory in Lancashire Obtained Against the Scots briefly mentions James Hind as possibly providing assistance to “the Scots King” Charles Stuart who was at that time missing. No explanation is given of Hind other than the basic identification of “the great robber” and presumably, no other explanation was necessary. The article denigrates both Charles and Hind, tendering the belief that Charles “lies sculking about in some private corners with Hind his guide”³⁷⁰ as he sought to escape, implying that skulking was appropriate for both. Another newsbook reporting the “True Speech”³⁷¹ of James Earl of Derby from the scaffold also suggests that Hind helped Charles escape, but in this case the only comment supporting Hind’s activity is in the title; the body of the newsbook discusses only the Earl of Derby. It is notable that these two newsbooks were published prior to Hind’s capture on November 9, 1651; they are also the only news sources reporting that Hind helped the king escape. Six other newsbooks contain information about Hind, but do not suggest that he helped Charles escape after the battle at Worcester or get to the continent. This suggests that the two newsbooks published prior to Hind’s arrest depended on unsupported hearsay for the

George Thomason, 1640-1661, vol. 1 (Switzerland: Kraus Reprint, 1969), 846. *The Thomason Tracts* gives the date of September 12, 1651.

³⁷⁰ *Another Victory in Lancashire Obtained against the Scots by Major General Harrison, and Collonel Lilburn*. (London: Printed by B.A., 1651), 4. <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

³⁷¹ *The True Speech Delivered on the Scaffold by James Earl of Derby, in The Market-Place at Bolton in Lancashire, on Wednesday Last, Being the 15. of This Instant October, 1651*. (London: Printed for Robert Eles, for general satisfaction to the People, 1651). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

reports of Hind's involvement in Charles' escape, while later newsbooks were able to draw on his own statements under examination and in court.

The first of the news stories to be published after Hind was captured was an account of Hind's confession published in *Mercurius Politicus* in November 1651. It focuses on Hind as a royalist supporter of Charles II, not on his activities as a criminal. The article outlines Hind's travels outside of England, his meeting with the king in Scotland, his joining the Duke of Buckingham's troops and subsequent participation in the battle at Worcester, his escape from the battlefield, and his final capture in London.³⁷² Joseph Frank identifies *Mercurius Politicus*, edited by Marchamont Nedham, as "England's most popular and profitable weekly"³⁷³ and as an accurate source of news in spite of a nationalistic bent;³⁷⁴ the brief report on James Hind's confession omits any sensationalism or references to Hind's former career as a highwayman, and sticks to the main outline of the events leading to his capture.

One week after Nedham's publication of the article in *Mercurius Politicus*, an article appeared in *The Weekly Intelligencer of the Common-*

³⁷² Marchamont Nedham, "Because Many Odd Reports Have Run up and down Touching Hind, the Notorious High-Way-Man, and His Perambulation; Take This Brief Abstract of What He Confessed upon Examination," *Mercurius Politicus Comprising the Summ of All Intelligence*, November 12, 1651, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. 1204.

³⁷³ Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper*, 223.

³⁷⁴ Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper*, 224.

wealth, describing James Hind's arrival at Newgate prison, and portraying him primarily as a violent criminal.³⁷⁵ *The Weekly Intelligencer* gives Hind the lead story, filling the front page below the masthead, and describes him as weighted down with irons, emphasizing the danger of violence on the part of the prisoner. The article goes on to describe Hind as attacking a keeper, stating that even though he was "lame in his right hand" and "his Fetters were heavy on his legs" the vigorous attack resulted in the assignment of two keepers to remain in attendance from then on, instead of the one keeper originally assigned.³⁷⁶ *The Weekly Intelligencer* shows its support for the Commonwealth by indicating that only his fellow prisoners joined Hind in toasting to the king's health, while "amongst those numbers that thronged in to see him, there was not one" that joined in the toast,³⁷⁷ a reminder to readers that supporting the king even with a toast was a criminal act. In spite of the sensationalist nature of the details included in this last article, overall the newsbooks do present Hind as a real person; at the point of his arrest, Hind's story had not yet taken on the elements of myth or of a trickster but remained strictly that of a criminal and royalist.

³⁷⁵ Richard Collings, ed., "It Is Happy Indeed for All That Travell...", *The Weekly Intelligencer of the Common-Wealth: Faithfully Communicating All Affairs Both Martial and Civil*, no. 45 (November 18, 1651): 346.

³⁷⁶ Collings, "It Is Happy," 347.

³⁷⁷ Collings, "It Is Happy," 346.

Additional newsbooks cover the early period of Hind's captivity, beginning with his capture and initial incarceration at Newgate prison, followed by a petition for improved conditions in prison, and his declaration or confession upon examination. Of these newsbooks, the petition alone does not discuss what Hind had done to be jailed but was simply a plea for more humane conditions in prison. In the *Humble Petition*, Hind claims that he is "unfeignedly sorrowfull for all his late miscarriages" and asks for the removal of leg irons, access to friends, and furniture "for the reducing of him from the bare boords, to a more Christian-like Condition."³⁷⁸ As a result of this plea, Hind was given a bed. Another newsbook repeats the story of Hind's arrival at Newgate, but avoids the sensational language of *The Weekly Intelligencer*; for example, where *The Weekly Intelligencer* tells of other prisoners drinking the health of the king when Hind offers a toast, *The True and Perfect Relation*³⁷⁹ indicates that Hind asked a man from his home town to make the toast and the man refuses. By omitting the other prisoners' acceptance of the toast, this retelling does not emphasize a parliamentary bias. Rather, *The True and Perfect Relation* uses Hind's confession to show his activities, highlighting specific social problems.

³⁷⁸ *The Humble Petition of James Hind (Close Prisoner in New-Gate) to the Right Honourable the Councell of State; and Their Proceedings Thereupon.* (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1651), 1.

³⁷⁹ *The True and Perfect Relation of the Taking of Captain James Hind: On Sabbath-Day Last in the Evening at a Barbers House in the Strand Neer Clements Church.* (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1651), 3. <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

The True and Perfect Relation ends with Hind's statement or confession as he was taken into prison; in this statement, he claimed that God had kept him from "shedding blood unjustly" and that he had not wronged any poor man even of the worth of a penny, but had only "made bold with a rich Bompkin, or a lying Lawyer."³⁸⁰ He was told that he was brought to prison for treason, not for robbing, to which Hind said of treason "I am not guilty of in the least" after which Hind reiterated his willingness to lose his life "in so good a cause" as that of Charles Stuart.³⁸¹ These statements show Hind as a royalist, but without offering any examples of actions to support that position. Following his statement, a gentleman showed Hind the books *Hind's Ramble* and *Hind's Exploits*, which Hind said he had seen but "upon the word of a Christian, they were fictions: But some merry Pranks and Revels I have plaid, that I deny not."³⁸² Hind's statement at the gate of the prison suggests that Hind's robberies and other tricks were specifically aimed at wealthy men whose practices further impoverished the poor. He even makes a joke at the expense of lawyers, which "caused much laughter, and many such witty Gingles would he often put forth."³⁸³ Liapi points to this "shared laughter between the highwayman and his audience at the expense of his victims" as "meant to emphasize that Hind's audience was on his side,

³⁸⁰ *The True and Perfect Relation*. 5.

³⁸¹ *The True and Perfect Relation*. 6.

³⁸² *The True and Perfect Relation*. 6.

³⁸³ *The True and Perfect Relation*. 6.

sharing his criticism against lawyers and tacitly justifying his actions.”³⁸⁴

Although brief, this is the first hint of Hind’s transformation into a trickster, turning tricks and making jokes that highlight a specific social problem.

The hints of Hind’s trickster traits expand in *The Declaration of Captain James Hind*, published immediately after *The True and Perfect Relation*. *The Declaration* provides an expanded version of Hind’s confession and includes more details of his travels abroad prior to his meeting with Charles and joining the Duke of Buckingham’s company. In the spirit of Robin Hood,³⁸⁵ he claims to benefit poor men even as he proves his loyalty to the king:

For every wrong I have done (called now to remembrance) wrings drops of bloud from my heart; although I never shed one: Neither did I ever take the worth of a peny from a poor man; but at what time soever I met with any such person, it was my constant custom, to ask, *Who he was for?* If he reply’d, *For the King*, I gave him 20 shillings: but if he answer’d, *For the Parliament*, I left him as I found him.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Liapi, “Loyal Hind,” 107.

³⁸⁵ However, Hind differs significantly from Robin Hood, who had been elevated to Earl in the 16th century; see Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), chapter 2. Hind never lost his background as a commoner, and often targeted the aristocracy with his thefts.

³⁸⁶ James Hind, *The Declaration of Captain James Hind (Close Prisoner in New-Gate) and His Acknowledgment, Protestation, and Full Confession at His Examination before the Council of State, on the 10. of This Instant Novemb. 1651*. (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1651), 2.

Hind further emphasizes the comparison with Robin Hood later in *The Declaration*, saying “this likewise is a supportment to me that I have taken from the rich, and given to the poor,” and continues by accusing “the rich Farmer and full-fed Lawyer” as the cause of the cottage-keeper’s poverty, justifying them as the target of his robberies.³⁸⁷ Although not containing any stories of specific tricks, Hind’s *Declaration* frames his robberies as the work of a trickster and hero, righting social injustices with his thefts.

The last of the newsbooks was published in December 1651, covering Hind’s first trial for treason and repeating Hind’s declaration.³⁸⁸ This last newsbook, along with previously published news, continue to offer suggestions that James Hind was not just a criminal, but was instead becoming something more—a hero. Newsbooks were not the only publications with James Hind as a protagonist, but other pamphlets made far less of an effort to appear as news, telling stories of Hind’s activities as entertainment.

Pamphlets: 1651

Where newsbooks hinted at trickster elements in James Hind’s actions, other pamphlets not published as news offer more specifics of Hind, with stories and details of robberies that demonstrate his transformation into

³⁸⁷ Hind, *The Declaration*, 6.

³⁸⁸ James Hind, *The Trial of Captain James Hind on Friday Last before the Honourable Court at the Sessions in the Old-Bayley*. (London, 1651).
<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

a trickster character. The earliest of these is *Hind's Ramble*,³⁸⁹ which Hind himself said was fictional.³⁹⁰ Published prior to Hind's capture, *Hind's Ramble* is a collection of stories, beginning with Hind's training under the master thief known as Bishop Allen, where he learned the art of disguise as used in robbery. While many of the robberies described in *Hind's Ramble* are straightforward theft, often at gunpoint although sometimes through trickery, at least one story includes elements that suggest a trickster at work. In chapter five, the story of "How Hind served two Bailies and a Usurer"³⁹¹ tells of Hind's chance discovery of an "honest Inn-keeper"³⁹² being arrested for the sum of 20 pounds. Hind offers to pay the debt if the innkeeper could give him any security; the innkeeper signs over all his property. Hind then pays the usurer and the bailies and receives in return the bond for the innkeeper's debt. However, Hind also asks which way the usurer was to go, and follows and robs him of 40 pounds, including the 20 pounds paid for the innkeeper and "twenty pound more, which he had got by his Usury."³⁹³ Hind then returns to the inn, where he hands back the innkeeper's security and gives him five pounds more. This story places Hind in the role of social

³⁸⁹ George Fidge, *Hind's Ramble or, the Description of His Manner and Course of Life. Wherein Is Related the Several Robberies He Hath Committed in England, and the Escapes He Hath Made upon Several Occasions*. (London: Printed for George Latham, 1651). <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

³⁹⁰ *The True and Perfect Relation*. 6.

³⁹¹ Fidge, *Hind's Ramble*, 16.

³⁹² Fidge, *Hind's Ramble*, 16.

³⁹³ Fidge, *Hind's Ramble*, 17.

arbiter, tricking both the innkeeper and the usurer into thinking he is another lender like the usurer. Effectively punishing the usurer with the loss of twice what he had taken from the innkeeper and rewarding the innkeeper's honesty with the safe return of all his property plus the bonus of five pounds, Hind successfully tricks all the other characters. Hind does profit financially from this trick, which reflects the stories of city comedy tricksters who also profit even as they punish usurers through the loss of their ill-gotten gains.

Although other stories in *Hind's Ramble* are less specific in his use of tricks and theft to highlight social issues, taken as a whole the stories in this collection do suggest antagonism along both class and political lines, further positioning Hind as a royalist. While many of Hind's victims are identified solely as gentlemen with money, others are more specifically named, including a parson, a committeeman (parliamentary official), and the captain of a troop of horse. The single victim identified as a poor man was in the end not a victim, since Hind returned his money and doubled it. In this and other of the earlier texts, Hind is treated as "larger than life, a creature of virtuoso robberies and lively jests."³⁹⁴ *Hind's Ramble* establishes Hind as a master of disguise and wit in his robberies, and in at least one story, as a royalist; it

³⁹⁴ Jane Smith, "The Commonwealth Cavalier," *Studies in Philology* 114, no. 3 (2017): 611. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sip.2017.0022>

also gives Hind the trickster attribute of disguise to highlight a social problem and punish the men at the heart of the problem.

A Second Discovery of Hind's Exploits is similar to *Hind's Ramble* but it presents different stories of Hind's robberies and tricks. Most of the stories from *Hind's Exploits* are repeated in a shorter book, *The Pleasant and Delightful History of Captain Hind*; both were published in 1651. *The Pleasant and Delightful History* does not offer any stories of Hind as a royalist but does emphasize Hind's skill at disguise: "sometimes he went in the habit of a Gentleman of great fortunes, sometimes in poor habit, and sometimes in a Serving-mans habit."³⁹⁵ In this pamphlet, the victims are again most often gentlemen, but include a butcher, reminiscent of Hind's origins. One story does point to a social concern over the excesses of gallants. In this story, a group of "Blades, having spent their patrimony, the next work they take in hand is, Goddam them, they would go take a purse too, to maintain them in their luxurious courses."³⁹⁶ The gallants rob a gentleman and immediately go to an inn where "they were very frolick and merry,"³⁹⁷ spending their booty as fast as they had spent their inheritance. The use of

³⁹⁵ *The Pleasant and Delightful History of Captain Hind: Wherein Is Set Forth a More Full and Perfect Relation of His Several Exploits, Stratagems, Robberies, and Progress, Both in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Holland: The like Never Heard of throughout All Ages.* (London: Printed for George Horton, 1651). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. 7.

³⁹⁶ *The Pleasant and Delightful History*, 8.

