UC Riverside
UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title
Laughter in Early Modern Drama: Permission to Laugh Ourselves Into Stitches

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6f36b9s4

Author
Antinora, Sarah Hill

Publication Date
2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Laughter in Early Modern Drama:
Permission to Laugh Ourselves Into Stitches

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

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

Sarah Hill Antinora

March 2016

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Deborah Willis, Chairperson
Dr. Heidi Brayman Hackel
Dr. Rise Axelrod

Copyright by
Sarah Hill Antinora
2016

The Dissertation of Sarah Hill Antinora is approved:

____

____

____
Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Portions of Chapter Three: Theatrical Cross-Gendering and the Laughter Response were published in the inaugural issue of *Cerae: An Australasian Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* in 2014. The input from *Cerae*'s editorial team was invaluable, and my hope is that the rigorous peer review process impacted my approach to the dissertation as a whole.

I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of the scholars who have shaped not only my dissertation's focus but my career path. Numerous mentors at California State University at San Bernardino supported my academic pursuits, including Dr. Juan Delgado, Dr. Julie Paegle, and Dr. Sunny Hyon. I especially want to thank Dr. Jacqueline Rhodes and Dr. Bruce Golden, without whom I would not have discovered where the exact intersection of my interests lies.

I have been incredibly well supported by the University of California at Riverside's English Department. I owe a special gratitude to Tina Feldmann, our tireless Graduate Student Affairs Officer, and Dr. Stanley Stewart and Dr. Erith Jaffe-Berg, both of whom served on my oral exam committee and offered valuable feedback on my course of study. My dissertation committee's support has been unwavering during this long process. I admire Dr. Rise Axelrod's commitment to and impact upon the field of first-year composition. I am indebted to her for my interests in classical rhetoric and frame theory. Dr. Heidi Brayman Hackel shared the world of early modern drama with me. She is the audience I keep in mind in my quest for academic rigor. Finally, Dr. Deborah Willis has been a friend, a mentor, and a most dependable dissertation chair.

Lastly, thank you to my grandmother for instilling me with the love of reading, my grandfather for believing in the power of education, my mother for being a strong emotional support, and my husband, without whom none of this would be possible or worth it. Thank you.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Laughter in Early Modern Drama:
Permission to Laugh Ourselves Into Stitches

by

Sarah Hill Antinora

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
University of California, Riverside, March 2016
Dr. Deborah Willis, Chairperson

This dissertation centers on the laughter elicited in early modern drama via text and performance. The project considers how moments of laughter are constructed—granting permission for an audience to laugh—and how that laughter reflects, reinforces, and alternately challenges societal frames of gender, ethnicity, status, and decorum. Chapter One: The Framing of Laughter, grounded in frame theory, explores the keys presented by playwrights, directors, and players that access *a priori* frames, the organizational structures one uses to understand the world. I argue that comedic moments in plays such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* prompt laughter by referencing culturally-held frames and that certain jokes are frames in and of themselves. Chapter Two: "Laughter through Tears": A Physiological Connection uncovers the physiological connection between laughter and tears and considers how particular moments of early modern plays capitalize on this physical phenomenon in order to elicit specific gestures and reactions from audiences. Chapter Three: Theatrical Cross-Gendering and the Laughter Response is a close reading of laughter's relationship with social constructions of gender. It especially

focuses on cross-gendered players and characters and how an audience's laughter, or lack thereof, reflects its anxieties stemming from issues of gender. Finally, Chapter Four: The Decorum of Laughter uses the lens of decorum to examine audience reactions to comedic plays that have been deemed inappropriate in certain cultural moments. "Laughter in Early Modern Drama: Permission to Laugh Ourselves Into Stitches" examines how and why we laugh, suggests what that laughter indicates about our core values and beliefs, and underscores laughter's place as a trait of humanness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION…………………………………………………………………...1

CHAPTER ONE………………………………………………………………27

The Framing of Laughter

CHAPTER TWO…………………………………………………………...74

"Laughter through Tears": A Physiological Connection

CHAPTER THREE…………………………………………………………128

Theatrical Cross-Gendering and the Laughter Response

CHAPTER FOUR……………………………………………………………166

The Decorum of Laughter

WORKS CITED……………………………………………………...…202

INTRODUCTION

In 1992, I returned home from college, and, as a special treat, I attended The Old Globe production of *The Winter's Tale* in San Diego with friends. It marked the first time I attended a professional production. Although I had already taken a Shakespeare course, this play had not been assigned, and none in my party were very familiar with its premise. While the last two decades have caused much of this production to be erased from my memory, one moment is clear: the tonal shift that occurs at the arrival of the shepherd in Act III, Scene ii. The tragedy of the first three acts had been void of humor, and I can remember vividly not only stifling laughter at the shepherd's arrival and early lines but looking around at others to see if they found him funny as well. Were we supposed to laugh here? Did we have permission?

I now know, of course, that the arrival of the shepherd marks the infamous tonal shift of one of early modern theater's most genre-bending works, but the above story illustrates a phenomenon that my fellow audience members and I were not the first to have experienced: the questioning of laughter's appropriateness in a given situation and the contemplating of that laughter's implications. I have entitled this dissertation "Laughter in Early Modern Drama: Permission to Laugh Ourselves Into Stitches"[1] because these questions of intention and permission to laugh are ones that have greatly guided not only my experiences with drama but my academic interests as well. I am interested in how playwrights convey their intentions of humor in a particular theatrical

---

[1] The idiom of laughing oneself into stitches comes from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, when Maria concocts a plan with Fabian, Sir Andrew, and Fabian to humiliate Malvolio. She says, "If you desire the spleen, and will laugh yourselves into stitches, follow me" (III.ii.58-60).

moment and create the conditions to grant an audience permission to laugh. I am also interested in the effects of that moment of laughter—how it fits contextually within the work's larger themes and character development and, more pointedly, what it reflects about not only the author's but the laugher's cultural views of gender, class, and race. This research lies in the intersection of three fields of study: comedy and laughter studies, the rhetorical emphasis on framing, and the theater, especially as related to performance and early modern compositions. While I do not intend for the following to be a complete literature review, I do want to begin with an introduction to the theories that ground the following chapters. As my focus is in uncovering how and why one laughs—rather than how and why Shakespeare and his contemporaries believed we laugh—the research that follows represents a current understanding of these fields of study.

THE COMIC AS DISTINCT FROM COMEDY

What is the comic and how does it differ from comedy? As Frances Teague notes in her introduction to *Acting Funny*: "The words *tragedy* and *tragic*, *comedy* and *comic* are clearly related, but they are…quite distinct. After all, comic moments occur in plays that are clearly not comedies, while not all comedies are comic" (11). She identifies the "largely uncomic comedy" *The Merchant of Venice* and the porter scene in *Macbeth* as examples that embody the distinction between *comedy* and *comic*. Yet, while the two terms are distinct, it is difficult to discuss one without referencing or differentiating it from the other, and—as the research outlined below will demonstrate—the formative

theories of comedy and the comic often focus on the very same questions of their respective reputation, purpose, and effect.

The definition of comedy often begins with Aristotle's *Poetics.* Incidentally, his work also serves as the foremost source arguing comedy as a lower form than tragedy, a reputation that generally still exists to this day. Aristotle claims that both tragedy and comedy are forms of imitation, a characteristic that he argues is innate in human nature. However, tragedy is an imitation of good men and noble actions, while comedy spotlights the ignoble or the ludicrous. He labels comedy as trivial and claims that lesser writers naturally write comedy as they do not have the talent to write tragedy. However, he also concedes that comedy is not "in the full sense of the word bad" (I.v). Instead, he argues that comedy has not been taken seriously and has no history—and, hence, has not developed and matured as tragedy has. While he leaves room for comedy to be taken seriously in the future, he sets the precedent of placing art forms in a hierarchy, with comedy being the lowest, tragedy occupying the middle tier, and epic being the highest art form.

Both Teague and R. W. Maslen refer to the perception that comedy is subordinate to tragedy. Teague defines tragedy and comedy in terms of the psychological dialectic between dependence and autonomy. For Teague, tragedy supports the belief that the individual should not depend on others, and in fact, that it is dangerous to do so. Tragedy illustrates this point when the individual is met with disaster after being forced to become involved with others. Comedy, in contrast, celebrates the individual's dependence on others, promoting the surrendering of autonomy in favor of the greater good. As Teague

argues, there is nothing inherent that makes either of these forms more important than the others, as they both self-rule and the collective are valuable in a functioning society. She does note, however, that if anything, comedy might be a higher form than tragedy, for comedy cannot only stand on its own, but it also occurs in tragedy. Yet, she argues, the tragic does not occur in comedy; it can only stand on its own.[2]

Maslen's *Shakespeare and Comedy* also remarks upon the uneven history of comedy criticism, and attributes it to the attacks of early modern English satirist Stephen Gosson against the art form. Gosson's *The Schoole of Abuse* claims that the theater, and comedy in particular, is dangerous because it does nothing to foster learning or betterment and instead revels in repeating past mistakes. Thomas Lodge's *A Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage-plays* responds to Gosson's claims by arguing that the role of theater, and comedy in particular, is to engage in a dialogue with authorities, and when necessary to expose their follies, excesses, and corruption. Hence, comedy only becomes purposeless and without effect when it is censored. While Maslen never explicitly defines comedy or tragedy, he does note how the two forms often intrude upon each other in Shakespeare—laughter encroaching upon tragedies and histories, and the comedies flirting with "the stuff of tragedy"—and that it is timing that turns a moment either towards the comic or the tragic.

---

[2] This claim seems dubious, or at least an overstatement, for there are many instances of tragedy within comedies. Two examples which will be discussed in this dissertation include the devastation of Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Winter's Tale* whose first half is a mini-tragedy and whose pastoral second half still closes with the death of two beloved characters.

Umberto Eco, in his “The Frames of Comic Freedom,” defines the tragic as the following: a violation of a rule that is either valid or justified committed by someone with whom the audience sympathizes; since the audience agrees that the action was bad, the audience not only shares the actor's remorse but feels peace upon his punishment. He claims that tragedy is universal, since tragedy always makes the rule being violated explicit. In contrast, comedy according to Eco is different in that the audience does not sympathize with the actor; in fact, it revels in his punishment. Further, the rule being broken is often repressive and the audience delights in the fact that it has been broken. More importantly, for comedy to work, Eco argues that the rule must be implicit, and, therefore, it cannot be universal. Eco, though, is not merely concerned with defining each genre’s role within a society. His work focuses more on the impact of comedy and the debate over whether it serves a conservative or transgressive function. Eco argues that comedy is always conservative—even if intended to transgress. Since the rule broken must be presupposed, the work paradoxically reinforces the rule. Therefore, even if the laughter mocks the rule, the rule is ultimately strengthened.

The question of what makes something funny is one that has baffled critics for millennia—baffled in that no consistent theory has been accepted, most theorists admit the quest for an answer to be unfruitful, and, yet, critics hypothesize their theories anyway. In his *Humor: Theory, History, and Applications*, Frank J. ManHovec organizes these hypotheses around three central queries. First, what are the characteristics of a

funny moment? Second, what causes a moment to be comedic?[3] Finally, what are the main theories of humor?[4] A close look at the seven conditions that must be present for a moment to be found funny underscores the very danger in making such a list:

1. The audience must be in a playful mood and receptive to humor.
2. A moment of comedy is an experience of pleasure.
3. The joke should have a transformational power, or the ability to change the mood.
4. The joke has an ephemeral, short-lived quality.
5. The joke is gem-like for it must be treated with care in order to ensure that it does not bomb.
6. Jokes are universal and appeal to a broad section of the populace.
7. Jokes are timeless; if something is funny now, it forever will be.

While all of the above are true, I would claim they also are all untrue. What I mean by this is that the case can be made that any and all of these factors serve to create the conditions that are deemed "funny"; however, an argument can be made against each of them as well. For example, if something funny has the ability to transform a moment as is claimed in his third point, then does the audience already need to be in a playful,

[3] He offers the following six causes: the reversal of an anticipated behavior, the exposing of a human weakness, the wish fulfillment of getting revenge or payback, surprise, incongruity or evidence of a topsy-turvy world, and the overly simplistic.

[4] ManHovec offers the following seven theories of comedy: superiority, disappointment, hostile wit, instinctual, sympathetic, semantic, and syzygy or power process theory.

receptive mood? If the funny moment has a transitory quality,[5] as he argues in point four, then how can it be said that it is timeless as well? Perhaps these contradictions merely highlight the elusive and precious nature of the funny joke, but if the factors are delved into further, other issues arise. For example, ManHovec claims that what is deemed funny contains a universality, in that it appeals to a broad section of people. This claim, I believe, aligns with theories that claim that we laugh communally, and, therefore, often in concert find things funny. However, as can be seen above, Eco would argue that both comedy and the comic are not universal but specific to their respective cultural moments.

I am pulling at the threads holding ManHovec's theory together not in order to dismiss it but in order to illustrate how even a sound theory of laughter will always be incomplete, refutable by example, or over-generalized. Thus, the theories of laughter that follow here are not intended to be the final words, and I suspect most of their respective theorists would agree. However, they are the prominent theories guiding this field and have best helped me to uncover how different types of humor work.

The oldest theory perhaps comes again from Aristotle. This theory, outlined in *Poetics* and *On the Parts of Animals*, makes two broad claims. First, Aristotle argues that only humans are capable of laughter and that it is man's capacity to laugh that marks his station between the animal and the divine. Second, he claims that laughter is always directed downwards; in other words, we laugh down and at trivial and lowly creatures.

---

[5] Although ManHovec defines "transitory" as being of a moment, as in the spark of humor comes from a moment almost too small to measure, he also argues that humor is of a particular moment, organically created from a specific space and time and deemed funny by a specific audience in a specific place. The specificity referenced in this section contradicts the timelessness argued in later ones.

This theory is the genesis of what is now known as the theory of superiority. While the theory of superiority still exists in this form, it has also evolved into one that heralds humor's ability to correct social deviance. From Horace to Eco, laughter is seen as a means to correct through ridicule in order to maintain order and adherence to social norms.

Early modern rhetorical manuals offer insight into how playwrights and audiences of the time may have approached the purpose of humor. Grounded in Cicero's claim that an ideal orator would know how to properly demonstrate his wit, numerous manuals on jesting, rhetoric, and decorum—they are not quite distinct during this period—argue that the role of humor is not merely to serve as a social corrective or to mock those below one's station but to illustrate one's own prowess with words. Giovano Pontano's *De Sermone* (1509), Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1560), George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), and Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1595) all emphasize the rhetorical power of wit, especially in regards to creating an *ethos*—a credible speaker—to an audience. Yet, as Barbara C. Bowen's collection[6] of jokes from the early modern era indicate, jokes still served a social function, for many reveal the time period's anxieties about gender and class mobility.

Humor's relationship with anxiety is most associated today with Sigmund Freud. Outlined in *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud's theory of relief is comprised of two main principles. The first is grounded in incongruity, with Freud

[6] See Bowen's *Humour and Humanism in the Renaissance*.

arguing that jokes create a moment of bafflement, which is then released upon its resolution as laughter. The other more famous component of his theory argues that humor allows access to feared topics, or ones that have been culturally deemed taboo. Other laughter theorists rely heavily upon Freud. For example, G. Legman's tome *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor* relies on the second aspect of Freud's analysis to ground his own claim that "dirty jokes" allow for one to "absorb and control, even to slough off, by means of jocular presentation and laughter, the great anxiety that both teller and listener feel in connection with certain culturally determined themes" (13-14). Helmuth Plessner, noted German philosopher and sociologist, moves one step past Freud to claim that the type of laughter prompted from what he calls "antagonism" is "pleasurable, but not cheerful, even if it usually acquires this affective tone. It is pleasurable as a release of tension" (112-113). Here, Plessner argues that while the laughter is a release of tension it is almost in mimicry of joy rather than being of actual joy. Laurent Joubert, an early modern French physician, demonstrates in his *Treatise on Laughter* (1579) that much of what is now known as relief theory has been a part of the discussion surrounding what prompts laughter for a long time. The type of laughter grounded in joy is one that he labels as "rejoicing," but he also notes the existence of a second type of laughter, one that is "debauched" and "lascivious" (39). However, while Legman and Freud would argue an inherent value in this second type of laughter, Joubert condemns it, claiming that this type of laughter "does not proceed from pure joy, but has some small part of sadness" (39).

The theory of relief is based on the idea that what is to be feared, or taboo, can actually be funny. Here, the fear is expelled as laughter. However, another theory, that of carnival, sees laughter as "a victory of laughter over fear" (Hyman 72). Two sections of the Liège satirical diptych entitled "Leave This Panel Closed" (1520) grace the cover of Timothy Hyman and Roger Malbert's *Carnivalesque* and serve as an exemplar of this type of humor. The front cover depicts whom Hyman calls a "parody prophet" sticking out his tongue and molding his malleable facial cheeks. The back cover portrays the same character spreading his speckled buttock cheeks to expose thistle that reads as excrement. Hyman claims that this piece of art has one purpose: "to make us laugh" (10). However, he identifies this call for laughter as a "battle cry" (14). While the laughter may at first glance appear to be lacking in social commentary or deeper meaning, the laughter itself is reason enough. Mikhail Bakhtin founded his literary theory of carnival[7] on the Carnival atmosphere of the late middle ages. This is a world turned upside down, in which there is no hierarchy. This world values laughter, freedom, and topsy-turvydom, and in it, laughter is pointed in all directions, not merely down as in Aristotle's theory of laughter.

Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque is especially useful when examining humor in the theater space, as Michael D. Bristol claims the theater to be a space of carnival in his *Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance Britain.* The theater—and especially the early modern theater space—is one in which hierarchal structures are overturned and transgressive moves are made at even the most basic level, with players of low socio-economic status playing kings and boys

[7] See Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*.

playing women. As Bristol writes, early modern theater creates a dual critique: one is positive, “a celebration and reaffirmation of collective traditions lived out by ordinary people in their ordinary existence,” and the other is a “negative critique that demystifies or ‘uncrowns’ power, its justificatory ideology, and the tendency of elites to undertake disruptive radicalizations of traditional patterns of social order” (4). The theater space is both conservative and transgressive, simultaneously. The laughter this theater elicits then is complex and cannot be simplified as one that merely mocks those who do not conform or solely challenges the status quo.

Is laughter grounded in joy or in fear? Do we laugh down, up, or in all directions? Does it stem from superiority, or incongruity, or something else? I would agree with Henri Bergson, whose *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* has solidified him as one of the foremost theorists in the field, when he admits that these questions are ultimately unanswerable. The laughter impulse is too complex to reduce to one motive or context. However, he does identify three fundamentals that are broad enough to ground even the most contradictory debates surrounding humor:

1. Laughter only exists within the human. Animals do not engage in laughter, even if certain primates are able to mimic it. Further, we may laugh at an animal, but only if we decipher some human quality in it.
2. Laughter is accompanied by an absence of feeling. In other words, in the precise moment of laughter no empathy is felt for those whom are the object of our laughter.
3. Laughter demands to be part of a community. We prefer to laugh with others.

a. Laughter is contagious.

b. As a rule, jokes do not translate across languages as they stem from a community.

His first and third points are perhaps the most important here, for the second does not rectify the discrepancy between whether we laugh down or up. Instead, his second point is focused on the fleeting relief one feels that goes something along the lines of: "Thank goodness that wasn't me." Whether the laughter is in response to a person tripping over a crack in the walkway, a character who speaks foolishly of love, or the orator impressing with witty word play, the object of the laughter is held separate from the one who laughs. The important thing here is the recognition that *that* is not *me*. Feelings that arise just after the laughter might be of superiority, sympathy, self-identification, or even a mixture of these. However, in the moment of laughter, Bergson argues, there is no feeling for the object of that laughter at all.

On the first point, most critics agree. Bergson claims that laughter is "strictly *human*" (10). Similarly, Aristotle claims that "no animal but man ever laughs" in his *On the Parts of Animals* (III.10). The only exception to this claim is in regards to primates. For example, while Joubert declares that "only man is gifted with" laughter, he does concede that the monkey "imitates it" (5). Darwin also studied these vocalizations noting that "young chimpanzees make a kind of barking noise, when pleased by the return of any one to whom they are attached." Their keepers call this noise a laugh and it can be emitted when a young chimpanzee is tickled. In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, he describes the sound as a "chuckling or laughing" and observes that their

"eyes sparkle and grow brighter." After the "laughter" subsides, an expression may pass over their faces which "may be called a smile." Robert R. Provine, a neuroscientist who has written on such topics as yawning, hiccupping, and laughter, admits that "our hairy cousins the chimpanzees do produce a laughlike sound"; yet, while chimpanzees do emit sounds in response to tickling—the most easily detected trigger of laughter—it is marked by "panting" and "grunting" and is quite distinguished from human laughter (75-79). The principle difference, though, is that laughter in chimpanzees is stimulated by "physical, concrete, and 'nonjoking'" means (94). Thus, in the strictest sense, it could be said that laughter can be found outside of the human, but laughter stemming from humor—that of laughter studies—is only of the human.

Bergson's third point focuses on the communal aspect of laughter. While a limited number of critics may challenge the second claim—that comedy is cultural-specific—the vast majority view it as such. The only debate seems to be if types of humor are universal; in other words, do all humans, across time and place, find the same types of things funny? Yet, it is the first aspect of Bergson's third point that I find most intriguing, that laughter not only is communal in that it is culture-specific but is contagious within a crowd. Theater companies seem to have understood this concept for quite some time. For example, Dennis Kennedy writes of the Roman "claque—a group of supposed spectators hired by a manager to promote the approval of an event" (17). The theory of the claque stems from the idea that an audience works akin to a "machine" and "that its applause need[s] a starter or a crank to get it going, to maintain it and to resuscitate it when it started to fail or stall" (17). The claque, along with the *chatouilleurs*

employed to laugh at jokes, work on the assumption that audience reactions can be triggered and that they function on the communal level. The claque and *chatouilleurs* also signal to the audience when a particular audience gesture is appropriate—an idea that would be extended into use of the "laugh track" now heard on television sitcoms (17-18). The understanding that laughing triggers further laughing and that audiences often need to be signaled to laugh are key to uncovering why audience members turn to each other for confirmation that laughter is appropriate and permitted in a given moment.

Before embarking on the analyses in the following chapters, then, it is important to state explicitly my application of the above theories. First, there is no evidence that early modern playwrights, any more than comedians of any era, were familiar with or ascribed to any one theory of humor. Second, there is no evidence that any one theory of laughter explains all incidents of laughter. In other words, I work under the presumption that humor and the laughter elicited therefrom is complex and multifaceted. No one theory, historical or transhistorical, will be adopted here. Instead, applications of particular theories work best—not necessarily to the exclusion of others—in uncovering both how and why an audience laughs in given situations.

THE RHETORICAL THEORY OF FRAMING AND ITS RELATION TO THE JOKE

The rhetorical theory of framing, however, is one that will ground the dissertation as a whole. Frame theory is one informed by rhetoric, semantics, and cognitive mapping. It is most employed today by those interested in the relationship between words and cognitive structures. For example, George Lakoff explicitly references frame theory in

his *Don't Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame Your Debate* and implicitly in his work with Mark Johnson *Metaphors We Live By*. Both texts argue that the words one uses not only reflect one's understanding of the world but also create that understanding. In essence, the relationship between words and thought processes is symbiotic. Frank Luntz is perhaps the most famous modern employer of the theory. A communication strategist often called upon by politically conservative organizations and their leaders, Luntz works with a motto that embodies frame theory: "It's not what you say, it's what they hear." What they "hear" actually means what pre-existing cognitive frame they reference. To understand how pre-existing frames function and their relationship to jokes and laughter, a short review of the theory offered by noted sociologist Erving Goffman is in order.

In his *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Goffman claims that frame theory attempts to answer the following question: What is going on here? He borrows the term "frame" from Gregory Bateson's "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," which coins the term to distinguish the serious from the unserious. Bateson's work is perhaps most noted for his understanding that, as Goffman writes, "on occasion we may not know whether it is play or the real thing that is occurring" (7). Bateson explored this question upon observing interactions between monkeys and noting that some meta-communication must occur that signals to the participating monkeys that this is "not combat" but instead that "this is play" (179). He then extends that work to the question that guides much human interaction: "Is this play?" Bateson proposes that it is the psychological frames of play and real that allow a participant or observer to answer

that question. This question of what is real, what is play, and what internal moves are made to uncover the difference is the impetus for Goffman's work. Goffman claims that a framework is implemented in answering the question: What is going on here? (8). Goffman's theory is one that works to explain the organization of experience, to uncover the "basic frameworking of understanding available in our society for making sense of events" (10). It is perhaps a little misleading to call this process a "framework," in that the term implies a singular frame. Instead, as Goffman notes, in most circumstances many things are occurring simultaneously. Therefore, many frames may be operating at once.

Three central terms are defined in Goffman's work. He uses the term "strip" to refer to "any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity" (10). A strip, therefore, is one event, one situation, or one "sequence of happenings" (10). In terms of this dissertation, a strip may be one joke, one moment of humor within a play, an entire scene, or the production of a play. The term "frame" is defined as follows by Lakoff in his *Don't Think of an Elephant!*: "Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world" (xv). Thus, frames are the organizational structures we use to interpret the world around us, to define and categorize the events before us. The third term is "keying," a term inextricably linked with the notion of "playing," and it is defined as "the set of conventions by which a given activity…is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by participants as something quite else" (43-44). Keys are, therefore, the signs or symbols that must be interpreted within any given strip that indicate which frame ought to be employed.

What I am interested in is the relationship between framing and the laughter elicited in early modern drama. While few studies employing frame theory to analyze humor exist, they prove useful in understanding how laughter is elicited specifically by the joke. For example, William O. Beeman defines the joke through the lens of frame theory in his essay "Humor." Beeman states that humor can be broken down into four stages: "the *setup*, the *paradox*, the *dénouement*, and the *release*" (1). This deconstruction of the joke[8] rests on the premise of incongruity:

> The actor constructs the [cognitive] frame through narration, visual representation, or enactment. He or she then suddenly pulls this frame aside, revealing one or more reframing of the original content material. The tension between the original framing and the sudden reframing results in an emotional release recognizable as the enjoyment response we see as smiles, amusement, and laughter. (1)

Beeman offers the following old Henny Youngman joke as an exemplar of this structure: Take my wife…please! At the start of the joke, "take" appears to mean "consider"—he is asking the audience to consider his wife as an example of something promised to be elucidated later on in the joke. This set-up immediately gives way to a paradox hinging on the double-framing of the word "take" (2). "Take" now is used to denote the seizing of an object into one's possession. Youngman is begging the audience to take his wife away. Upon hearing the punchline, or the dénouement, "the wife" is re-framed (2). The

[8] Although Beeman uses the term "humor" throughout his essay, it is clear that he is discussing the narrower field of the joke.

audience comes to a new understanding of who the wife is, or at least of how the husband views her. If the three "communicational acts" (set up, paradox, dénouement) are enacted properly, then, in Beeman's analysis, "tension release in laughter should proceed" (3).

Jyotsna Vaid et al. conducted field research to study humor comprehension in their "Getting a Joke: The Time Course of Meaning Activation in Verbal Humor." Their research rests on a similar joke structure as that identified by Beeman, but the field research directly focuses on the aspect of time. Do the stages of the joke overlap? Does the timing between each affect the enjoyment of the joke? The "concurrent activation view" posits that the two competing frames must "in some sense coexist temporally in the mind of the humor comprehender" (1433). In contrast, the "selective activation view" holds that once the new frame is engaged the original narrative of the joke is erased (1434). In his "Frame-Shifting in Humor and Irony," David Ritchie applies frame theory to analyze specifically the "aggressive joke" identified in Freud's theory of relief. Instead of focusing on how conflicting frames cause incongruity, he argues that the taboo stands in opposition to the "culturally licensed frame" (282).

While theories of laughter help to uncover why an audience will laugh, frame theory works to uncover how the author of a joke—or the playwright of a humorous moment—signals to an audience that not only should it laugh but that it has permission to laugh. One other factor affects the audience's perceptions of humor and its expected response: the theater space itself.

THE FRAMING OF THE EARLY MODERN AND MODERN THEATER SPACE

Goffman analyzes the theater as one framed as a space of play. While there are many theories of theater, it makes sense to begin with this one given the emphasis on frame theory throughout this dissertation. To be clear, Goffman is discussing the modern theater and its conventions, and not only does he not address the variances that would have been found in an early modern theater but he discusses the modern theater space as if it is uniform as well. Yet, his analysis does identify the broad conventions of current theater, and therefore perhaps the expectations of the typical theater-goer. Here, in short, are the keys implemented in a theatrical production to access the theatrical frame in an audience: spatial boundaries of the stage exist without a ceiling and one wall missing; dialogue between characters is spatially opened up with actors turned slightly towards the audience rather than directly facing one another; one person is usually front and center as the focus of attention; actors take turn talking and allow for others to finish talking before replying; pertinent knowledge is revealed in dialogue; utterances are more eloquent and lengthy than in everyday speech; and it is understood that nothing occurs onstage that is irrelevant or insignificant (138-144). These keys indicate to an audience that the space is one of theater and play.

One key that has changed from early modern theater to modern theater is the clear line maintained between the "staging area" and the area of the audience (124-125). This key is one which Goffman notes often in his discussion of the theatrical frame. He emphasizes how the audience is separated spatially from the action of the stage. How is this modern convention reconciled with the early modern theatrical use of the thrust

stage, the onstage and balcony seating, and the audience interaction, all of which not only blur this line between stage and audience, but often place the audience as part of the staged production itself? As Andrew Gurr notes in his *The Shakespeare Stage: 1574-1642*, “Almost all action took place on the stage or platform, the only area known at the time as the ‘stage’” (117). The interesting phrase here is “almost all.” Not only were there variations in staging practices among early modern playhouses, and not only were productions frequently staged outside of the playhouse, but even within that setting, the line dividing the stage and the audience was not always clear.

Thomas Platter describes the conditions of the playhouse in the following after attending a performance at The Curtain:

> The playhouses are so constructed that they play on a raised platform, so that everyone has a good view. There are different galleries and places, however, where the seating is better and more comfortable and therefore more expensive, but if he wishes to sit he enters by another door, and pays another penny, while if he desires to sit in the most comfortable seats, which are cushioned, where he not only sees everything well, but can also be seen, then he pays yet another English penny at the door.” (qtd. in Gurr 142)

Note how this description not only supports Goffman’s identification of the stage as a keying, but also underscores two aspects about the audience. First, audiences were not homogenous. Instead, their status, most evidenced by where they entered the theatre and sat (and, therefore, what they could pay), was visible. Second, the most comfortable seats and their patrons were seen, and, therefore, a part of the performance on some level,

demonstrating again that the line between performance and audience was not a strict one. Platter's description also underscores another aspect to early modern theater thus far unstated—that when discussing the early modern theater space the plural should actually be used, for there was not one frame of early modern theater but at least two: the smaller indoor theaters like The Blackfriars and the larger outdoor amphitheaters like The Globe. These two theater types would each have their own set of audience expectations and the theater-going experiences would be framed differently.

An additional aspect to the theatrical frame as defined by Goffman is the "conceptual distinction" made between the character being played and the individual performing that character. Goffman offers the following example: an audience can distinguish between Sir John Gielgud the actor and Gielgud performing as Hamlet (128). Sometimes, however, this distinction is blurred as well. For example, a player is often cast in a role in which the player's real life persona can either be commented upon or referenced—one current example would be the casting of Lindsay Lohan in *Scary Movie 5* or almost any recent work casting Charlie Sheen. In other words, at times a blurring has occurred between the two roles: actor as self versus actor as character. Goffman calls this a "dual self" (129). While the distinction between the two selves should always be clear to the audience—the framework of what those two selves look like should be distinct—it is one person in two roles. Audience reactions to Richard Tarlton in early modern theaters and Richard Blunt in The Blackfriars Playhouse today, both of which are discussed in later chapters, indicate that this blurring is a transhistorical phenomenon.

Goffman claims that the audience also demonstrates a dual self. On the one hand, the audience member acts as a theatergoer: he/she purchases tickets, arrives on time, takes an intermission break, etc. As Goffman notes, he/she expends real money and real time (129). On the other hand, the audience member acts as an "onlooker," "collaborat[ing] in the unreality of onstage" (130). This role as onlooker is a complicated one, though. The audience must consciously and at times subconsciously suspend disbelief and accept the "unreality" of the stage as "real." Audiences who know the ending—due to perhaps seeing a prior performance, having read the play, or understanding the conventions of a genre—do not betray that knowledge to either others in the audience or him/herself in the moment. The onlooker frame allows for the audience member to become actively and intentionally invested in the "unreal." However, the reactions—ranging from laughter to sadness and from fear to sympathy—are very much "real" (130-138). In other words, the audience engages in multiple acts of self-deception in order to the keep the fantasy of playing alive. Yet, perhaps contradictorily, "at no time is the audience convinced that real is life is going on up there" (136). A ghost has not appeared to his son, a young woman has not drowned herself, and the stage is not littered with real dead bodies at the end of *Hamlet*. And, yet, while the audience knows all of this, "*real* suspense and *real* disclosure can result" (136).

While Goffman focuses on the theater space and an audience's understanding of the conventions expected therein, Kennedy focuses more on audience response. In his *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*, he defines and explores the roles and behaviors of the audience. He writes that audiences are not

"homogenous social and psychological groups" (3). It is near impossible to make generalizations about their reactions; in fact, he argues that "*the gathering itself*" is the only universal: "They become an audience by virtue of their cooperative attendance, nothing more" (14). Kennedy devotes much of his work to audience gestures: booing, hissing, catcalls, laughter, crying, applauding, standing, etc. Some of his most interesting comments are upon laughter, for he claims that while applause—and many of the other gestures discussed in the work—are voluntary, laughter and weeping are "involuntary" and "intuitive," occurring even at moments when a person attempts to suppress them (15-16).

How does an audience identify a moment of humor? What does an audience's response to that humor—laughter, silence, rejection—reveal about the themes embedded within that humor? To answer these questions, I will engage numerous plays from the early modern era. While I will focus on the work of Shakespeare, it will be within the context of his contemporaries: John Marston, John Ford, Francis Beaumont, and Ben Jonson. As both frame theory and theories of laughter emphasize communal influences, the plays of Shakespeare cannot be understood in isolation.

OVERVIEW

Chapter One: The Framing of Laughter analyzes the humor found in Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The goal here is to closely examine how the comic is framed in one play and to identify what keys are present to indicate to an audience that the play as a whole is intended to be funny and to grant permission for

audiences to laugh at strategic moments. When frame theory is applied to jokes, it is usually used to explain how laughter is created. When two frames of reality are juxtaposed, causing tension and confusion, the relief in resolving that incongruity is expressed through laughter. However, as this analysis illustrates, the framing of humor occurs on multiple levels, for the play not only elicits laughter through incongruous frames, but individual jokes are framed as well. In other words, keys are present here that indicate that certain jokes—much like a knock knock joke today—stand as individually framed jokes of the early modern theater.

Chapter Two: "Laughter through Tears": A Physiological Connection examines the physiological and emotional link between tears and laughter. I am especially interested in how this connection is exploited by playwrights to elicit complex audience responses. Grounded in both Freud's theory of relief and the anatomical processes of laughing and crying, a key moment of John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is analyzed to uncover how the playwright and current productions lead an audience from laughter to tears in the death of its clown Bergetto. The laughter prompted by Beatrice's order for Benedick to kill Claudio in *Much Ado about Nothing* is then unpacked as an exemplar of the relief response. The findings of both of these analyses then allow for an audience's complex responses to the tonal shift in *The Winter's Tale* to be identified as a laughter through tears impulse, which serves as an answer to the questions of appropriateness and permission that first plagued me during the 1992 Old Globe performance mentioned above.

Chapter Three: Theatrical Cross-Gendering and the Laughter Response seeks to uncover laughter's relationship with gender. This chapter especially focuses on the following three gendered moments of laughter in early modern plays: the metatheatrical moments that call attention to the all-male theater's convention of the boy performing as a female character; the male character who dons a female disguise; and the more frequently-seen female character who dons a male disguise. As the theories outlined in this chapter indicate, it is not possible to accurately and thoroughly understand how early modern audiences responded to the all-male theater; however, the plays' focus on gender reveals much about early modern constructions of and anxieties surrounding gender. A current production's approach to a play that features gendered disguise further reveals modern understandings of gender as well, which are illustrated through analyses of two productions: the 2009 Shakespeare's Globe *As You like It* featuring players in their respective gendered characters and the 2012 Shakespeare's Globe *Twelfth Night* featuring an all-male cast.

Chapter Four: The Decorum of Laughter returns to humor's relationship with rhetorical theory, centering on how decorum must be met in order for a joke to elicit laughter. Jokes fail for not adhering to decorum by being inappropriate in one of four ways: the style does not fit the occasion, it is told in the wrong time and/or place, the joke does not adhere to the belief system of the audience, or the speaker and the persona he/she constructs does not match the content of the joke. In this chapter, I especially focus on two types of breaches in decorum. First, I examine a "failed joke"—here, a failed humorous play—which failed for presenting themes and beliefs that did not match

those of its audience: Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. As the history of this play indicates, when the audience changes, along with it its belief structures, the play not only can be deemed more decorous but can find great success. The second type of breach in decorum rests in the speaker. Just as the audience has changed to find the themes of Beaumont's play appropriate, it has found many of the themes of Shakespeare's not to be. While it could be said that the plays no longer adhere to what is deemed appropriate by the audience, it is more accurate to say that the speaker no longer matches the content of his words. As Marjorie Garber argues in *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, each era has constructed a "Shakespeare" in its own idealized image. The modern construction of "Shakespeare" is not one who espouses misogynistic, racist, or anti-Semitic views; indeed, he is often theorized to be a progressive who was ahead of his time. What does a culture then do with works that challenge this construction? Given Shakespeare's status—and the way that our culture has constructed him—his plays have not only continued to be performed and studied but made more decorous. The conflict between what Shakespeare wrote versus whom we want him to be has led to the rewriting of much of his work in order to be made decorous for a current audience, as seen in the performance history of *The Merchant of Venice* and current approaches to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

CHAPTER ONE

The Framing of Laughter

Nick Asbury, freelance writer and half of the publishing team Asbury and Asbury, created the following piece as part of a series of what he calls "failed jokes":

—Knock knock.

—Who's there?

—It's the police.

—It's the police who?

—It's the police. I'm afraid there's been a terrible accident.

Its title, "Collision," refers to the accident about which the police are notifying the next of kin. In fact, the title foreshadows that a type of collision or accident will feature prominently in the plot of the piece. However, the term "collision" also describes the moment that the joke confronts a real-life scenario. Asbury defines "failed jokes," or anti-jokes, as ones "where jokes run up against the real world in a variety of strange and uncomfortable ways." Asbury offers another failed joke[9] that follows a similar structure as "Collision": "—How many trapeze artists does it take to change a lightbulb?—Leave it, I'll do it." Both of these failed jokes function in the same way: they begin by referencing a well-known joke structure and introductory line but then challenge an

[9] It is important to note that the term "failed joke" is Asbury's. I will continue to use this term since it is not only the term he coined but also the title of the collection. However, many of the pieces labeled as "failed jokes," including the two cited here explicitly, may meet the definition of a joke and its understood goal of eliciting laughter, especially when considered through the lens of release theory, introduced in the Introduction, elucidated in Chapter Two: "Laughter through Tears": A Physiological Connection, and upon which many joke analyses rest.

audience's expectations by not continuing to follow through with that structure. In other words, this type of joke works—or "fails," to use Asbury's language—because of the collision of two divergent frames.

Using frame theory,[10] the "knock knock" that begins the exchange is a key that signals to both the participant—the one who answers, "Who's there?"—and the observer—the one reading the piece or witnessing the exchange—that a frame of play should be accessed. It is clear that the participant understands that key because he or she supplies the expected follow-up line for a knock-knock joke: "(blank) who?" However, the police officer who answers that question provides an answer that does not act as a key of play. Instead, the response makes it clear to both participant and observer alike that the originally-accessed frame of play was in fact incorrect; instead, the response indicates that a frame that many have either experienced or feared should have been accessed: a police officer's duty to notify the next of kin after a serious accident. As Asbury so aptly alludes to in the failed joke's title, two organizational frames have collided.

Research focused on unpacking the rhetorical facets of humor has been fairly limited in scope. First, the application of frame theory to understand humor largely has rested on the joke rather than the broader areas of humor often evidenced in theater. Thus, while the punning reveled in by Hamlet can be explained by this research, situational humor like that in broad comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has not been addressed. I would argue that frame theory very much explains all moments of laughter and that the theory needs to be analytically

---

[10] See a discussion of frame theory and its components in the Introduction.

applied to broader moments of humor than just the joke. Second, the jokes themselves have only been discussed in terms of the incongruity between the two frames established therein. Hence, a typical knock-knock joke is explained by the incongruity between the frame of the person within the home wanting to know who is outside and the frame of play, usually resting on pun and word play. For example, consider the following knock-knock joke:

—Knock knock.

—Who's there?

—Wendy.

—Wendy who?

—Wendy wind blows the cradle will rock.

The answer of "Wendy" to the first inquiry fits within a pre-existing frame. When a knock is heard at one's door, one inquires who it is. The question relies upon an understanding of the world as an unsafe place and that one way to alleviate that danger is to only allow someone one knows into one's home. When the person within does not recognize "Wendy," more information is requested: "Wendy who?" It is at this point that "Wendy" becomes re-framed from that of a person to the words "when the." The situation then is re-framed as that of a common scenario experienced in one's place of residence to that of play.

This is the type of analysis that has already been completed, using frame theory as a way of unpacking a joke.[11] However, it discusses only the frames employed within the joke. I instead posit that the type of joke itself is a frame. It is clear that when someone begins with "knock knock" that a particular type of joke is being framed, as evidenced by the failed joke that began this discussion. After all, that joke only "fails" if one understands the frame of the knock-knock joke and can identify the precise moment when the frame is no longer being employed. Yet, the research employing frame theory in humor studies—limited as it has been—has not discussed explicitly these common moments of laughter as frames in and of themselves.

What follows is an unpacking of the jokes and moments of laughter evidenced in one early modern play. My aim is to explain some of the methods employed by playwrights to prompt laughter and to identify many of the main frames of laughter evident in early modern drama in order to better understand the function of humor and laughter. Later chapters will attempt to define the other frames at play in these early modern jokes—especially of gender, race, and class—but identifying the jokes as frames first will allow some insight into what made early modern audiences laugh.

This analysis will focus on the methods or keys used to access frames of not only play but of laughter. First, the keys used to begin plays will be examined, especially focusing on the use of Inductions, opening monologues, and the repetition of key terms. Character types most associated with laughter will then be identified, with a special focus on Richard Tarlton and characters modeled after him. Next, word play and its ability to

[11] See the discussion of Goffman's, Beeman's, Ritchie's and Vaid et al's work in the Introduction for more on how frame theory has been applied to joke analysis.

signal laughter will be analyzed, especially centering on character names. Lastly, a few notable scenes will be analyzed to uncover how broad humor—extended humor rather than the moment of a joke—is established and works to elicit laughter.

To illustrate the central components of joke frames found within early modern theater, the analysis will center primarily upon Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The reasons for this focus are threefold. First, it is one of his earliest works, if not his first. The *Norton* editors suggest that it may have been written between 1590 and 1591, but submit that it is "perhaps the first of Shakespeare's theatrical compositions" (Howard 109). The *Oxford Shakespeare* states that it was written "probably in the late 1580s" (Wells et al. 1), a time span also proposed by E. A. J. Honigmann (88). Much has been made of Shakespearean comedy, and the ways in which his framing of the genre might differ from his peers.[12] However, the earlier the play, the less one can claim that a theater-going audience of the time would have known how to define a "Shakespearean comedy."[13] In other words, the frames found in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* were accessed by culturally or universally understood keys, not ones that were necessarily cultivated by Shakespeare nor have come to be identified as "Shakespearean." Hence, while a scholar such as Marjorie Garber might note the play's reputation as "an

[12] See Northrop Frye's "Argument of Comedy" and C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, for example.

[13] To be clear, I am not claiming that the general theater-going population would have been able to identify these Shakespearean tropes even in the latter years of his career.

anthology" of Shakespearean tropes,[14] in its original performances, an audience would have no such understanding; instead, it would read the keys contextually and culturally.

It is perhaps its reliance upon these types of keys that has given it its poor reputation. Ralph Alan Cohen puts this idea in the most positive light: "[There are] so many kinds of comedy in this play. [It relies upon a] 'short-hand of comedy'" that clearly alludes to previously performed bits ("Blackfriars Backstage Pass"). Noted for its inconsistencies and derivative nature, scholars such as Harold Bloom call it "the weakest of all Shakespeare's comedies," as it is "so much less impressive, in every register" than his other work (36). It is its weak reputation, however, that makes it ripe for this type of analysis. Evidence of keys within even a weak play confirms the manner in which frame theory works. More importantly, though, is that a close reading of this play's keys can transform how one views its supposed weaknesses. It is my contention that an analysis of framing in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* resolves some of its inadequacies, and, therefore, illustrates the value an application of this theory can hold.

Lastly, as Cohen noted while directing the ASC 2013 production of the play, "The actors, the audience know it's a play, what is funny. The dog doesn't!" (Personal interview). Not only does this observation confirm the very humanness of laughter, as discussed in the Introduction, but it highlights the most special aspect of *The Two*

---

[14] In *Shakespeare after All*, Garber notes the following Shakespearean tropes as evident in this work: a love triangle, involving two "brothers" in which the heroine seeks aid from a friar; a second heroine disguised as a boy, wooing the one she loves on another's behalf; a hero hiring musicians to woo the object of his desire; a band of outlaws who adopt a nobleman as their leader; an elopement plot involving a ladder; a wise clown-figure; and, finally, a father who denies his daughter the right to marry the one of her choosing and instead promises her to someone else (43). As Garber suggests, these tropes would later be "crafted into more compelling drama" (43).

Gentlemen of Verona: Crab. While much of the humor derived from Crab will be read below, for now it is his lack of access to frames that make his existence important. Neither the "character" of Crab nor the dog who plays him can read the keys presented by the playwright nor access the same frames of laughter that the audience does. Yet, it is his lack of access to these frames that elicits much of the humor; in other words, the frame of "dog" is butting up against the frame of "human." He then becomes a continual reminder of not only how framing works but of how seeking to answer the question that guides frame theory—What is going on here?—is a human pursuit.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY'S THE THING

In the quest to determine what is going on, a theater-going audience reads a multitude of keys simultaneously and quickly. The keys pointing to the frames of theater, outlined in the Introduction, position the audience to witness a duel between rivals and not fear for one of their lives, a dastardly plot enacted by an evil schemer and feel delight rather than repulsion, and a marriage proposal based on mistaken identity and refrain from intervening. In other words, the keys evident in the theater space and the structure of the productions ensure that the audience will understand that the actions witnessed are based in play, or in pretend. The playwright, though, embeds other keys within the play to ensure that his audience accesses the correct frame of genre and/or theme. The most important keys appear at the beginning of the play, for they establish the tone of the play and the expectations of the audience. They direct the audience to notice some things and perhaps ignore others; they highlight and they obscure. These keys appear in the title of

the work, pre-Act I scenes (what would be called "front matter" in a printed text), and the play's first lines.

The title of a play does much work towards ensuring that the audience will access the correct frames of genre and theme. There is that old adage that a tragedy's title names a character while a comedy's does not. If one removes the histories, this adage largely proves to be true, with the tragedies including *Doctor Faustus*, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, and the comedies including *Bartholomew Fair*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The Roaring Girl*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night*. This guideline, though, is not foolproof. *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Changeling*, and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* are notable tragedies lacking proper names, while *Pericles* and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* include proper names but are not categorized as tragedy. Hence, this adage may be a key that could be utilized by an audience to determine genre, but it cannot work in isolation.

There are, however, often other clues in the title. For example, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* contains language of class and laughter, in addition to adhering to the above rule. *The Revenger's Tragedy*, although breaking the above rule, contains language that names its genre and theme. It is this type of language that aids a theater-going audience in not only creating expectations for the play but determining its generic categorization as well. For example, the "comical history" in *The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice* ensured that not only the First Folio editors would include it with the comedies but that audiences would see it as one as well. It is perhaps that very phrase that makes that particular play not only a problem play but problematic today, for it is difficult for

modern audiences to view the play's plot as "comical."[15] That same type of directive language is found in *Cymbeline, King of Britain*, titled as *The Tragedie of Cymbeline* in the First Folio. Although today *Cymbeline* typically is labeled as a romance or tragicomedy, the inclusion of the word "tragedy" in this title would have influenced an audience's expectations greatly.

What do the keys found in the title *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* suggest? First, it follows the adage outlined above. In fact, if one accepts the categorization of genre in the First Folio, all of Shakespeare's play titles do. Given, however, that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is one of Shakespeare's earliest, if not the earliest, works, it cannot be assumed that a theater-going audience would rely so heavily upon this key to determine genre. Yet, its language does direct the audience to the play's central characters and, more importantly, its primary theme. Silvia and Julia may be strong characters, with Julia especially given scenes that promote audience identification, and Lance and Crab may steal many a production; however, the title suggests that this is a story of camaraderie—of brotherhood—that will center on the conventions of being a "gentleman." Before an audience member has even entered the theater, he or she can expect that the conflict will rest with these two men and that questions of what it means to be a gentleman—in other words, the very frame of "gentleman"—will be raised.

While *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* does not have an Induction—in performance—or a To the Reader—in print, other plays do, and this material's primary purpose often is to introduce keys that target intended frames. For example, the first

[15] More on this troubling aspect of *The Merchant of Venice* and modern approaches to the play are discussed in Chapter Four: The Decorum of Laughter.

production of *The Malcontent* that I attended was a production at a neighboring university when I was an undergraduate student. Beforehand, I had not read John Marston's work, and, thus, my expectations for the play came solely from its title and the playbill. The program, as I recall, primarily highlighted the actors and production team, but it contained a blurb likening the play to *The Spanish Tragedy*. This description encouraged this one theater-goer to anticipate a tragedy. As the production eliminated the text's Prologue and Induction, I was caught off guard by the tone of the opening scenes. In fact, I remember wondering if I were allowed to laugh at these scenes. The excised Prologue or knowledge of the To the Reader's message, however, would have provided the keys to answering my question: What is going on here? While *The Spanish Tragedy* is alluded to when Condell's references Jeronimo (Ind.77), little else in these two pieces would suggest the genre of tragedy. Instead, while the plot may mirror a typical revenge tragedy, and the reference encourages an audience member to make that connection, noting it in a passing reference downplays the role of revenge in the play. Conversely, other keys are spotlighted. The Prologue speaks of "fools" (14) and Sly has recorded the "jests" found in the play (Ind. 16), both of which would allow theater-goers to access the frame of comedy rather than tragedy and ready them for laughter. Further, the Induction—with its players Will Sly, Dick Burbage, Harry Condell, and John Lowin playing "Will Sly," "Dick Burbage," "Harry Condell," and "John Lowin," respectively—is theatricality at its finest and it functions to highlight the artificiality of the play's world. As much of this play seeks to blur the "real" with the "artificial," the Induction then becomes key to directing an audience towards that very theme. In short, the keys found in

the Prologue and Induction obscure the play's links to tragedy and draw attention to its mirth and themes.

Lastly, it is a play's opening lines that provide the most reliable keys for an audience. A close look at the opening of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* prove this assertion. When an early modern theater audience first encountered Theseus and Hippolyta at the start of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it must have been quite a moment. These unsuspecting theater-goers saw and heard the legendary characters from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* brought to life on the stage. Based on this extraordinary start, what were their expectations for the remainder of the play? Did they expect grand spectacles of battle and conquest? This assumption could easily be true, for early on Theseus reminds Hippolyta—and the audience—that he "wooed [her] with [his] sword,/ And won [her] love doing [her] injuries" (I.i.16-17). Even without this reminder, Theseus's association with violence would have been known, for as Jonathan Bate affirms, he, "as any half-way educated person in the Renaissance could tell you, was a notorious rapist" (136). Given the connotations of these characters, how does a playwright, and Shakespeare in particular, then elicit laughter?

A close reading of the initial interaction between Theseus and Hippolyta reveals two keys that encourage early modern audiences to access the frame of the comic. The first key appears in the very first line of the play, when Theseus states that their "nuptial hour" is quickly approaching (I.i.1). Comedy's association with weddings has long been noted. Although Lord Byron's claim that "all tragedies are finished by a death and all

comedies by a marriage" does not strictly hold true, the association speaks to the way comedy as a genre has been framed. Shakespeare's comedy especially has been defined by nuptials, with Lisa Hopkins marking its most outstanding feature as "its pervading obsession with marriage" (36). By the time *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is first performed, this obsession—or what I will call a key—has been well established, with four previous Shakespearean comedies centered on marriage or the expectation of marriage.[16]

This key is accessed early, and frequently, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with the word "nuptial" appearing no less than five times. "Wedding" appears twice, "wed" appears three times, and "wedded" once. Other terms signaling a wedding also appear, such as "solemnities," "pomp," "triumph," and "reveling," all of which connote the public celebration of marriage. It is the term "reveling" that leads to the second key—language or vocabulary that directly connotes laughter. While four variations of the word "laughter" appears in the play, terms like "revel," "mirth," and variations of "merry" appear much more often. In fact, in the opening exchange between Theseus and Hippolyta, he uses no fewer than seven words that connote laughter. Hence, while the "halfway educated person of the Renaissance" may, for a moment, understand the presence of Theseus and Hippolyta as a key indicating that this play will center on violence and conquest, the same person would use the key of nuptials and the key of laughter-related vocabulary to instead access the frame of the comic. When Theseus

[16] *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Love's Labour's Lost* conventionally are believed to be written and performed earlier than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is possible that the lost *Love Labour's Won* also would have adhered to this convention.

states that he will wed Hippolyta "in another key"—not one of the sword or of injuries—but "with pomp, with triumph, and with reveling," the audience has been told directly which frame they should employ in enjoying this play (I.i.16-19). In other words, they should be ready to laugh.

The opening lines of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* work similarly to those of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in that the characters and their language act as keys to direct the audience.[17] The play opens with Valentine in the midst of bidding his good friend Proteus adieu. He is leaving for Milan, believing that one must leave home and see the world in order to become a man. Valentine has chosen to stay in Verona, for he is in love with Julia. Valentine and Proteus[18] are the "two gentlemen of Verona" and their language indicates a deep affection for one another. Valentine addresses his friend as "loving Proteus" (1.i.1) and "sweet Proteus" (1.i.56), while Proteus addresses his friend with "sweet Valentine" (I.i.11). When speaking to Valentine, he also names himself as "thy Proteus" (I.i.12). This language, alongside the fact that the play begins with solely these two characters, shapes an audience's expectations. This play will not be a romantic love story, even if romantic love later appears. This story centers on the love between these two men, a bond that can be described as a homosocial brotherhood.[19]

---

[17] For the purpose of this short analysis, the opening lines are comprised of Act I, Scene i lines 1-69.

[18] A discussion of how their names act as keys will follow below.

[19] See J. L. Simmons's "Coming out in Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona´* for a critique that claims Proteus and Valentine's relationship as not only homosocial but as homerotic as well.