³⁹⁷ *The Pleasant and Delightful History*, 8.

phrases like “Goddam them” and “luxurious courses” demonstrates that the gallants’ behavior was at issue. When Hind and his company in turn robbed the young gallants of all their money, the young men cried out: “Why we are your friends ; What Theeves fall out? We will fall in, saith Hind, and so fell upon them, took all their money, and so left them.”³⁹⁸ Hind’s words and actions show him denying any relationship between his own men or himself and the young gallants; they were in Hind’s view not thieves together, but thieves and gentlemen prey. The story expressly points to the inappropriate behavior of the young gallants as the cause of their own punishment by Hind and his crew.

A Second Discovery adds just two stories not included in *The Pleasant and Delightful History*. The first of these involves a man from whom Hind had previously borrowed money. When Hind and his men came across the man in a wood, they of course robbed him. The story says of Hind’s men that “some of them were so cruel, that they would have killed him”³⁹⁹ but Hind made them spare the man’s life and left him tied in a thicket. Later, Hind returns and frees the man, returning to him Hind’s own portion of the money that had been stolen. The story shows Hind to be somewhat more honorable

³⁹⁸ *The Pleasant and Delightful History*, 8.

³⁹⁹ *A Second Discovery of Hind’s Exploits or a Fuller Relation of His Ramble, Robberies, and Cheats in England, Ireland, Scotland, with His Voyage to Holland*. (London: Printed for William Ley, and are to be sold at his shop at Pauls Chain, 1651), <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>. 24.

than his men, since he saved the man who had loaned him money, although he did not stop the robbery altogether. Hind's treatment of the man is one example that demonstrates Friedman's claim that "Pamphlet authors expunged Hind's record of any truly antisocial crimes, ignoring, for instance, several charges of murder."⁴⁰⁰ In this story, there could be no murder charge since Hind saves the potential victim. Clearing Hind's record by improving the outcome of the crime is a key factor in his transformation into a hero and trickster.

The second story which appears only in *A Second Discovery* is notable for one reason only: it includes a female character. Of the Hind publications, this is the first woman with any role in a story, and it is a minor role: she is a robbery victim's wife who is travelling with him. Until this point in mid-November 1651, all the stories include only men, either as victims of theft or as thieves. However, the next appearance of a female character is far more central to the plot; in mid-November, George Horton published the pamphlet play⁴⁰¹ *The Prince of Priggs Revels*,⁴⁰² also including a female character but this time in a key role as one of Hind's victims.

⁴⁰⁰ Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs*, 210.

⁴⁰¹ A play intended to be read rather than performed.

⁴⁰² J. S., *An Excellent Comedy, Called, The Prince of Priggs Revels: Or, The Practises of That Grand Thief Captain James Hind, Relating Divers of His Pranks and Exploits, Never Heretofore Published by Any*. (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1651). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

The Prince of Priggs Revels, a Pamphlet Play

The Prince of Priggs Revels represents a significant shift in the use of dialogue to tell its stories. There are differences between plays written for performance and pamphlet plays, however, stemming from the differences in purpose and format. One effect of the Puritan influence over London was the closure of the public theatres in 1642. Although there had been sporadic closings of theatres in the first part of the 17th century, for example to limit the risk of plague, it wasn't until the Commonwealth and parliamentary control mid-century that theatres closed apparently for good. In something of a domino effect, the disappearance of new plays from publishers' wares followed; partially filling the gap were pamphlet plays, which were much shorter plays intended primarily to be read rather than performed. Not created solely for entertainment, according to S. J. Wiseman pamphlet plays were "produced by and in the news market" and as such, "were, though not political theory, claiming a place for themselves as polemically intervening in political debate."⁴⁰³ Although participating in the market for news, play pamphlets drew on dramatic structures of dialogue, acts, and scenes to offer the reader "both political theory and fantasized resolution of political troubles by means of the subjective yet representative desires of the 'ordinary' subject

⁴⁰³ S. J. Wiseman, "Pamphlet Plays in the Civil War News Market: Genre, Politics, and 'Context,'" *Prose Studies* 21, no. 2 (August 1998): 70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440359808586639>

or citizen and therefore provides positions with which a reader could identify.”⁴⁰⁴ Piep points out that the play *The Prince of Priggs Revels* uses Hind’s robberies to mock unpopular groups such as prosperous merchants, aristocrats, and aldermen.⁴⁰⁵ In the first act, for example, Hind calls a greedy merchant “this putrid piece of parcemonie” and “This old Extortioner,”⁴⁰⁶ mocking the merchant and reflecting the idea that his thefts are tricks played on those who deserve them as lessons. The fourth act also uses descriptive language to mock a wealthy merchant, but this time puts the words in the mouth of the merchant himself. In disguise as disabled veterans of foreign wars, Hind and his men accost a wealthy merchant and his friends, who respond:

Truly friends the times are so hard, and we so burthend, that verily, yea and nay, we are scarce able to furnish our wives with a competent number of silke gownes, lawn smocks, gold laces, beaver hats, silver hilted fans, Flanders laces and other necessaries, without which, all honest men know we cannot subsist.⁴⁰⁷

Hind subsequently robs the merchants of 600 pounds, using his disguise to trick the merchants so that he can get close enough to punish them for their excessive lifestyles and lack of charity in the face of poverty.

⁴⁰⁴ Wiseman, “Pamphlet Plays,” 79.

⁴⁰⁵ Piep, “The Merry Life,” 127.

⁴⁰⁶ J. S., *An Excellent Comedy, Called, The Prince of Priggs Revels*, 4.

⁴⁰⁷ J. S., *An Excellent Comedy, Called, The Prince of Priggs Revels*, 12.

The second act combines mockery of aristocrats and women. Hind calls Infortunia “A wealthy widow; nay, a beauteous widow; / A Lady of high birth, and great perfection.”⁴⁰⁸ Hind disguises himself as a “great Lord” and puts some of his men into suitable liveries to trick the widow, even sending his man Grammario ahead to deliver a love poem cobbled together out of appropriate previous works: as Grammario explained it, “I was fain to devoure one whole page out *Ovid*, / Three large siz’d sentences out of *Catullus* / One Axiome out of *Hero and Leander*; / and a whole stanzae out of *Venus and Adonis*.”⁴⁰⁹ The disguises and the poem are quite effective, and Hind even has sex with the woman while his men steal her wealth. Then the men rouse Hind and the woman saying that the house was robbed; Hind leaves with his men to chase the supposed culprits. As the title to the act puts it, Hind “growes very intimate with a brave and noble Lady, whom at once he deprives of the inestimable jewell of her honour, together with much treasure.”⁴¹⁰ Infortunia may be brave and noble, but she seems eager enough to jump into bed with Hind, making her appear more like a stereotypical lusty widow than an honorable lady; she is less a victim than a willing participant, which is perhaps reason enough for her to be the object of Hind’s tricks.

⁴⁰⁸ J. S., *An Excellent Comedy, Called, The Prince of Priggs Revels*, 5.

⁴⁰⁹ J. S., *An Excellent Comedy, Called, The Prince of Priggs Revels*, 6.

⁴¹⁰ J. S., *An Excellent Comedy, Called, The Prince of Priggs Revels*, 5.

The final act of *The Prince of Priggs Revels* does not follow the pattern of the earlier acts in mocking and tricking unpopular groups. Instead, it shows a meeting between Hind and the king after his loss at the battle of Worcester, with Hind offering to guide the king and to remain loyal to him. Where two newsbooks reported rumor that Hind aided the king in this way, most newsbooks did not, and Hind himself consistently denied even seeing the king after the battle. The final act only makes sense if, as Smith says, “In part because the theaters had been associated with royal patronage, pamphlet plays...tended to sympathize with the royalist cause.”⁴¹¹ However, while Smith suggests that the first four acts of *The Prince of Priggs* present Hind as a greedy villain and attributes his transformation in the final act to the appearance of Charles II,⁴¹² it is difficult to ignore the type of victims chosen for the earlier acts. These choices identify Hind as a thief, but also as a trickster who has specific social concerns to address, often using disguise as a means of tricking his victims and highlighting the problems they represent.

Pamphlets: 1652

The later publications continued to add stories of Hind’s escapades as well as information about his capture and trials; they also repeated other stories from earlier pamphlets. *The English Gusman* is the longest of the story collections, containing nearly 40 short stories or chapters including 5

⁴¹¹ Smith, “The Commonwealth Cavalier,” 634.

⁴¹² Smith, “The Commonwealth Cavalier,” 635-637.

from *Hind's Ramble* as well as variations on other tales. *The English Gusman* adds doctors and captains to the list of characters robbed and doubles the number of women characters. In one story, Hind was betrayed by two whores, who said to the men who kept them that "there was a gentleman in the house that had abundance of gold about him."⁴¹³ The two thieves rode after Hind intending to rob him of his horse and money, but Hind turned on them and robbed them instead. In other words, the whores saw Hind not as a highwayman but as a gentleman, as did the two thieves who tried to rob him. Although the story ends with Hind claiming status as the "one Master-Thief in England,"⁴¹⁴ being mistaken for a gentleman is very different from being a butcher's apprentice or even a common thief, and is another step in Hind's trickster transformation, taking on a role that allows him greater opportunity for social commentary.

The English Gusman is also the first collection to include a story of Hind's enchantment, introducing an element of magic into Hind's abilities. An old hag stops Hind as he is riding and gives him a charm to enable him to escape when in distress; she uses a white rod and gives him a box like a sundial, symbols of the enchantment. The charm is to last three years. If he is in England at the end of the time she promises to renew it, but he was in

⁴¹³ George Fidge, *The English Gusman; or The History of That Unparalle'd Thief James Hind*. (London: Printed by T.N. or George Latham Junior; and are to be sold at the Bishops-Head in Paul's Church-Yard, 1652), 15, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

⁴¹⁴ Fidge, *The English Gusman*, 15.

Ireland, so the enchantment ended and he was wounded.⁴¹⁵ This enchantment is an important step in Hind's transformation to a trickster, since as Piep puts it, "As in so many fairy-tales, the wandering hero must secure the aid of the supernatural before mounting the good fight against the evil order."⁴¹⁶ Moreover, Piep points out that "in the depictions of Hind as a figure of *both* myth and daily politics, one cannot fail to see that the popular press added an overtly social-critical component to the one-dimensional hero-worship of old."⁴¹⁷ Where previously-discussed stories provided a social-critical stance, Hind's enchantment adds a layer of myth to his actions. As Friedman puts it, this and later publications "converted this royalist thief into a semidivine lawgiver."⁴¹⁸ It is true that nearly all of the later publications included Hind's enchantment by a cunning woman or witch, although the term "semidivine" seems a little strong since the enchantment was time-limited; still, these enchantments are part of the mythmaking critical to Hind's transformation into a trickster.

We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market, a news pamphlet also published in 1652, repeats the story of enchantment, and further mythologizes Hind. This pamphlet identifies the end of the period of

⁴¹⁵ Fidge, *The English Gusman*, 16-17.

⁴¹⁶ Piep, "The Merry Life," 137.

⁴¹⁷ Piep, "The Merry Life," 132.

⁴¹⁸ Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs*, 263.

enchantment—“The time of this Charm was expired in the year 1649”⁴¹⁹—as prior to Hind’s capture, which should not have occurred had he been able to renew the enchantment. It further indicates that the enchantment changed Hind. For example, *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market* states that “Since which time, many strange Visions have appeared unto him, but especially since he came to Newgate,”⁴²⁰ which was in 1651, well after the 1649 deadline for the enchantment to end. While in Newgate, Hind is described as having a dream vision of the late King Charles who promised mercy if Hind would repent; he told the keeper of his vision, describing it as seeing his master in heaven. In another example, *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market* shows Hind’s self-awareness as a marvel:

Gentlemen, I am a man sent to do Wonders ; and many Visions have appear’d ; and sundry voices have I heard, saying, O thou great and mighty Lyon, thou a t [*sic*] decreed to range the Countries to work and manifest to the people strange Wonders : At which instant, a Rampant Lyon appeared visible, but immediatly vanished ; to the great admiration of the spectators ; who peaceably departed to their several Habitations, to tell the strangenesse of this Wonder.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market: Or, Strange Newes from New-Gate; Being a Most Pleasant and Historical Narrative, of Captain James Hind, Never before Published, of His Merry Pranks, Witty Jests, Unparallel’d Attempts, and Strange Designs.* (London: For George Horton, 1652), 5. The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

⁴²⁰ *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market*, 5.

⁴²¹ *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market*, 7.

Of course, whether the reader believed him to be a mythic wonder or not, Hind's words and actions were also intended to allow his escape from guards who were searching for someone who had committed a robbery; even as he was portrayed as having magic, he was also shown as a successful robber. In this example, however, the magic outweighs the criminality and Hind escapes.

The remaining works from 1652 all tell similar stories to those in *The English Gusman*, furthering the image of Hind as a trickster. *A Pill to Purge Melancholy* includes only stories of robberies, but these continue to focus on the punishment of certain social classes. Three stories in particular point to Hind as a hero and trickster. In the first story, encouraged by some "Ladies of pleasure"⁴²² Hind puts on woman's clothing and fools one of his associates. Since Hind's disguise as a woman was completely successful, fooling even his own associates, one of the whores suggests that Hind go out and get a "cully"—a customer. Still in disguise, Hind immediately caught the attention of a lecherous lawyer. The lawyer, being cheap as well as lecherous, did not want to go to Hind's lodging, but persuaded Hind to go to his room for 10 shillings to "do the feat."⁴²³ When the lawyer took out his money to pay, Hind took the 10 shillings then pulled out his pistol, bound and gagged the lawyer,

⁴²² *A Pill to Purge Melancholy: Or Merry Newes from Newgate: Wherein Is Set Forth, the Pleasant Jestes, Witty Conceits, and Excellent Couzenages, of Captain James Hind, and His Associates.* (London: Printed by Robert Wood, 1652), 4. <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

⁴²³ *A Pill to Purge Melancholy*, 6.

and took the rest of his money. When Hind told his tale to the whores, they were glad that he had robbed the lawyer, “wishing that all old lecherous Curmudgions were so served” since such men “spoyl’d our Trade, and brought down the prises of our Commodities.”⁴²⁴ This story looks at society from an inverted perspective, where the whores are the lawyer’s victims and the lawyer gets his just reward when he is robbed. However, the inversion can also be read as mocking the whores’ trade through Hind’s easy counterfeit of their dress and behavior, generating laughter for the reader who may have seen the whores’ complaints as only what they deserved. In the end, it is still the lawyer who is punished for his unwillingness to pay the going rate for services rendered.