Yet, the language also indicates that love is of some import to these men, for the word in varying forms appears no less than twenty times in these first lines. Both “wit[s]” and “fool” or “folly” appear no less than four. Other important language is the repetition of “youth” or “young” and “mirth.” Even divorced from the context of these terms, the words become keys that highlight the play’s themes. This is a story that raises questions about the place of love in a gentleman’s life. Is it possible to be in love and maintain one’s wit? How does one in the midst of growing into manhood balance friendship, love, mirth, and wit? Which of these is most important and why? By the time Valentine warns Proteus that “by love the young and tender wit/ Is turned to folly” (I.i.47-48), the audience already understands that this tension will be the main conflict of the play. Moreover, when Proteus juxtaposes “honour” and “love” in his short soliloquy at the end of these opening lines (I.i.63), it is clear that this is the conflict that he himself will face. Based on the keys evident in the beginning of the play—the title, the sole focus on two characters, and the opening lines’ language—the story then will not be a love triangle, even though it later appears to be one, in which two men vie for the love of the same woman. Instead, it is about each man’s struggle to create an honorable self, even in the face of love. The playwright has embedded these keys in order direct the audience’s attention towards these issues and away from others.

PLAYING WITH WORDS: WHAT’S IN A NAME?

The Spanish Tragedy’s Revenge, *Doctor Faustus*’s Wrath, Envy, et al., *The Malcontent’s* Malevole, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*’s Luce, *The Revenger’s*

Tragedy's Vindice, and *Twelfth Night's* Malvolio: these are merely representative of the multitude of early modern characters whose names acted as keys. Some of these examples are of allegorical figures, such as Revenge and the Seven Deadly Sins in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Doctor Faustus*, respectively. Most, however, are meant to be clues as to how these characters should be framed. Malevole's and Malvolio's very names identify them as discontents, Luce as good and wise, and Vindice as a vindicator.

Ben Jonson famously utilizes this technique in his moralistic allegory *Volpone*. The Italian translations of the characters' names reveal much about their personalities, motives, and abilities. John Florio's 1598 Italian-English dictionary defines Volpone as "an old fox," connoting trickery and wit; Voltore as "vulture," Corbaccio as "raven," and Corvino as "crow," all connoting scavengers; and Celia as "heaven," connoting piety (qtd. in Bevington et al. 682). These names are the first keys instructing the audience in how to frame these characters. Some of the names indicate how a character will behave in a given situation. For example, the key in Celia's name allows the audience to predict that she will not be seduced easily by Volpone, and that expectation is confirmed when she says, "[I] Cannot be taken with these sensual baits" (III.vii.209). The "heavenly" aspect of her character is confirmed again when she uses religious pleas to ward him off: "If you have touch of holy saints or heaven,/ Do me the grace to let me scape" (III.vii.242-243) and "O just God!" (III.vii.265). While these are not the only keys Jonson provides, they are the first indicators of how his characters should be framed—as hero or villain, as schemer or vindicator, as innocent or discontent.

Many of the names of the characters in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* serve a similar purpose as those in Jonson's *Volpone*: they act as keys to framing the characters in their entirety. "The two gentlemen," Valentine and Proteus, are the most notable examples of this technique. As Valentine's Day has been associated with romantic love since at least the era of Chaucer, and St. Valentine with courtly love, Valentine's name inherently carries with it connotations of love. When Valentine mocks Proteus's love for Julia in the opening lines, his very name stands in juxtaposition to his words. His name allows the audience to predict not only that he too will fall in love but that his love for Silvia is truer than Proteus's. His name encourages the audience to believe him when he says, "I have loved her ever since I saw her, and still I see her beautiful" (II.i.59-60).

In contrast, the audience doubts Proteus when he tells Julia, "Here is my hand for my true constancy" (II.ii.8), for the one thing it knows about Proteus is that he is a shape-shifter rather than a constant. Proteus, the god of the sea, appears in Book VIII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and features in Homer's *The Odyssey*. He is known for his mutability, due to his association with the changing sea, and the word "protean" now conveys that variability. Shakespeare's Proteus does not escape that connotation. In his first lines, Valentine suggests that Proteus lives in "shapeless idleness" (I.i.8). He himself echoes his shape-shifting nature when he states that he has been "metamorphosed" by Julia (I.i.66). The terms "metamorphosed" seems to have been fairly new at the time of Shakespeare's usage. While it appears in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (I.ii.379), *The Oxford English Dictionary* at one time attributed the term's first usage to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

(Bate 43).[20] In any case, the term hearkens back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the theme of transformation. Hence, an audience reads the key of Proteus's name as one that indicates that his character is one whose form and interests are easily shifted. He confirms the changing nature of his mind when he says that he has conflicting thoughts about being summoned by his father: "My heart accords thereto,/ And yet a thousand times it answers 'No'" (I.iii.90-91).

Conventionally, Valentine is read as faithful, whereas Proteus is understood to be inconstant, and in terms of their love for Silvia (or in Proteus's case both Silvia and Julia) that notion bears out. Proteus's name, however, does more than construct him as feckless. It instead introduces the very nature of metamorphosis into the play. The language of transformation is throughout. Valentine states that his "life is altered now" (II.iv.121), and Speed declares him "metamorphosed with a mistress" (II.i.26-27). Thus, this language does not describe Proteus solely. Rather, this language key—reinforced by Proteus's name—asserts the transformative power of love. It also suggests, moreover, that Proteus and Valentine are not polar opposites but versions of the same self.

It is perhaps no coincidence then that the other key term appearing throughout the play is of the "self." In describing Proteus, Valentine states, "I knew him as myself" (II.iv.55). Valentine's language does not merely claim that he knows Proteus well but that he knows him "as" himself, that they are the same. Similarly, in Proteus's soliloquy declaring his love for Silvia, he states, "Julia I lose, and Valentine I lose./ If I keep them I

[20] Given the murky dating of both *The Jew of Malta* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, it is unclear if Marlowe or Shakespeare coined the term. While, according to Bate, *The Oxford English Dictionary* once attributed it to Shakespeare, the current online edition no longer does.

needs must lose myself/ If I lose them, thus find I by their loss/ for Valentine, myself, for Julia, Silvia" (II.vi.19-22). Here, Proteus struggles to distinguish himself from Valentine. To Gregory Jon Phelps, Proteus in the 2013 ASC production of the play, this speech underscores how young these two men are. They are in the midst of adolescence, in search of their own identities ("The Blackfriars Backstage Pass"). From the above lines, it is clear that Proteus has yet to have had a self that is separate from Valentine.

That interpretation aligns with that of Garber, who identifies the major theme of the play as "losing oneself to find oneself" (*Shakespeare after All* 47). Proteus must lose Valentine in order to find Proteus. This paradox can only be true if they are read as not polar opposites but as versions of each other. As Garber argues, Proteus and Valentine taken together demonstrate the typical young man: "ardent *and* changeable; selfish *and* optimistic; cruel *and* a desire to be forgiven" (46). While their allegorical names at first suggest that they stand in contrast to one another, the other language keys of "metamorphosis" and "self" direct an audience to see them as two sides of the same coin. This understanding again ensures that the audience does not read the play as that of a love triangle, wondering who is most worthy to win the girl; rather, these keys comprised of names and repeated terms access a different frame: the construction of self.

WITTY FOOL OR FOOLISH WIT?

Performance reviews and literary critiques of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* tend to focus on two areas: Valentine's offering of Silvia to Proteus, who has just attempted to rape her, and the two fools. In his scathing dismissal of the play, Bloom recommends that

the play be staged as a “travesty” (36), for “what ensues between the two gentlemen is so manifestly peculiar that Shakespeare cannot have expected any audience to accept this, even as farce” (38). Yet, he finds two rays of light: Launce and his dog Crab, “who has more personality than anyone in the play except Launce himself” (36). Although he identifies Speed as a routine clown, “Launce is so hearteningly a person” (37-38). He concludes that only “Launce and his dog Crab matter” (40). While the handling of the play’s controversial ending will be discussed below, Bloom’s praise for the clown figures (his remarks about Speed notwithstanding) exemplifies many of the critiques of this play. C. L. Barber highlights “Launce’s romance with his dog Crab” (14), Garber praises the shoe puppetry as akin to a play within a play (*Shakespeare after All* 54), reviews of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 1996-98 production note that it underscores the love Launce has for his dog (Jackson), while reviews of the 2012 ASC production celebrate Speed’s witty conversational dialogue (Minton).

In many ways, Speed and Launce are stock characters, but I disagree with the dismissiveness that this term might suggest. The term is often used to diminish the characters’ development and importance to the play. Rather, I argue that Shakespeare purposefully provides keys that allow the audience to frame Speed and Launce as specific clown figures. Discussing these types as frames rather than stock characters allows for critical questions to be raised: What is being contained within each frame, or, in other words, what is being highlighted and why? What is the purpose in accessing one clown frame over another, or, in other words, what are the functions of these clowns within the play?

As the prominent scholars theorizing on the fool have noted, the fool is defined by duality. In detailing the major types of fools throughout history, a dichotomy is often employed. For example, Enid Welsford juxtaposes fool pairs: the ancient parasite and buffoon; the professional fool such as Touchstone and the mythical fool of the collective such as Robin Goodfellow; and the natural fool such as Queen Elizabeth I's Jane and the artificial fool such as Henry VIII's Will Somers. Sandra Billington develops a duality that rests on the two Hebrew terms for "fool": *tam* indicating an innocent fool who has no material motives and *ksl* who uses imitation for evil gain. These two categories also align with the natural fool versus artificial fool dichotomy. John Southworth, although only examining the professional fool, still defines the fool in terms of a similar dichotomy. He contrasts the natural fool who speaks the truth because he/she has no capacity to lie with the clever fool who actively holds a mirror up to the monarch. He further divides the natural fool into two categories: an innocent who is close to God, therefore acting as a source of wisdom, and one who has been forsaken by God and is mentally ill. If these theories are distilled, there are two primary frames of the fool in English history and embedded within English literature. The first is the artificial fool: a wise, licensed sidekick. He is exemplified by Mosca in *Volpone*, the fool in *King Lear*, and Touchstone in *As You like It*. The second is the natural clown: a character primarily of low status and intelligence who often inadvertently states the truth. He is exemplified by Nano in *Volpone*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Dogberry in *Much Ado about Nothing*. In short, it can be said that Speed is framed as an artificial fool and Launce a natural fool.

Another essential characteristic of the fool figure is that he is paired, further confirming his association with duality. As William Willeford writes, fools need a counterpart. While they at times come in pairs, like Laurel and Hardy, they more often are partnered in an act of doubling. Since the fool serves as a reflection, symbolically represented in his mirrored bauble, he must have a counterpart to reflect. The prototypical example of this relationship is the licensed fool to King Lear, with the fool acting so much as a reflection of the king that he has no named identity of his own (42). In this construction, the audience, according to Willeford, identifies with the fool, with him voicing the very questions and concerns that they too hold (xix). It is this claim that underscores the fool's importance to a play.

It also spotlights, however, the issue with dismissing a character as merely a stock character, especially one that is labeled a natural fool. Although audience members may be likely to see themselves as wise as artificial fools, it seems counterintuitive to assume they would identify as natural fools. In fact, one of the most famous diatribes against the clown illustrates this issue. In his *An Apologie for Poetrie*, Sir Philip Sidney writes the following:

> Laughter almost ever cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight hath a joy in it, either permanent or present. Laughter hath only a scornful tickling. …We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight. We delight in good chances, we laugh at mischances; we delight in hear the happiness of our friends, or Country, at which he were worthy to be laughed at that would laugh….For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched Beggar, or a

beggarly Clown? or, against law of hospitality, to jest at strangers, because they speak not English so well as we do? (140-141)[21]

Sidney is condemning laughter as abuse. He views the laughter that is elicited by a natural fool or clown to be one of scorn but one that is elicited by wit to be of delight. In other words, the audience laughs *at* the clown, and Sidney disparages that type of laughter as one that is below a gentleman. If the argument that the audience holds the clown in contempt is true, then audience members cannot identify with the natural fool and he cannot speak any truths for them.

It is here that the focus on framing becomes important, for a frame contains and highlights, but it is not an entirety. A frame structure allows audiences to both laugh *with* and laugh *at*—to both identify *with* and feel superior *to*—these clown figures because they are accessing multiple frames at once: of theater, of character, and of class structure in their lives outside the theater. It is this understanding that allows for an argument such as the one made by Robert Weimann, in which he asserts that the audience laughs with the clowns of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* more often than at them.

To that end, how is the character of Speed framed, and what is his role in the play? As his name suggests, he is quick-witted, and, therefore, would probably be heralded as the type of figure Sidney would celebrate. Within his first three lines, he demonstrates the word play that illustrates this wit. After Proteus reveals that his master Valentine is leaving for Milan, Speed says, "Twenty to one, then, he is shipped already,/

---

[21] For clarity, the spelling has been modernized in this passage, e.g. "euer" has been changed to "ever" and "doe" to "do." While other changes would be appropriate to modernize the passage (e.g. "we delight to hear the happiness" for "we delight in hear the happiness" or standardized capitalization), I have refrained from doing so here.

And I have played the sheep in losing him" (I.i.72-73). Although he uses the word "sheep" to connote "foolish," he is also playing on the similar pronunciation of "ship" and "sheep." Over the next few lines, he plays with Proteus, creating an extended metaphor around shepherds and mutton to describe various master and servant relationships. It is interesting to note that the audience witnesses Speed engage in this play with Proteus before he does so with his master Valentine, perhaps to illustrate again that Proteus and Valentine are each other's counterpart.

It is in Act II, Scene i that Speed best illustrates his ability to be the voice of the audience in his pairing with Valentine. He begins with a verbal prank with a glove, playing on the similar pronunciation of "on" and "one" (II.i.3). He purposely mistakes Valentine's sigh of love, "Ah, Silvia, Silvia!" as a command for him to call out for her (II.i.5-6). He engages in figures of speech based in repetition, such as the following:

> VALENTINE Well, you'll still be too forward.
>
> SPEED And yet I was last chidden for being too slow.
>
> ….
>
> VALENTINE I have loved her ever since I saw her, and still I see her beautiful.
>
> SPEED If you love her you cannot see her.
>
> VALENTINE Why?
>
> SPEED Because love is blind. (II.i.11-12, 59-63).

These exchanges demonstrate Speed's skill in repetition, especially in spinning the words said by another. He turns "too forward" into "too slow," "I have loved her" into "If you

love her," and "still I see her" into "cannot see her." His wit especially evidences when he negates Valentine's line "seeing her beautiful" into "love is blind." This is a line that elicits laughter not only from the audience but from Speed and Valentine. While the audience is invited to laugh at the displays of romantic love, it does not laugh at these characters; it laughs with them. This word play is the type that Sidney would say "delights" and it acts as a key in framing Speed's character.

Weimann, however, goes further than merely identifying Speed's effect on the audience as "delight"; he calls it "collusion" (86). Weimann argues that Speech uses asides to develop complicity between the character and the audience. In an extended get-a-load-of-these-two-love-birds riff, Speed comments upon Valentine's exaggerated welcoming of Silvia and her overly-complimentary response (II.i.86-90). Further, their lovesickness blinds Valentine to Silvia's motives in having him write the letter to the unbeknownst-to-him love interest. Demonstrating his quick-wittedness, Speed deciphers her plot before Valentine does:

> O jest unseen, inscrutable, invisible
>
> As a nose on a man's face or a weathercock on a steeple.
>
> My master sues to her, and she hath taught her suitor,
>
> He being her pupil, to become her tutor.
>
> O excellent device! Was there ever heard a better?—
>
> That my master, being scribe, to himself should write the letter. (II.i.121-126)

ASC's Allison Glazer notes that she always gets a laugh and often applause with these lines, for they demonstrate not merely the quick wit and the quick speech of Speed but

the ridiculousness of the plot and the cluelessness of Valentine ("Blackfriars Backstage Pass"). Yet, Speed admits that everyone should have been able to detect Silvia's plan, as it is as "invisible" as the nose on a "man's face." This admission encourages the audience to align themselves with him. There becomes an unspoken "we," joining Speed with the audience. *We* have detected Silvia's plan. *We* can laugh at these silly displays of love. Further, the audience now recognizes Speed's comments on his master's metamorphosis as the truth it would speak, which importantly ends with: "And now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, that when I look on you I can hardly think you my master" (II.i.27-28). Thus, while Speed acts as the mirror reflecting Valentine's transformation back to him, he also acts as a key directing the audience to a particular framing of love and its transformative powers. Leo Salingar claims that this laughter is only fitting with the themes of English comedy, for falling in love is depicted as a "deviation from a man's normal (English) self, and a lover is laughed at…because he is supposed to have adopted a fashion of behavior which is exotic and affected" (251). Due to Speed's powers of collusion, he convinces the audience members into believing that these constructions of love and of "the gentleman" have been their own belief all along.

In short, the framing of Speed ensures that he acts as a double for the audience, alternately highlighting and obscuring aspects of the play in order to emphasize a particular interpretation of the work. There are many keys evident that indicate that Speed is constructed in the frame of the artificial fool: his name connotes quick-wittedness, his verbal prowess demonstrates his intelligence, and his position as servant places him in the licensed fool space. These aspects are highlighted and the remainder of his character is

obscured. Save for a scene in which he verbally plays with Launce, he only exists in the play in relation to others. This blurring of the remainder of his character allows for the audience to identify and collude with him, and most importantly internalize his words about love's ability to transform the self.

In contrast, the keys surrounding Launce frame him as a natural fool and, more specifically, as one in the Richard Tarlton tradition. The actor and jester Richard Tarlton was a professional fool according to the categories above, but his cultivated "Richard Tarlton" character most aligns with Launce. Andrew Gurr ascribes the terms "cunning rustic clown," "country fool," and "cunning innocent" to the Tarlton figure (*Playgoing* 151). There are three types of jests found on the title page of his *Tarlton's Jests*: "Court-wittie," "Sound Cittie," and "Country-prettie," and while these categories describe the various types of anecdotes found in the jest book, it is the "country-prettie" that directly connotes the natural clown (*Tarlton Project*). Gurr claims that Tarlton was known to make "his audience a single unit through the cohesion of laughter" (156) and, in fact, could elicit laughter just upon his mere appearance. For example, Henry Peacham writes the following:

> Tarlton when his head was only scene,
> The Tirehouse door and Tapestry between,
> Set all the multitude in such a laughter,
> They could not hold for scare an hour after. (qtd. in Gurr 154)[22]

[22] The spelling in this passage has been modernized for clarity.

Peacham indicates that the audience laughed at Tarlton even when only peeking from behind the curtains. This type of laughter—divorced from other factors that would elicit laughter—can only be prompted if there is already a frame of the Tarlton figure or natural clown in place. In Tarlton's case, his reputation and fame preceded him, and a mere glance at his person was enough to prompt an audience to laugh.

Other accounts, however, demonstrate that other natural clowns also had this power. The following is excerpted from Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarum: Satires*:

> midst the silent rout,
>
> Comes leaping in a self-misformed lout,
>
> And laughs, and grins, and frames his mimic face,
>
> And jostles straight into the prince's place:
>
> Then doth the theatre echo all aloud,
>
> With gladsome noise of that applauding crowd.
>
> A goodly hodge-podge, when vile russetings
>
> Are match with monarchs, and with mighty kings;
>
> A goodly grace to sober tragic muse,
>
> When each base clown his clumsy fist doth bruise,
>
> And show his teeth in double rotten row,
>
> For laughter at his self-resembled show. (33-44)[23]

The above passage notes many of the keys associated with the frame of the natural clown: the gaiety found in his laughter and grin, the lower class status implied by his

[23] For clarity, the spelling has modernized in this excerpt.

rotten teeth and the word “base,” and the physicality of “jostling” and “leaping.” What is not mentioned here is the natural clown’s ability to speak truths, even if unwittingly. This idea is perhaps best illustrated by twentieth century comic Red Skelton: “I’ve got the sixth sense, but I don’t have the other five” (qtd. in Willeford 28).

Launce appears in scenes as a comedy team with his dog Crab, in extended exchanges with Speed, and paired with Proteus. In true fool fashion, he is never alone on stage; instead, he always appears with at least one counterpart. His scene with Proteus, his master, is of the least consequence, interestingly. It does, however, illustrate how Launce’s lack of control over language allows him to paradoxically control the conversation (Timpane 197). For example, he misunderstands Valentine’s “nothing” to be his name. He is then at first awed that “nothing” can speak and later threatens to strike “nothing” (III.i.198-204). Later, his malapropism forces his master to tailor his language and the course of the conversation. When Valentine asks for the news, Launce replies, “Sir, there is a proclamation that you are vanished” (III.i.215). With that, Proteus then has to amend his own words to clarify Launce’s: “That thou art banished” (III.i.216). Given that as his servant, however, Launce is the natural pair to Proteus, it is striking that he does not act as such in this scene. It is thus clear that he does not function in the same manner that Speed does with Valentine; as a natural clown—lacking the license of an artificial fool—his role does not play out directly with his master.

He does have a greater rapport with Valentine’s servant Speed, though. For example, Act II, Scene v sees Speed welcoming Launce to Milan; despite being almost fifty lines in length, this is the only plot that occurs. Instead of plot, the audience

witnesses a comedy routine. The BBC television adaptation of the play stages this scene as a joke contest, with Speed goading Launce into making him laugh; Cohen directed his ASC 2012 actors to create a "vaudeville" routine. Much of the humor here lies with Launce punning on "stand" and "staff" as sexual innuendo. The pair work in tandem, with Speed setting up the jokes and Launce delivering the punchlines. Cohen's direction underscored this synchronicity. The two stood side by side, swaying in unison. When Launce would deliver a punchline, the two would rock in silent, uncontrolled laughter, timed to the millisecond. At one point in rehearsals, Allison Glenzer, who played Speed, questioned Cohen's reasoning behind this direction. Cohen argued that it would translate to contagious humor in performance. Not only was he right, but it even elicited laughter from set designers during rehearsals. Equally important, though, is how this staging presents Launce and Speed as partners or counterparts, rather than opposites, as the artificial versus natural fool dichotomy often does. This is further substantiated when the language is examined in this scene. While Launce cannot be claimed to have the same dexterity with words as Speed, he does prove to have better mastery over his language than his scene with Proteus suggests. As his mishearing "lover" for "lubber" shows (II.v.36-39), his malapropisms are at times merely in service of creating a punchline rather than in reflection of a lack of understanding. John Timpane agrees, noting that while he does take words literally, it is impossible to tell if he is being "shrewd or merely thick" (197).

His greatest partnership, however, is with his dog Crab. Their most famous scene is what Garber refers to as a play-within-a-play in Act II, Scene iii (54). In this puppet

show, Launce uses his shoes, a staff, and a hat to depict his leaving home and portray the "cruel-hearted" nature of his dog Crab that shed no tear (II.iii.8). It is fleetingly featured in *Shakespeare in Love*[24] and it allows, and perhaps requires, the greatest amount of improvisation, a skill that Timpane notes is associated with Tarlton himself (198). The rehearsals for the ASC 2012 production emphasized this improvisation. First, it should be noted that the playhouse used untrained, shelter dogs for these performances, and that a new dog "starred" as Crab each week. While other productions opt for a trained dog, a stuffed dog, or even a plastic parrot,[25] the untrained "Crab" demands that the actor playing Launce be ready for whatever reactions the dog has and able to incorporate that into his performance. Cohen directed Benjamin Curns to use the dog's actions and to plan for as many scenarios as possible, for the performance would depend on the dog. If the dog looks interested in Launce's speech, it will be funny because it is contrary to how Launce is describing him; if the dog looks away or appears disinterested, it will confirm his cold-heartedness. Curns soon worked out that if he let go of the leash at "I think Crab" that the dog would look away and seem "sour natured" (II.iii.4-5), if he patted the bone in his pocket, the dog would wag its tale, and that if the dog laid down, he should as well to underscore how he "is the dog" (II.iii.19). While not all of the improvisation

[24] Although the shoe puppetry is not depicted in the scene, Will Kemp is seen in preparation and roars of laughter are heard as the dog viciously bites at his clothing. It is clear from the film that the scene in question is Act II, Scene iii because Queen Elizabeth later falls asleep to Valentine's declarations of love for Silvia in Act III, Scene i.

[25] The Redlands Shakespeare Festival's 2012 production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was pirate-themed.

produced the same effect in performance as in rehearsal, two things held true: the bit was funny and the dog elicited laughs.

Shakespeare in Love's Philip Henslow might be right; perhaps comedy is just "love and a bit with a dog." In many ways, Crab is the licensed fool to his master Launce. Productions often emphasize the dog's reactions in order to create an implied comment upon Launce's antics. For example, in the BBC televised production, Launce and Speed consider if Proteus and Julia will be a match. Launce suggests the following to Speed: "Ask my dog. If he say 'Ay,' it will. If he say 'No,' it will. If he shake his tail and say nothing, it will" (II.v.30-31). It would seems that Launce has covered all of the possibilities, implying that Proteus and Julia will be a match, and Speed agrees. Yet, the production allows for Crab to "comment" upon this game: the camera zooms in for a close up as the dog yawns. In other productions, it is his very silence that "speaks" in derision. The dog here, though, cannot understand the frame of laughter it is eliciting. Although it may understand concepts of "play," the dog playing Crab does not know he is "playing" a part or what his silence connotes. Of course, his inability to understand the frames of theater often will be the very thing that elicits laughter from an audience. However, Crab not only steal scenes; he serves a valuable function as well. He is Launce's partner in a play that so relies upon doubling, which in turn mirrors Launce's own function.

Launce's purpose as a natural fool, who does not have the license to comment directly upon his master's actions, is as to be his master's double. His role as a double becomes clear in what Bloom calls a "burlesque of parallelism" (74). This is first evident

in the shoe puppet show, as the tale of leaving mirrors the parting scene Julia and Proteus enacted in the scene just prior. Moreover, he struggles with his own identity in much the same way that his master Proteus will in the following scene. He says, "I am the dog. No, the dog is himself, and I am the dog. O, the dog is me, and I am myself. Ay, so, so" (II.iii.28-20). Just as Proteus has never been a self without Valentine, Launce's and Crab's identities are intertwined. His reunion with Speed takes place directly after Proteus's reunion with Valentine, while his letter cataloguing the milkmaid's qualities mirrors the letters written by Proteus to Julia and Valentine to Silvia.

Ultimately, the framing of Launce allows for the character to function as a double for Proteus and comment upon the play's themes. Numerous keys are evident in the play that frame Launce as a natural fool: he frequently uses malapropism indicating a lack of control over his language, he engages in physical humor like that seen in the shoe puppet show, and he acts largely separate from the primary action of the play for he is not licensed to comment upon it directly. He does not function alone but instead is always paired with Crab, Speed, or Proteus. While the audience knows much more about his life than that of Speed, he still invites the audience to laugh with him, or, as Weimann argues, to laugh at him *with* him, for he "laughs and grins at his own performance" (84). As his function is to burlesque his master's conflicts, it is imperative that he be a character that the audience can both laugh *with* and *at*, for the *with* implies collusion and identification, while the *at* directs the audience's reactions towards Proteus. In other words, because Launce is a double of Proteus, the audience is actually laughing at Proteus when it laughs

at Launce. Since the artificial fool does not invite an audience to laugh at him, Launce is necessarily framed as a natural fool.

A LETTER, A LADDER, A RAPE, AND A GIFT

Thus far, numerous keys have been identified that ensure that the audience will access frames not only of laughter but of theme. They direct the audience's attention toward certain aspects of the play while underplaying others. What follows is an examination of how these keys not only are evident in individual scenes but act to produce the desired effects of laughter, foster the audience's identification with specific characters, and therefore provide the audience with a frame to accept the play's controversial closing.

In my interview with Cohen of the ASC, held in the final stages of rehearsals for the 2012 production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, he identified four comedic layers in the play. The first is the title, which emphasizes youth rather than the tragedy of an important figure. The second is the vaudevillian humor of Speed and Launce, based in word play and physical comedy, and the third is the farce of Valentine's ladder plot. The fourth occurs early in the play, and yet Cohen identifies it as the deepest kind of comedy. It lies in identification and self-recognition—a moment in which audience members see themselves. Cohen identifies the scene featuring Julia's letter from Proteus as one that best fosters this type of connection. It is a scene in which one laughs not only at Julia but in self-recognition of one's own youthful folly.