The second story in *A Pill to Purge Melancholy* has Hind sending a man back to the lawyer’s room to find out how he was, since he “could not be satisfied till he was resolved what became of him after he had left him.”⁴²⁵ This may demonstrate a desire not to cause physical harm as one of Hind’s claims was that he did not shed blood unnecessarily; it also strengthens the picture of Hind as a hero rather than strictly a criminal. Hind sent his man Colonel Scarface, who found the lawyer still bound and gagged. When Scarface released him, the lawyer tried to show himself in a better light by claiming that he had been bound by a rough fellow who knocked at his door.

⁴²⁴ *A Pill to Purge Melancholy*, 6-7.

⁴²⁵ *A Pill to Purge Melancholy*, 7.

He certainly did not want to admit his defeat by a whore or a woman; a reader would also laugh that he could not tell that Hind was male. Bragging, the lawyer tells Scarface that the thief took the money from his pocket but did not take the 100 pounds from his trunk. Such bragging shows the lawyer to be careless; after all, if one stranger at the door is a thief, the next one could be as well, as was the case in this example. Of course, Scarface told Hind about the money in the trunk, and Hind determined to get it as well. Thus far, the story puts the lawyer in the worst possible light: in addition to lecherous and cheap, he is vain and foolish. At this point, the mockery is focused against lawyers. However, interjected into the critique of lawyers is a brief but intriguing comment about whores.

Hind hired a whore to help in the trick to steal the rest of the lawyer's money; "She (being willing, poor Whore, to get money), promised him her assistance"⁴²⁶ in borrowing the lawyer's key for Hind. The phrasing of the whore's agreement suggests that women might be whores not because they are wanton but rather due to their poverty. This suggestion, especially considering the whores' complaint in the first story, recognizes that at least some women may be driven to prostitution by financial need, an issue that may have been known but was largely ignored. Where previous pamphlets limited their inclusion of female characters to minor roles or negative

⁴²⁶ *A Pill to Purge Melancholy*, 8.

perspectives, this is the first of the Hind pamphlets that presents the possibility of women as society's victims being assisted by Hind the trickster. The story ends with Hind stealing the rest of the lawyer's money, continuing Hind's mockery of lawyers and reminding the reader of the lawyer's foolishness in being unable to tell a man from a woman, strengthening Hind's role as trickster in disguise. It also emphasizes the image of the lecherous lawyer, since he is easily gulled by the whore who steals his key and keeps him busy while Hind is taking the rest of his money. As the trickster, Hind's actions point to the lawyer as an example of several social problems, including lechery, prostitution, and poverty, all while mocking members of the legal profession as exacerbating those problems.

James Hind, royalist

More than half of the pamphlets and newsbooks offer evidence that Hind was a royalist, some describing his involvement on the side of Charles in the battle of Worcester, and others indicating his generosity to poor men who said they were for the king. The identification of Hind as a royalist is an important element in his transformation into a trickster, suggesting that Hind could provide solutions to some social ills in small ways, just as royalists might believe that the return of the monarchy could provide solutions for England. Jerome DeGroot indicates that "Hind's case demonstrates the way that crime and loyalty come to be conflated during the period, and how marginalized, scandalous characters mitigated their social

isolation by cleaving to a cause.”⁴²⁷ DeGroot believes that Hind sought to “save himself from charges of criminality by aligning himself with the king,”⁴²⁸ but there is little in the various pamphlets to prove that was Hind’s purpose. Hind’s own descriptions of his generosity to poor men who were for the king shows that he self-identified as a royalist, but this was a dangerous means of protection from criminal charges if indeed that was Hind’s idea, since it resulted in his eventual execution for treason against the Commonwealth.

Part of the confusion about Hind as a royalist is a result of the different purposes of the publications and their publishers: news or entertainment, politically for the monarchy or for parliament. Jane Smith notes that following the battle at Worcester, the image of Charles II shifted from king to commoner in his disguise while escaping, while that of Hind shifted from commoner to gentleman, or even to nobility. She identifies two woodcuts associated with Hind in the pamphlet *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market*, printed in 1652, as recycled images of Charles II from two pamphlets printed in 1648 and 1651.⁴²⁹ If someone other than George Horton had printed this pamphlet, the conflating of Hind with Charles might suggest

⁴²⁷ Jerome DeGroot, “Prison Writing, Writing Prison during the 1640s and 1650s,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (June 2009): 214, <https://doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2009.72.2.193>

⁴²⁸ DeGroot, “Prison Writing,” 212.

⁴²⁹ Smith, “The Commonwealth Cavalier,” 618-619.

that the publisher wanted to mock the king, but Horton's other work shows him to be a royalist and anti-parliamentarian. Further, one of the same images was also included in the pamphlet *A Pill to Purge Melancholy*, published in 1652 by Robert Wood; this solitary pamphlet from Wood does not otherwise offer any evidence of James Hind as a royalist, including only stories of robberies apparently intended as entertainment alone. With only the woodcut labeled "James Hind" to show any link to Charles, it neither appears to mock the king, nor to conflate Hind with the king. However, the use of these woodcuts to represent Hind does shift his image from that of a butcher's apprentice to a higher social rank and status. In addition, where Smith looks to the images included in *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market* to demonstrate Hind's connection with the Stuarts, Piep points instead to the pamphlet's text, focusing on verbal images of Charles I as Hind's benefactor. Noting that Hind's enchantment by the old hag expired in 1649, the same year that Charles I was executed, Piep links their fates as well as Hind's transformation into a hero whose very existence resists the power of the Commonwealth: "The attacks against the new regime that appear in the Hind pamphlets are grounded in... myth (supernatural images of Hind and the executed king)."⁴³⁰ These two late pamphlets show a different Hind than the early butcher turned robber; not even just a royalist, Hind is

⁴³⁰ Piep, "The Merry Life," 137.

now a gentleman with implied links to royalty. Even more, his royalism is part of the message of Hind the trickster. As Friedman states, “To maintain the myth of Hind as a respectable hero, many publications used his royalism as a cover to justify his other activities.”⁴³¹ This mythmaking is the final factor transforming Hind into a mythic trickster.

James Hind as trickster

Although the newsbooks portrayed Hind solely as a criminal and traitor, the remaining pamphlets described him as a robber but also as a kind of hero. Stories abound of Hind giving money to poor men while robbing those whose positions and occupations might be seen as part of the problem of poverty such as lawyers, merchants, and gentlemen. Calling Hind “A true social reformer,” Piep summarizes Hind’s actions: he “rights wrongs committed against the poor and helpless.”⁴³² Examples of righting wrongs include giving money to poor men or helping an honest innkeeper save his inn from a usurer. Comparing James Hind to Robin Hood, Piep believes the many pamphlets published in 1651 and 1652 gave Hind the “durable image of a courageous outlaw, who single-handedly rectifies the wrongs perpetuated by an unjust social order.”⁴³³ This image is somewhat less than durable, however, since there is only one pamphlet published after 1652: *No Jest, Like*

⁴³¹ Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs*, 211.

⁴³² Piep, “The Merry Life,” 136.

⁴³³ Piep, “The Merry Life,” 127.

*a True Jest*⁴³⁴ was first published in 1657 and reprinted three times between 1670 and 1680. Still, the image of Hind as a social reformer is woven consistently throughout the pamphlets, drawing attention to various social problems, often related to poverty and those who preyed on the poor. Although social commentary without other traits does not define a trickster, stories of Hind included other trickster elements like the use of carnival elements such as jests and the use of disguise or shape-change.

One trickster element displayed in all the stories of Hind's robberies is that he "could neatly rob, and neatly jest."⁴³⁵ As DeGroot puts it, "Hind is a mischievous, lovable rogue, a polite raffish wit, a symbol of the carnival jollity of innocent old England."⁴³⁶ The tricks Hind played on his robbery victims often elicit laughter. In one story, Hind even gets his victim to stop by standing in the road laughing at him. Another example of Hind's jesting has him tricking a parson into shooting a pistol at the men who were trying to catch Hind after a robbery; Hind told the parson that the men were themselves robbers. Of course, the parson's shooting was ineffectual, and the men captured the parson. The parson was subsequently released by the judge, who knew him personally. Another trick that generates laughter is

⁴³⁴ *No Jest like a True Jest Being a Compendious Record of the Merry Life and Mad Exploits of Capt. James Hind the Great Robber of England*. (London: Printed by A. P. for T. Vere, and are to be sold at his shop, at the sign of the Angel without Newgate., 1674). The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

⁴³⁵ *We Have Brought Our Hogs to a Fair Market*, 8.

⁴³⁶ DeGroot, "Prison Writing," 214.

Hind dressing as a whore and making a group of prostitutes laugh; in this disguise, Hind fools his own men and even gets a client. One story that possibly generates the most laughter is in *Pill to Purge Melancholy*, when Hind dresses in a bear's skin and robs a fellow guest at an inn, a stingy committeeman. The man had dinner served privately in his room, so he would not have to share with his friends. Hind bought a bearskin and disguised himself, while the chamberlain took the committee-man's dinner to his chamber, followed by the inn's mastiff. When the chamberlain left, Hind as bear entered, frightening the committeeman who ran. The dog attacked Hind and knocked him down, pulling off the bear head. The dog stopped attacking and began barking; Hind gave it the man's mutton dinner which quieted it. After taking the committeeman's cloak which contained his money, Hind returned to his own chamber. Hind took the money and hid the cloak and bearskin in the chimney. The committeeman spoke of a bear or devil that came into his room and demanded a new room. In the morning Hind left the inn with the money, leaving a verse for the committeeman:

Those that forsake their friends to save their purse,
 May they be serv'd as thou hast been, or worse;
 Good company hereafter ne're decline,
 But love goodfellowship; lest that the Coin;
 For which thous carp'st, and takest so much care,

Be again taken from thee, by the Bear.⁴³⁷

Such tricks fit Mikhail Bakhtin's description of actions "done with laughter and for laughter's sake."⁴³⁸ Bakhtin was describing thrashings as generating laughter; while Hind's actions were not so violent as to cause personal physical harm, the victims did suffer something, usually robbery, and in the case of the parson and committee-man, mockery for their own actions. That Hind's robberies often included such jests places them into the realm of carnival, another indication of his transformation into a trickster.

However, the role of James Hind as a mythic trickster was relatively short. As Friedman puts it, "Having been transformed from a butcher's apprentice into a social redeemer and from a thief to a miraculous personage and lawgiver, Hind's execution brought an abrupt end to the myth."⁴³⁹ While this is not wholly true—one pamphlet was reprinted for the next 30 years—no new stories of Hind appeared after his execution.

Conclusion

The impact of politics on 17th century English society was played out in the development of trickster stories, specifically demonstrated by the numerous pamphlets and newsbooks about James Hind. Although characterization of this highwayman began with stories that reported him

⁴³⁷ *A Pill to Purge Melancholy*, 16.

⁴³⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 208.

⁴³⁹ Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs*, 215.

simply as a criminal, the descriptions soon added a layer of royalist sympathies. From one perspective, these descriptions culminate in Hind's arrest and subsequent execution for treason against the commonwealth, but from another perspective, they present the royalist stance as a solution to England's problems. It is this latter perspective that begins to position Hind as a trickster and suggests that broad social and political issues might be resolved if only England had a monarch.

Hind's transformation from criminal to trickster hero is attributable at least in part by the rise of newsbooks, which begin by describing him as a famous robber, newly arrested for his involvement in the battle of Worcester in 1651. Much like today's news sources, the newsbooks of 1651 had their biases, demonstrated largely by language choices that at times exaggerated Hind's actions, along with the publication as fact of rumor that later proved untrue. For example, Hind was initially reported to have aided in the escape of Charles II following the battle, a claim that was later proved unfounded. After Hind's capture and initial questioning, however, breaking news was less frequent, and Hind's story continued in pamphlets published more for entertainment. Drawing in part on details from Hind's examinations such as his claims to have avoided killing and to have provided help for poor men, it is in these fictional accounts that Hind is fully transformed from robber to trickster hero with the addition of carnivalesque details and mystical enchantments.

Stories of Hind's exploits often show him to incorporate jesting and tricks along with robbery. Tales of robberies show the victims as the brunt of jests that display their faults, and the robberies themselves as the punishment for those faults. Lawyers and usurers, for example, are targeted for their treatment of poorer men, with the theft of their ill-gotten gains their reward. This is similar to tricks played by city comedy tricksters, which are tailored to address perceived faults of the victims. Hind's victims fall along class lines, with doctors, lawyers, merchants, gentlemen, and gallants the source of laughter as Hind tricks them out of their property and highlights their foolish or imprudent behavior. Curiously, Hind himself transforms into a gentleman using disguise, but this transformation is a temporary trick, serving only to allow him access to the men he seeks to rob, further illustrating his victims' gullibility. By using his tricks to rob and mock, Hind becomes the hero, righting the wrongs done to poor and honest men by victimizing the social types perceived as the root of social imbalance. However, Hind's exploits only minimally comment on the role of women, primarily as society's victims or its problems.

Three types of women appear in the Hind pamphlets: wives, whores, and one aristocrat. The portrayals of Hind's interactions with these women are very different than his interactions with men, separating him from earlier tricksters, whose tricks target both men and women. Instead of marriage being a positive solution for women, wives are the least important

type of woman in the Hind stories, including one wife of a victim and Hind's own wife, who visits him in prison. In both these examples, the wife is shown to suffer due to her husband's deeds, but no social solution is offered, nor punishment given, suggesting that for the male publishers of the Hind stories, the suffering of wives was not a concern. However, the aristocratic lady is one of Hind's victims, robbed of both her property and her sexual honor at once, shown as a lusty woman willing to have sex with Hind in his disguise as a rich lord even as his men take her money. This image contrasts with descriptions of whores in several stories; the whores are generally portrayed as businesswomen with a commodity to sell, not as wanton or oversexed women. Indeed, one story even suggests the possibility that women become whores due to poverty, not from a desire for sex, thus linking prostitution with commerce much as city comedies did. Countering this suggestion that female poverty is an important issue, however, is the fact that none of the stories have Hind offer money to poor women, as he does to poor men; women's poverty is clearly not an issue for Hind. Hind's tricks may transform him into a hero, but alone among early modern tricksters, he is a hero only for men.

Chapter 6: Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary

The nursery rhyme which begins Mary, Mary, quite contrary is an apt opening for this chapter, which is ultimately about two Marys, both quite contrary to female standards of the 1660s. Although England was once again a monarchy following the restoration of Charles II, this was not a quick fix for social problems, but instead brought renewed concerns about specific social issues such as inappropriate gendered behavior and disguise used to falsify class or rank. These concerns are illustrated by popular interest in Mary Frith and Mary Carleton. Interest in Mary Frith, better known as Moll Cutpurse the notorious title character of the Middleton and Dekker play *The Roaring Girl*, was revived following her death in 1659, while Mary Carleton burst into prominence during her trial for bigamy in 1663. Both Marys used their attire in the development of personal identities, one to deny her femininity, the other to emphasize her social status, both as a trick or cheat. Both Mary Frith and Mary Carleton received the attention of the popular press, in the process becoming more than real. Much like the authors of the James Hind pamphlets, the writers and editors of books and pamphlets on the two Marys focused on their crimes. Stories of their tricks and pranks suggest real women, but with mythic overtones that blur the lines between

fact and fantasy,⁴⁴⁰ potentially giving each woman the role of a trickster.

Perhaps most interesting, however, is that each of these women had a voice in telling her own story; through autobiography, they appear to recreate themselves as tricksters.

Mary Frith / Moll Cutpurse

Mary Frith died in 1659 at the age of 74, according to her diary as published in the 1662 autobiography, *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse*.⁴⁴¹ Most of Frith's autobiography consists of a diary, although the passages are not separated or dated and often use flashbacks to tell stories. While the printed book provides no authorial designation, the diary appears to be Frith's work based on voice and tone, although the opening address and the introductory section are clearly written by other voices.⁴⁴² The opening address is "in a tone of ostentatiously learned and sprightly irony"⁴⁴³ that suggests Frith might be an example for the reader. The more extensive introductory material, on the other hand, provides apparently factual details of Frith's early life leading up to her life of

⁴⁴⁰ Janet M. Todd and Elizabeth Spearing, eds., *Counterfeit Ladies*, NYU Press Women's Classics (Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1994): ix.

⁴⁴¹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith. Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse*. (London: Printed for W. Gilbertson at the Bible in Giltspur-street without Newgate, 1662). <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

⁴⁴² Randall S. Nakayama (*The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*), Alicia A. Tomasian ("Molls Law"), and Geraldine Wagner ("Dismembering Desire") agree that the diary portion of *The Life and Death* were written by Mary Frith herself, as do Todd and Spearing (*Counterfeit Ladies*) although they suggest that the diary may have been a "told to" autobiography.

⁴⁴³ Todd and Spearing, eds., *Counterfeit Ladies*, xi.

crime, although the date given for her birth is questionable.⁴⁴⁴ In addition, some key elements are missing in the autobiography, including her marriage in 1614 to Lewknor Markham⁴⁴⁵ or any direct reference to Middleton and Dekker's play. Although Frith did not quite make it to the restoration herself, her published autobiography places her character in the early years of the restored monarchy, emblematic of old social concerns resurfaced, layered with new concerns such as loyalty to the crown.

Although Frith's *Life and Death* does not mention *The Roaring Girl* directly, she does briefly reference her alter ego Moll Cutpurse, if only to reject it. Frith insists on her own identity separate from the character Moll: "I overheard [a serving wench] call me *Mal Cutpurse*, which I could by no means endure."⁴⁴⁶ Even more clearly, Frith claims, "My Devices were all of my own spinning, nor was I beholding to any Stale-Artifice whatsoever of any Woman preceding me,"⁴⁴⁷ including Middleton and Dekker's character. Frith also claims to have "never Actually or Instrumentally cut any Mans Purse, though I have often restored it,"⁴⁴⁸ further denying the accuracy of the Cutpurse identity. However, the denial of any real connection to Moll

⁴⁴⁴ A birth date of 1589 is possibly in error, based on Frith's own remark that she is dying at the age of 74; one of these must be incorrect given her death in 1659.

⁴⁴⁵ Gustav Ungerer, "Mary Frith, Alias Moll Cutpurse, in Life and Literature," *Shakespeare Studies* 28, no. 1 (2000): 68.

⁴⁴⁶ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 84.

⁴⁴⁷ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 28.

⁴⁴⁸ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 168.

Cutpurse is only part of the self-image Frith paints for the reader; she equally firmly denies most aspects of proper womanhood, a position with which the author of the introduction agrees, stating “she was not made for the pleasure or delight of Man.”⁴⁴⁹ By omitting any mention of her marriage, Frith downplays the possibility of her personal fulfillment of normative female roles. She emphasizes this stance by explaining that while she bore no children, she kept dogs “who were trimmed & looked to with the same Care as other folks did their Children.”⁴⁵⁰ Mirroring one of Moll Cutpurse’s skills in *The Roaring Girl*, Frith also claimed prowess with a sword, a distinctly male weapon: “I could use a Backsword as well as the best of them. Once I challenged a fellow to fight with me in a School at that Weapon, whom I so soundly beat that he was forced to lay it down and confesse me the Conquerour.”⁴⁵¹ However, while Frith denied most aspects of proper womanhood, she claimed to keep a tidy house, “In the exact and curious cleannesse whereof I always much delighted, none of my Neighbours equaling me in the neatness thereof : which was the onely part of womanhood I did.”⁴⁵² Still, keeping a clean house does little to counter Frith’s self-description as a “Woman of a single and strange Humour [who was] lookt upon as one of the

⁴⁴⁹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 18.

⁴⁵⁰ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 79.

⁴⁵¹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 87-88.

⁴⁵² *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 80.

conceits of the Times.”⁴⁵³ Instead, Frith focuses on her differences from other women, or as Wagner puts it, she “alter[s] conventional patterns to fit her own experience in ways that mark her difference from others.”⁴⁵⁴ One example of the marked differences between Frith and other women appears in Frith’s discussion of smoking tobacco. She says, “I was mightily taken with this vanity, because of its affected singularity; and no Woman before me ever smoakt any, though I had a great many to follow my example.”⁴⁵⁵ Although this is likely not true, still the claim serves to separate Frith from other women. But if Mary Frith did not claim to be a typical woman, what she claimed to be is more interesting. Frith’s diary and the stories she chooses to tell “transmute the historical Mary Frith” into a royalist outlaw who plots “raids on Cromwell’s money convoys” and into a “popular outcast defending the poor and the oppressed against rapacious lawyers,” as well as against “clergymen, and the abuses committed by petty constables and selfish politicians.”⁴⁵⁶ It is Frith’s literary choices—her storytelling—that shift her portrayal from outlaw to royalist to trickster hero.

⁴⁵³ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 41.

⁴⁵⁴ Geraldine Wagner, “Dismembering Desire: Cross(Dress)ing the Boundaries of Gender and Genre in *The Life and Death of Mary Frith, Commonly Called Moll Cutpurse*,” *English Studies* 92, no. 4 (June 2011): 375–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2011.574396>, 386.

⁴⁵⁵ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 41.

⁴⁵⁶ Ungerer. “Mary Frith, Alias Moll Cutpurse,” 46, 52.

Mary Frith, Outlaw

Mary Frith's portrayal of herself as an outlaw, although exaggerated, is the most likely of her literary personas, demonstrating the complexity of a life both inside and outside the community. Descriptions of Frith as an outlaw are balanced by descriptions of her fair treatment of her neighbors. The diary offers accounts of Frith as a receiver of stolen goods, although she claims to ransom such goods back to the original owners; she describes this as her business, almost a service to the owners who might not otherwise ever see their property again. Frith describes her work as "A Lawless Vocation yet bordering between illicit and convenient, more advantagious by far to the injured, then the Courts of Justice and benefits of the Law."⁴⁵⁷ Michelle O'Callaghan leans too far on the side of legitimacy in saying that, "Moll assumes an eccentric respectability...familiar with the criminal workings of the underworld" yet positioned outside of it,⁴⁵⁸ while Frith's stories clearly position her as part of the criminal underworld, describing the thieves and pickpockets who provide her merchandise as her "imps" and implying that they work for her. This simultaneous inside-outside positioning is supported by the author of the introduction, who says of Frith that "she lived in a kind of mean betwixt open, profest dishonesty, and fair and civil deportment,"⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 43.

⁴⁵⁸ Michelle O'Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton, Renaissance Dramatist*, Renaissance Dramatists (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 56.

⁴⁵⁹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 2.

possibly in response to Frith's own statement that "my Reputation may be like my Habit and Mind, equally Good and Evil."⁴⁶⁰ Mary Frith's reality, as she herself suggests, was likely with one foot in either camp, simultaneously an outlaw and a member of the community.

One way in which Mary Frith in *Life and Death* differs from *The Roaring Girl's* Moll Cutpurse is that Frith was arrested and punished while Moll Cutpurse was effectively decriminalized. However, when Frith describes her punishment for wearing "indecent and manly apparel"⁴⁶¹ she compares herself to a pickpocket who acted the clown in the pillory, attracting the attention of the crowd while his fellows cut their purses.⁴⁶² Although she did not intentionally try to be publicly punished, she helped make the most of the situation: "for my Emissaries were very busie without any regard to the sacrednesse of the place, but in revenge of this disgrace intended me, spoyled a good many Cloaths by cutting of part of their Cloaks and Gowns, and sending them home as naked behind as an Apes Tayle."⁴⁶³ Pascale Drouet indicates that Frith "is a figure able to divert punishment into performance, to alter the course of the law not only for herself but also—if not chiefly—for others."⁴⁶⁴ This image of Mary Frith as clown not only helps her business, but

⁴⁶⁰ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 130.

⁴⁶¹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 69.

⁴⁶² *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 71.

⁴⁶³ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 70.

⁴⁶⁴ Pascale Drouet, "Appropriating a Famous Female Offender: Mary Frith (1584? - 1659), Alias Moll Cutpurse," in *Female Transgression in Early Modern Britain: Literary and*

puts her in control of her own punishment even as it provides the first suggestion of Frith as carnival or festive trickster, mocking the crowd that came to taunt her, distracting attention as her minions rob the watchers as punishment for their treatment of Frith. The suggestion of carnival here is just the first; another image of carnival appears in Frith's description of Charles I return from the Scottish uprising in 1638, also emblematic of Frith's royalism.⁴⁶⁵

Mary Frith, Royalist

Throughout *Life and Death* Frith positions herself as loyal to the monarchy: as she puts it, she is "affectionately Loyal to my Prince."⁴⁶⁶ For example, when Charles I returned to London after the 1638 Scottish rebellion, Frith describes her actions on the day of his triumphal procession. Frith determined that she would mimic the public spending of Roman and Italian courtesans⁴⁶⁷ by undertaking to "supply Fleet-street Conduit adjacent to my House with Wine, to run continually for that triumphal Day, which I performed with no less Expence then Credit and Delight, and the satisfaction of all Comers and Spectators."⁴⁶⁸ By mimicking courtesans in supporting the public with free-flowing wine, Frith mocks the actions of citizen guilds and

Historical Explorations, ed. Richard Hillman and Pauline Ruberry-Blanc (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 97.

⁴⁶⁵ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 95.

⁴⁶⁶ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 110.

⁴⁶⁷ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 95.

⁴⁶⁸ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 97.

their sponsorship of public display. Frith even claims to have taken the hand of the king as he passed, welcoming him home: “the people shouted and made a noyse, in part at my Confidence and presumption, and in part for joy of the Kings Return.”⁴⁶⁹ In telling of her part in this event, Frith claims control of part of the wider carnival festivity of Charles’ procession as her own, showing herself as both loyal to the monarchy and active in community festivity. By linking the story of her spending to descriptions of the spending of historical courtesans, she provides another suggestion of trickster festivity, mocking the public displays of more proper citizens.

Later in her life, Mary Frith “metamorphosed from the rebellious imp of Renaissance stage and street culture to a royalist heroine and counterrevolutionary”⁴⁷⁰ as “the need for myths and narratives that highlighted the honor of supporting King and country was becoming increasingly evident.”⁴⁷¹ Frith’s diary openly supports the monarchy against Parliament, even against her neighbors’ stances: “I think I was the onely declared person in our street against the Parliament.”⁴⁷² Of course, the diary was not published until after Frith’s death, and after the restoration of the monarchy. She took up writing during the interregnum; after she “wholy

⁴⁶⁹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 97.

⁴⁷⁰ Melissa Mowry. “Thieves, Bawds, and Counterrevolutionary Fantasies: The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith.” *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2005): 26.

⁴⁷¹ Mowry, “Thieves, Bawds, and Counterrevolutionary Fantasies,” 31.

⁴⁷² *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 130.

relinquished all converse or commerce” in response to the evil times, she says “I had an account of my time to make by spending it in more serious Writings and Contemplations.”⁴⁷³ There is nothing to suggest that Frith expected her story to be published earlier, if at all; however, the timing suggests that it was part of her personal support for the monarchy, as is further shown by descriptions of Frith’s actions relative to the civil war.

Frith was quite vocal against the rebellion, saying for example that “on a Generall Training day” as parliamentary troops lined up in Fleet-street “I could not forbear upbraiding them with their Fighting against the King.”⁴⁷⁴ She also refused to participate with women who helped prepare fortifications around the city; Frith wittily mocked the husbands of the women by comparing the digging of ditches for fortification to cuckolding: “Round-Heads and Cuckolds go Dig, go Dig—your Wives Aprons, grow short and their bellies big,” suggesting that the women could get “Horn-works enough at home.”⁴⁷⁵ This mockery turns the complaint against the women into one against their husbands, scorning the men for their lack of control over their wives. In this, Frith’s words support the period’s normal gendered assumptions of marriage, using those assumptions to suggest that Parliamentarian men were weak.

⁴⁷³ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 164.

⁴⁷⁴ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 135.

⁴⁷⁵ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 136.

To further emphasize her support for the monarchy, Frith asserts “constant intimacy” with “Captaine Hind, a daring adventurer”⁴⁷⁶ whose exploits Frith claimed to have had a hand in setting: “I was the Wyer that moved that Engine in all his great prizes.”⁴⁷⁷ Of Hind, Frith states, “both of us concurring to be revenged of Committee Men and Parliament People, by those private assaults, since publique combating of them would not prevaile.”⁴⁷⁸ This claim appears to be more fantasy than fact since none of the Hind pamphlets or newsbooks even hint at a connection with Mary Frith; however, her claims do suggest that she is something of a trickster hero, taking action against a type of man she believed was not good for the community. Unlike Hind himself, however, she only targets committee men and Parliamentarians with these claims of helping Hind, not other groups such as lawyers, usurers, or constables as she does elsewhere.

Mary Frith, Trickster

While *Life and Death* clearly portrays Mary Frith as an outlaw, if not a cutpurse, not all the pranks she describes are in support of her property restoration business, but suggest a “glorification of her pranks and crimes rather than a condemnation of them.”⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, some tales suggest a social purpose, tricking individuals or groups who seem to deserve it, using tricks to

⁴⁷⁶ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 150.

⁴⁷⁷ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 153.

⁴⁷⁸ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 150.