In Act I, Scene ii, Julia asks Lucetta for guidance as to whom she should love. When Proteus's name is raised, Julia indicates that he has never pursued her. Lucetta produces a love letter from Proteus, which Julia promptly rejects. Rather than appearing to be interested in Proteus's advancements, Julia rips up the letter. Once Lucetta leaves, Julia places the pieces back together as best she can, to read his words of love, only to deny her interest again upon Lucetta's return. There is much room for physical humor and various productions have staged it in such a way as to highlight this potential. In the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's 1981 production, for example, Julia drags Lucetta, attempting to hem her lady's dress, across the stage as she is distracted by love (Fulton 222). The BBC 1983 broadcast features a Julia who pounds the letter pieces featuring "kind Julia" into the ground, speaks lovingly to the "love-wounded Proteus" piece, whispers ardently to the "passionate Proteus" piece, and kisses the remaining pieces after folding them with care. The 1931 Chinese, silent film adaptation *A Spray of Plum Blossom* does not feature Lucetta; instead the servant is an amalgam of Speed, Launce, and Lucetta. Julia, Valentine's sister here, calls Proteus a "loafer" when in his and his servant's presence, but she frantically pieces the letter together when alone, focusing on a piece that says, "love wounded Proteus."

Although productions often highlight the physicality of the scene, they usually emphasize her emotional struggle as well. The 2012 ASC production is one that constructs a Julia who struggles to balance her insecurity and fear with her young love. While Lucetta relies on woman's intuition—"I think him so because I think him so" (I.ii.24)—Julia's immaturity and youth prohibit her from trusting herself. Lucetta's

wisdom is staged in the authoritative voice of one speaking the truth, and perhaps even well-known idioms of the time: "Fire that's closest kept burns most of all….O, they love least that let men know their love" (I.ii.30, 32). Yet, Tracey Thomason's Julia replies with hesitantly-spoken, seemingly-invented idioms: "His little speaking shows his love but small….They do not love that do not show their love" (I.ii.29, 31). She confirms as much when she exclaims, "I would I knew his mind" (I.ii.33). The ASC's Julia is one who cannot trust her intuition, for she is too young to have developed a reliable one, and needs confirmation and validation from those around her.

This production enacts the piecing of the letter similarly to that seen in the BBC broadcast. Thomason gently rubs pieces of the letter along her cheek, holds them delicately as if they are precious artifacts, breathes in the aroma of the paper, and rolls atop them across the stage. As the text suggests, Julia is a typical teenager in love. For a modern audience, it is reminiscent of rolling atop one's bed, hugging a picture of one's crush tightly, or writing one's name over and over in a diary, only with the crush's last name and hearts dotting the Is. Admittedly, early modern theater-goers may not have done any of the love-sick actions mentioned above in their youth, but they likely enacted other silly displays of lovesickness in the first throes of what is now called "puppy love." Just as likely, embarrassment resulted if that display were to be discovered, and, hence, an audience understands Julia's question of diversion, "Is't near dinner-time?" (I.ii.67), when she is discovered by Lucetta.

As Cohen argues, the laughter elicited here is the deepest kind of all, for it is grounded in identification and self-recognition. While the fools of Speed and Launce

invite identification and collusion to laugh, a scene such as this one invites self-reflection. Audience members laugh not merely at Julia but at themselves. Thus this laughter is not *with* and *at* a character, but *at* and *inward*. It this type of identification that ensures that an audience will feel betrayal at Proteus's fickle love, humiliation at witnessing Julia-disguised-as-a-page woo Silvia in Proteus's steed, and joy at her reunion with Proteus in the closing of the play.

The exaggerated display of Julia's love in the letter scene hinges on farce. Although farcical moments occur throughout *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the extended dialogue between Valentine—the lover of Silvia—and the Duke—the father intent on keeping them apart—is perhaps the best illustration of the frame of farce. This love triangle is identified by Northrop Frye in his "The Argument of Comedy" as being the normative starting plot point in New Comedy. He writes, "New Comedy unfolds from what may be described as a comic Oedipus situation which has as a central theme the successful effort of a young man to outwit an opponent and possess the girl of his choice" (93). Valentine's plan to use a rope ladder[26] to access Silvia's window in the dark of night and then run away together perfectly illustrates this New Comedy framing device. Further, Salingar notes that a daughter often escapes from an overbearing father figure to the woods, where she is then united with her love and reconciled with her father. Salingar names Silvia's escape into the woods in order to escape the Duke and his chosen mate for

[26] The "ladder of love" is first referenced in *Ladder of Love* in Plato's *Symposium* (210a-211b). In Plato's ladder of love, the lowest run represents the basest form of love, while the highest rung is love in its purest form. Since then, the ladder has become a conventional symbol of love. Symbols themselves can be seen as keys to how a scene, character, or theme is to be framed.

her, Thurio, as the quintessential example of this trope (28). Yet, for both of these comedic conventions to occur as they do in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the rope ladder plot must fail. Although it is Valentine's method of outwitting the overbearing father of Silvia, it is its failure that predicates Silvia's escape into the woods. Shakespeare chooses to not only have the rope ladder fail but fail in a spectacularly farcical fashion.

Interestingly, what can arguably be called the most extensive treatise on farce, Albert Bermel's *Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen*, does not offer a definition of the term. Bermel writes, "Being a destroyer and detractor, farce is a negative force, hard, if not impossible, to trap and pin down. I haven't come across a plausible definition, and I won't attempt one" (14). Based on the definition offered by *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Bermel's trepidation seems founded: "A dramatic work (usually short) which has for its sole object to excite laughter; an interlude." This definition seems incredibly broad and could be applied to almost any type of humorous production. Most notably, though, farce lacks the moral component of satire or what many identify as the ridiculing nature of parody since laughter is farce's "sole object." Matthew Bevis also avoids defining the term, but he emphasizes the absurd nature of farce and heralds its ability to "make delusion seem ludic" (44-45). Can a concept so lacking a definition be labeled a frame? I would argue that it indeed can as the keys present in strips often identified as farcical are consistent. While the metaphorical frame of this organizational structure may be less defined than others—I am picturing a frame made of fuzzy, porous cotton balls rather than a streamlined one of stainless steel—it is indeed there. For example, the word "ridiculous" is often linked with farce as is its special relationship

with the concept of suspension of disbelief. Additionally, Bermel notes that it “flouts the bounds of reason, good taste, fairness, and what we commonly think of as sanity” (21). Perhaps it then can be said that farce is the depiction of the unreasonable, the distasteful, the unfair, and/ or the insane for the purpose of eliciting laughter. It is definitely a frame of play, or the unserious.[27]

No scene in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* illustrates this frame of farce better than that of the rope ladder in Act III, Scene i. The text provides numerous keys to the scene’s farcical nature and the following analysis will be informed further by two productions: the BBC television adaptation and the ASC Summer 2012 production. It is noteworthy that the more romantic and somber Chinese adaptation *A Spray of Plum Blossoms* omits this scene entirely, perhaps because it is one that cannot be stripped of the keys accessing the frame of farce.

Both the BBC television adaptation and the ASC production make a point of cluing in the audience to the ladder hidden beneath Valentine’s cloak upon his entrance. In the BBC television adaptation, Valentine shows the viewers the rope ladder under his cloak and then covers it back up before approaching the Duke. When closed, the cloak appears to be obscuring something underneath. Its form is bumpy and misshapen and stands in stark contrast to the figure and clothing style evident in Valentine up to this point. The ASC production features a Valentine in a comically large cloak—the

[27] It is a frame that early modern audiences would have been able to recognize easily, as well. Its long history began in the satyr plays of Rome and it gained popularity in the French *fabliaux*, which had been popular in England for centuries and is prominent in Chaucer. Early modern audiences would be especially responsive to farce as it would soon be established as a key hallmark of the city comedy (Bliss 164).

exaggerated size of the cloak being the key for an audience to understand it as ridiculous. Even still, the rope ladder featuring wooden slats is still visible in the gaps of the cloak. Valentine also has the shape of a bumpy pregnant woman, as the rope ladder has been wrapped around his body numerous times, the reasons for which will be evident below. Both stagings of Valentine's entrance use keys signaling the over-the-top nature of farce. Interestingly, the text does not offer a stage direction here that would prescribe the two above interpretations. Instead of reading as "Valentine enters in a cloak hiding a visible rope ladder," stage directions noting his entrance are entirely missing. Most editions have added a stage direction such as Norton's "Enter Valentine," but even here the stage direction lacks instruction for the player's use of the two props. However, Shakespeare does provide in-text direction that undoubtedly has influenced the staging of this scene. For example, the ladder is mentioned by Valentine himself at line 122 as a solution to aid the Duke in approaching his lady's window at night: "Why then, a ladder quaintly made of cords/ To cast up, with a pair of anchoring hooks,/ Would serve to scale another Hero's tower" (122-124). However, it is clear that the Duke creates a story that will prompt this response from Valentine, and he begins that story a full 46 lines earlier and only 26 lines after Valentine enters. Indeed, most productions allow the Duke to visibly react to Valentine's ensemble during Valentine's opening lines in the exchange. While it is true that Proteus informs the Duke of Valentine's plan just a few lines earlier (38-47), the Duke's method only makes sense if he believes Valentine is wearing the rope ladder at that moment. Proteus does not mention that the rope ladder will be hidden by the cloak, and it is the Duke's insistence upon feeling the cloak upon him (136) that finally reveals

the ladder and the letter hidden within.[28] While it is possible for the Duke to remain clueless as to the contents beneath the cloak up to this point,[29] the rope ladder does need to be visible to the audience for the humor in this scene to work. Unless the production intends to stage the Duke as a fool who serendipitously stumbles across Valentine's plan and props for escape, Valentine must be foolish enough here to believe that his over-sized cloak will convincingly hide a rope-ladder that not only the audience but the Duke can see. In either scenario, a suspension of disbelief must be expected of the audience for Shakespeare has not provided any evidence prior that either of these two characters is dense. The over-sized cloak, visible rope-ladder, and the Duke's reaction therefore serve as keys to the audience that this is a scene of farce.

In fact, it is Valentine's attempts to conceal the ladder, the ladder's obvious visibility, and the Duke's acknowledgement—at least to the audience—of the ladder's existence that elicit laughter during this exchange. For example, in the ASC production, the Duke pointedly taps Valentine's chest for emphasis each time he says "thee" (59, 73, 84). While this tap would normally create a dull thud from the finger making contact with the wood slats beneath the cloak, the actor playing Valentine created a much more

---

[28] Shakespeare does not provide a stage direction indicating the reveal of the rope ladder and letter. Instead, editors have added a stage direction like that of the Norton: "He lifts Valentine's cloak and finds a letter and a rope-ladder." However, the Duke's next line contains at least part of that information: "What letter is this same? What's here?" (137).

[29] In the Summer 1981 Alabama Shakespeare Festival production, the Duke is staged as a befuddled fool. Not only is he clueless to Valentine's plan to steal Silvia away using the rope ladder for access to her room until the last possible moment, but he also has difficulties following Proteus's plan to disparage Valentine (Fulton 222).

audible noise by knocking the wood slat with his own knuckles surreptitiously beneath the cloak. This loud noise continuously serves as a signal to the audience that no attempts for realism are being made here. Instead, the noise is an exaggeration—a key signaling the unrealistic nature of not only the sound produced but the pretense of both characters to ignore its implications. In the BBC television adaptation, the Duke instructs Valentine to sit on a bench next to him with "Stay with me awhile" (57). However, Valentine struggles to sit, as the bulk of the rope ladder makes it difficult for him to bend at the waist. While the struggle and the Duke's reaction are both noticeable, the viewers are expected to suspend disbelief. The longer the Duke waits to ask what is beneath Valentine's cloak—the logical question begging to be asked throughout the exchange—the longer the viewers must suspend disbelief. In both productions, it is the lack of that question juxtaposed with the choices to stage the rope ladder as what might be called visibly invisible that acts as a key signaling the frame of farce.

Both productions include at least one more key of exaggeration before the pretense is abandoned. In the BBC television adaptation, Valentine surprises himself when he suggests that a "ladder quaintly made of cords" could help the Duke access his lady's window. That surprise causes him to briefly drop the cloak at "cast up" (118), revealing the ladder. Although the Duke does a double-take, he carries on as if he does not notice. It is a moment that defies credulity, but the frame of farce relies on a lack of credulity. The ASC production takes a different approach. As Valentine first enters the scene, Silvia can be seen in the balcony, indicating that it is her window. As Valentine begins to offer the Duke advice about how to approach his lady's window, Valentine

continually gestures towards Silvia's window, the balcony in which the audience just saw her standing. The parallels between the Duke's and Valentine's situations are similar enough to strain credulity; an audience member must wonder how Valentine is foolish enough not to notice the overt similarities. However, staging the scene with Valentine continually gesturing to the window he is intent on entering at any moment takes that strain to new heights. While a lack of credulity, or what Bermel calls the sane, can detract from the effect of a play, it has the opposite effect in a farce. If an audience member has at least some limited understanding of farce, meaning that the frame of farce is pre-existing, then he or she will be able to recognize the keys offered in the text and production as that of play. Those keys allow the audience to access the pre-existing organizational frame of farce to uncover, as Goffman states, what is going on here. If the audience can access the frame of farce, then the exchange's unrealistic and, at times, insane nature will not detract from the play but instead prompt laughter and enjoyment.

Both productions also stage the reveal of the rope ladder using keys of obvious play. While the BBC television adaptation creates a pseudo-dance that allows the Duke to twirl Valentine in such a way as to release him from the rope ladder, the ASC production has the Duke, holding one end of the rope ladder, walk around Valentine, unraveling the fifteen-foot long ladder as he reads the letter aloud. Both stagings allow for this moment to elicit laughter rather than focus on the danger that an audience knows is coming. The dismissal from the Duke, the banishment of Valentine, the betrayal of Proteus, and the eventual dangers of the woods hang in the periphery but are delayed as long as possible.

By implementing keys signaling the frame of farce, the text and the staged productions discussed here ensure that this exchange will prompt laughter rather than fear and dread.

Given the ending of the play, though, would fear and dread have been more appropriate? Proteus's attempted rape of Silvia and Valentine's offering of Silvia to her would-be attacker have perplexed audiences and critics alike for centuries. Garber sums up the nearly universal reaction to Valentine's offering of Silvia to the man who just attempted to rape her:

> And yet less than twenty lines later this same Valentine will deliver himself of the play's most astonishing line, one that has sent critics and editors scurrying to find an explanation (a scribal error, a textual variant, a mistaken speaker, a mere stratagem on Valentine's part) of what he could possibly mean. (*Shakespeare after All* 50)

The line in question is Valentine's "All that was mine in Silvia I give thee" (V.iv.83) coming so quickly after Proteus's "I'll woo you like a soldier, at arm's end,/ And love you 'gainst the nature of love: force ye./ …. I'll force thee yield to my desire" (V.iv.57-59). While Valentine's meaning is far more ambiguous than Proteus's, for scholars can "scurry" to explain his words, attempted rape is the only way to explain Proteus's. Its controversy is so far-reaching that some productions, such as the South Florida Shakespeare Festival, omit Valentine's "absurd gift" of Silvia to Proteus all together (Endel 468).

How have other productions approached these final moments? The Alabama Shakespeare Festival staged both the attempted rape and Valentine's offering of Silvia to

her attempted rapist for comedic effect. The attack's darkness is blunted by the appearance of "Sebastian," who jumps atop Proteus as he has Silvia pinned to the ground. When Valentine says, "Ruffian! Let go that rude uncivil touch," he is not only addressing Proteus, but "Sebastian" as well. This production choice is a "rescue from a ridiculous situation" (Fulton 222). Similarly, Valentine's controversial offering of Silvia to Proteus is played as slapstick as both men receive slaps from their respective ladies in its quick aftermath (Fulton 223). In the televised BBC production, editing highlights certain characters and their reactions while obscuring others, thereby blunting the scene's impact. For example, Julia is seen at line 18, but then not again until line 61, when she is foregrounded in the shot; further, Silvia's face is not seen in reaction to Proteus's attack. Instead, only close ups of Proteus and Valentine are shown, followed by Julia's reaction. In fact, Silvia's reaction is not seen until line 112, when Proteus looks to stroke her face to compare her to Julia. Although she backs away slightly from him, her direct reaction to both the attempted rape and Valentine's offering are excised from the production, thereby removing the most effective means of promoting an audience's identification with Silvia. Finally, Cohen's ASC production approaches the play as a fairy tale. To create distance between the modern audience's world and that of the play, period costumes are worn. This choice, alongside emphasizing the rape but downplaying the giving of Silvia, allows for the ending to be accepted.

An ending, certainly, should not merely be accepted but provide a logical close to the characters' story arcs and coherent resolution to the play's themes. Bate's tactic in resolving the play's problematic close is to embrace its threat of violence. As he notes in

his *Shakespeare and Ovid*, Shakespeare comedies reverse Ovid: whereas in Ovid "Adonis is gored, Actaeon dismembered, [and] Io raped," in comedy, "Shakespeare is the one who lets his characters off the hook" (119). He argues that the attempted rape of Silvia[30] by Proteus is indicative of a tenet of Shakespearean comedy: "true love does not run smooth, but drastic violence is always forestalled and those who intend it are converted or expelled" (120). Hence, Proteus attempts to rape Silvia but is not only thwarted before he can enact the violence (119), but redeemed shortly afterwards. Other critics follow Bloom's facetious suggestion to treat the play as a travesty or farce. For example, Fulton argues that the ASF staging of the final scene is especially in keeping with the tone of the play, in that it "poked fun at everything it handled" (222). Garber's approach is slightly more tempered, suggesting that it is clear that no one is serious here, and, simultaneously, everyone is serious (*Shakespeare after All* 50).

Although Bate's theory about the threat of violence holds true for Proteus's actions, it does not explain Valentine's offer of his love to the man who attempted to rape her moments earlier. Redemption and forgiveness are one thing; offering a victimized lover to her would-be rapist is another. Thus, many have provided alternate readings to Valentine's line, "All that was mine in Silvia I give thee." Norton offers the following interpretation: "all that was mine, in the person of Silvia, all the love I gave to Silvia" (Greenblatt et al. 156). In other words, Valentine might be offering his love to Proteus, claiming it to be the same intensity that he feels for Silvia. Alternatively, Valentine might be wishing for Proteus to have the same love he has in Silvia with someone else. Out of

---

[30] Bate incorrectly identifies Julia as the object of the attempted rape.

context, these suggested readings are persuasive. It is the type of overture Valentine, a man who believes in the grand gesture, would make to demonstrate his forgiveness. The other suggested interpretation by Norton, though, fits the other keys from the scene: "All my claims to Silvia" I give thee (Greenblatt et al. 156). Julia's outburst of "O me unhappy!" (V.iv.84) and her subsequent fainting only logically respond to Valentine's offering of Silvia to Proteus, not merely forgiving Proteus. While this offer on the surface offends audiences' and critics' sensibilities, it is the ending that the frames in the play have prepared the audience to accept.

As the keys in the play have established, the audience is to frame this play as a comedy centered on Proteus and Valentine. The title directs them to focus on only these two men and their youth, and only these two characters appear in the opening lines. These opening lines guide the audience to focus on certain questions, those asking what it means to be a gentleman and questioning love's ability to infect a man's wit. The names of the two main characters and the language of "self" and "metamorphosis" highlight the theme of the search for identity, not apart from one's romantic partner but from one's counterpart. The doubling embodied in Speed allows the audience to voice its warnings about the folly of love, while the doubling embodied in Launce illustrates the foolishness of love. And, while there are scenes that invite audience identification with Julia, there are no such scenes for Silvia, a character who never speaks after the attempted rape.

To be clear, the play has been framed as a love story, but it is between Proteus and Valentine, not the love triangle involving Silvia nor the love between Julia and Proteus. Thus, when Proteus understands the shame of his actions, he apologizes to

Valentine, not Silvia (V.iv.74), and therefore it is Valentine's place to forgive. Just as a lover would give all that he has to his intended, Valentine offers his most prized love to Proteus. The reunion then that is expected at the end of a comedy is not evidenced in a wedding but in the re-pairing of Valentine and Proteus.

Even though an application of frame theory may not remove the unsavory taste the ending of this play may bring, resolve its minor inconsistencies, nor explain its rushed ending, it does work to explain the seemingly inexplicable ending, the element that has most been cited for its poor reception. While many of these same keys and frames are evidenced in other early modern plays, there are, of course, numerous others that do not appear in this work. Thus, my intention here is not to identify every frame of laughter that can be found in early modern drama. Instead, my hope is that this one close analysis employing frame theory illustrates how playwrights embed keys within their work to access specific frames of theater, laughter, and theme.

CHAPTER TWO

"Laughter through Tears": A Physiological Connection

Towards the end of *Steel Magnolias*, an American play first produced in 1987 and adapted into a 1989 film starring Julia Roberts and Sally Field, Robert Harling elicits from both his audience and characters a truly precise emotion. M'Lynn has lost her daughter Shelby to kidney failure and she is surrounded by her friends Truvy, Oiser, Clairee, and Annelle at the funeral. She is despondent, guilt-ridden, and angry. Through tears, she proclaims that she's so angry she wants something to hit. When Clairee offers up their cantankerous friend Oiser as the punching bag, M'Lynn—followed by all except Oiser herself—cannot help but laugh. M'Lynn attempts to apologize for the roller coaster of emotions, but Truvy responds, "Laughter through tears is my favorite emotion."

It could perhaps be argued that such a modern example is an odd way to introduce a discussion of emotion in early modern drama. My hope, however, is that it will soon be clear that the example is not anachronistic for two reasons. First, the line is arguably the most quoted from Harling's work, and I would contend that its fame is due to its ability to precisely define a very human experience, one which most audience members have felt and enjoyed but perhaps had never before named so succinctly. Second, the line names a connection between laughter and crying that has been used by playwrights for centuries. While the connection may not have always been understood as one of physiology—and as discussed below even today some aspects are more understood than others—laughter's ability to create tears, the impulse to laugh in the midst of crying, and the human body's quick access to crying following laughter are all seemingly understood by great writers.

Interestingly, the phenomenon works in both directions, meaning that not only do humans often have the impulse to laugh in the midst of emotional crying, but that laughter itself can allow for emotional tears.

In the pages that follow, three examples from early modern drama will be analyzed through the lens of the "laughter through tears"[31] phenomenon: John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and William Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Winter's Tale*. Ford's work especially illustrates the ways in which laughter allows quick access to emotional tears[32] in the scenes showcasing the death of its clown figure Bergetto. Act IV, Scene i of *Much Ado about Nothing* will serve as an exemplar of laughter as a relief from tension and sadness, a theory most notably offered by Sigmund Freud. Finally, an analysis of the jarring shift in tone that occurs in Act III Scene iii of *The Winter's Tale* will be informed by both relief theory and physiology in order to fully uncover the connection between laughter and tears.

What is remarkable about these three moments? On the one hand, these moments are not exceptional; the phenomena discussed here occur in the works of numerous playwrights and are not confined to the early modern period. On the other hand, they are outstanding examples of the phenomena in two ways. First, these moments have come to be known as the turning point or hallmark scene of their respective plays. They are the scenes that demand the most intense attention from directors and actors. They include the

---

[31] To be clear, I will be labeling all of the connections between laughter and crying with the term "laughter through tears," regardless of which response comes first.

[32] I emphasize "emotional tears" here to differentiate them from the tears that are often expressed through the act of laughing.

line—or stage direction in the case of *A Winter's Tale*—that is the most identified with their respective plays: Poggio's "Oh, my master, my master, my master!"; Beatrice's "Kill Claudio"; and "*Exit, pursued by a bear*." The second, however, is perhaps equally important but nevertheless indicates the subjective nature of a topic such as this one: these are the moments demonstrating these phenomena to which I have reacted most strongly. While I will argue below that the phenomena is one of human experience grounded in physiology, the truth is that laughing and crying is not only a human experience—in that certain generalities can be made about its causes, functions, and impulses—but that it is also an individual one. Individuals in an audience will have diverse experiences, and audiences from night to night will react differently. The impulse to laugh and weep is in many ways subjective and personal. Thus, it was important that the moments selected for this analysis in particular were ones that prompted the laughter through tears reaction in me as an audience member.

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN LAUGHTER AND TEARS

The link between laughter and tears is a connection grounded in physiology, for while the two physical reactions seem opposite as they are prompted by very different emotions, they actually share much in common. Hence, although the matter of what makes us laugh is still important and will be discussed in this analysis, the focus at first will be on the physiological and anatomical impulses that allow for and cause laughter and weeping.

How are laughter and weeping created? Early modern physicians' answers to that question would rely primarily upon Joubert's *Treatise on Laughter* (1579) and Timothie Bright's *Treatise on Melancholy* (1586). Joubert outlines the following physiological occurrences to create laughter: the laughter begins in the heart and moves though the diaphragm in spasms, and those movements then affect the lungs, causing air to be expressed as audible laughter. Bright outlines a six-step process for weeping: the melancholy, which begins in the brain, causes tears in the eyes; it then moves through the chest; it forces facial convulsions; it causes vision to blur; it is expelled through the nose and mouth in mucous and saliva; and finally it shakes the whole chest in sobs. Laughter, then, was thought to begin in the heart and move upwards, while weeping was thought to begin in the brain and move downwards. While laughter was believed to be the final step in a physiological process, tears were believed to be the first in a different one. However, they both were believed to work towards healing humours that were imbalanced, and the involuntary physical response was thought to be provide insight into a person's inner turmoil and soul. In other words, a person's well-being could be judged by his/her laughter or weeping. This idea prompted an ambivalent attitude towards these physical responses of emotion; they were healing, but they also were indicative of a sickness, and the symptoms in and of themselves were thought to be able to cause death.[33]

Modern science would disagree with much of Joubert's and Bright's findings—although their descriptions of facial gestures corresponding to laughter and tears is fairly

---

[33] My understanding of early modern theories of laughter and weeping are informed by the following: Joubert's *Treatise on Laughter*, Bright's *Treatise on Melancholy*, Matthew Steggle's *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres*, and Gail Kern Paster's *The Body Embarrassed.*

close to those made in modern studies. Modern science also has not completely answered the questions of what makes us weep or laugh, but there is much that is known. The first is that they are both reactions that belong solely to the human, a similar claim to the one made by laughter theorists about laughter discussed in the Introduction. Although there are numerous tales, usually told by their owners or handlers, depicting animals weeping or laughing, none have been scientifically documented. Perhaps the most well-known story of a weeping animal is that of Sadie the elephant, whom her trainer George Lewis claims wept when punished. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy's *When Elephants Weep* details this story and even they acknowledge that Sadie probably did not actually weep. Instead, this tale seems to be the product of projection and personification. Instead, while there is much disagreement within laughter studies, and the smaller field of crying studies, the one claim that is practically universally agreed upon is that these impulses are only exhibited by the human. Charles Darwin labels weeping as one of the "special expressions of man," despite discussing the special expressions of animals extensively in his famous *The Expressions of the Emotion of Man and Animals*. Although he identifies expressions of joy, affection, anger, terror, pain, and astonishment in animals, he only identifies weeping as being of the human. Tom Lutz, author of one of the few texts devoted to the biology, cultural expectations and implications, and functions of crying in his *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*, agrees, writing that while "weeping is a human universal," it is "exclusively human" (17).

How does the human body laugh and cry, and how do these expressions differ from other expressions of emotion such as joy, love, anger, or sympathy? In his *Laughing*

and Crying, Helmuth Plessner writes, “The eruptive character of laughing and crying links them closely with movements that express emotion….Nevertheless, their form of expression separates them from emotional expressive movements” (23). Most human emotions are reflected in corresponding facial expressions, gestures, or voice tone, just as laughing and weeping reflect and convey particular emotions. Yet, laughter and weeping are exceptional in that they are what Plessner calls “fixed,” having more in common with involuntary reflexes such as blushing, sneezing, or vomiting than the furrow of a brow conveying confusion (23-24). Indeed, a laughing or crying person is not in control of these reactions, unless they are being mimicked. They are also unique in that they are both of the body—physiologically explained in the same manner as sweating or coughing—and of the “mind” and “soul.” As Plessner writes, “It is not my body but I who laugh and cry, and for a reason, ‘about something’” (25). And, while the physiology of laughing and crying will be explained here as it is vital to uncovering how the two are connected, it is important to note what scientists do not yet know. As Plessner explains, it cannot be answered why “we laugh at a joke and not weep” (28). How exactly emotion corresponds and triggers the physiological reaction has not been uncovered, and perhaps it never will be.

The physiology of laughing and crying demonstrates that each is comprised of two parts: laughing is comprised of a vocalized sound and corresponding facial and body movements, while crying is comprised of tear production and corresponding facial and body movements. Interestingly, as will be seen below, the corresponding facial and body movements and expressions for each are remarkably similar. To begin, the characteristics

that they do not share will be discussed first; however, as will become clear, even the distinction between crying and laughing is not as well-defined as it would at first seem.

To explain the production of tears in weeping, Lutz outlines its three types: basal, reflex, and psychic. Basal tears provide continuous lubrication, and reflex tears are produced in response to a physical agitation, such as the presence of a strong chemical or a grain of sand (67). In contrast, “physical or emotional tears are those caused by, and communicating, specific emotional states” (68). All three types of tears are produced by the lacrimal system that both produces and drains away tears. Small lacrimal glands largely produce the basal tears while the larger one primarily produces reflex and psychic tears (68-70). The basal tears do not appear to be important to the laughing through tears phenomenon. However, an understanding of the main lacrimal gland does provide a physiological indication of how these two responses are linked. Located behind the frontal bone and the eyeball, the main lacrimal gland secretes tears when pressure is placed upon it. When emotion is strong enough, it is thought that an increase of blood flow puts pressure on the gland, thereby causing tears. Interestingly, this is the same gland that produces tears in the middle of a “hard” laugh—one that puts pressure on the eye thereby triggering reflex tears. The facial expressions causing this tear production will be discussed further below.

Darwin’s work predominantly concerns itself with the documentation of the physical body in the midst of laughter. Although he writes that laughter “is produced by a deep inspiration followed by short, interrupted, spasmodic contractions of the chest, and especially the diaphragm,” it is the movement of the body, namely the chest and

diaphragm, rather than the sound created by the movement that interests him. He notes that the head "nods to and fro," "the lower jaw often quivers up and down," and the upper lip is "somewhat raised" while the corners of the mouth are up and back. He observes that the "upper and lower orbicular muscles of the eyes are at the same time more or less contracted" and he claims a connection "between the orbiculars, especially the lower ones, and some of the muscles running to the upper lip," indicating that as the lower orbicular muscles of the eye are contracted, the upper lip naturally is raised. While he claims that these facial movements can be mimicked, for example by an actor, the one movement that is difficult to reproduce is the contraction of the lower orbicular and its effect on the upper lip. This scientific observation illuminates the expression "the smile doesn't reach the eyes," often offered when someone is faking a smile.

The contraction of the eye muscles and the raising of the upper lip are found in pictures depicting his subjects both laughing and weeping. In fact, there are a number of pictures in which it is difficult to determine if the subject is crying or laughing, as the facial expressions are similar in each. Darwin notes these similarities as well, extensively detailing the orbicular muscle contractions evident in weeping and their effect on the drawing of the upper lip on infants screaming. He also explains the sparkle often seen in one's eye after laughter with the following: "The brightness seems to be chiefly due to their tenseness, owing to the contraction of the orbicular muscles and to the pressure of the raised cheeks." In his observations of weeping, he explains tears in a markedly similar fashion. What is interesting here is that the physiological reactions created by laughing or

crying on facial musculature both create the same type of pressure on the lacrimal gland to create tears.[34]

Although more than a century old, Darwin's work detailing the corresponding facial movements to laughter and weeping and their respective ability to produce tears is still believed to be accurate today. From the research detailing the physiology of these two impulses, the following physiological connections between laughter and weeping are known: laughing and weeping are both human, largely involuntary, physiological responses, indicating a lack of control of the body; laughing and weeping may arise from different impetuses, but the physiological effects on the facial muscles are similar; and, therefore, while laughter and weeping often trigger the lacrimal glands differently, they do both access tears from the same gland.

'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE: LAUGHTER SUCCUMBS TO TEARS

Dating the first performance of John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* has proven difficult.[35] The lack of surviving evidence documenting playgoers' experiences in early performances does not aid the matter. In 1639 it is included in a list of plays belonging to

[34] It should be noted that Darwin is less convincing in explaining the production of tears without the contraction of the orbicular muscles—a sorrow-driven cry that does not develop into violent weeping—for he suggests that the tears are produced out of muscle memory, an idea that since has been dismissed (Lutz 80).

[35] Some scholars such as Gerald Eade Bentley have extrapolated that the first recorded performance was in 1633, since the earliest printed edition is dated as such (Hopkins 4-5). 1615 is based on a puzzling line from Ford's dedication in the 1633 edition, in which he claims the play as "these firstfruits of my leisure in the action." Does this line imply the play is the first written by Ford, which would make a dating of 1615 possible, or does it identify the play as his first independent work, in which case 1627 would be a likely date? Moreover, should the term "firstfruits" be taken literally?

the Cockpit theater (Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* 163), suggesting that the play was still being performed, and, therefore, profitable at the time. Yet, the earliest surviving review of the play is recorded by Samuel Pepys, who attended the play on Monday, 9 September, 1661. Unfortunately, his review is rather brief: "Salisbury Court play house, where was acted the first time ''Tis pity She's a Whore,' a simple play and ill acted." Then, as Kate Wilkinson notes, the play is "largely neglected until the twentieth century," an absence that is usually explained by its taboo[36] subject matter (35). In fact, the play is not revived in Britain until the Phoenix Society produces the play in 1923 (White 109). All of which is to say, all information about the play's early performances have been lost; we do not know when (1615? 1627? 1633?) or where (The Phoenix? The Cockpit?) it was first performed, or, more importantly for this discussion, how early modern audiences reacted to themes of the play, specific characters, or particular scenes.

One facet of the play that has received much critical attention is its relationship with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. While the play is surely influenced by other works—Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* perhaps being the most oft cited (Hopkins 3; Maus 1905; White 11)—its invocation of the star-crossed lovers of Romeo and Juliet is most prominent. Both plays feature young lovers kept apart by outside

[36] It seems that the broaching of this topic is not what makes Ford's play so controversial. After all, many plays of the time either hint at or explicitly discuss incest, with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* being two prominent examples. However, the difference lies in Ford's treatment of the incest, for the love between Giovanni and Annabella is presented as a manifestation of the corruptions surrounding them, corruptions that in the context of the play are more morally problematic that that of the love between siblings. Additionally, while the relationship is never condoned, it is not condemned by the text either.

forces: in *Romeo and Juliet* it is a long-brewing family feud and in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* it is society's condemnation of love between a brother and a sister. Both sets of young lovers seek counsel from a friar and a nurse, and both, of course, die at the end. Giovanni's murder of Annabella, witnessed onstage and revisited again with the startling image of her "heart upon his dagger," however, is one of horror and the grotesque rather than the often romanticized deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

Yet, there is one more similarity between these two plays, for, as Hopkins points out, "Bergetto's death is not unlike Mercutio's" (3). However, while Mercutio's death has received a great amount of attention, Bergetto's has received far less. This lack of scholarly attention stems from many likely causes. Perhaps the largest explanation for this dearth of attention is the fact that John Ford's plays are undervalued as a whole. Lisa Hopkins, editor of one of the very few scholarly anthologies devoted to the play, jokes that "to say that one works on John Ford, even in academic circles, can still sometimes lead to being asked what one thinks of *Stagecoach* or *The Quiet Man*" (14). This scene in particular is understudied as it does not inform the theme of incest, the most widely studied theme of the work. In addition, it is the death of a minor character, one so minor that many productions remove the character and the scene entirely, as seen in the 1972 Glasgow Citizens' Company and 2013 Cheek by Jowl stage productions and Giuseppe Patroni Griffi's 1973 film adaptation.[37] Lastly, it is the death of a comic character in a

[37] Productions often omit the Bergetto character for a few reasons. First, if the performance is abridged for time, his story arc can be excised from the play without impacting the other large themes of the work fairly easily. Second, his scenes are so grounded in the comic that many directors find the tonal shifts to be too great for a cohesive performance, as noted by Cheek by Jowl director Declan Donnellan ("Cheek by

scene that is firmly grounded in the comic, areas that predominantly receive less scholarly attention. Yet, in performance, it clearly has the same impact on the audience as the death of Mercutio, and serves as the turning point of the play. Bergetto's is the first death on a stage that will soon be littered with blood and bodies, and it is that death that signals to an audience that tragic repercussions will befall all of the play's characters. Indeed, as Desmond McCarthy notes in his review of the 1923 Phoenix Society production, the death of "that fluttering fool…is far more moving than the deaths of the noble, tragic characters" (qtd. in White 109).

To fully understand the emotional effects of this scene, it must be placed within the context of the character's arc as a whole. Bergetto is the nephew to Donaldo, a wealthy and noble citizen of Parma, who recommends him as a suitor for Florio's daughter Annabella. However, his recommendation signals to the audience that not only would he be ill-suited, the character will be one of laughter: "Here's hope yet, if my nephew would have wit;/ But he is such another dunce, I fear/ He'll never with the wench" (I.iii.23-25). Bergetto quickly proves himself to be the dunce his uncle says in his very first lines, showing such excitement at hearing the tale offered by a gossiping barber of a horse whose head "stands just behind where his tail" (I.iii.39-40). His wealth and status have allowed him the freedom to revel in his favorite amusements: May-games, hobbyhorses, and the ability to "tickle" a young maiden with a joke until he had almost

---

Jowl"). While that production captured all of the bloody decadence and underscored the themes of innocence and corruption for which the play is famous, the performance suffered from Bergetto's absence. Not only was the play void of an example of untainted love, but the audience never experiences the sorrow elicited by his death and Poggio's reaction. Instead, Putana's murder scene is extended, and the production capitalizes on the grotesque and horror this event creates.

"burst her belly with laughing" (I.iii.47, 51, 54-55). He is, as his uncle says, a fool (I.iii.44).

Enid Welsford defines the fool as causing "amusement not merely by absurd gluttony, merry gossip, or knavish tricks, but by mental deficiencies or physical deformities which deprive him both of rights and responsibilities and put him in the paradoxical position of virtual outlawry combined with utter dependence on the support of the social group to which he belongs" (55). Although Welsford uses this description to define the "court-fool,"[38] it describes Bergetto well. He reveals his gluttony when he declares his admiration for Annabella is such that he loves her more than parmesan cheese (I.iii.59) and his love of gossip when he regales his entire earlier interaction with Annabella in a "he said, she said" fashion—"quoth I" and "said she" respectively (I.iii.67, 73). His lack of wit is noted often in his short time on stage and has come to define his character in many scholarly works. For example, in her introduction to the play in *English Renaissance Drama*, Katherine Eisaman Maus reduces the character to "mentally deficient" (1908). Most important is his reliance on others. It may at first seem odd to declare a character associated with so much wealth as dependent on others in a way that is akin to the court-fool's reliance on his masters. In fact his wealth is one of the reasons Valerie Jephson and Bruce Boehrer label his death as a "comic retribution" for his "two-fold crime against the ranks"—that of the wealthy bourgeoisie and the climbing of the social ladder (10). However, his wealth is not earned; instead, it is to be inherited

[38] Welsford draws a distinction between the "professional buffoon"—a person employed by the court to offer wit and critique—and the "court-fool"—a person of low intellect housed by the court.

from Donaldo. He does not have the wit to earn it on his own and thereby is dependent on his family for support. Yet, he is at least smart enough to realize that his lack of wit causes others to question his word. As a remedy, he continually asks his servant Poggio to vouch for him, asking, for example, "Is't not true, Poggio?" (I.iii.40). That the word of a servant is deemed more reliable than his own underscores his complete lack of power. And, thus, he is a "court-fool" without the title—a witless man whose family's wealth has allowed him the freedom to pursue merriment and make others laugh.

Despite Jephson and Boehrer's condemnation of the character, I would argue that he is one of innocence and sincerity, garnering much affection from his audience. Although the character's scenes allow for a farcical staging,[39] his love for Philotis and his deep connection to Poggio are two of only very few examples of pure, innocent love offered in the play. He falls for Philotis when she tends to him after he receives a beating on the street. He says, "I'faith, I shall love her as long as I live for't" (II.vi.87-88). He declares that she is worth twenty of Annabella, not realizing that this statement could be insulting to her (II.vi.96), and calls her a "pretty lass" (III.v.37). That they both refer to each other as "sweetheart"—Philotis uses the term in III.iv.42, while Bergetto uses it at III.vii.4—is a strong indication that they are a good match and that the love is mutual. While the romance does not receive much stage time, it is the only one that is not marred by incest, greed, adultery, or abuse of power. Yet, Bergetto's relationship with Poggio may be the strongest in the play. It is Poggio with whom he first confides his plans to

[39] For example, fairground organ music is played in the background during the 1977 Royal Shakespeare Company's production (Wilkinson 39) and he is dressed in a costume reminiscent of W.C. Fields in the 2012 ASC's production.

marry Philotis, exchanges jokes charged with sexual innuendo, and, as mentioned above, trusts to vouch for his word. Perhaps most telling, it will be Poggio he cries out for in his dying moments. Indeed, it can be said that Bergetto and Poggio "are the true love story" of the play (Warren).

Thus, as Act III, Scene vii begins, the audience has come to know and expect a few things from Bergetto: he is the fool, he will make them laugh, and he is an innocent. The audience also knows that Grimaldi, another of Annabella suitors, intends to kill Soranzo, his main competition. He enters holding a "dark lantern," a reminder to the audience, often bathed in the universal light of the performance, of how dark the night is. He can only use the hearing of the word "sweetheart" as an indication that lovers are near, and he assumes them to be Annabella and Soranzo. Grimaldi does not see Bergetto, Philotis, Richardetto, and Poggio, and they do not see him. After he "strikes Bergetto" and exits, Bergetto has to "feel his clothes to try to understand what has happened" (White 8). Bergetto calls for help and cries, "Here's a stitch fallen in my guts./ Oh, for a flesh-tailor quickly!" (III.vii.8-9). The extended word play in such short lines is ripe for laughter. Bergetto does not cry out that he has been stabbed or that he feels a wound. He also does not cry out for a physician. Instead, he compares his skin to clothing, the cut to a stitch, and the surgeon to a flesh-tailor. Rather than comment on the blood, he wonders, "I am sure I cannot piss forward and backward, and yet I am wet before and behind" (III.vii.11-12). The language of what Bakhtin calls the lower bodily stratum as well as the emphasis on the funny-sounding word "piss," will now ensure that the audience is laughing. Although a stabbing has occurred on stage, the audience is encouraged to

laugh: this is a scene featuring the fool and he is using language that encourages laughter rather than underscoring the death that is to come. Notice that Richardetto even questions the extent of his injuries. He asks, “How is’t. Bergetto? Slain?/ It cannot be. Are you sure you’re hurt?” (III.vii.16-17). It is important that Richardetto is questioning if someone like Bergetto can be slain. As Martin White writes in his guide to the text and performances, “Richardetto’s doubt over the extent of Bergetto’s injuries results partly from the fact that Bergetto is a bit of a clown” (9). Richardetto knows, like the audience, that clowns do not die. Of course there are notable exceptions to this rule. *King Lear*’s fool is killed, but the death occurs offstage; Mercutio is killed, but that character is much more difficult to label as a true clown. Fools may be injured in pratfalls and they may play pranks that look like death, but they are not stabbed and killed onstage. Thus, when Bergetto answers Richardetto, the audience laughs again, for he is still using the language of laughter and carnival, this time of food: “My belly seethes like a porridge pot” (III.vii.18).

It is not until Poggio returns with officers and lights, and Richardetto notices “all blood,” that the situation will become clear to all (III.vii.23). Words like “murderer,” “wounds,” and “blood” coupled with the urgency of the officers’ directions ensure that the tone of the scene turns abruptly (III.vii.25, 29, 31, 28). Bergetto’s last words include no words of laughter:

> Is all this mine own blood? Nay, then, good night with me, Poggio. Commend me to my uncle, dost hear? Bid him for my sake make much of this wench. Oh—I am

> going the wrong way sure, my belly aches so—Oh, farewell, Poggio—Oh—Oh—
> (III.vii.31-35)

In his dying words, he arranges for his love Philotis to be provided for and he says farewell to his most trusted friend Poggio. Poggio closes the scene with sorrowful repetition: "Oh, my master, my master, my master!" (III.vii.39).

Two recent productions by the ASC, in 2006 and 2012, will be used here to analyze the role Bergetto's death scene serves in the play and the emotional turn from laughter to tears that is prompted by it. Although both productions were staged by the same theater, the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia, they have very little in common. The 2006 production was staged as a part of what is known as the Actors' Renaissance Season. The plays are selected by the current resident troupe and are self-directed. The actors staged a modern production with Bergetto wearing the plaids of golfers and Poggio, rather incongruously, wearing a bright slicker raincoat. The recorded performance viewed for this analysis was taped on its opening night. The 2012 production was directed by Jim Warren, co-founder and Artistic Director for the ASC, and was performed by the company's touring troupe. This production, too, was set in a modern era, with the cast clothed in Alexander McQueen-inspired costumes. The only exceptions were those of Bergetto and Poggio, as Bergetto wore a W.C. Fields inspired suit and top hat with a long, ivory scarf made of silk, while Poggio was clothed plainly in a drab, grey uniform of pants, button-down shirt, and suspenders. The performance attended for this analysis was the last of its run. Yet, despite all of the differences

between these two productions, the emotions elicited from the scene of Bergetto's death are virtually identical.

In the 2012 production, some laughter occurs upon Bergetto's entrance before line 4 of Act III, Scene vii, while none occurs in the 2006. While the laughter could be explained as an expectation based on the character's previous scenes—since laughter has always accompanied this character, it is emitted upon the very sight of him—this explanation does not account for the lack of laughter in 2006. I would posit that the laughter instead stems from the audience's relationship with this particular actor, Rick Blunt, the current ASC comedic actor for the touring troupe. He is a local resident, much loved by the community, who had announced his engagement before the start of the performance. This audience knows that when Blunt enters the stage, laughter will follow. What can be certain is that the first line Bergetto speaks is not innately funny: "We are almost at the place, I hope, sweetheart" (III.vii.4). Yet, there is room in the character's entrance for laughter to be elicited. As White argues, "Bergetto, presented from the outset as a buffoon is still, from the point of view of his companions, playing the fool, and it is vital that the actor's performance—especially in the moments up to the stabbing, when he is perhaps larking about—allows this interpretation to be placed upon it" (53-54). Indeed, both productions highlight the character's fool-status: in 2006, Bergetto and Poggio engage in a little horseplay, while in 2012 Bergetto and Philotis in a short pantomime of a love. The laughter elicited here is light and not of the loud, raucous variety, and it is not difficult to still hear Grimaldi speak.

The laughter elicited at Bergetto's first lines after the stabbing, however, is much louder. The exaggerated physical movements and the imagery evoked by the "flesh-tailor" prompts both audiences to energetically laugh, and by the time Bergetto speaks of "piss[ing] forward and backward," the laughing is near riotous. The recording of the smaller 2006 audience reveals some members leaning to the side in laughter, and the packed 2012 audience was so loud that Philotis's next line could not be heard clearly. I can personally account that my facial muscles reacted as Darwin observed and I placed my hand over my mouth to stifle my loud laughter. The two men seated to my right, whom I do not know, boomed loudly with laughter, while the older woman to my left, giggled softly. It was at this point that I noted that her eyes were sparkling.

The laughter abated for a few lines during both productions, but the renewed laughter prompted by Bergetto's use of a "porridge pot" was perhaps the loudest yet. This line is not the most empirically funny, meaning that it would elicit laughter out of context; the line wondering at his pissing forward and backward arguably has that title. However, the momentum of laughter gathered early in the scene, aided by the fact that there were a few audience members who had not yet composed themselves, allowed for this moment of laughter to be the greatest. Indeed, it was during this line that I felt my own eyes tear up. To be clear, I would not claim that every audience member's eyes teared up at this moment, or during this scene at all. The two men to my right never cried during the scene to my knowledge. However, the physiological response of laughter creating tears not only occurred in me but in many of the audience members around me. Unfortunately, due to the camera angle of the recording, it is impossible to tell if this

holds true for the 2006 production as well; however, it can be assumed that a comparable percentage of audience members experienced this physiological effect. Regardless of whether an audience member has teared up or not, the exuberance of the laughter throughout the playhouse demonstrates the lack of bodily control the audience had in those moments. The laughter is impulsive, the sounds are expelled from the vocal chords and in conjunction with the diaphragm, and the facial muscles respond accordingly.

Although, as noted above, the gravity of Bergetto's wound becomes clear to audience quickly once Poggio brings the light and Richardetto notices the blood, the flurry of activity during the next ten lines does not allow for bodies in the audience to relax. Although the bodies are not laughing in either production, anxiety and, therefore new tension, is still being produced. This tension ensures that facial muscles have not completely relaxed from their laughing state.[40]

That tension is released during Bergetto's dying speech. In this short speech, the innocent Bergetto acknowledges his coming death and bids adieu to the people he loves. In both productions, the theater quiets at the start of Bergetto's "Is all this mine own blood?" (III.vii.31). It is this line that signals to the audience that this violence is not of slapstick but of tragedy. I felt the first tear at Bergetto's resignation to death: "Good night with me, Poggio" (III.vii.31-32). The older woman to my left had a tear flowing down her cheek once Bergetto wishes Poggio, the person he loves most, farewell. Again, the two men to my right in the 2012 production did not weep, but the one seated directly next

[40] It should also be mentioned that ASC is committed to the flow of action and aims to meet the "two hours' traffic of our stage" that *Romeo and Juliet* promises; hence, ten lines in an ASC production is a short time indeed (Warren).

to me did have his brow furrowed deeply. Numerous sniffles could be heard as Poggio lamented the death of his master, a line that signals not only loyalty but deep grief. The recording of the 2006 production captures a woman placing her hand on her husband's shoulder at this moment.

My goal here is not to prove that the sub-plot including Bergetto and Poggio is the core of the play and that any production omitting their scenes is a weak one. It also is not my intent to claim that this scene will always prompt raucous laughter and deep sadness in every audience member, although I would claim that any solid production would allow for an audience to experience both joy and sadness within these 39 lines. What is my claim is as follows: audiences experience Bergetto's death much more strongly because they have just experienced laughter with him. As White argues, "The final image…of Poggio cradling his dead friend is a deeply moving one, the more so *because* of its contrast with the mood of the earlier part of the scene" (54; emphasis added). Some audience members will be moved to tears of sadness, and those tears will come much more easily because they have just been laughing. The emotions drawn from this scene are not completely within an audience member's control, and the physiological reactions prompted by those emotions are largely involuntary as well. The pressure placed on the lacrimal glands by the creasing of the eyes during hardy laughter at the start of the scene seamlessly transitions to the pressure placed on the same main lacrimal gland by the increase in blood flow during sadness. During the "laughter through tears" phenomenon—witnessed here as laughter giving way to tears—the audience member has

lost control of his/her body's physiological responses, and this particular scene perfectly capitalizes on that response.

Here, I include a final note on the 2012 ASC production of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. The Cardinal in this production was also played by Rick Blunt. The company traditionally doubles parts, and the doubling of Bergetto and the Cardinal is logical for three reasons: the two characters are never onstage simultaneously, Bergetto's role ends just before the Cardinal's first appearance, and thematically Bergetto's innocence contrasts beautifully with the Cardinal's corruption. When Blunt's Cardinal appears before line 30 in Act III, Scene ix, a short but audible sound from the audience could be heard. It was a mixture of gasp and laughter. It disappears after the Cardinal asks, "Why, how now, friends?" I would posit that this laughter-like sound is directly related to the laughter of release discussed in the next section. His friends, the audience, seem incredibly relieved to see him again.

"KILL CLAUDIO": A MOMENT OF RELEASE

William Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, 1600 (Q), contains more than 22,000 words in its seventeen scenes, and, yet, its most controversial moment only rests upon two: Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" (IV.i.287). Beatrice's directive to Benedick comes immediately after the ruin of Hero, in which Claudio breaks off their engagement, Hero "falls to the ground," and her own father tells her to "not ope thine eyes" in hopes that she should die rather than live in shame (IV.i.122). Garber calls these two words the play's "palpable turning point" (*Shakespeare after All* 373); yet, the play turns away from

its comedic tone at the start of Act IV, not near its end. Its first three acts witness the rejoicing in welcoming soldiers from war, the romantic union of Hero and Claudio and their subsequent engagement, and the realization of old sparring partners — Beatrice and Benedick — that they are in love. Hence, it is a turning point when the comedy gives way to tragedy at the aborted nuptials. What, then, is "palpable" or controversial in Beatrice's "Kill Claudio"?

It is this line's effect on audiences in performance — often evidenced by laughter — that has inspired much debate. Many critics argue that no laughter should be prompted by Beatrice's command and that a production has failed in this moment if the audience does so. In his Introduction to the Arden edition of *Much Ado about Nothing*, A. R. Humphreys, perhaps the most zealous voice on this side of the argument, says the following about these two words in performance: "It is a moment dangerously liable to explode the audience into laughter, perhaps because so unexpectedly sensational, so unlikely to turn out as she wishes, and so intense that Benedick's instinctive rejection chimes incongruously against it" (48). While Humphreys offers an explanation as to why an audience may laugh, one largely grounded in the laughter theory of incongruity, of particular note is Humphreys's use of the word "dangerously." The idea that laughter, and especially its affiliation with the loss of control, can be dangerous is one that can be found in early modern literary critics such as Sir Philip Sidney and Stephen Gosson.[41]

[41] It is important to note here that neither Sidney's nor Gosson's expressions of fear regarding laughter's loss of control imply an anti-laughter stance. While others of the period, such as Philip Stubbes, often express fear of laughter in condemnations of mirth as a whole, Sidney and Gosson underscore anxieties about particular types of laughter,

Humphreys is associating the laughter often elicited from Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" with a loss of control, but it seems to me that his condemnation is not of the audience's lack of control but of the production's. The laughter here is dangerous, according to Humphreys, because it demonstrates that the production mishandled this scene. In other words, laughter is an inappropriate response to these two words and should be avoided. It seems that many agree with Humphreys's interpretation of this scene, as notable productions, ranging from the Palace Theatre's 1956 production featuring Peggy Ashcroft to the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1976 production featuring Judi Dench, eschew the laughter that Humphrey warns against. Further, Garber also expresses concern that laughter elicited here may undermine the sincerity of this key moment (*Shakespeare after All* 373).

Yet, some critics disagree. One such critic, Cohen of the ASC, argues not only that audiences will laugh during the second half of Act IV when Beatrice and Benedick are alone for the first time since discovering their love for one another, but that the largest laugh will come from Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" ("Dr. Ralph Presents"). Cohen even instructs his audiences to listen for the laughter elicited by not only this scene but Beatrice's line in particular: "You watch. It will be there." While Cohen admits that he used to take pains to avoid the laughter, he now allows for the laughter to occur: "The play is much better, the themes make more sense, if the audience is allowed to laugh" (Personal interview).