⁴⁷⁹ Ungerer, “Mary Frith,” 51.

generate laughter that highlights social problems. Drouet indicates that “Frith’s persona asserts herself as an outlaw, although a benign and a merry one (the tone is that of a wit and a trickster—playfully boasting, humorous and provocative).”⁴⁸⁰ Wagner agrees with this stance, affirming that “Frith glories in her transgressions and attempts to legitimize them as unconventionally heroic, socially advantageous actions.”⁴⁸¹ One example of such social commentary is Frith’s story of how she punished a constable who arrested her.

The constable had Frith arrested as “suspectious” for walking out late at night, although he clearly knew who she was. The constable “vapoured what a trick he had served me,”⁴⁸² an indication of his awareness that the arrest was not appropriate, so Frith determined to take revenge for this action, which she saw as the constable using his power unfairly and without cause, out of his pride in the power of the position. Frith describes the trick she played on the constable in return, using one of her “imps” to trick him.⁴⁸³ Use of the term “imps” hints at Frith’s own misbehavior, suggesting that she might have ties to the devil, although she denies this elsewhere in her diary; in this story, the term can be read as one of the outlaws who worked for her. Since the constable was proud of his wealth and boasted of wealthy country

⁴⁸⁰ Drouet, “Appropriating a Famous Female Offender, 97.

⁴⁸¹ Wagner, “Dismembering Desire,” 383.

⁴⁸² *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 52.

⁴⁸³ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 53.

relations, Frith tricked him by having her man impersonate a servitor to one of the constable's wealthy relations in order to persuade the constable that the uncle had died and left him as the heir. The constable bought new clothes for himself and his wife, suitable to what he believed was his new wealth, and followed Frith's man to the country, where he began to suspect a cheat; however, "covetousnesse prevailing against reason"⁴⁸⁴ the constable went on to the town described by Frith's man, where he soon discovered that there was no inheritance at all. Having spent his money on clothes and travel, the constable had to sell his horses; he and his wife then had to walk back home to London, where he was mocked by his neighbors. While this trick does get personal revenge for the way the constable treated Frith, it also points to the broader issue of pride and misuse of power by such men. The constable was punished in what mattered to him: his wealth and his pride. This is not a solution for the problem but does indicate that mistreatment of others out of excessive pride of position is wrong and can be punished, at least by a trickster willing to take action.

In another trick, Frith and her friends suspected a vintner to be cheating his customers by watering the white wine. To catch him at this cheat, Frith sent for some "Green Seg, such as grows in your clearest Fountains."⁴⁸⁵ She put some of the green herb into the pot of wine she had

⁴⁸⁴ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 59.

⁴⁸⁵ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 93-94.

been served, and sent for the vintner, who “had not the Confidence utterly to deny it” but instead ran into the kitchen and beat the pot-boy for “not looking to the clearness of the water that was set aside for this use of mixture.”⁴⁸⁶ Hearing the result of the trick, Frith “fell with the like fury upon the Master, for his cheating couzening practices upon his Neighbours,”⁴⁸⁷ beating him as he had beaten the pot-boy. This trick is similar to a trick performed by Robin Goodfellow, in which he punishes a tapster who was cheating his customers; however, where Goodfellow devised an elaborate trick in which the tapster was himself cheated out of his unfair profits,⁴⁸⁸ Frith simply beats the vintner. In either case, though, the cheating practices are discovered and the guilty punished by tricksters Goodfellow and Frith when the neighbors could do nothing.

Mary Frith’s tricks often targeted the same type of men who were targets of James Hind’s robberies. For example, Frith says of lawyers, “I had tasted of their covetousnesse and dilatorinesse so much, that I never advised any person upon any misusing whatsoever to have recourse to them for remedy or redresse” and “they could and did wrest the Law to any thing for their own advantage.”⁴⁸⁹ With that attitude, it is no surprise that Frith set up

⁴⁸⁶ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 94.

⁴⁸⁷ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 94.

⁴⁸⁸ *Robin Good-Fellow, His Mad Prankes and Merry Jestes, Full of Honest Mirth, and Is Fit Medicine for Melancholy* (London: Printed for F. Grove dwelling on Snow-hill over against the Sarazens head., 1628), sig D3r.

⁴⁸⁹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 106.

a trick that cheated a usurious lawyer of 100 pounds.⁴⁹⁰ In another case, Frith tricks a greedy liar who had lost a bag of money. He first claimed the amount was 100 pounds and promised a 20-pound reward, but when an honest man found the money, the liar gave him 20 shillings saying that the original amount was actually near 120 pounds, and that the finder must have kept it. Fortunately, the honest man used Frith as an intermediary. She had the two men swear affidavits to the amounts, and then awarded the money to the honest finder, saying that if both oaths were true, then the found money must belong to some other man.⁴⁹¹ These last examples portray a trickster concerned with righting wrongs done to honest men, or with punishing those types of men who preyed on others due to greed.

Frith offers one other factor that potentially links her to prior tricksters Robin Goodfellow and James Hind: the suggestion of magic. Frith describes her house as having “the delight of Looking Glasses, so that I could see my sweet self all over in any part of my rooms. This gave occasion to folks to say that I used Magical Glasses, wherein I could show the Querists (those that resorted to me for Information)”⁴⁹² the images of thieves or future husbands. However, Frith firmly states that “this was a Fable”⁴⁹³ regarding her own looking glasses. Although she denies using magic, by including this

⁴⁹⁰ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 105-106.

⁴⁹¹ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 107-109.

⁴⁹² *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 80.

⁴⁹³ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 81.

brief description she hints at its use, another link to previous tricksters and part of her image.

While much of Frith's diary portrays an outlaw, the self-image she presents is complex. Frith's clothing and assumption of male attributes draws attention to ways that women are not supposed to behave, but which she claims as her right: to wear what she wants, to fight, to smoke—to be a loud and controversial figure. Frith's stories about crime position Frith as benefiting from the business, but she does not usually benefit in stories that point to a social problem such as excessive greed or cheating. She seems to differentiate between actual criminals who steal, and non-criminals such as the constable or the vintner who use their positions to mistreat their neighbors or community in some way. It almost suggests that the criminals are at least honest in what they do, while lawyers, constables, and usurers—notably, all men—are not. And in a way, she is correct; one would expect a thief to steal but would expect a vintner to serve undiluted wine. While Frith's role as a trickster does highlight some social issues, and her actions offer some punishment to those she marks as guilty, this role is countered by her life as an outlaw. Overall, Frith as trickster is only part of her complex human nature, but one that she chooses to include in her self-identity.

Mary Carleton, the German Princess

The second contrary female trickster of the early 1660s is Mary Carleton, also known as the German Princess. Like Frith, Carleton used her

own voice in creating a self-image that includes trickster elements. Like Frith's, Carleton's self-identity is also a complex blend of criminality and innocence incorporating both fantasy and fact. Kate Lilley suggests that Mary Carleton had the opportunity to read *The Life of Mrs. Mary Frith*, which was published one year prior to Carleton's 1663 trial for bigamy, drawing connections between Frith's story and Carleton's actions and her own recounting of them.⁴⁹⁴ Intriguing as that possibility is, Mary Carleton is very different from Mary Frith as a trickster, although they both use elements of rogue literature and autobiographical self-identity to create their own stories. Whereas Mary Frith describes herself as boldly wearing a mix of male and female clothing, and admits to her connections with thieves, Mary Carleton describes herself as modest but learned, a product of a German convent. Where Mary Frith portrays a woman willing to go up against a man in a fight, Mary Carleton portrays a victimized woman who leaves Germany to escape her inappropriate suitors only to fall into the hands of yet another. However, both women describe themselves as tricking or deceiving their foes, and to some extent ultimately controlling their own lives.

⁴⁹⁴ Kate Lilley. "The German Princess Revived: The Case of Mary Carleton." In *Expanding the Canon of Early Modern Women's Writing*, edited by Paul Salzman. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010, 116.

Mary Carleton's story fascinated early modern Londoners, leading to "at least twenty-seven pamphlets with competing biographical narratives,"⁴⁹⁵ some by Carleton herself, some by her husband John Carleton, and some by other authors. Geraldine Wagner sees Mary Carleton's story as tapping "a deep well of cultural anxiety concerning the indeterminacy of gender, class, and ethnic identity."⁴⁹⁶ Will Pritchard agrees that the published stories demonstrate this anxiety; Pritchard indicates that when all the published documents are considered, they "oscillate between idealization and excoriation of women" offering a "microcosm of a larger, culturewide dispute about women."⁴⁹⁷ Mary Jo Kietzman sees the problem as wider than one of women alone; she points instead to a simultaneous fascination and anxiety about "social masquerade" possibly stemming from the disguise Charles II used when he escaped into exile.⁴⁹⁸ Kietzman indicates that disguise "threatened to destabilize the social order"⁴⁹⁹ by crossing the lines of class and rank, something she suggests that Mary Carleton accomplished.⁵⁰⁰ Of all

⁴⁹⁵ Geraldine Wagner, "The Staged Self in Mary Carleton's Autobiographical Narratives," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1273>, 2.

⁴⁹⁶ Wagner, "The Staged Self," 2.

⁴⁹⁷ Will Pritchard, *Outward Appearances: The Female Exterior in Restoration London*, The Bucknell Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008), 43.

⁴⁹⁸ Mary Jo Kietzman, "Publicizing Private History: Mary Carleton's Case in Court and in Print," *Prose Studies* 18, no. 3 (December 1995): 105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440359508586562>

⁴⁹⁹ Kietzman, "Publicizing Private History," 106.

⁵⁰⁰ Kietzman, "Publicizing Private History," 108.

the publications concerning her life, Carleton's own 1663 *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton*⁵⁰¹ provides the clearest image, beginning with her early life and offering an explanation of her interactions with the Carleton family.

The Case of Madam Mary Carleton

Of the early publications concerning Mary Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton* offers the most details of the circumstances of Mary's life and the events that occurred in 1663. Although some scholars have asserted that Mary Carleton did not write *The Case* herself, suggesting authorship by "a 'hack' journalist or 'press-agent'" eager to profit from her story, there is no proof that such was the case.⁵⁰² Incorporating earlier statements Carleton wrote in her defense, *The Case* is "now generally accepted as partly or wholly Mary's own work."⁵⁰³ As such, this work demonstrates Carleton's creation of herself as a trickster who punishes those who seek to swindle her, using the assumptions made by her husband's family as the basis for her tricks, becoming the German princess that they believed her to be. However, in *The Case*, Carleton does not claim royal status.

⁵⁰¹ Mary Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, Lately Stiled The German Princess, Truly Stated: With an Historical Relation of Her Birth, Education, and Fortunes; In an Appeal to His Illustrious Highness Prince Rupert*. (London: Printed for Sam: Speed at the Rainbow in Fleetstreet, and Hen: Marsh at the Princes Arms in Chancery-Lane., 1663).

⁵⁰² Chalmers. "The Person I Am," 163.

⁵⁰³ Lilley, "The German Princess Revived," 116.

Building her image as noble, although not royal, Carleton states that she was born at “Collen”⁵⁰⁴ and that her “Fathers name was, *Henry Van Wolway*, a Licentiat and Doctor of the Civil Law, and Lord of Holmstein.”⁵⁰⁵ Emphasizing her ties to Germany, Carleton prefaces her autobiography with an appeal to the German Prince Rupert, “Count Palatine of the Rhine.”⁵⁰⁶ Mihoko Suzuki sees this appeal as one that “signals her transgressive desires—to cross the boundaries of gender, class, and nation;”⁵⁰⁷ however, to a contemporary reader of *The Case*, it could also have supported Carleton’s claims. Carleton describes her upbringing as that of a wealthy child who lost both her parents at an early age. She was “put into the Monastery or Nunnery of Sancta Clara, at this Infant age, and educated in all such breeding as was fit for one devoted to the service of God and his Church.”⁵⁰⁸ Although strongly encouraged to join the sisters there, as a young woman Carleton was not attracted to the religious life.

Carleton offers as a reason for leaving Germany that after she left the convent at the age of 19, she was courted by not one but two suitors, neither of whom was appropriate. First was an old man, a former soldier who would not accept a negative response to his suit, “since he had never known what a

⁵⁰⁴ Carleton, *The Case*, 6.

⁵⁰⁵ Carleton, *The Case*, 9.

⁵⁰⁶ Carleton, *The Case*, sig Ar.

⁵⁰⁷ Mihoko Suzuki, “The Case of Mary Carleton: Representing the Female Subject, 1663-1673,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 62.

⁵⁰⁸ Carleton, *The Case*, 13-14.

repulse meant in his life.”⁵⁰⁹ This first suitor represents the inappropriateness of too much difference between the ages of a couple in a marriage, as well as power assumed by men over women. The second suitor was young, but was a magician “like to be a second Dr. Faustus”⁵¹⁰ who had spent all his own estate and was looking for a replacement fortune; Carleton states that “his magical Glass shewed him me, who should by my fortune make him up again.”⁵¹¹ The second suitor represents both fortune hunters and pacts with the devil, both clear marks against his appropriateness for a vulnerable young woman. Carleton believed the old man was planning to kidnap her, even while she was in danger from the young man, both dangers “were in prudence to be prevented by my absence.”⁵¹² The description of Carleton’s inappropriate suiters is ample reason for a young woman such as she presented herself to be to find a safer place to live. At this point in her narrative, Carleton did not claim the trickster attribute of punishment for these inappropriate suiters, but simply portrayed herself as the potential victim of male control, fleeing two inappropriate marriages. Countering her victimization and her first indication of the trickster role is her potential tricking of another suitor, John Carleton, inappropriate as a suitor because

⁵⁰⁹ Carleton, *The Case*, 27.

⁵¹⁰ Carleton, *The Case*, 27.

⁵¹¹ Carleton, *The Case*, 28.

⁵¹² Carleton, *The Case*, 29.

he misrepresents his social standing in an attempt to gain her fortune, believing Mary to be higher in rank—a German princess—and wealthy.

Mary Carleton’s account makes clear that John Carleton and his sister Mrs. King lied about his rank in order to deceive Mary: Mrs. King explained that John Carleton was in disguise the first time he was introduced to Mary, but “saith she, I do assure you he is a Lord.”⁵¹³ According to Mary, “I was altogether ignorant of what estate my Husband was... for I conceited still that he was some landed, honorable and wealthy man.”⁵¹⁴ However, John’s boasted lands and estate were “reckoned and charged beforehand to my account, and to be purchased with my estate, which was his, by a figure of anticipation, when we two should be all one, and therefore he lyed not, but onely equivocated a little.”⁵¹⁵ Adding to these lies, the Carletons also kept Mary from any public contact that might tell her what John’s social standing actually was. She claims: “they kept me close in the nature of a Prisoner;” in response, she “pretended some aversness to all company, but onely my enamourate, Mr. Carleton.”⁵¹⁶ This last statement identifying John as a potential love interest suggests that Mary was interested in John, not just in his supposed rank as a Lord, making their relationship a possible love match.

⁵¹³ Carleton, *The Case*, 51.

⁵¹⁴ Carleton, *The Case*, 67.

⁵¹⁵ Carleton, *The Case*, 59.

⁵¹⁶ Carleton, *The Case*, 48.

However, the Carleton family, including John, was driven by its greed for Mary's estate, and urged a speedy marriage between John and Mary.

Mary responded to the Carletons' greed by tricking them—an attempt to take control of her own life when the Carletons were trying to control her. Carleton's letters requesting money from her steward were a key factor in her ability to trick the Carleton family: "I acquainted Him [Mr. King] I would send by Post to my Steward, for the return of some moneys to defray the expences" of preparations for her public appearance as a lady of quality; King "conceived such imaginations in his Head thereupon."⁵¹⁷ Carleton indicates that she told her story to the Carleton family "unconcernedly, and negligently, as a matter of no moment or disturbance to me" which persuaded the Carletons that her wealth and position were real, leading them in turn to work toward a "speedy and secret marriage" between Mary and John Carleton.⁵¹⁸ Mary claimed that the Carletons' urgency was driven by "the answers I had received by the Post, by which I was certified of the receipt of mine, and that accordingly some thousands of Crowns should be remitted instantly to London."⁵¹⁹ There is, however, no explanation of how those replies were obtained, whether from the German steward of her estate, an unnamed accomplice, or created by Mary herself; her narrative presents the

⁵¹⁷ Carleton, *The Case*, 44.

⁵¹⁸ Carleton, *The Case*, 45.

⁵¹⁹ Carleton, *The Case*, 49.

replies as real, not as a trick. In addition, no moneys were delivered to her: Mary Carleton would surely have included any such receipt in her story as exonerating evidence. Instead, Mary's response to the Carletons' lies and greed is summarized as follows: "Let the World now judge, whither being prompted by such plain and publique signes of a design upon me, to counterplot them, I have done any more then what the Rule, and a received principle of Justice directs: *to deceive the deceiver, is no deceit.*"⁵²⁰ Mary Carleton, self-proclaimed trickster, seeks to punish the family that sought to cheat her. But despite the multiple deceptions, Mary does marry John Carleton.

Marriage

The Carleton family was so eager to trap the woman they believed to be a princess that they rushed the marriage even before obtaining an actual marriage license, although they corrected this omission shortly afterwards. For the first marriage, the Carleton family "pretended a Licence" and took Mary and John by coach to the Church of Great St. Bartholomews, where they were married by one Mr. Smith. Following this wedding ceremony, John and Mary Carleton lay together two nights, after which they were again married "a License being then obtained to make the match more fast and sure."⁵²¹ However, license or no, the two were married, and as Mary says,

⁵²⁰ Carleton, *The Case*, 45-46.

⁵²¹ Carleton, *The Case*, 63-64.

“my husband and I enjoyed one another with mutual complacency,”⁵²² suggesting that both Mary and John were, at this point, satisfied with one another, regardless of his family’s hopes or deceptions.

Charge of bigamy and subsequent trial

The Carleton family, however, was not satisfied. Mary Carleton describes her husband’s family as having “implacable malice against me”⁵²³ which she later indicated was the result of her unwillingness to turn over her estate to her new husband. The Carleton family received a letter claiming that Mary Carleton was already married; they then came to her lodging and stripped her of the finery they had themselves provided, as well as what jewels and personal items she already had. According to Mary, they also kept John away, “not suffering my Husband to come neer me, though I cryed out for him to take my part.”⁵²⁴ The Carletons, and particularly the elder Mr. Carleton, brought a charge of bigamy against Mary based on the letter, claiming that she was originally from Canterbury and was already married to a Thomas Stedman. According to Bernard Capp, accusations of bigamy were at times “triggered by malice, rather than by moral concern,”⁵²⁵ a suggestion that fits the Carletons’ accusations. However, the Carletons were unable to bring sure proof; Stedman did not appear, nor was there any official record of

⁵²² Carleton, *The Case*, 68.

⁵²³ Carleton, *The Case*, 4.

⁵²⁴ Carleton, *The Case*, 72.

⁵²⁵ Capp, “Bigamous Marriage,” 550.

the marriage. There was also no proof that Mary was from Canterbury. The bailey of the prison gave evidence at the trial: “My Lord, there has been at least 500, people have viewed her; severall from *Canterbury*, fourty at least that said they lived there; and when they went up to her, she hid not her face at all, but not one of them knew her.”⁵²⁶ While not perfectly conclusive, this lack of recognition does suggest that Mary’s identity was in doubt; if she was not clearly from Canterbury, she might not have been Mary Stedman.

Carleton did not confess to bigamy but adamantly denied it, successfully winning the suit brought against her. Instead she insisted that “she was an aristocrat and a ‘stranger’ (that is, an immigrant) deserving of courtesy and assistance, and that she had never before been married.”⁵²⁷ As a result of her defense and the lack of evidence, Mary Carleton was not convicted. However, as Mary put it, the trial and the notoriety it created was a permanent mark against her: “The breach that is made in my Credit and reputation, I do feel and understand to be very wide, and past my repaying.”⁵²⁸ In addition, Mary Carleton suffered financial and personal loss; the Carletons did not return any of Mary’s personal goods, insisting that they belonged to John, who had joined his family in turning against her, even mocking her while she was in

⁵²⁶ Carleton, *The Case*, 99.

⁵²⁷ Kate Lilley, “‘These Novels of My Life’: Mary Carleton’s Crimes,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 25, no. 65 (2010): 265–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2010.504292>, 271.

⁵²⁸ Carleton, *The Case*, dedication To the Noble Ladies 1-2.

prison awaiting trial with the assumption that her life expectancy was short since women convicted of bigamy were hung.⁵²⁹ The result was that Mary Carleton, although officially still married to John, was left without a means of support and with a damaged reputation. In response, she published the autobiography in which she reinvented herself as a trickster.

Mary Carleton as Trickster

In an early hint of the trickster persona she later developed in *The Case*, Carleton notes: “the suspicious, noxious world doth very hardly conceive of me other then a Malefactor, and prefer my Wit and Artful Carriage to my Honesty, and take this untoward passage of my life for some festivous and merry accident of the times.”⁵³⁰ If the world sees her with elements of festival, Carleton responds by emphasizing her use of wit and education, capitalizing on public perception to create her self-image as a trickster. Throughout *The Case*, Carleton intersperses phrases in Latin and refers to ancient scholars such as Pythagoras. She specifically mentions learning “Greek, Latine, French, Italian, Spanish, English”⁵³¹ and other languages in addition to the German she claims as her native tongue. Suzuki points to Carleton’s claims of education as one way that she “repeatedly tests and flouts the circumscribed boundaries accorded her gender... her

⁵²⁹ Carleton, *The Case*, 77.

⁵³⁰ Carleton, *The Case*, 2.

⁵³¹ Carleton, *The Case*, 47(39).

‘masculine conceptions,’ greedily acquiring an education, learning English and French, as well as ‘the rest of the European Languages,’ reading in addition to romances traditionally addressed to a female audience history and ‘other Heroical Adblandiments’ (p. 23).⁵³² Possibly contrary to ideas of what a young English woman should know, this level of education is not as exceptional if one accepts Carleton’s story of her childhood among the sisters of Sancta Clara as the daughter of a wealthy nobleman. Still, Carleton’s education and particularly her facility with English is demonstrated in *The Case*, as well as in her verbal testimony at her 1663 trial for bigamy, which is described in the pamphlet *The Tryall and Arraignment of the Germain Princess*,⁵³³ also published in 1663. While Hero Chalmers suggests that Carleton’s use of “puns, double-meanings and occasional cheap laughs introduce shades of ‘the crafty whore’ into the solemn complaint of ‘the distressed lady’,”⁵³⁴ such language can also be considered the use of wit, an attribute that Carleton often displays; wit is, of course, a key tool of the trickster.

Interestingly, Carleton admits to the use of deceit in her relationship with John Carleton: “What harme have I done in pretending to great

⁵³² Suzuki, “The Case of Mary Carleton,” 64.

⁵³³ *The Great Tryall and Arraignment of the Late Distressed Lady, Otherwise Called the Late Germain Princess* (London: W. Gilbertson, 1663), 6.

⁵³⁴ Chalmers. “The Person I Am,” 170-171.

Titles?”⁵³⁵ “She explains that her performance was intended to ‘counterplot’ those who had a ‘design’ to take advantage of her” asserting that it was not a lie to deceive John Carleton’s family who were in turn seeking to deceive her.⁵³⁶ Indeed, Carleton claims her own deceit as a positive attribute: “I do rather deserve commendation then reproach; if the best things are to be imitated, I had a good precept and warrant for my assumption of such a personage as they were willing to believe me to be.”⁵³⁷ With this, Carleton places the blame on the Carleton family for being foolish enough to believe her the wealthy princess they in turn tried to deceive. Still, she continues to insist on her status not as a princess but as the daughter of a Lord: “I am traduced and calumniated as an Impostor (and the scandal continues after all the umbrages of it are vanished) and that I am not a *German*, nor so well descended there as I have alleged, and do and will maintain.”⁵³⁸ Carleton’s use of deceit to trick the Carleton family but otherwise insisting on a lesser rank than princess suggests that her deceit was focused on that family alone, as a means to punish them for their own greed and lies.

One way in which Carleton as trickster differs from some earlier tricksters, especially the city comedy tricksters, is that she does not benefit

⁵³⁵ Carleton, *The Case*, 36.

⁵³⁶ William D. Brewer, *Staging Romantic Chameleons and Imposters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 23.

⁵³⁷ Carleton, *The Case*, 37.

⁵³⁸ Carleton, *The Case*, sig A2r.

financially from the trick she plays on the Carleton family, even though her tricking them serves as her revenge for their treatment. As she puts it, “And now let all the world judge of the Cheat I have put upon this worshipfull family of the Carletons. I have of theirs not a thred, nor piece of any thing, to be a token or remembrance of my beloved Lord, which I might preserve and lay up as a sacred relique of a person dear to me.”⁵³⁹ In this, she is more comparable to Robin Goodfellow or Moll Cutpurse, whose tricks often point to a social anxiety or concern but do not benefit the trickster; in the case of Mary Carleton, her tricks point to the social inequality of women. To highlight this, Carleton describes the place of women in German society, saying of the “fashions and customs” of German wives: “the wife shares an equal portion with her husband in all things of weal and woe, and can *liber intentare*, begin and commence, and finish a suit in her own name; they buy and sell, and keep accounts, manage the affairs of household, and the Trade, and do all things relating to their several stations and degrees.”⁵⁴⁰ This contrasts to Carleton’s treatment by her husband and his family, who kept all her personal goods after the trial was ended, since according to English law they belonged to John, not to Mary. In fact, one key to the difficulty between Mary and the elder Mr. Carleton was that she would not turn over her estate to John as her husband. After the trial was over and Mary acquitted, this

⁵³⁹ Carleton, *The Case*, 122-123.

⁵⁴⁰ Carleton, *The Case*, 126.

disagreement continued, but she remained firm; she said, “They cannot finger any of my Estate; and very importunate they are for me to declare it; and this they say is the onely argument to prove me no Cheat, and *I* say and believe it is the onely argument to prove me a fool.”⁵⁴¹ According to Kate Lilley, “Mary played the part of a distressed and victimised foreign aristocrat alienated from her just position and possessions—very well indeed.”⁵⁴² And while this may be true in actual fact, Mary’s self-description moves her actions beyond those of a rogue or picara and into the realm of a literary trickster, at least in *The Case*.

An Historical Narrative of the German Princess

Although the *Historicall Narrative* does not offer the same level of detail as *The Case*, omitting any specifics concerning Carleton’s early days, there are some points of interest raised in this shorter narrative. First, Mary Carleton points to her “accidental coming”⁵⁴³ into the King’s house where she would soon meet John Carleton as demonstrating the designs of the Carletons against her rather than any plot of hers against the Carletons; stressing the accidental nature of that initial meeting helps position her as

⁵⁴¹ Carleton, *The Case*, 135.

⁵⁴² Lilley. “The German Princess Revived,” 113.

⁵⁴³ Mary Carleton, *An Historical Narrative of the German Princess, Containing All Material Passages, from Her First Arrivall at Graves-End, the 30th of March Last Past, Untill She Was Discharged from Her Imprisonment, June the Sixth Instant, Wherein Also Is Mentioned, Sundry Private Matters, between Mr. John Carlton, and Others, and the Said Princess; Not yet Published*. (London: Printed for Charles Moulton, 1663). <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>, 8.

the victim of the Carleton's deceptions, in turn making her own deceptions closer to those of a trickster than a rogue, creating deceptions to trick the family that sought to trick her into marriage and out of her imagined estate.

The *Historicall Narrative* ends with "An Encomiastick Poem upon The German Princess."⁵⁴⁴ The poem states that it is Carleton's wit, one of the tools of a trickster, that enabled her success: her "...WIT so refin'd, / Made frustrate what her En'mies had design'd; / Deceiving her deceivers, cast them all / Into the Pit they digged for her fall."⁵⁴⁵ The Carleton family was punished for their attempts to use deception to acquire the estate, real or imagined, of the woman they believed to be foreign nobility; their punishment was appropriate as they were deceived and mocked by the one they sought to defraud.

Carleton herself was not the only author who used trickster characteristics in telling her story; following the same lines as Carleton's autobiographies, Thomas Porter's play *A Witty Combat*⁵⁴⁶ reprises the role of Mary Carleton as a trickster who punishes the Carleton family for their willingness to cheat a solitary unprotected woman.

⁵⁴⁴ Carleton, *An Historicall Narrative*, 22-23.

⁵⁴⁵ Carleton, *An Historicall Narrative*, 22.

⁵⁴⁶ Thomas Porter, *A Witty Combat: Or, the Female Victor. A Trage-Comedy. e* (London: Printed for Tho. Roberts, and are to be sold at the Royal-Exchange, Fleet-Street, and Westminster-Hall, 1663), sig C4v-r.