Both sides of this debate offer strong evidence, especially given that effective productions have taken divergent approaches to this scene. However, the answer to

---

such as Gosson's discussion of the "meaner sort" of laughter and Sidney's laughter that "cometh…not of delight."

whether the scene should encourage laughter (read as Cohen's "allow," as very little needs to be done to elicit laughter here) lies in the following three considerations: the genre and tone of the play; the textual clues within the latter half of Act IV, Scene i; and the individual and communal emotional responses of the audience.[42] In what follows, I will first examine this moment as one that is part of a comedy both in terms of genre and tone, and, as such, productions should not actively suppress a natural laughter response. Next, textual clues within the exchange between Beatrice and Benedick will be analyzed. It is my contention that productions that avoid the laughter here engage in a "rewriting" of the play; the text, in contrast, allows for the laughter. Lastly, I argue that Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" taps into an innately human response: the desire to release. In his theory of relief, Freud posits that laughter is the means by which psychic tension is released. The laughter in this moment is a byproduct of an audience's desire to expel the tension amassed at the scathing dismissal and fall of Hero, to return to the comic tone of earlier scenes, and most importantly to return to safety. Rather than avoiding this audience reaction, productions should recognize the laughter's role as a communal emotional response. While I will take pains here to avoid the claim that audiences should laugh in response to Beatrice's "Kill Claudio," I am arguing that the laughter elicited here is a

[42] While I argue that the phenomenon of laughter is one grounded in human psychology, the truth is that laughing is not only a human experience — in that certain generalities can be made about its causes, functions, and impulses — but also an individual one. Yet, theatre audiences also act collectively as one. This communal nature was noted by early modern scholars such as Stephen Gosson, who, in his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), recounts "a wonderful laughter, and [the audience] shout altogether with one voice" (C8^{v}). Gosson claims that the audience reacted as one, with one voice, in what Steggle identifies as "one organism" (64).

natural response to the text and, therefore, is not only not dangerous, as Humphreys argues above, but cathartic.

In his *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres*, Matthew Steggle claims that there is much evidence in support of laughter being comedy's primary agenda. For example, his study of Prologues from early modern plays indicates that laughter is the desired outcome for a comedy (59-63). Prologues of the anonymous *Mucedorus* (1598) and *Wily Beguilde* (1606), along with that of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Woman Hater* (1647), indicate that comedy plays — and, at times, Comedy personified — desire to "make you laugh" and "make your eyes with laughter flow."[43] While there are Shakespearean plays labeled as comedies that do not appear to have laughter as a primary aim (*Measure for Measure* perhaps being an obvious example) and no Shakespearean play contains a Prologue making claims about intent as those do above, *Much Ado about Nothing* is a comedy that not only meets the genre's conventions[44] but delights its audiences with laughter. While I do not claim that Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" must elicit laughter since the aims of comedy are to do so, I do argue that the play establishes a pattern of laughter-making. That pattern is one that encourages an audience not only to listen for jokes and laugh in response but also to desire a return to laughter

---

[43] For clarity, spelling has modernized in this quote.

[44] As this is not a section that discusses genre directly, I will not devote space here to discussing how *Much Ado about Nothing* meets the conventions of the genre of comedy as defined in the early modern era. For full discussions of genre, see the following: Northrop Frye's "The Argument of Comedy" (1948), Leo Salingar's *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (1976), and *Acting Funny: Comic Theory and Practice in Shakespeare's Plays* (1994), a collection edited by Frances Teague.

when those jokes are disrupted. This desire to return to jokes, or what will be discussed as a return to safety below, is established in the jokes that occur prior to Act IV, Scene i. To uncover how those jokes work, I turn to the theory of relief as presented in Freud's *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, as his theory will also be implemented in further analysis of the laughter found at Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" below.

Freud begins with the factor of "bafflement and light dawning" (4). The joke[45] deceives or baffles for just a moment, and then laughter comes in the moment of dawning, or understanding, of the unspoken. His belief that the joke lies in the unspoken is perhaps best stated by a contemporary of Freud's, Theodor Lipps: "The joke says what it says, not always in a few, but always in too few words, that is, in words which in strict logic or in the ordinary way of thinking and speaking are not sufficient to say it. It is ultimately able to say it outright, by not saying it at all" (qtd. in Freud 5). Hence, the joke's inherent "too few words" will always lead to what Freud calls a "bafflement," but as the listener[46] begins to understand what is actually being said, the "light dawning" occurs. The tension brought on by the bafflement is then released through the laughter. Freud claims there are two types of jokes: the innocuous and the tendentious.[47] One

---

[45] The term "joke" is used broadly here. While much of the scholarly work uncovering the impulse of laughter and unpacking how exactly that impulse is prompted use traditional joke structure as examples (i.e. a verbal anecdote or exchange that has a set-up and punch line), the term "joke" is often used as a synonym for moments with the intended purpose of eliciting laughter.

[46] It should be noted that most of Freud's examples are verbal jokes.

[47] The bulk of his analysis focuses on the three technical devices of the innocuous joke: word play, pleasure of recognition, and intellectual jokes.

tendentious joke, imbedded in the punning of “nothing” in this play’s title, illustrates how Freud’s theory works. For early modern theatre-goers, the word “nothing” not only denoted naught and would have been an audible pun for “noting” or eavesdropping but also connoted female genitalia. The bafflement caused by the three conflicting meanings would be easily rectified by an early modern audience and the tension caused by the initial confusion and its focus on the taboo would have been expelled through laughter. In addressing taboo topics, the joke allows for a release of built up tension, as it becomes the one socially acceptable means to relieve the “effort spent on inhibition or suppression” (115). In short, jokes, according to Freud, allow for a release of tension: the bafflement released after a light dawning; the unfamiliar released after the recognition of the familiar; or the inhibition released after the socially-acceptable addressing of a taboo.

Freud’s work, obviously, comes much later than Shakespeare’s text, and, therefore, is not a theory that would have influenced his writing, like, for example, Joubert’s or Cicero’s theories of laughter may have. Yet, it is a theory that answers the question, “What makes us laugh?” in a transhistorical context and elucidates the various types of humor found in this play. *Much Ado about Nothing* is a work that conditions an audience to expect jokes structured as bafflement leading to release. While I do not claim that audiences laugh at Beatrice’s “Kill Claudio” solely because they have been conditioned to expect laughter—otherwise, every line in the play could be argued to be a joke—they have grown accustomed to experiencing laughter as the result of bafflement.

“Kill Claudio” cannot be classified as word play or an intellectual joke, nor is it a sexually tendentious joke. However, the laughter found in this line is grounded in the

text. In other words, the two words and the lines directly preceding them contain elements of the joke structures discussed above and defined by Freud. To uncover some of those characteristics, a return to earlier scenes is required. Prior to the aborted wedding in Act IV, Beatrice and Benedick share two private conversations: in Act II, Scene i at the masquerade and in Act II, Scene iii directly after Benedick pledges to love Beatrice.[48] While their witty banter is evident from the first scene of the play, these scenes condition the audience to expect laughter during their private moments. At the masquerade, only Benedick is masked, and it is unclear if Beatrice knows his identity. She describes Benedick—to a masked Benedick—as "the Prince's jester, a very dull fool … For he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him, and beat him" (II.i.118–22). Here, she ridicules his intellect and status. What prompts laughter here is not the insults themselves. Instead, it is a layered emotional response grounded in the bafflement that comes from dramatic irony—she is insulting this man to his (masked) face and does not realize it. This irony continues with Benedick's response: "When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say" (II.i.124–5). The bafflement is two-fold here for it is grounded in the irony of the situation and the tendentious nature of her comments. Thus, the psychic expenditure, or tension, builds from both the taboo nature of her insults and the incongruous situation.

---

[48] It is true that the conversation at the masquerade is not strictly in private; however, the structure of the scene indicates that Beatrice and Benedick only can hear each other. The second scene is remarkable as only Benedick recognizes the love he has for Beatrice; the staged eavesdropping scene which forces her to realize the love she has for Benedick comes directly afterwards. Hence, in both examples, Benedick knows something that Beatrice does not: their mutual identities in the first and their mutual love in the second.

A similar dual-bafflement occurs in Act II, Scene iii. Here, Beatrice is tasked with informing Benedick that dinner is ready. Since he has just uncovered his love for her, and believes that she loves him, he looks for double meanings in her words where there are none. When Benedick thanks her for her "pains" upon hearing that she came against her will, she says, "I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me" (II.iii.220–1). The laughter here results from the repetition of and playing with "pains" and "thank"; however, there is also a level of absurdity here in the way the situation—a calling of someone to dinner—has been elevated to a discussion of "pain." When Benedick then twists her response into hearing that she takes "pleasure" in giving the message, she responds: "Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and choke a daw withal" (II.iii.224–5). The excessively violent, tendentious response comparing choking a bird at knifepoint with calling someone to dinner causes bafflement on two levels: her response does not fit the occasion as the vitriol is incongruous with the activity and her words again drift into the taboo. From these two scenes, the audience has learned a few things about the interactions between Benedick and Beatrice. Their words will be ripe with incongruity, they will often misunderstand or twist each other's words, and they—or, rather, Beatrice in particular—will use the language of the violently taboo. The audience has also learned that in this play, those elements construct a joke prompting laughter. This knowledge will be key upon entering into the latter half of Act IV, Scene i.

The Shakespeare's Globe 2011 production of *Much Ado about Nothing* best illustrates how laughter can occur in this scene. The heralded production is available in DVD format, capturing not only the staging practices of the early modern theatre (as best

we know of them), but also the audience reactions. Directed by Jeremy Herrin, it features Eve Best as Beatrice and Charles Edward as Benedick. After all other characters have exited from the aborted wedding, Benedick asks Beatrice, "Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?" (IV.i.255). Loud, boisterous laughs are elicited in response to not only Benedick's question but also at her response: "Yea, and I will weep a while longer" (IV.i.256). The laughter here is prompted by the incongruity of the question, for the other players have just left the stage, a time not long enough to warrant the "all this while." This is an incongruity that the audience has grown to expect from their exchanges. Interestingly, the two most prominent films of *Much Ado about Nothing*, Kenneth Branagh's 1993 and Joss Whedon's 2012 adaptations, both re-write this scene to remove the incongruity and avoid the laughter. In both, the scene is edited so that Benedick and Beatrice's conversation takes place in a separate location from the aborted wedding—in the chapel in Branagh's and in the house in Whedon's. When Edward's Benedick indicates that he does not desire for her to cry any longer, Beatrice replies, "You have no reason, I do it freely" (IV.i.258). Her response indicates that she hears "desire" as "command" or "dictate," and again, the audience of the Shakespeare's Globe laughs, responding to her purposeful misunderstanding of his words. Best speaks these lines with resignation and slight embarrassment at showing her emotion in such an extroverted manner, but even with her reading, the explanation of the humor is weak. The bafflement created here is minimal, but it is reminiscent just enough of their earlier banter to prompt the audience to laugh.

This type of laughter continues with two lines that again recall the couple's earlier barbs. Beatrice says, "It is a man's office, but not yours" with Benedick answering, "I do love nothing in the world so well as you. Is not that strange?" (IV.i.265–7). As Best emphasizes "but not yours," the audience is allowed to interpret the line as an implication of Benedick's failings as a man, a similar barb to the one naming him a Prince's jester in Act II, Scene i. While the line is heavy with other implications, Best's reading permits a laugh. Edward emphasizes the question, "Is not that strange?" The emphasis allows the audience to hear the two lines as an incongruity, one that becomes a small barb aimed at Beatrice. In essence, he is asking, isn't it strange that *she* is the thing he loves most, the thing that is the most exasperating to him. Both Beatrice's and Benedick's lines can be read without comedic effect as evidenced in Branagh's and Whedon's adaptations; the interesting note here is that neither actor in the Globe production does much to make them humorous. Instead, the actors need only allow for the possibility of humor for the audience to laugh. This lack suggests that the laughter, if allowed, naturally comes from these words. I argue that the audience not only hears these lines as reminiscent of earlier exchanges between the two characters—being able to identify the patterns of play in their jokes—but that they also take pleasure in recognizing the familiar. The first half of Act IV, Scene i, which will be discussed in detail below, is jarring and unfamiliar. The audience's recognition of this familiar banter and joke structure allows them to laugh much more heartily than if these lines were in isolation. Thus, while the bafflement

caused by each line individually is minimal, its existence grants the audience permission to laugh.[49]

It is the recognition of their verbal sparring pattern that causes the greatest laugh from Best's "Kill Claudio" (IV.i.287), and it is the momentum of laughter created thus far that ensures the audience gesture of laughter, rather than a gasp, once she reads this critical line. She does not allow for a pause; instead, it continues the quick banter in which they have always engaged and are engaging in presently. She speaks quickly, in an urgent tone, and the audience responds with laughter. The violence within these two words is shocking, but in this context it becomes the same type of shock and bafflement as prompted by her earlier violent rhetoric. The audience has come to expect the taboo from Beatrice—in decorum and appropriateness, but especially in words of violence. Thus, the audience laughs at this tendentious line, hearing it as a joke.

What becomes especially important in this reading is Benedick's response: "Ha! Not for the wide world" (IV.i.288). As Jeremy Lopez notes in his *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response*, the writing out of "ha" in early modern plays is a rarity (174). For an era often associated with mirth, laughing on stage—and explicitly written in text—was not common. Lopez uncovers two contradictory intentions of the written "ha": this staged laughter either underscores the "inappropriateness of laughter," such as that

[49] One might question if an audience is conditioned to laugh in the way that I argue here. Kennedy's discussion of the *chatouilleurs*, members of the audience planted to laugh at specific moments and, hence, inspire others in the audience to laugh as well, speaks to this issue. The *chatouilleurs* work under the assumption that audience reactions can be triggered (17-18). I argue that audiences can be triggered to laugh through a conditioning process as well. If laughter is often elicited through word play, for example, audiences will be conditioned to listen more closely for those types of jokes.

evidenced by Titus Andronicus upon receiving the heads of his sons, or invites "complicity" from the audience in laughter (174-5). Thus, while Benedick's "Ha!" could support Humphreys's claim that laughter here is dangerous and inappropriate, it may also support Cohen's belief that the laughter should be encouraged and Benedick's reaction merely mirrors the audience's own response. To solve this disparity, Lopez's final note regarding the writing out of "ha" is most beneficial: the writing out of laughter indicates when the laughter should begin and when it should stop (175). The short burst of laughter embodied in Benedick's "Ha!" indicates that laughter from the audience is expected. He finds her violent request to be similar to Beatrice's earlier violent jokes just as the audience does. However, the release is short lived. The realization that she is not joking comes quickly, for both Benedick and the audience.

Remarkably, these three productions avoid this textual clue. The Shakespeare's Globe production's Edward and Whedon's Alexis Denisof both omit the sound entirely, while Branagh rewrites the sound to one of realization, the "ah." While the omission of the "Ha!" does not prevent the laughter of the audience, as evidenced by the great roar of laughter at Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" in the Globe production, it does exemplify the type of rewriting that often occurs in productions of this scene and indicate that it takes rewriting to avoid the laughter all together. Both Branagh's and Whedon's film adaptations take multiple steps to avoid the laughter here: the change in setting to avoid the laughter stemming from IV.i.255; the removal of Benedick's "Ha!" at IV.i.288; and the insertion of a kiss just before Benedick asks of Beatrice, "Come, bid me do anything for thee" (IV.i.286), a move that makes the scene more intimate and romantic—two tones

not conducive to laughter. It is my contention that the scene must be rewritten in these ways if a production wishes to avoid the laughter elicited from Beatrice's "Kill Claudio." The textual clues within the play encourage laughter in this moment and discourage the suppression of this natural audience response.

However, the most compelling support of this laughter is one that identifies it as a release of the psychic tension built on a grand scale in Act IV rather than one stemming from a moment of incongruity or bafflement. It is this overriding, communal tension that is released upon her command. Most work in relief theory has mirrored Freud's findings but applied them to new situations. One theorist grounded in Freud's work, however, has expanded upon the original hypotheses and his claims are especially pertinent here. Norman Holland, a Freudian analyst of literature, adds a key hypothesis in explaining the relief impulse: "Perhaps laughter is a social signal to other members of the group that they can relax with safety" (43). This kind of laughter signifies a return to safety and often occurs as a groundswell, with the laughter being contagious or with the laughers acting as one, much as Gosson observed above. What is key is that this laughter occurs after a communally experienced moment of danger; safety has been threatened and laughter signifies the end of that threat. And, it is the theory of relief that best explains the laughter that comes so easily for most audiences after witnessing Hero's devastation, a theory that perhaps can best be summed up with Figaro's famous line from Pierre Beaumarchais's *The Barber of Seville*: "I laugh, so that I may not cry."[50] Here, in

---

[50] In Act I, Scene ii, Figaro says, "Accustomed to Misfortunes I laugh at every Event, least on consideration I shou'd find myself more dispos'd to cry," which has entered

application to the reactions of an entire audience, the line should probably be re-stated as "we laugh, so that we may not cry." An audience that communally has experienced a trauma—the devastation of Hero—needs to expel that psychic tension and will do so with laughter if permitted.

Act IV, Scene i and the emotions prompted by it are only understood in the context of the play in its entirety. Up until the start of Act IV, *Much Ado about Nothing* follows the conventions of not only a comedy but a funny one at that. The witty banter between Benedick and Beatrice and the malapropisms of Dogberry the Constable allow for much laughter, while the plot involving two couples falling in love and joined in union at the play's closing all adhere to the audience's expectations. While the trick played by Don John and the malevolence behind it could cause alarm in an audience, they largely do not, for the audience expects some type of complication to arise. This expectation is grounded in the audience's understanding that it is enjoying a comedy; there is a feeling that, as Cohen states, "everything will be alright" ("Dr. Ralph Presents").

The opening lines of Act IV, Scene i allow for the audience to hold onto that feeling. The audience may feel some uneasiness when the Friar asks of Claudio, "You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?" and Claudio responds with a "no" (IV.i.4–6). However, that uneasiness abates when Leonato corrects the Friar: "To be married *to* her. Friar, you come to *marry* her" [emphasis added] (IV.i.7). This line allows for the audience to believe Claudio's "no" was merely an over-attentiveness to clarity, and the

---

popular culture as the quote above. A similar quote is attributed to Lord Byron: "And if I laugh at any mortal thing, 'Tis that I may not weep."

relief offered in Leonato's line allows for a boisterous laugh, heard notably in the Shakespeare's Globe 2011 production. However, once Claudio begins his verbal assault on Hero, accusing her of knowing "the heat of a luxurious bed" and of engaging in "savage sensuality" (IV.i.39, 59), it is clear that this scene is darker than the expected complication to love found in most comedies. This section is allowed only one other viable opportunity for laughter, evidenced again in the Shakespeare's Globe 2011 production. After many ugly words have already been spoken, Benedick says, "This looks not like a nuptial" (IV.i.66). If the player chooses to use a tone of exasperation rather than solemnity, a large laugh can be elicited here, but it is the last one for nearly two hundred lines. While the Globe production does capitalize upon these two moments available for laughter, it is worth noting that the remainder of the scene is gut-wrenching. It is perhaps due to the unadorned set, or the intimacy of a staged performance, that the tragedy of this section is felt more here than in Branagh's or Whedon's adaptations. The audience (visible due to universal lighting) is incredibly quiet.

The tension from this scene stems from multiple forces: the violence of Claudio's words, the rejection of an innocent by both her fiancé and her father, the impotence from not being able to right this wrong. From the audience's perspective, there is also a bafflement at witnessing such a distressing scene within a play that had implicitly promised that "everything would be alright"; what it wants more than anything is to return to the familiar, to return to the comic. If the production allows for it, the audience will embrace the comedy and release laughter in relief beginning at Benedick's "Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?" They will collectively signal that a return to

safety, as Holland argues, is here. That collective laughter of release will be heard most loudly at Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" for it is here that the audience needs to signal most that this play is still a comedy.

Is it "surprised laughter," as Alison Findlay suggests in her guide to the text and performance (57)? Is it "sensational," or "dangerous," as Humphreys suggests? Or, does it stem from a desire for the play to return to the comic, as Cohen suggests? To be clear, there is something surprising and sensational about the cold, direct request, but the scene does prepare the audience that a moment like this is coming, even if it is a moment that Beatrice has not quite admitted to herself. Beatrice demonstrates her unease in making the request before she issues the order, evidenced by her asking for forgiveness and using the word "protest" to proclaim her love of Benedick (IV.i.279–82). Thus, while the bluntness of the line can cause shock, an attentive audience should already realize that something is coming. Additionally, the request cannot be as ridiculous as Humphreys portrays it, for Benedick agrees to do her bidding by the end of the scene. Further, while Cohen's hypothesis that the audience wants to return to the comedy it enjoyed earlier explains the laughter in the previous lines, it does not quite explain the boisterousness that accompanies this one.

Instead, the moment cannot be explained by just one cause. The audience is "surprised," it does hear the request as "sensational," and it does want the play to return to its comedic roots. The laughter is a means to expel tension, even if the tensions are derived from many forces. What makes this line remarkable is that it capitalizes on all three tensions at once, allowing for the great response of laughter that is often elicited.

After experiencing the communal trauma of the aborted wedding scene, the audience is signaling to one another that they can relax in safety; I would argue further that the laughter signals to the production the desire to remain in safety. While consciously an audience understands that its gestures will not alter the course of a production, psychically the laughter signals its collective wish for Beatrice's request to be a joke—a desire to return to the safety of the comic. It is worth noting, however, that even in the Shakespeare's Globe production silence befell the audience once again upon her next line: "You kill me to deny it. Farewell" (IV.i.289). This line confirms that the audience's desire will be postponed for at least the time being. The loss of sincerity, as Garber fears above, does not occur; the scene does not devolve. It remains a rich and layered scene infused with a multitude of emotions. The audience has been not only permitted but prompted to experience an intrinsically human communal reaction, and the scene is all the more effective for it. The tension released here allows for Benedick's resolve to kill Claudio to be all the more impactful. It is not just one more moment of tension; this moment signaling character development is now singular.

Before closing, it is worth acknowledging how strong the impulse to release in a scene such as this one is. As the Shakespeare's Globe production brings this scene to a close, two moments are worth noting. The first occurs during Beatrice's speech ending with the following: "O God that I were a man! I would eat his heart/ in the market place" (IV.i.303–4). Best does not even complete these lines before a loud roar of applause emerges from the audience. I believe this reaction to have the same impetus as the laughter witnessed above, but the audience is no longer being offered lines of possible

incongruity or surprise. In other words, it is not being permitted to laugh; hence, the tension still contained within the audience is released not in laughter but in applause. The second occurs at the start of Act IV, Scene ii with the entrance of Dogberry. Before Paul Hunter's Dogberry utters even one line, the audience laughs. The recognition of the familiar is strong in this moment; the audience aligns the Dogberry character with laughter and will laugh upon his mere entrance in order to further expel pent up tension. This is an example of an audience in desperate need of returning to the familiarity of the comic, and they again release that tension of repression at the first moment the production allows, begging for this all to be much ado about nothing.

A WINTER'S TALE: PHYSIOLOGY AND RELEASE CONVERGE

A Winter's Tale, somewhat notoriously, is placed at the end of the group of comedies in the Folio of 1623, its first publication. Is the play a comedy? Or, is it a romance, or perhaps a tragicomedy? Harold Bloom defines *The Winter's Tale* as "a vast pastoral lyric, and it is also a psychological novel, the story of Leontes, an Othello who is his own Iago" (639). Notice that Bloom does not directly address the shift in tone or genre in the play, for he argues throughout his work that Shakespeare "writ no genre" (639). If "*The Taming of the Shrew* looks like farce, and yet it isn't; Falstaff's 'histories' are tragicomedies; and *Hamlet*, 'poem unlimited,' is simply the norm," then *The Winter's Tale* is not exceptional in its lack of adherence to genre expectations (Bloom 639). In recent years, the term "tragicomedy" is the genre in which the play is most often placed. Ros King defines tragicomedy as "often characterized as a V: a descent into hell and a

climb back out of it" (95). This marked delineation between the descent into hell and the climb back out can be pinpointed to an exact stage direction in *The Winter's Tale*, what King identifies as the most famous stage direction in all of literature: *Exit, pursued by a bear.*

This moment has been widely studied, most commonly in its relation to genre. However, while the generic turn is of interest to this analysis, it is so because of what it reveals about the connection between laughter and tears rather than as its comment upon the genre of the work as a whole. Tragedy is often marked by tears and comedy by laughter, and, thus, one might expect only the former in the first three acts and only the latter in the final two. However, that does not hold true for *The Winter's Tale*. Instead, as King argues, "Laughter and tears, horror and humour, don't just alternate, they mingle" (96), and they mingle no more so than in the moments surrounding that famous stage direction in Act III, Scene iii.

Most remarkable about this scene in light of the above analyses of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *Much Ado about Nothing* is that the mingling of laughter and tears here is not merely prompted by a physiological reaction nor by a release of psychic tension. Instead, the laughter through tears phenomenon prompted by Act III, Scene iii capitalizes on both involuntary impulses, one physiological and one psychical.

In his *The Winter's Tale in Performance*, Dennis Bartholomeusz claims that "a purely literary-critical approach…is not adequate for an understanding of *The Winter's Tale*"; it is a play that particularly requires performance to understand its impact (5). I must echo these sentiments; in my own experience, I had read the play numerous times

before attending a performance and it had always felt disjointed and flat to me. This flatness perhaps stems from the play's reliance on spectacle. Gurr claims in his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* that the play is representative of Shakespeare's shift away from viewing playgoers as auditors towards calling them spectators, noting the play's illusions "precisely set out to deceive the eye with a bear on stage and a statue that comes to life" (111). However, I would argue that it is more than a commitment to spectacle that allows for the play to reach its true impact in performance; it is a mingling of spectacle, devastation, horror, and humor—all of which co-mingle in the critical scene identified for this analysis.

The impact of those first performances has been largely lost. The key source in identifying a date is that of Simon Forman's diary. Forman's account of his May 15, 1611, attendance of *The Winter's Tale* at the Globe is remarkable for a few reasons. First, it offers an accurate summary of the plot. Second, his only remark on the play is the following: "Beware of trusting feigned beggars or fawning fellows" (qtd. in Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 133).[51] Interestingly, the lesson he gleaned from the play stems from the actions of Autolycus rather than the tragic consequences set in motion by Leontes. Perhaps most notably, though, is what his account does not mention: the bear and Hermione's resurrection. It seems remarkable that a playgoer, offering a detailed account of the play, would omit its most famous scenes. The omission seems even less likely if the production had used a real bear rather than a player in a bear costume. However, given the popularity of bear-baiting at the time, and the close

[51] For clarity, the spelling has modernized in this quote.

proximity of bear-baiting gardens to the Globe, it is perhaps impossible for a modern sensibility to determine which would have been more noteworthy to an early modern playgoer: a live bear chasing a player onstage or a player in a convincing, or even perhaps ridiculous, bear costume doing the same.

Did the earliest productions use a live bear? Gurr seems to think so. In *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, he claims that *The Winter's Tale* "has no stage-business or properties to display at all, apart from the bear which took a turn as a player (if it was a real bear) in a masque as well as the play in 1611" (127). There is an assumption here, although he concedes that it may be incorrect, that the bear was real. He further suggests that a real bear was used in performances of *The Winter's Tale* in his discussion of Philip Henslow's list of properties: "From his function as a bear-ward he could no doubt have imitated *The Winter's Tale* by introducing a real bear on stage, but his players, perhaps understandably, seem to have preferred doing it themselves, and his lists accordingly show 'i bears head', and 'i bears skin'" (132). Even though the list of properties includes a bear head and bear skins, Gurr is still convinced that Shakespeare's play introduced a live bear on stage. However, the only evidence I can find to corroborate this claim is that of easy access to the bears used in bear-baiting.

King and Bartholomeusz, however, tend to believe that a bear skin was used during performance rather than a live bear. King uses the same evidence Gurr does in making her claim, noting that "a local supply of bearskins" would always be available (37). More importantly, she and Bartholomeusz both argue that an adult bear would prove to be much too unpredictable. They both cite the horrific killing of a child by one

of the bears held for baiting in 1609. James I and his entire family went to the Tower to witness the baiting of that bear on June 23, 1610, with the bear apparently surviving after the lions fled in fear and the dogs attacked the horses instead (King 118, Bartholomeusz 13). The incident suggests that a playhouse may have used more caution in the days and months following. As King argues, "What was needed for the play was an actor in a bearskin (to which, it is clear, the theatres had ready access), who could time his actions to trigger both alarm and laughter in the audience" (118). As scholars tend to disagree on this point, I think it is important to imagine what the implications would be for each scenario. The unpredictability of a live bear could have both horrifying and unintended comic effects, while an extra in a bear costume would have control over the intended audience reactions. In either case, however, the intended reactions of the bear pursuit are still unclear. Is it meant to be humorous or horrific, or a combination of the two?

Here, still, there is debate. Bartholomeusz argues that "the bear is not to my mind a comic turn, nor is it merely topical" as a reminder of the 1609 incident (12). King suggests, however, that "horrid humour may well have been part of the original intention" (37). In his *The Winter's Tale: Text and Performance*, R. P. Draper concurs when he writes the following: "The sight of a bear (known, of course, to be an 'extra' in a bearskin) lolloping over the stage in pursuit of Antigonus will always strike some members of the audience as comic" (70). What is interesting here is his use of "always" and "some." It does seem that laughter is difficult to avoid in the staging of this moment; it may not always be intended and it may not be widespread, but it will appear. To my mind, unless the production has an abstract approach to the staging of the bear—using

lighting or symbolism to represent or suggest the bear rather than a player in a bear costume—the comedy of the moment cannot be suppressed; however, unless it is staged as farce, the humor is mingled with horror. It is this mingling that capitalizes on the two impulses of laughter that will be found in Act III, Scene iii.

Three modern productions chose diverse approaches to the "bear problem." Adrian Noble's 1992 RSC production embraced the spectacle of the bear, choosing to showcase it as a realistic and imposing presence. Noble says, "It seemed to me that it's one of those things you shouldn't duck as a director. I tried to make it as amazing, fabulous, and extraordinary as possible" (qtd. in Bate and Rasmussen 169). Similarly, Dominic Cooke's 2006 "promenade" production for the RSC's Complete Works Festival used a "very scary, life-size bear and it came through the audience. We tried to make it as real as possible and not send it up" (qtd. in Bate and Rasmussen170).

In contrast, Barbara Gaines's 2003 production at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater took a different approach:

> The stage was dimly lit, almost black. You hardly saw anything, but what you *thought* you saw was terrifying. A huge, white polar bear, perhaps eight feet tall with a ferocious face and tremendous teeth, ran toward the audience on that deep thrust stage….It was so quick and the sound so overpowering and the scream of Antigonus so terrifying, that all together in this brief moment, it was shocking. Then there was a blackout and we saw Antigonus' blood on the white carpet. We cared for him, and so that spot of blood was devastating. (qtd. in Bate and Rasmussen 170).

A few aspects of Gaines's description are noteworthy. First, she implemented a combination of the two popular approaches in that the bear was both horrifyingly realistic and the staging took advantage of the audience's imagination in the same way that lighting and symbolic staging might. Second is her use of the word "shocking." If the audience is not yet allowed to laugh in the bear's pursuit of Antigonus—in other words, if the tension built throughout the first three acts cannot be released here through laughter—then the moment should build more tension. More remarkable is her treatment of Antigonus's death. The blood stain could prompt tears, especially since this audience would not have been allowed to release tension through laughter.

It is to these tears that I will now turn. In order to explicate the moment's elicitation of tears (and of laughter later on), two recent productions of the play will be used as illustrations. The first is the 1999 RSC production directed by Greg Doran and available on DVD. The second is the 2012 ASC production directed by Jim Warren and personally attended upon its return to the Blackfriars Playhouse. Although the two productions address the bear problem differently, the moments of tears and laughter are virtually identical.

Up through the middle of Act III, Scene iii, very few moments of laughter can be found in this play. While not a comic character, Paulina is one who at times elicits laughter in the first three acts. In fact, other than a few lines offered by Antigonus, she is the only source of laughter in the first half. This laughter perhaps stems from her strength. Denice Burbach Mahler, who played Perdita in the 2012 ASC touring troupe, argues that the biggest laughs across the plays are prompted by playing with gender

stereotypes. Paulina's strength and independence are traits normally associated with masculinity, especially considering that she is a lady of the court speaking not only to men but often in the presence of the king. She does not temper her words, and when she does speak plainly, a laugh is often garnered from the audience. For example, when Leontes orders the lords to "force her hence," she warns, "Let him that makes but trifles of his eyes/ First hand me. On mine own accord, I'll off./ But first I'll do my errand" (II.iii.62-65). Also in this scene, laughter is elicited from her "He shall not rule me" (II.iii.49), evidenced by that heard during the 2012 ASC production. The laughter elicited here is similar to the laughter heard during the 1999 RSC production after being told that she has "made fault/ I'th' boldness of [her] speech": Estelle Kohler's Paulina spits out, "I am sorry for't" (III.ii.215-216). In all of these instances, the laughter stems from a subverting of gender expectations. Her defiance and will to speak are incongruous to how an audience expects a woman in her position to behave, and these incongruities allow for laughter.[52]

However, it should be clear, laughter is not prominent in the first half of the play, and I do not mean to misrepresent it as being so. Instead, these are scenes marked by madness, tragedy, and death. Leontes has clearly descended in a madness marked by jealousy, most evident in the 1999 production in the opening lines of Act III, Scene ii. Antony Sher's Leontes shuffles to his throne, gazes off towards the audience for uninterrupted moments at a time, and must finally return to notes kept in his pocket after

[52] The laughter stemming from Paulina's subversion of gender expectations is one that is typical of the laughter that is examined in Chapter Three: Theatrical Cross-Gendering and the Laughter Response.

having to repeat “this sessions”—the beginning of his speech—three times (III.ii.1). Hermione’s speeches are incredibly moving in this scene, indicating a strength of character and above all a loyalty to her husband. The despondence in Alexandra Gilbreath’s voice is especially thick. While tears may be elicited at many moments in this scene, including the death of Mamillius and the falling of Hermione, both productions are marked by one line in particular: Paulina’s “I swear she’s dead” (III.ii.201). The two productions approached the line in a similar fashion. Paulina has already talked around the death of the queen, become physical with the male characters on the stage,[53] and said outright, “The Queen, the Queen,/ The sweet’st, dear’st creature’s dead” (III.ii.198-199). ASC’s Bridget Rue and RSC’s Kohler both speak this line softly, almost inaudibly. When the lord begins to protest that the queen cannot be dead, Paulina cries out, in a line that pierces through the theater, “I say she’s dead.” The high frequency of both actresses’ voices, the unambiguous nature of the line, and the flurry of tension that preceded it all allow this line to stir an emotional response in audience members. If crying is to be prompted during this play, producing emotional tears caused by an increase of blood flow to the lacrimal system, then this is most likely the moment it will occur.[54]

[53] She throws Leontes to the ground in the 1999 production and is held back by the lords in the 2012 production.

[54] Interestingly, an actress’s interpretation of this line can not only avoid the prompting of tears but actually elicit laughter instead. One such production that did so is the 2013 Old Globe production in San Diego. Here, the production made clear that Paulina was misleading Leontes and the other characters onstage. Angel Desai instead reads the line as if she were making the audience complicit in her deception, and, hence, the audience laughs rather than feeling shock or sadness. It should be noted that this choice was in keeping with the entire staging of the play, which mined the first three acts for laughs at all turns.

Leontes will reference these tears in his closing lines of the play's first half. Upon ordering his dead wife and son to be placed in the same grave, he says, "Once a day I'll visit/ The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there/ Shall be my recreation. So long as nature/ Will bear up with this exercise, so long/ I daily vow to use it. Come, and lead me/ To these sorrows" (III.ii.236-241). In the realization of the horror that his jealousy has caused, he vows to pay tribute to his dead wife and child with his tears. He vows to remain in a place of sorrow, a word that is an appropriate description for the feeling evoked by these early scenes as a whole. ASC's Eugene Douglas especially conveys that emotion in his closing words, and, in observation, I noted four audience members just within my close proximity who either had tears running down their cheeks or used a tissue to dab at their noses and eyes.

If Act III, Scene ii has brought a large portion of the audience to tears, and, again, I would not argue that any production would result in the exact same emotional response in all of its audience members, then neither the 1999 RSC nor the 2012 ASC productions will allow laughter to peak through their tears for another 57 lines. In the 1999 RSC production, large swaths of fabric envelop the stage in Act III, Scene iii. Through the use of fog machines and lighting effects, the storm is evoked. In contrast, the ASC uses a bare stage, allowing Michael Amendola's Antigonus to illustrate the storm for his audience. In relating his vision of Hermione, a recording of Alexandra Gilbreath's lines can be heard in the RSC production. The effect allows the audience to view her words as magic rather than a dream. At line 48, Antigonus remarks that "the storm begins." King claims that "there must be the sound of thunder at this point…a mixture of sounds

including more thunder, the shouts and horns of a hunting party (II.56, 62-64), and in many modern productions, the amplified roar of a bear" (37). The RSC produces all of these sounds along with lighting effects, but the ASC does not. Again, it relies on the audience's imagination.

The differences between the two productions continue in their approach to the staging of the bear pursuit. As Jeffrey Wickham's Antigonus cries out, "This is the chase" (III.iii.56), the cloth begins to waft. A shape reminiscent of a bear is then created within the cloth, moving towards Antigonus. The cloth falls upon him, and a quick flash of light reveals the outline of a bear behind it. The stage goes dark while his screams can still be heard. In contrast, the 2012 ASC production offers an unknown player wearing the head of a black bear. The bear's head is realistic, with its mouth slightly open to reveal long sharp teeth. Harrowing screams can be heard from offstage once the two have exited. Although one production staged the bear through lighting effects and the other through a bear costume, the effects of both are similar. The moment is harrowing and dark. Although a few titters could be heard during the ASC production, the majority of the audience views the scene as horrifying. It should be noted that the audience's reaction to the RSC production is impossible to gauge due to the placement of cameras and microphones; however, I would suggest that there were even fewer audience members who laughed in this production given its approach. Instead, what little tension that had been released in the few tears produced at the end of Act III, Scene ii has now been replaced with the tension of fear. Yet, it is important to remember that Leontes only left the stage 57 lines earlier—a three-minute span in the RSC production and substantially

less in the ASC. Hence, approaching the Old Shepherd's entrance before line III.iii.58, audience members have accumulated the tension of three acts of sorrow and moments of horror.

King remarks that the tone changes immediately with the entrance of Old Shepherd, "not least because he speaks in colloquial prose" and "the sense of danger from wild beasts and the storm diminish rapidly" (37). The swiftness of the tonal shift is evident in both productions. Both produce laughter from the audience before the shepherd even speaks. In the RSC production, when the lights are turned up, James Hayes' Old Shepherd is already onstage, the cloth having calmed and settled into place. He is using a whistle to call out, perhaps for his son or perhaps for the dogs that could be heard earlier in the distance. When he turns towards the audience, and notices them, his whistle fades out. This dying whistle sound allows for the first laughter to be heard from the audience. A similar laugh is elicited from Ronald Peet in the ASC production. Peet, a young man in his early twenties, has been aged with white powder in his hair, a crumpled-over gait reliant on a cane, and the wavering voice of the elderly. He is costumed in suspenders and a straw hat, and with his first broad smile, he gives the audience permission to laugh. In neither production is the laughter big at this point; it is a tentative release of the tension that has been built up. Yet, both actors elicit as many laughs from their first few lines as possible.

Small laughs can be heard when the shepherd claims that the only activities of youth are "getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting" (III.iii.60-61). More laughter can be heard when he claims that the youth have "scared

away two of my best sheep" (III.iii.63-64). In the ASC production, Peet prompts laughter when he chooses to sit next to an audience member seated in the gallants' stools located on stage, a choice indicating the tiredness of his elderly bones. In the RSC production, a baby's cry can be heard after the shepherd says, "Good luck, an't be thy will!" (III.iii.66). James Hayes' Old Shepherd mimics a sheep's baying, eliciting a large laugh from the audience. Once he notices the child, he turns to the audience and asks, "What have we here?" (III.iii.67), again prompting a loud laugh. The audience laughs continually as he runs over to the baby, at the cooing noises he offers the baby, and at his question directed to the audience: "A boy or a child, I wonder?" (III.iii.68).

Throughout these lines, both audiences laugh continuously, and the largest laugh is just about to come, but before discussing the Old Shepherd's son, unambiguously named the Clown, I want to reiterate what has happened in just sixteen lines. Audiences begin the moment feeling nervous anxiety caused by seeing the tragedy unfold in the first three acts. According to release theory, the human will search for an acceptable space to release that tension, and according to current understanding of physiology, that tension has created an increase of blood flow to the main lacrimal gland. Although some pressure may have been expelled via a few tears at the end of Act III, Scene ii, not only is it inadequate to relieve the amount of tension built up over an hour-long period, but it has been replaced by the tension of terror at "witnessing" Antigonus's death. At the first moment permitted, audiences expel the tension—both physiological and psychic—with laughter. Since both productions encourage the laughter in quick succession, the laughs become louder and more tension relieving. Yes, the Old Shepherd is a comic character

written to prompt laughter, but his lines here are not the comedy that will be encountered in his son. And, yet, strong laughter occurs here, and that response can best be explained as release.

The arrival of the shepherd's son and his recounting of Antigonus's death validate to audiences that a tonal shift has occurred. As King writes, the clown "is both country bumpkin and comic character," allowing for "some playfulness, or even improvisation" (38). The audience is "no longer allowed to dwell on 'things dying'"; instead, the clown's pantomime of Antigonus's death, in what Garber calls an "unscene," redirects the audience's attention away from tragedy and towards comedy (King 95; Garber 839). Both productions use the same bit to bring the clown onstage. The shepherd calls out "whoa-ho-hoa" twice; it is during the second bellow that his son appears directly in front of him, prompting great laughter stemming from the incongruity of the loudness of the yelling in relation to the close proximity of the person being called. Christopher Brand's clown speaks in a cockney accent, allowing the laughter of superiority. Rick Blunt's clown takes on the gait, clothing, and affect of an overgrown child. The clown acts out the storm's attack on the sea, but it is his first mention of the bear that startles his father. The shepherd seems shocked that a bear would be in the wilderness, perhaps just as shocked as the audience is to encounter one in the play. That laughter is built upon when the clown mimics Antigonus's dying words as, "Ah-ah-ah-ntigonus, a nobleman" (III.iii.90), allowing the "a" to be drawn out to imitate his screams. Of course, the line is humorous on its own, imagining Antigonus identifying his rank in the one situation where rank does not matter. Each of the clown's proclamations that the action had just

taken place "now" prompts laughter. The clown, the shepherd, and the audience are all equally shocked at what has just "now" occurred on this stage. The Old Shepherd signals that the play will no longer be one of dying but of life: "Thou metst with things dying, I with things new-born" (III.iii.104-105). The shock garnered by the first three acts can now be expelled through uproarious laughter rather than repressed.

To close, I offer the main note offered by the director of the 2012 ASC production of *The Winter's Tale*, Jim Warren, to his actors as they prepared for their first performance: "Play the moment. Let it be heavy. Don't act the arc." *Play the moment*. If the tonal shifts of *The Winter's Tale* have confounded audiences and scholars alike, perhaps they should not. After all, does the mingling of laughter and tears in this work differ that greatly from that discussed in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* or *Much Ado about Nothing*? Indeed, it would be difficult to identify a play from the period that does contain at least one instance of the "laughter through tears" phenomenon. Importantly, it is the *moment* that matters in creating these impulses. If they are not removed in the name of continuity and instead each moment is allowed to produce its natural effect, then the body's natural impulses will take it up from there. The reason Truvy's reassurance that "laughter through tears" is her favorite emotion resonates with audiences is because life is not unified; it does not adhere to genre expectations. Instead, it plays the moment, and, therefore, when audiences encounter such scenes on the stage, they react: they laugh; they cry; they do a little of both.

CHAPTER THREE

Theatrical Cross-Gendering and the Laughter Response

In the summer of 2013, I attended a local festival production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The Redlands Shakespeare Festival (RSF) provides free, open-air Shakespeare to the local community, usually producing three plays a season. It attracts families, first-time theater-goers, and Shakespeare scholars alike. In previous seasons, it had produced a pirate-themed *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* a vampire-themed *Titus Andronicus*, and a western-set *As You like It*. Although the company tends to rely heavily on gimmicks, I was greatly looking forward to the 2013 season: The Season of Gender, featuring an all-female *Julius Caesar*, an all-male *The Taming of the Shrew*, and a mixed-gender cast of *Love's Labor's Lost*. While previous seasons' tricks to draw audiences had at times seemed cheap to me, this focus on gender—and, especially how the player's gender complicates the issues of gender raised in a play—greatly intrigued me.

Although each production contained multiple thought-provoking moments, it is the company's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* that has stuck with me and even inspired the analysis that follows here. While I was expecting the play to challenge some of my and my fellow audience members' understanding of gender and laughter, I was surprised at which moments elicited the greatest laughter and audience reactions. At Katherine's and Bianca's first entrance in Act I, Scene i, laughter—perhaps tittering is a better word—could be heard across the theater. References to Bianca's beauty consistently elicited laughter, and the scenes in which she is wooed, such as Act III, Scene i, prompted much audible giggling as well. While there were long stretches in the

performances in which I and the audience members around me seemingly forgot that male actors were playing the female characters, the moments that suggested or promised romance—and, therefore, two male actors performing romance—always prompted laughter. For example, at the end of Act V, Scene i, productions usually stage a kiss between Petruchio and Katherine, a choice which most editors support by adding a stage direction such as, "They kiss," after line 128. The discussion of kissing sent audible responses around the theater—of squeamishness, of laughter, of encouragement—and audible disappointment when the production chose to forgo the kiss. When the kiss finally came after Katherine's most famous speech and Petruchio's "kiss me, Kate" (V.ii.184), the audience applauded, gasped, and, yes, laughed.

Reactions to other all-male productions have been similar. For example, the 2015 Sacramento Shakespeare Festival (SSF) staged an all-male *Romeo and Juliet*. Laughter stemming from the players' gender occurred at the first entrances of Lady Capulet, the Nurse, and Juliet in Act I, Scene iii. Although this type of laughter generally faded after the first act, as it did in RSF's *The Taming of the Shrew*, the anxious, anticipatory laughter prompted by the mere suggestion of a kiss heard in scenes in which Lucentio wooed Bianca or Petruchio asked Katherine for a kiss was also heard during Juliet and Romeo's first kiss at the masquerade. Subsequent kisses, however, did not elicit laughter nor audible audience response, perhaps due to the tension being lifted or from the tone of a play such as *Romeo and Juliet*. In contrast, the male characters of the 2015 SSF's all-female *As You like It*, did not elicit laughter upon their first entrances. Much of the wooing scenes between Rosalind as Ganymede and Orlando did elicit laughter, but, to

my ear, the response was prompted by the metatheatrical references to gender in the text rather than by the witnessing two female actors—one portraying a man and the other portraying a woman portraying a man—engaged in same-sex romance. While I do not intend to suggest that these audiences' reactions are indicative of all audience reactions, the reactions elicited here raise important questions: Why did the audience laugh at the mere vision of the male actors in female garb but not so at the female actors in male garb? Why did the audience react with laughter during moments requiring male actors to perform same-sex romance but not to female actors doing the same?

One answer might be that an audience would be more inclined to laugh at cross dressing at free festival performances. The drink is plentiful, the kids are laughing and running around, and, perhaps most importantly, the make-up used to create the illusion of the female character is less artfully done. The audience at The Globe, for example, did not laugh at the mere entrance of Johnny Flynn, Mark Rylance, and Paul Chahidi as Viola, Olivia, and Maria in its 2013 all-male production of *Twelfth Night*. However, this argument resembles the one grounded in classist elitism that John Webster makes in his To the Reader in *The White Devil*, complaining of "those ignorant asses" at the playhouse (8-9)—a lament echoed by the likes of Marston, Jonson, and Beaumont. Rather, I agree with a claim made by Ralph Alan Cohen during a personal interview: "There is no inappropriate laughter. Something created it." In other words, the laughter elicited from male actors in drag—and from moments within plays that challenge gender in other ways—comes from something other than what might be called a bad audience or a bad production. These audiences laughed because that laughter reflects and reveals something

about how gender is constructed and how comfortable, or not, we feel in seeing those constructions challenged.

I use the universal “we” above, but it should be understood that the “we” is not universal and neither are its constructions—or frames—of gender. Hence, while an early modern audience and a twenty-first century audience may both laugh when constructions of gender are questioned or played with, they may not laugh at the same moments or for precisely the same reason. It can be assumed that an early modern audience would have reacted less audibly than modern audiences to the sight of a female character played by a male performer given that it was the convention of the time. Conversely, the female player portraying not only a female character but a male one presumably would elicit much less response today than it would have in the English early modern theater. While I do not mean to set up a dichotomy of audience reaction—that early modern audiences reacted in a directly opposite manner to gender in theater as modern audiences—differences do exist. But why? How has the framing of gender and its relationship to theater changed to allow for such a difference in response?

My approach to the following analysis is to outline the relationship between laughter and gender and uncover the questions that laughter responses to gender raise. They are numerous and interrelated. In addition to the ones above, one must be added: Which frame of gender informed the English theatrical practice of all-male productions and how does it differ from today’s? Moreover, early modern plays often wrestle directly with questions of gender in their preoccupation with the cross-dressed character. What function do these characters, males disguised as females or—more typically—females

disguised as males, reveal about how gender is constructed and the anxieties surrounding its construction? How does the laughter, or lack thereof, elicited from these characters' disguises reflect, or perhaps deflect, attitudes regarding gender?

My attempt to answer these questions, however, will be admittedly limited in scope, for attempting such an answer implies that there *is one*. As Stephen Orgel admits in his introduction to *Impersonations*, which wrestles with the question of how the "construction of gender on the stage—any stage—and in society at large" are related, raising such a question implies that there is an answer (2). The very question, however, limits and "close[s] off" the answer, to the point where the answer is rendered meaningless (2). I agree with Orgel. Thus, while my analysis will note how particular plays raise questions, challenge gender norms, seek to make an audience squirm, or provoke laughter—both in release and in derision—it will also err on the side of caution, in order to avoid over-simplification and the hubris of thinking one can truly uncover the entire frame of gender—in one's own time period or of the past—and its complicated relationship with laughter. However, the analysis will operate upon the following thesis: laughter does reflect the social and cultural attitudes regarding gender and reveal the consequences of not adhering to those frames of gender, both then and now.

GIRLS WHO ARE BOYS[55]

Any introduction to English theater in the early modern era includes a short statement, of perhaps a paragraph or two, detailing the absence of female players. For

[55] The subjection headings in this chapter come from Blur's "Girls and Boys."

example, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare* notes that female characters were probably played by boys, although older female characters may have been played by men (McDonald 112). Except for the all-boy companies, the companies outlined in Gurr's *The Shakespeare Stage: 1574-1642* are comprised exclusively of men. This "transvestite theater" often is said to have limited the number of female parts, which then leads to the conjecture that male youths of special talent must have been in companies at specific times during runs of especially strong female characters (McDonald 113). The theatrical convention of "youth attired in the habit of women," as Thomas Heywood describes them in his defense of the practice, was not without controversy, as it became one of the principle points of concern raised in anti-theater treatises. Today, though, the practice is often matter-of-factly presented as one of the characteristics of Elizabethan theater.

The question of why an all-male theater was enacted has traditionally been answered with a version of the following: "The appearance of women on stage was forbidden because it was felt in the Renaissance to compromise their modesty" (Orgel 1). As Orgel notes, this long-accepted explanation is not only problematic but raises other questions as well. Given that much of continental Europe did not prohibit female players (Orgel 10), how and why did this practice develop in England but not elsewhere? Orgel also notes that the premise of the all-male English theater needs "serious qualification," for English audiences did enjoy performances by actresses in, for example, traveling Italian productions and even amateur English productions (10). Therefore, the conventional notion that the appearance of women on stage compromised their modesty is not quite accurate, as Orgel concludes it was "*English* women on the professional

stage" that was prohibited (11). While Orgel emphasizes the word "English," he perhaps should have emphasized "professional" as well, but the claim underscores two things. There is a distinction between the amateur and professional theaters of Elizabethan England, and discussions of the all-male theater necessarily must center on the professional theater spaces. Second, the construction of gender on stage is a reflection of not only that of gender off stage but of Englishness as well. These identities cannot be solely approached as discreet and disparate, for they are reciprocal in nature.

The all-male theater's relationship to early modern constructions of gender is complex; how does one inform the other and what does one reveal about the other? Theories are diverse, and, in the interest of space, only a few will be reviewed here. Heywood claims that the audience is always aware of the players' gender, a perception that, contrary to Heywood's argument in defense of acting, leads some to view the practice as homoerotic. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass argue that the cross-dressed boy is of an indeterminate gender—what they call a "total absorption of male into female, female into male"—and, therefore, resists a homoerotic or heteroerotic label (215). David Mann counters the foundation upon which Jones and Stallybrass's oft-cited assertion rests, that the boy players did not wear breast prostheses to simulate the female form. Instead, he argues that unrealistic, simulated breasts mimicked the stereotypical female form in a way that prevented desire while simultaneously reaffirming the heterosexual ideal (102-121). Orgel, on the other hand, connects the practice with the English fear of effeminization and the view that the desire for a woman weakens the man (26-30). Each of these theories centers on how maleness and masculine desire is

constructed and defined in the Elizabethan era, rather than the female. In other words, whether a critic—of the early modern era or today—views the boy dressed in female garb as transgressive or reaffirming, the concern focuses on the question of what it means to be a man rather than a woman.

The above, though, also rest in the notion that gender—and perhaps sex as well—are constructed, meaning not necessarily determined by biology. As Orgel writes, "Manhood was not a natural condition but a quality to be striven for and maintained only through constant vigilance, and even then with utmost difficulty" (19). This argument, which echoes Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning,[56] suggests that gender is not absolute nor stable. While this understanding of gender performativity is well accepted in a post-*Gender Trouble*[57] world, the early modern understanding of this performativity rests in its theories of physiology.[58] In this Galenic model, male and female genitalia were viewed as inversions of each other, with female genitalia merely being male genitalia located internally. It was also believed that every fetus has the potential to be male or female, with the presence of heat providing the strength and force to push the genitalia outwards. The body was thought to be comprised of four humors: blood, phlegm, choler (or yellow bile), and black bile. Phlegm is associated especially with

---

[56] See Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning; From More to Shakespeare* (1980).

[57] See Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990).

[58] My understanding of humoral theory and the Renaissance approach to gender and sex are informed by Nancy G. Siraisi's *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, Gail Kern Paster's *The Body Embarrassed*, Stephen Orgel's *Impersonations*, and Natalie Zemon Davis's "Women on Top."

women as they are cold and dry, while choler is associated with men as they are hot and wet. All four humors, though, are present in each person; in order to be healthy, the humors must be in balance, but the balance for men and women would differ. It was also believed that these fluids were not clearly distinct, meaning that one could become the other. Thus, an unruly woman, such as Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, would be thought to be choleric, or ruled by a principally male humor, while an effeminate man might be prone to tears, a liquid associated with phlegm, and it was thought that both of these conditions could be cured by treating one's humors to ensure a proper balance for one's gender.

This theory of physiology, quite understandably, caused quite a bit of anxiety about gender and its malleability. The biological distinction between the sexes was blurred. Given that women are presented as "incomplete men"—not containing enough heat to have thrust the genitalia outwards—it is then unsurprising that women are constructed as "less intelligent, more passionate, less in control of their affections" (Orgel 21 and 25). Moreover, though, given the mutability of the body's liquids and humors, one's gender was never truly thought to be fixed. A practicing physician of the Renaissance, Sir Thomas Browne writes the following in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*:

> As for the mutation of the sexes, or transition into one another, we cannot deny it in Hares, it being observable in Man….And though very few, or rather none which have emasculated or turned into women, yet very many who from an esteem or reality of being women have infallibly proved Men…And that not only

> mankind, but many other Animals may suffer this transexion, we will not deny, or hold it at all impossible.