*A Witty Combat*⁵⁴⁷

Thomas Porter's play *A Witty Combat* play echoes details provided by Carleton in *The Case*, focusing on the first meetings of Mary Carleton and her soon-to-be in-laws, ending with a brief off-stage trial for bigamy. Porter presents Mr. and Mrs. King as gullible buffoons; Mr. King uses painfully stumbling language, frequently repeating "d'ye see" throughout the play; Mrs. King repeats her brother's name "John" multiple times during a dialogue with him, echoing the repetitiveness of Mr. King's "d'ye see."⁵⁴⁸ Mrs. King also calls John Carleton a "witch" and "cunning," because he knows without being told about the presence of a strange woman in the house, suggesting a gullible belief in magic.⁵⁴⁹

The play begins by presenting Mary Carleton as a gentlewoman, placing her elevation to nobility on the Kings and their gullibility. Porter shows Mary setting up a trick against the Kings and John; she writes letters that ostensibly demonstrate her financial status, fully expecting Mrs. King to intercept and read them. Mary compares Mrs. King to Eve, easily tempted; she says, "My Landlady like to one Grandam Eve, / Covets to know more then

⁵⁴⁷ While some scholars (see Chalmers "The Person That I Am"; Suzuki "The Case of Mary Carleton: Representing the Female Subject, 1663-73"; or Wagner "The Staged Self in Mary Carleton's Autobiographical Narratives") indicate that Carleton acted as herself in Porter's play, others show that her performance was in John Holden's unpublished play *The German Princess* in 1664. See Kietzman "Defoe Masters the Serial Subject" and Pritchard *Outward Appearances* for the latter position.

⁵⁴⁸ Porter, *A Witty Combat*, sig C4v-r.

⁵⁴⁹ Porter, *A Witty Combat*, sig C4r.

she ever shall; / Yet I'll afford her to tast of the Apple."⁵⁵⁰ Mary continues with a description of the letters, saying "...there let her nibble, / Upon the bates I've laid and please herself."⁵⁵¹ Mrs. King falls for the trick, and immediately shows why she deserves to be tricked: her response to the belief that Mary Carleton is a Lady is to find a way to swindle her. It is Mrs. King's suggestion that John Carleton get himself up like a Lord, since the woman is a Lady and only a Lord will be acceptable to her: "Then put your self John into an Equipage beyond your self John, appear as I would have you like a Lord John, with your Coach and Foot-boyes, the sooner John the better."⁵⁵² This masquerade sets up the Carletons' cheat of Mary Carleton, and elevates her status from a gentlewoman to a Lady and eventually a princess. As the trickster, Mary Carleton does not benefit from her marriage to John Carleton, but loses what personal property she has and is tried for bigamy; in return for their treatment of Mary, the Carletons and Kings lose the money they spend on John and Mary, and are publicly humiliated as the foolish cheats who end up cheated. *A Witty Combat* portrays Mary Carleton as a witty fraud and ends with her direct address to the audience in which she proclaims: "The Worlds a Cheat, and we that move in it / In our degrees do exercise our Wit."⁵⁵³ Although Carleton is presented by Porter as a cheat, his

⁵⁵⁰ Porter, *A Witty Combat*, sig D1r.

⁵⁵¹ Porter, *A Witty Combat*, sig D1r.

⁵⁵² Porter, *A Witty Combat*, sig D3v.

⁵⁵³ Porter, *A Witty Combat*, sig F2v.

inclusion of her wit demonstrates trickster nature, accepting the disguise of a princess to play her tricks on the Carletons. That Porter continued the trickster characterization initially created by Carleton herself suggests some success of that persona, at least in public perception. However, other authors including Carleton's husband John and her biographer Francis Kirkman omit any use of trickster attributes and focus instead on Mary's deceptions as crimes.

Other Works

Shortly after Mary Carleton's trial in 1663, John Carleton published two pamphlets: *The Replication of Certain Vindictory Depositions*⁵⁵⁴ and *The Ultimium Vale of John Carleton*.⁵⁵⁵ In the first, John describes his meeting with Mary, saying that her behavior "left no room for Suspition" as her "Wit did more and more Charm me, Her Qualities deprived me of my own; Her Courteous behaviour, Her Majestick Humility to all Persons...Her great Zeal to her Religion, her Modest Confidence, and Grace in all Companies"⁵⁵⁶—in other words, Mary's actions and words fit the beliefs that John had concerning her status and rank as a German noblewoman. While

⁵⁵⁴ John Carleton, *The Replication, Or Certain Vindictory Depositions, Occasioned by Way of Answer, to the Various Aspersions, and False Reports of Ignorant and Malicious Tongues, and the Printed Sheets and Pamphlets of Base Detractors, Concerning the Late Acted Cheat*. (London: Printed by the Authors Appointment, 1663).

⁵⁵⁵ John Carleton, *The Ultimium Vale of John Carleton, of The Middle Temple London, Gent. Being a True Description of the Passages of That Grand Impostor, Late a Pretended Germane-Lady*. (London: Printed for J. Jones, 1663).

⁵⁵⁶ John Carleton, *The Replication*, 4.

such a description might appear to support Mary's role as a trickster, the remainder of the pamphlet makes clear that John later saw her behavior solely as a cheat. John claims that Mary told him of "her intention to Marry a Private Gentleman"⁵⁵⁷ thus indirectly disclaiming any deception on his part of pretending to be a Lord. Without the latter deception, he shows Mary's pretense as a cheat rather than a trick to punish his own actions. In *The Ultimium Vale* John adds detail, for example retelling the story of Mary's arrival at the tavern belonging to his sister and brother-in-law, the Kings. In this retelling, however, John uses negative language to present Mary from the first as a liar and cheat: "She with Crocodile teares, and in a canting stile, began to recollect her Adventure."⁵⁵⁸ Continuing in this same tone, John says that Mary was "acting the part of a Saint" in order to imitate "the Devils craft; when he means to deceive."⁵⁵⁹ In addition, John Carleton specifically denies that he pretended to be a Lord, once again removing the purpose of Mary's actions as tricks intended to punish his deceit and so changing her chosen trickster characterization into that of a criminal.⁵⁶⁰ Mary Carleton's biographer Francis Kirkman agrees with John Carleton's stance, seeing Mary solely as a liar and criminal, not as a trickster whose actions call attention to social anxiety.

⁵⁵⁷ John Carleton, *The Replication*, 5.

⁵⁵⁸ John Carleton, *The Ultimium Vale*, 2.

⁵⁵⁹ John Carleton, *The Ultimium Vale*, 7.

⁵⁶⁰ John Carleton, *The Ultimium Vale*, 19.

Although Mary Carleton was acquitted of bigamy in 1663, her later life led her to further criminal trials, ending with her execution in January 1672. That trial and execution in turn led to a second spate of publications concerning her life, her final trial, and her final days. The most extensive of these publications was Francis Kirkman's *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled*, a biography of Mary Carleton published in 1673. According to Geraldine Wagner, "both [John Carleton and Francis Kirkman] try to fix her identity as a conventional picaresque by stripping her of the sartorial self-fashioning through which she revalues the picaresque as a romance heroine."⁵⁶¹ As John Carleton did a decade prior, in countering Mary Carleton's published self-image Kirkman also strips her of her trickster status. Jody Greene indicates that Kirkman "is virtually mesmerized by Carleton's strategy of using the public to validate her counterfeit persona,"⁵⁶² including her autobiography and the actions it describes. Kirkman's biography actually includes much of the text from *The Case*; after examining both *The Case* and John Carleton's versions of the events, Kirkman states that he "cannot find it [*The Case*] or her guilty of any considerable untruth"⁵⁶³ at least in the descriptions of Mary's initial introduction to the Carletons, her trial for bigamy, and its result. Throughout

⁵⁶¹ Wagner, "The Staged Self," 2.

⁵⁶² Jody Greene, "Francis Kirkman's Counterfeit Authority: Autobiography, Subjectivity, Print," *PMLA* 121, no. 1 (January 2006): 27.

⁵⁶³ Francis Kirkman, *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled*. (London: Printed for Peter Parker, at the Leg and Star, over against the Royal Exchange in Cornhill, 1673), 27.

his biography Kirkman intersperses Mary's text with his own commentary, reframing it with his own negative language, e.g., "Ah witty Baggage, she had her answer as ready as they their questions."⁵⁶⁴ Kirkman concludes that both Mary and John Carleton lied, potentially accepting her self-description as a trickster with the intention that she used it to deceive the deceiver. However, his biography of necessity includes her life following the trial, touching on her numerous crimes and lies between 1663 and 1673 and ending with her final trial, in which she admits to being Mary Carleton even though she had been transported under that name. Greene indicates that Kirkman's narrative "never really recovers" from Carleton's admission, and "disintegrates into a fairly straightforward rogue narrative."⁵⁶⁵ Clearly, Kirkman does not see Mary Carleton as a trickster, but as a counterfeit. Geraldine Wagner argues that Kirkman's use of the term "unveiled" in the title of Carleton's biography is a slur intended to "reduce Carleton to her sex and sexuality" thereby suggesting that "the nature of her threat to the status quo was specifically feminine and bodily."⁵⁶⁶ If Carleton is a threat only as a woman and not as a trickster, then her actions neither support community standards nor offer ideas for change—she is reframed as the problem.

⁵⁶⁴ Kirkman, *The Counterfeit Lady*, 73

⁵⁶⁵ Greene, "Francis Kirkman's Counterfeit Authority," 29.

⁵⁶⁶ Wagner, "The Staged Self," 5.

Conclusion

While both Mary Frith and Mary Carleton draw on trickster attributes in the creation of their written selves, the results are very different, suggesting both the viability and failure of using the trickster to formulate a literary character for a living person. Frith's trickster characterization looks back to tricksters at the beginning of the century, claiming elements of social commentary and resistance along with hints of magic to support her ideas of fairness and royalism. Even as Frith denies any relation to the character of Moll Cutpurse, she uses many of the same tricks focused on similar concerns, such as cheating tapsters and misuse of power by men such as constables or lawyers. Frith's self-description also points to similar concerns that were previously demonstrated by Moll Cutpurse, using choices in clothing and action to point to social anxiety over appropriate roles for women, claiming for herself the right to make her own choices contrary to community standards, wearing both men and women's clothing, smoking and fighting, and running her own business. Unlike earlier tricksters including Moll Cutpurse, Frith used trickster attributes to disparage parliamentarians and support the monarchy.

In one way, Frith's death prior to the publication of her autobiography gave a level of stability to her claims of trickster attributes; Carleton did not benefit from any such stability, with her self-description reviewed and revised by other authors and by her own criminal actions in the decade

following the publication of her autobiography. Further, where Frith's tricks identified and punished individuals who mistreated the community in some way, Carleton's tricks focused only on herself as victim, and on her husband and his family as the guilty parties, claiming revenge on those who she perceived as cheating her by their own deceptions. Her own later actions showed her to be less a trickster than a rogue. Even so, in 1663 Carleton's claims do point to one social issue: the ways that women and particularly wives lacked control over their own lives. However, where Frith's self-image offers a possible although contrary alternative to normative women's roles, Carleton's self-image shows her only as a cheat, thus denying the viability of breaking away from proper female roles.

Both Frith and Carleton differ from James Hind as a trickster, in that they both chose to incorporate trickster elements into their own stories, where Hind's role as trickster was imposed by other authors whose fictional accounts of Hind's life and actions. Frith's autobiography follows more a story-telling narrative than a strict chronological order, allowing her to use the tools of fiction to arrange her story, facilitating the development of her trickster self-image. That Carleton was less than successful in creating herself as a trickster may be in part attributed to differences between autobiography and fiction. Carleton's autobiography was constrained to some extent by her response to the facts of her arrest and trial for bigamy, although she certainly tried to give her own interpretation, where Hind's

fictional biographers were free to add or select events that supported the message they wanted to deliver.

Finally, while Carleton's pretense of a rank she did not possess highlights social anxiety about true rank being masked by disguise, in the end, that pretense served only herself as she sought to trick the Carleton family and the broader public. Where a trickster might benefit from a trick, as do the city comedy tricksters, there is also some suggestion of resolution for related social anxieties; Carleton's tricks do not offer any such resolution and so lack the final touch that would make her self-created image into the trickster she sought to be.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study examines English literary tricksters from the beginning of the seventeenth century through the restoration of the monarchy, seeking to determine how those tricksters functioned to draw attention to issues of conflict and social tensions, particularly issues related to changing ideas about gender roles. I selected eight trickster characters to study, ranging from the fairy Robin Goodfellow at the beginning of the century to the self-styled German Princess in the 1660s. England's seventeenth century saw the inclusion of multiple trickster characters in popular literature, ranging across the decades in a shifting *mélange* of male and female, fictional and human, magic and mundane. In addition to changes in the portrayal of the trickster characters, the century saw changes in the social concerns addressed by tricksters and their tricks. Both these sets of changes provide insight into the changing world of early modern England.

Changes in Trickster Characters

The ways that trickster characters were presented shifted across the seventeenth century in a continuum from wholly mythic to wholly human, also shifting from wholly fictional to real persons, fictionalized—or not. In addition, trickster stories shifted from oral transmission to development by professional authors or playwrights, and finally to the autobiographical voices of the human tricksters themselves. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Robin Goodfellow's character developed from earlier

oral stories, fantastic and magical. Goodfellow's character is completely fictional, and does not refer to any human person, living or otherwise. In the late 1500s and into the early 1600s, Robin Goodfellow stories told of a fairy or nature spirit who used magic to trick other characters, some of them human. Goodfellow used his magic to change shape at will, to take the place of other characters or to become an animal such as a rabbit or a horse; he could even become as insubstantial as a will-o-the-whisp to lead other characters into trouble. Goodfellow's tricks nearly always generated laughter, often at the expense of other characters who behaved in ways that countered community standards or were otherwise inappropriate; such characters seemed to deserve the tricks, either to learn a lesson or as punishment for their actions. Robin Goodfellow also performed some tricks for the comedic value; in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, Bottom's theatrical pomposity hardly deserved the punishment of an ass head. This type of trick draws more on the aspects of carnival than social change, although in the end Robin's actions do help reunite Oberon and Titania.

Robin Goodfellow's tricks touch on issues that could have happened anywhere; any group of young men can have a bit too much to drink or any maid slack her housekeeping. There is no required location for lecherous old uncles who interfere with their nieces, and a tapster can cheat his customers in any drinking house anywhere. Still, because Goodfellow is a country spirit, the tricks he plays and the issues he highlights suggest the movement of

country problems into the city, as London drew on rural immigrants to maintain and increase its population while Robin Goodfellow stories were printed and reprinted.

However, with a shift from fairy to human, other tricksters begin to challenge early images of the fantastic and draw more on human actions and words to perform their tricks. By 1611, rather than being developed over time out of older traditions, the character of Moll Cutpurse is the product of the playwrights Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker for their city comedy *The Roaring Girl*. Moll Cutpurse is a new character, based on a living woman but fictionalized so that there are significant differences between the character and the person; Moll Cutpurse is larger than life, with Mary Frith's behaviors exaggerated and shaped into those of the fictional character. This method of character development is the next shift in trickster stories, with the authors able to draw on elements from the life of the model to create their character. Like seventeenth century stories of Robin Goodfellow which often relied on audience awareness of the character, prior awareness of Mary Frith informs the audience response to Moll Cutpurse. For example, Mary Frith often wore men's clothing, and behaved at times more like a young man than a woman; the character Moll Cutpurse wears men's clothing and acts like a young male gallant, exaggerating Frith's behavior into a fictionalized trickster character with the specific attributes of a gallant rather than just any young man. Middleton and Dekker also drew on earlier trickster characteristics in her

development, making Moll Cutpurse similar to Robin Goodfellow in the types of social issues she addresses. However, Moll Cutpurse is clearly a Londoner whose character highlights urban issues; location becomes important in the development of Cutpurse and other city comedy tricksters as these plays target London audiences and their concerns.

Unlike Moll Cutpurse, however, other city comedy tricksters are not based on specific living humans but are instead exaggerated examples of a type: the spendthrift gallant who has lost his inheritance. Whereas Robin Goodfellow has a depth and breadth of character developed over time and multiple stories, most city comedy tricksters appear only once, focused on one set of problems, without the ability to draw on a character history as a foundation for their actions or solutions. City tricksters such as Folly-wit, Wit-good, and William Smallshankes were developed as one type of stock character in plays focused on London and its social issues. Instead of magical shape changes and country humor, city comedy tricksters rely on disguise and wit to perform their tricks, and unlike Robin Goodfellow or Moll Cutpurse, often draw on the assistance of other characters, also in disguise. Fortunately, the disguises are always successful, and the tricksters' wit persuasive. Somewhat confusing, however, is that city tricksters are more specifically self-serving, directly benefiting financially from some of the tricks they play even as those tricks point to social concerns. This differs from Robin Goodfellow's tricks, which may be self-serving as he seeks to amuse himself,

but they do not earn any tangible reward. Moll Cutpurse also does not benefit financially from her tricks, although she does clearly demonstrate to Laxton that she is not sexually available, as he assumes, which benefits herself. One explanation for this apparent conflict is that the trickster gallants are themselves the victims of one specific social issue: a lack of support from older male relatives who continue in the same follies of their own youth. Instead of helping their younger male relatives to reach financial stability, marriage, and so adult householder status, these older men persist in spending their money on mistresses or on social climbing, much as gallants are accused of doing. In tricking the older men, the wasteful behavior of gallants and aging would-be gallants are compared, showing neither group in a positive light. Still, the city comedy tricksters do highlight social concerns; they are themselves tarnished, perhaps, by the issues they highlight, but they still fulfill the trickster role in their broader concerns.

Following the development of the fictional Moll Cutpurse from the real-life Mary Frith, the next logical step in the continuum of tricksters is the conversion of a living person into a trickster without creating a new character. While the conversion of James Hind, a highwayman, into a hero and trickster might seem illogical given his criminal status, the timing made it possible. The early 1650s brought together political tensions including the deposition of Charles II combined with a lively business in the publications of newsbooks and pamphlets; James Hind became a tool for pamphlet

publishers to support both royalist and parliamentary positions. In addition, the closing of the theatres removed the need to create a fictional character. Like Robin Goodfellow and Mary Frith, Hind was already well-known to early modern readers, due to his criminal activities; pamphleteers simply gave Hind the words they wanted to say to support their own positions. Hind was a royalist by his own words, saying that he would not rob from men who were for the king, but others used his story to support both royalist and parliamentarian positions. Stories of Hind's robberies focus on men like lawyers and usurers, providing the trickster's punishment to rich men who might have mistreated poorer men. Hind's choice of victims positions him as an unlikely hero, like Robin Hood helping to right the imbalance of rich and poor. Hind also uses disguise to work his tricks and thefts, often dressing as a gentleman although he was originally a butcher's apprentice. But it was in the entertainment pamphlets that Hind truly becomes the trickster, with the addition of enchantments and carnivalesque details such as disguising himself as a bear to frighten a stingy guest at an inn.

One striking way that Hind as trickster differs from previous tricksters is that his focus is almost solely on men; women figure very little in all the stories about Hind's exploits. Where all the previously discussed tricksters play tricks that address social concerns for both men and women, Hind's tricks focus on men and men's treatment of other men. Because there are a very few women in the stories, Hind as trickster does not provide social

commentary about social concerns relative to women. This absence of commentary is perhaps the most glaring note, suggesting that for Hind's writers, women and their concerns simply did not matter. However, a lack of interest in women's issues is countered by the next trickster development in the characters of Mary Frith and Mary Carleton.

In the early 1660s, both Mary Frith and Mary Carleton published autobiographies (Frith's was posthumous) that sought to position themselves as tricksters; these autobiographies complete the continuum of seventeenth century tricksters from wholly mythic to wholly human. The autobiographies also shift the voice of the tales to that of the tricksters themselves, potentially without the intervention of other authors or perspectives, while Hind's characterization as a trickster is in other voices, not his own. Still, while Frith does portray herself as a trickster, the attributes she describes are similar to those of the earlier Moll Cutpurse, and her use of male attire was part of her own identity, not a disguise. For Mary Carleton, however, identity was something one could put on and off, not an immutable birthright. Although Carleton portrays herself as a trickster, attempting to instruct her audience about the mistreatment of women, one is left with an impression only of a rogue. In 1663, she was fascinatingly notorious; by 1673 she was a criminal justly executed for her crimes. Carleton's story thus suggests the difficulty of creating tricksters out of living humans without the additional inclusion of fictionalization. With Carleton, seventeenth century tricksters

complete the shift from the magical to the real, and along the way, lose much of their ability to convince an audience of the changes they champion.

Gender and Social Anxieties

Even as trickster characterizations changed, the anxieties and challenges addressed by those tricksters reflect the changing conditions of the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the century, the Robin Goodfellow stories largely support traditional gendered roles, punishing or tricking persons of both genders who act outside of those roles, while suggesting that some change is possible. For example, maids were expected to keep neat houses, and young men to behave with some decorum. Marriage is another common theme, with support for appropriate male-dominant gender roles in marriage, even among fairies. However, in some circumstances Goodfellow challenges the right of male family members such as fathers and uncles to control who young women can wed, particularly if the woman is in love. In addition, lecherous behavior is inappropriate. Despite this challenge, however, Goodfellow's tricks more generally support the gendered status quo: each gender should do its work and do it properly and fairly to support the community, without cheating the neighbors. Goodfellow even takes responsibility for punishing those whose actions disrupt the community. In the end, it is Goodfellow's humor that reassures the audience that social harmony continues, even as his tricks draw attention to disruptive issues.

Where Goodfellow's tricks address issues of community that could occur in the country or the city, beginning with the city comedies, the issues are city issues, either brought about or exaggerated by urban life. Still, Moll Cutpurse mimics Robin Goodfellow's actions more closely than do other city comedy tricksters. She is clearly on the side of order when she protects friends from pickpockets, and she supports other characters in fulfilling a love match against the wishes of the young man's father. However, she goes much farther than Goodfellow in support of women, taking over the role of men as protectors of women by protecting herself when she fights Laxton after his attempts to seduce her, simultaneously suggesting that women can be stronger than society expects them to be while men are failing in their role of protecting women—indeed, they are why women need protection.

City comedy tricksters addressed issues tied specifically to the urban setting; perhaps the most specific urban issue addressed by city comedies is that of country women seduced into city prostitution. All the city comedies considered in this study include prostitutes or courtesans: mistresses of the tricksters and of the tricksters' primary targets. While prostitution is logically not restricted to women, the city comedies treat it as a female-centric problem. The plays also do not suggest a way to end the seduction of country women; at most they suggest that some women become prostitutes based on financial need, not entrapment, but still without offering any solution. Male city comedy tricksters offer marriage as the one way to repair

damaged female reputations; this is especially true if the woman is loyal to the trickster, rewarding that loyalty with improved social credit. While the social standing of the husband varies across the plays, the benefit to the woman remains the same, and the former prostitutes and mistresses seem content with their new status as wives. Rather than suggesting marriage as a solution after women have been seduced, Moll Cutpurse punishes men who view women as objects, partially shifting the blame for prostitution away from women and placing that blame on men. Where Cutpurse points to causes, the male tricksters simply point to the possible solution of marriage as the way for a woman seduced into the role of a mistress or prostitute to recover her reputation and so rejoin the community as a wife. It is interesting that the one female trickster seeks to absolve the women of the seductions that caused their loss of status, where male tricksters seem not to care about causes but look only to offer those women a way out of their social failure. Neither perspective offers a full solution, indicating a complex issue that needs multiple answers.

Cutpurse further suggests that women do not need to marry at all, a departure from the ideal. Instead, she destabilizes patriarchal power over women's bodies by claiming her own power to fight, to remain unwed, and to wear what she chooses. While Moll Cutpurse's actions push the boundaries of the possible and suggest that gendered roles are not as clear-cut as they seem, it is the trickster humor of her cross-dressing, which combines male

and female clothing, that allows the audience to consider those possibilities. Cutpurse subverts the role of women from submissiveness to assertiveness, suggesting that women can be more than the normal social ideals.

Further, as a female gallant—a roaring girl—Moll Cutpurse mocks the behavior of male gallants, a city phenomenon. Socially disruptive to traditional patterns of family life, spendthrift young male gallants potentially lose the ability to reach full householder status if they cannot afford to marry, having lost their inheritances to their wasteful behavior. Moll's mockery as she mimics their actions points to the problem of the gallants, but does not suggest a solution; however, male city comedy tricksters suggest that part of the issue is that older male relatives are part of the problem, as those older men continue to waste their money on mistresses and social climbing rather than on support for their younger male relations. That the older men continue in the same behaviors further suggests that even if young gallants can be rescued, chances are high that they will fall back into the same patterns as they age in their turn. In the worlds of these plays, some gallants will continue in their folly, potentially becoming the next generation of older men who fail to support their own younger male relatives.

Overall, city comedy tricksters are inconsistent in providing successful solutions to social concerns; even when characters attempt to change, their later actions and words sometimes demonstrate that the changes are incomplete or impossible. For example, the marriages arranged for the

various prostitutes suggest that women's bodies are the payment for what they need, whether it is financial stability or social status—in other words, prostitution with a payment other than cash. Still, the city comedy tricksters do address some of the traditional issues found in the Robin Goodfellow stories, including tricks worked against greedy or usurious men. In any case, the social anxieties to this point are highly gendered. With the introduction of Captain James Hind as trickster, this gendered focus begins to change, even though the tricks attributed to his character focus almost solely on men.

As with earlier tricksters, Hind's tricks and robberies often target men such as lawyers and usurers whose actions are perceived as victimizing poor and honest men. However, Hind sometimes returns the money he takes from his victims; the real difference in Hind's tricks is that he often chooses whether to rob men or offer them money based on whether they are against or for the king. This determination outweighs all other factors, making royalism the important element rather than each potential victim's own behavior or status—or potentially, even gender. With Hind's trickster actions, other social concerns are less important than this one overriding factor; it is only after this question is answered that Hind's tricks fit the earlier pattern of punishing men who treat poorer men unfairly. Hind's treatment of women, however, does not fit earlier patterns; for the most part, he ignores them. While the Hind stories do present prostitutes as businesswomen rather than wantons, placing the cause for prostitution on poverty, he does not provide

any suggestions for helping them, nor does he directly offer them money as he does poor men.

Like James Hind, Mary Frith's story combines royalism and crime, claiming to defend the poor against lawyers, clergymen, constables, and others who abuse their power, all while resisting the parliamentary government she sees as the root of many problems. Indeed, Frith claims to have been a driving force for some of Hind's activities, attempting to link her story and fame to his. However, Frith's story also relies on the tricks of her past fictionalization, maintaining her trickster status even as she refocuses her account on being a royalist in a parliamentarian community. Where Frith describes tricks and behaviors that reflect her past, she addresses the same social issues as did Moll Cutpurse, especially issues related to what women could wear or how they had to behave. These stories also address issues of fair treatment of the community by men with some power such as constables or merchants. But her stories of supporting the king or mocking the parliamentarians suggest that royalism is for her a critical social anxiety, as it is for James Hind, a logical concern during the interregnum when Frith wrote her autobiography.

The early years of the restoration saw renewed concerns about proper gendered behavior and the use of cross-dressing and disguise, issues addressed in both Mary Frith's and Mary Carleton's autobiographies. Both Frith and Carleton challenge the restrictions of birth, one defying

assumptions of gender and the other defying assumptions of class, each highlighting concerns about dressing and disguise by choosing her own roles and costumes outside of societal expectations. However, while both Frith and Carleton challenge the status quo, their solutions to concerns about deceptive identity based on attire differ, while highlighting this concern as one of significance. For Frith, the answer is that women ought to be able to wear what they want without in any way detracting from their gender; for Carleton, the reverse is true, when clothes become identity regardless of one's actual status. Carleton does not rely on earlier trickster attributes but focuses her deceptions on the Carleton family, attempting to turn her tricks into self-serving revenge. In the end, Carleton's trickster portrayal fails, offering no solution for anxiety over the use of clothing to disguise rank or status, but rather becoming part of the problem.

Suggestions for Future Research

The most obvious need for future research is to expand the timeframe to include tricksters from the late seventeenth century, particularly after England's revolution of 1688 to the end of the Stuart monarchy and beyond. While I did not specifically identify or analyze later tricksters⁵⁶⁷, consideration of them would offer a more extensive understanding of ways

⁵⁶⁷ One possibility might be the title character in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*; others could include potential trickster characters in later seventeenth century plays such as *The Wild Gallant* by John Dryden (1669), *The Merry Milkmaid of Islington* (1680), *Tom Tram of the West* (1688), or *The She-Gallants* by George Granville (1696).

that the English adapted to and resisted the changes to their society across this tumultuous century.

Another possibility for future research is to focus on the relationship between tricksters and crime, and particularly on the similarities and differences between tricksters and rogues. For example, why is a trickster a hero even when robbing and tricking his or her victims, while a rogue is an enemy of society? Can a trickster or rogue be redefined as the other if social standards change—that is, does a trickster's success in suggesting change invalidate trickster standing as a supporter of society?

Finally, future research could identify literary tricksters from other times and places. Because tricksters simultaneously support community standards and suggest changes to those standards, they are a useful way to identify social concerns and to explore ways that societies manage those concerns. Tricksters are ubiquitous, although not always identified as such; given that, this model of exploration should be adaptable to other times and places of social stress, offering a focus for research into the way different societies function and adapt to change.

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