Browne observes that while no evidence exists of a man "transexing" into a woman, evidence exists of the opposite, of a woman becoming a man. Given the scientific evidence he presents about hares, he believes that both situations of "transexing" are possible. Browne later goes on to call this phenomenon a "transmutation" or "transplantation" of one gender into another. The possibility exists then, for some of the early modern era, for a man to reverse genders, or as Orgel argues "be turned *back* into" a woman due to a losing of the strength or weakening of the humor that allowed the transformation in the first place (25).

This belief causes disparate views of the boy player in female garb. On the one hand, the practice removes heterosexual desire from the stage. Orgel claims that it is the "love of women" that most threatens to effeminate the straight male audience (26). Boys performing as caricatures of women, as Mann argues, removes the threat of that desire. On the other hand, if gender is not merely based in biology but must also be performed, then the boys who don the female garb are thought to be in danger of reverting back to their original female forms. This sentiment can be heard in Philip Stubbes's warning: "Our apparel was given us as a sign distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, and therefore, one to wear the apparel of another sex is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the verity of his own kind" (1859-1862). Stubbes argues for clothing as one of the signs of sex and gender performativity and that wearing the clothing of another's gender is participating in that gender. In both scenarios, the male gender is in jeopardy—

of being either feminized or "transexed" altogether—and the theater is either alleviating or causing it. The practice, however, can be problematic in other ways as well. If the gender of the player is clear, and the costume unconvincing, then same-sex desire is being enacted on stage. In his *The Overthrow of Stage Plays* (1599), John Rainoldes says that it goes against the "moral law" of Deuteronomy for women to dress like men and men like women. He especially condemns the "sparkles of lust" that can be elicited by men in women's attire that may "kindle in unclean affections" (77). Rainoldes is warning against homoerotic affections, but Orgel suggests that the transgressive nature of the all-male theater may be even greater, for what the spectator is "really" attracted to is "the undifferentiated sexuality, a sexuality that does not distinguish men from women and reduces men to women" (29). The desire is not heteroerotic nor homoerotic but a desire that is ungendered. In this scenario, the theater becomes a transgressive space free from gender rather than one that serves to alleviate the anxieties of performing gender.

Again, going forward, it will not be assumed that any one of these reactions to all-male companies or theories surrounding construction of gender in Elizabethan England is correct. To do so, takes for granted that only one motive, anxiety, or belief fuels particular scenes or moments on stage. Taken as a collective whole, though, a few conclusions emerge. First, just as today—but for different reasons—gender was understood to be constructed and performed in the early modern era. Second, that understanding has an inextricable relationship to the theatrical convention of the era's all-male company. Some of that knotty relationship cannot be untied, and, therefore, its effects on laughter are impenetrable.

To underscore this point, I provide the following example. The ASC not only models its theater after the famed Blackfriars of early modern London, but it also adheres to the staging convention of doubling, using one player for more than one character. It not does, however, adhere to the all-male cast; in fact, its company is comprised equally of men and women. Given that the company predominantly performs early modern plays, the vast majority of which lack female characters, most productions feature actresses playing male parts. All of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'s fairies besides Titania, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*'s Speed, and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*'s Poggio were played by women within a span of a few days in the summer of 2012. I witnessed not a single visible or audible reaction, let alone laughter, from these cross-gendered performances. In contrast, the 2011 ASC production of *The Malcontent* featured a male player as Emilia, with a full beard and in drag. Many laughs can be heard in the recording of the production upon Emilia's first few appearances. As a viewer, I—and, it seems from their lack of audible reactions, the audience—forgot that Emilia was played by a male by the play's end, but that laughter stands in stark contrast to the lack of reaction when a female plays a male character. As Jim Warren, a co-founder of ASC, notes, "Females can be cast in male parts without any implications of humor. Males cast as females? It is difficult to avoid a laugh in 2012."

Would neither of Warren's observations be true for a 1600 production in England? Would the opposite be true? For example, is Mann correct when he claims that the metatheatrical reference to the boy playing Cleopatra in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* would not only not elicit laughter but go unnoticed? Mann argues that

Cleopatra's reference (V.ii.214-217) is a "tribute to the effectiveness of the convention being used that made no bones about admitting the means of performance….These things allowed the spectator to concentrate on the events of the stage fiction and their outcome rather than being distracted by mere verisimilitude" (118). From my twenty-first century perspective, it seems nearly impossible for Mann's claim to be true. While I would not argue for outright laughter at Cleopatra's reference, I would expect a smile of recognition, acknowledging the theatrical convention. Is the audience not to laugh at another metatheatrical reference in the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*—admittedly a scene with a much lighter tone—when the Lord acts as director in detailing how Bartholomew, presumably played by a boy, will transform into Sly's "lady" (Ind. 101-126)? Nor when Sly commands to Bartholomew as the lady in disguise, "Undress you and come now to bed" (Ind. 113), suggesting the actual player's male form will be revealed if such a thing were to occur? Again, to my mind, these are moments for laughter. While the boy in female garb has a thorny connection to the era's construction of gender—and, as seen in earlier chapters, anxiety is a source of laughter—I do not presume that the vast majority of his appearances resulted in a laughter response. There do seem to be moments, though, when the playwright has capitalized upon the anxieties surrounding this theatrical practice and constructions of gender in general to elicit laughter. Some of those moments are metatheatrical. Most, however, fall into one of the two following categories: the male character in disguise as a female and the female character in disguise as a male.

WHO LIKE BOYS TO BE GIRLS

There are far fewer incidents of male characters disguised as women than the opposite. One popular example exists in prose: Sidney's romance *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* of 1590. Maurice A. Hunt identifies the example of Pyrocles in disguise as an Amazon-like woman named Zelmane as "ideational transvestism" (135). Pyrocles dons the disguise in order to be close to his prohibited love, Philoclea. While the disguise does have what Hunt calls a "destabilizing effect" as it spurs same-sex desire in Philoclea for Zelmane, it is still ideational as Philoclea becomes a better woman by imitating Zelmane (136). In other words, Philoclea learns how to perform her gender by imitating Zelmane's behavior, speech, and dress. Pyrocles's transformation also has a destabilizing effect upon his own gender, according to Hunt, for he is told that in order to transform he cannot merely don female dress; he must also "soften [his] heart" to receive the "imperfections" of the female sex. His gender is destabilized because he changes not only his clothes but his heart as well and, hence, the disguise "effeminates" him (Hunt 136).

Although Sidney's Pyrocles as Zelmane appears in a prose romance—and, therefore, does not reflect exactly the same issues raised by male to female transformations on stage nor elicit the same possible laughter response—it does underscore the effeminization that occurs when male characters don female disguise. It is that process of effeminization that often prompts laughter when performed on stage. Note that this effeminization differs from that found in plays in which the female disguise is purposefully linked to shame. For example, the title character of Jonson's *Epicœne* is

disguised as a silent woman in order to trick Morose into marrying "her." After the marriage, "she" becomes a nagging wife, and in his search to find grounds to divorce "her," Morose signs over his inheritance to the masterminds of the trick. The reveal of Epicœne's gender is aimed at shaming Morose, who is effeminized by his association with Epicœne. Shame is also the motive in the gender swap found in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Here, Falstaff[59] is punished for his boorish wooing of Mistress Ford and Mistress Page. He is tricked into donning a female disguise in order to be humiliated in front of the entire town. Although he accepts the stunt as a good-natured joke, the shame is associated with the effeminization of donning the female disguise. These examples work to directly destabilize a character's gender, and the humor stems from an Aristotelian space, the audience laughing at and down at those who do not adhere to the gender norm. What then of the instances in which the male character takes on a female disguise for a purpose other than that related to shaming?

One way to read the term "effeminization" is the process of stripping one's maleness. As the identity of gender is one of the most important to understanding who one is, the process of effeminization has the potential to destabilize an entire identity.

---

[59] Falstaff often has been identified as a female or hybrid character, most notably by Valerie Traub. In her article "Prince Hal's Falstaff: Positioning Psychoanalysis and the Female Reproductive Body," Traub claims that the rejection of Falstaff by Prince Hal in *Henry IV Part I* and *II* is the symbolic rejection of both the oedipal father figure and the pre-oedipal maternal figure. Traub proves this claim by positioning Falstaff as a secondary father figure for Prince Hal, whereby the newly-crowned King Henry's rejection of his old friend at the end of *Henry IV Part II* serves as symbolic patricide; however, much of her article focuses on the simultaneous positioning of Falstaff as a maternal figure--with his grotesque belly symbolizing the pregnant woman—thereby allowing his rejection to ultimately reinforce the patriarchal construction of a man who can only truly be powerful once he is free of female influence.

Such is the case for Antonio of Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*. Antonio begins the play in disguise as Florizell the Amazon in order to reunite with his love Mellida, their love having been prohibited by her father. The text provides multiple clues that Antonio's disguise is not realistic. The boy playing him says, "I a voice to play a lady! I shall ne-er do it" (Ind.69). Although a boy, his voice has matured enough that Florizell's femaleness must always be in question. Florizell's clothing is also marked as unconvincing as Mellida notes "her" "strange habit" (I.i.166). Antonio's appearance as Florizell may very well be an example of laughter being elicited by the mere sight of the male in female garb in early modern English theater. Even so, Mellida does not recognize Florizell as Antonio until the end of Act III, even though they kiss at the end of Act II. The three acts as a woman take their toll on Antonio's identity. He begins Act IV with, the following: "Antonio is lost./ He cannot find himself, not seize himself./ Alas, this that you see is not Antonio" (IV.i.2-4). Although he is decrying the loss of his identity due to his separation from Mellida, he has been effeminized by that love. He can no longer find Antonio, the male part of himself, for his identity belongs to a woman, Mellida, symbolized by his feminized identity as Florizell for three acts. He is not male or female but "two parts in one," as the boy playing Antonio answers when asked, "What must you play?" (Ind.65-66, 64). As Balurdo declares upon the later reveal of Mellida disguised as a male page, "Turned man, turned man; women wear the breeches" (IV.i.235). Although these lines are spoken by a foolish gentleman, they do underscore the power of clothing to destabilize one's gender and identity. In the final two acts, Antonio disguises himself first as a sailor and then as a dead man, both disguises further underlining an unstable identity.

Although the theme of lost identity is not inconsequential, it is difficult to take seriously in a play in which characters are named "Dildo" and "Cazzo," Italian for "penis"; implied stage directions encourage slapstick with multiple faked faintings; the players highlight the artificiality of the of the proceedings in the Induction; and the father figure reverses his objection to Antonio after a feigned death. What exactly the play is saying about the construction of gender, however, is even less clear. At whom, or with whom, should the audience be laughing, and, what beliefs about gender does that laughter reinforce or question?

A play, or at least one production of that play, that answers those questions more directly is the ASC 2012 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In a 2012 interview, Denice Burbach Mahler, who played Helena in the production, claims that the scenes that play with gender stereotyping get the biggest laughs. In this production, Hermia and Helena "fight like dudes," as Burbach Mahler says, with Lysander and Demetrius having to pull Hermia off Helena in Act III, Scene ii. This scene draws large laughs from the audience as does the fight between Lysander and Demetrius, portrayed as "femininely-weak" hand slapping (Burbach Mahler). Both fights overturn constructions of gender, both of Shakespeare's time and of the twenty-first century. The greatest laughs, however, in this fine production come from Flute as Thisbe in Act V. Flute's gender disguise has a purpose, unlike the shaming evidenced in *Epicœne* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*—the same purpose as the boy would have had who played Hippolyta, Hermia, or Helena in the original production. Flute, though, is not a professional actor, and in fact the production in which he stars is Shakespeare's parody of amateur theater, obsessed with

literal translation in contrast to his own play's metamorphosis from its original material found in Ovid. While playing Flute, as opposed to Flute as Thisbe, Ronald Peet dons an over-sized, button-down white shirt and faded blue pants. As Thisbe, sans wig, he wears a strappy pink gown reminiscent of the one Gwyneth Paltrow wore when she won an Academy Award for her performance in *Shakespeare in Love*, with rouge and lipstick to match. Each of Thisbe's lines is spoken in a squeaky falsetto, Peet's—or is it Flute's?—voice often breaking. The laughter at his appearance and first lines in the mechanicals' "Pyramus and Thisbe" is loud and raucous, but it has faded by the time he first arrives at "Ninny's tomb" to meet Bottom as Pyramus (V.i.252). When Flute returns, though, to find that Pyramus has died, she kneels down to ask, "Asleep, my love?" (V.i.311). It is at that moment that Peet's—or, again, is it Flute's?—dress strap breaks, revealing his bare chest. This incongruity, highlighting the maleness of the performer, caused those around me to cry with laughter. Interestingly, this very hypothesis is suggested by Mann in his suggestion that boy performers must have worn simulated female breasts: "Where an appearance of male performer obtruded, it would more likely lead to humorous incongruity rather than homoerotic desire" (104). It is difficult to determine in the case of the ASC production if the last gales of laughter stemmed from the gender incongruity of the male form of a female character, the theatrical incongruity of props breaking mid-scene, or both.

The scene, however, is one that I have never seen fail to elicit laughter, although some Flutes as Thisbes have their audiences in tears by the end of the speech as well. It is one that directly references the theatrical convention of the all-male cast, but it is one that

also requires an actor to play a man playing a woman for a purpose other than shaming. Is the laughter elicited here corrective and conservative? It does not appear to be merely so, for while the production of “Pyramus and Thisbe” is an object of mockery, Flute as Thisbe is not shamed for his performance nor his gender transformation. Does it mock the theatrical convention, productions that do not facilitate it as well as Shakespeare’s own, or merely nod to its practice? All three scenarios are possible, but given that the moment resides in a play within a play, I would suggest that there is more to this laughter. The play proper witnesses other transformations, such as a weaver becoming an ass-headed lover of a queen. It also challenges gender norms, such as Helena’s role reversal in becoming a Diana that pursues Demetrius’s Apollo. Flute as Thisbe is the final moment in which these two transformations meet. As Robin’s final speech suggests, the audience is permitted to interpret the actions of the play as an offense to be dismissed as a dream, but the suggestion implies that the opposite is true as well, that an audience could instead take delight. The laughter found in the Flute as Thisbe scene—and in the Peet as Flute as Thisbe scene—allows for both audience reactions, one that seeks a return to gendered order and one that delights in the gender hybrid embodied by the character. As Burbach Mahler concludes, “Laughter allows for both reactions.”

WHO DO GIRLS LIKE THEY’RE BOYS

The question of transgression—or the degree to which a character in the guise of another gender transgresses—is one raised by Hunt. In answering this question, he establishes a spectrum of transgression. On the one end of the spectrum is the “women

disguised as men whose transvestite roles primarily involve the teaching, or revelation, of ideational nonsexual virtues that eclipse, or neutralize, the transvestite's complex sexual provocation of other characters and, presumably, readers or playgoers" (133). Although not a woman disguised as a man, the cross-gendered Pyrocles as Zelmane in Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* is cited as the exemplar of this extreme. While destabilization to some degree will always occur when a character dons the disguise of gender, the primary effect of the transformation is one of being and shaping the ideal female. The opposing end of the spectrum would be exemplified by John Lyly's *Gallathea*, featuring female characters who don the male disguise but fall in love with each other. No matter how the gender confusion on stage is untangled, same sex love has been not only portrayed but celebrated. Such characters' role in the work "is either chiefly or solely the complex sexual provocation of other characters and certain readers or members of the theater audience" (133). Importantly, characters may reside at any point along this spectrum, in what Hunt labels as both "ideational" and "sexual" (134). What follows is an analysis of three of Shakespeare's female characters who take on the disguise of maleness: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*'s Julia, *As You like It*'s Rosalind, and *Twelfth Night*'s Viola. Where do these three characters appear on the spectrum? What does the laughter elicited by their transexing reveal about gender?

The character closest to "ideational" is *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*'s Julia. Hunt notes that the sexuality and gender of the page Sebastian, the identity Julia adopts, is not emphasized in the play. The only lines that suggest gender are spoken by Lucetta, as she and Julia plot her transformation:

LUCETTA You must needs have them with a codpiece, madam.

JULIA Out, out, Lucetta. That will be ill-favoured. (II.vii.53-54)

Lucetta's mention of the codpiece is the only reference to Julia's or Sebastian's genitalia. While there is bawdy humor elsewhere in the play, none surrounds the cross-gendered Sebastian neither in this scene nor in later appearances. In fact, while this planning scene may involve some giggling between Julia and Lucetta as to the particulars of Julia's disguise—as it does in the televised BBC adaptation—Julia's central concern is to protect her virtue. She plans to don the male disguise to "prevent/ The loose encounters of lascivious men" (II.vii.40-41) but worries that doing so will tarnish her reputation. She asks Lucetta, "But tell me, wench, how will the world repute me/ For undertaking so unstaid a journey? I fear me it will make me scandalized" (II.vii.59-61). Although Julia ultimately "morally uplifts" Proteus (Hunt 137), her concern about her virtue and reputation fit the ideal for women, and, thus, she functions as ideational on two levels, for both men and women. Aiding audiences in focusing on this aspect of her role is the utter lack of laughter accompanying scenes featuring Julia as Sebastian. Neither she nor her transformation are sources of mockery as her purpose is an admirable one.

Upon meeting "Sebastian," Proteus reads his "face and…behavior" as indicative of "good bringing up, fortune, and truth" (IV.iv.59, 61). Here, the lines do not indicate a sexual attraction on Proteus's part for the page; instead, they register an admiration for qualities that a man should have, ones that Proteus has yet to fully acknowledge within himself or develop. After his attempted rape of Silvia, Julia, still in disguise as the boy page, faints. Although Proteus directs Valentine to "look to the boy" (V.iv.83), there is no

indication of same-sex desire. It is not until Julia produces the ring Proteus had given to her, a ring representing love and fidelity, that he finally recognizes her. She teaches him the following truth: “In a disguise of love./ It is the lesser blot, modesty finds, / Women to change their shapes than men their minds” (V.iv.105-107). Proteus recognizes the truth in her statement, that men must be constant. Julia’s gender transformation works towards creating Proteus into the ideal man. He sees qualities in Sebastian to emulate, and her presence helps him to develop the one quality he most lacked. Hunt identifies her as a “redemptive” force and places her on the ideational extreme of the spectrum (135). While I agree with Hunt that Julia’s gender transformation principally serves to redeem Proteus and that her gender and sexuality while in disguise are down-played, I do think he glosses over the fact that she does not return to her female form at the end of the play. Although there are no stage directions indicating that Proteus and Julia in disguise kiss, he does say that he has his “wish”—Julia—forever, and many editors add a stage direction indicating the joining of hands just before he does so (V.iv.117). Shakespeare’s choice to leave Julia in male garb while Proteus makes this declaration does finally underscore her, even if temporary, male gender. Given that the playwright typically allows for a return to order, and a return to one’s original gender, the choice to keep her in her gendered disguise appears purposeful, and perhaps moves the example of Julia just a bit towards the middle of the spectrum than Hunt argues.

A character such as *As You like It*’s Rosalind occupies almost the exact mid-point of Hunt’s spectrum. She is ideational in her role as a model and molder of Orlando, and she is sexual, but that sexuality is necessarily complex as the character, played by a boy,

disguises herself as a man but then pretends to be a woman in her wooing scenes with Orlando. In her male disguise, she attracts both Orlando and Phoebe. She embodies, though, the ideal female virtues, reinforces heterosexual desire, endorses marriage, and aids in Orlando's fashioning of an ideal self, worthy of being her mate.

That Rosalind chooses the name "Ganymede" for her male identity cannot be glossed over. The play begins with multiple suggestions of same-sex desire, the most blatant of which is the name Rosalind selects. In Greek mythology, Ganymede attracts the love of Zeus and after being abducted is given eternal youth and beauty. His name has come to symbolize not only homosexual desire but pederasty, the love for a young male by an adult male. Many also detect same-sex love between Rosalind and Celia. Before the audience is introduced to these two characters, Charles provides this insight: "Never two ladies loved as they do" (I.i.97). Celia's second line in the play is directed at Rosalind: "Herein I see thou lovest me not with the full weight that I love thee" (I.ii.6-7). She details their relationship in the following manner: "We still have slept together,/ Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together,/ And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans/ Still we went coupled and inseparable" (I.iii.67-70). While many critics and audiences note the "slept together," it is the "coupled" that most connotes a romantic relationship to my mind. The above lines indicate that the bond between Celia and Rosalind, or at least the affection Celia has for Rosalind, may be more than friendly or sisterly, although productions can certainly stage their relationship as such, as the Shakespeare's Globe 2009 production does. Other moments of same-sex desire, though, cannot be so easily downplayed given Rosalind's gender disguise.

Rosalind plans her disguise after being condemned by Duke Frederick. She says that because she is tall, and to ensure that she escapes the dangers of Arden, she will dress like a man:

> A gallant curtal-axe upon my thigh,
>
> A boar-spear in my hand, woman's fear there will.
>
> We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
>
> As many other mannish cowards have,
>
> That do outface it with their semblances. (I.iii.111-116)

Here, Rosalind does not focus on the gendered clothing that would connote sex or sexuality; instead, she emphasizes the articles of clothing and manners that would connote bravery and strength, the qualities she will need to survive in the forest and thrive on her own. When she next appears, however, the Shakespeare's Globe production has made an interesting staging choice: not only has Naomi Frederick's Rosalind removed her makeup, but she has cut her hair in a manner similar to that of Orlando and wears the same brown leather pants and jacket that she saw him in during their first meeting. This choice reinforces the audience's understanding that to Rosalind, Orlando is the ideal man. As she will soon learn, he may need to be taught the art of wooing, but she already knows him to be close enough to the ideal that if she were to be a man she would choose to be him.

However, no matter how convincing the disguise, issues of same-sex desire will be raised. Rosalind takes pains to distinguish her female self from the clothing she wears—"Dost thou think…I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?" (III.ii.127-

179)—but her disguise's success rests in her being able to pass as a young man. When she first encounters Orlando in the forest, Frederick's Rosalind smooths her hair down, consciously adopts a frown, and lowers her voice. This clear male disguise elicits laughter from the Shakespeare's Globe audience and again when she says, "I thank God I am not a woman" (III.ii.315). Although Orlando notices the femininity of Ganymede, he associates that with "his" youth, calling Rosalind as Ganymede "pretty youth," "youth," and "good youth" (III.ii.303, 379, 386). The plan to have Orlando woo Ganymede pretending to be Rosalind elicits laughter, especially when she tells him, "woo me" (III.ii.381). This moment is rich with dramatic irony, with the audience and Rosalind knowing much more about how knotty this wooing will be than Orlando does; it places Rosalind in control, acting as what Natalie Zemon Davis would call a "woman on top," with her directing the man she loves to woo her in a specific manner; and it underscores the gender transformation, from boy player to female Rosalind to male Ganymede to female "Rosalind." Jack Laskey, Orlando in the Shakespeare's Globe production, clearly enjoys the young man he has encountered in the forest. He is intrigued if not attracted by the end of Act III, Scene ii, as he calls out an unscripted "Rosalind" after she tells him, "You must call me Rosalind" (III.ii.387). The text is unclear as to exactly when Orlando realizes Rosalind's disguise, but he clearly does not see through her disguise in this first meeting.

Hence, when upon their next meeting he greets her with "Rosalind," and Laskey's Orlando presents her with flowers, the male character is consciously wooing another character whom he perceives to be male. The Shakespeare's Globe production stages this

scene with Rosalind barely being able to restrain herself from revealing her disguise. She elicits a big laugh when she says, "I am your Rosalind," and Celia corrects her with the warning, "It pleases him to call you so, but he hath a Rosalind of a better leer than you" (IV.i.56-58). The oaths of love offered between lines 93 and 104 are spoken softly and in earnest, and the production adds a kiss at the end of the mock wedding staged as a *play extempore*. Laskey's Orlando kisses whom he believes is Ganymede pretending to be Rosalind, but this kiss not found in Shakespeare's text unveils Rosalind's disguise. She turns away with a wry smile, the audience laughing at her being able to maneuver Orlando into giving her this kiss. The kiss, however, has sparked a moment of realization in Orlando, and he points in silent recognition of her true gender and self. Thus, when Laskey's Orlando stands behind Frederick's Rosalind and she leans against him and says, "By my life, she will do as I do" (IV.i.135), the audience is no longer witnessing same-sex desire. They are witnessing a tender, heterosexual moment. Laskey says he will keep his promise as "though thou wert indeed my Rosalind," to whom he now knows to be a female Rosalind. While this line reading again elicits laughter from the audience, their knowledge now aligned with Orlando rather than Rosalind, the sincere oaths and the kiss earlier do not. The staging has removed any anxiety that the gender disguises may cause. How these same choices would have played in Shakespeare's time, though, are unclear, for no matter when Rosalind's gender is realized by Orlando, the player would always have been a boy.

Even with these safe and unusual staging choices made by the Shakespeare's Globe, the production does not, and cannot, avoid the same-sex desire in this play, for it

is Ganymede's femininity that attracts Phoebe. She too calls Ganymede a "pretty youth," but she also notes the "pretty redness in his lip, / A little riper and more lusty-red / Than that mixed in his cheek" (III.v.114, 121-123). It is Ganymede's female face that Phoebe most desires. While critics differ in how Rosalind responds to Phoebe's love—Hunt says that she "does not appear to return Phoebe's homoerotic love" (143), while Mann says that she "delights" in it (119)—it is one based in same-sex desire. The Shakespeare's Globe production milks the laughter that Phoebe's desire can elicit, having her pant giddily at one point and on her knees in another, but Frederick's Rosalind clearly disdains how Phoebe can be attracted to someone who treats her so poorly. While this staging choice allows the laughter to act conservatively, mocking those who break from heterosexual love, a production in Shakespeare's era would be less clearly so, for, again, both Rosalind and Phoebe would be played by boys. The layered reactions to all-male casts, discussed above, would come into play, and be specifically underscored and complicated by Rosalind's final speech.

Unlike *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*'s Julia, Rosalind does return to her female form at the end of the play. However, the Epilogue is spoken by the boy playing her, not the character herself, clearly implied by the line, "If I were a woman" (14-15). This self-referential moment is one which Mann argues leaves the player as "an incongruously half-crossed-dressed creature, upsetting rather than alluring," for if the boy were a woman, he would kiss any of the men in the audience at his own choosing (15-16). He argues that while the issues of gender raised throughout the play highlight the anxieties surrounding gender in the period, the boy's reference creates visceral anxiety in the male

audience members around desire and their own manhood. The laughter elicited here is one caused by Freud's theory of relief—a release from tension and relief that the play is at a close, thereby ending this direct gender confrontation. However, most modern productions, such as that of the Shakespeare's Globe, do not feature an all-male cast. Fredericks lifts her skirts at these lines to reveal her Ganymede costume underneath, but this move merely highlights the artificiality of Rosalind's disguise, rather than emphasizing the artificiality of Rosalind's original gender. The moment, therefore, is less threatening and more incongruous. As Hunt notes, "Once women after the Restoration began playing female roles in the theater, an early modern English visual spectacle was lost whose effect, notably so in *As You like It*, proves virtually impossible to overestimate" (144). Even still, he places Rosalind's gender transformation at the mid-point of his spectrum, embodying both the ideal and the sexual. The Shakespeare's Globe production most assuredly rests at this point. Just how jarring the final speech would be in the original production is unknowable, however.

One play not discussed by Hunt featuring a female character in a male disguise that would be placed closer to the far extreme of the spectrum is *Twelfth Night*. The play's Viola shares many characteristics with *As You like It*'s Rosalind, but there are ways in which this text more greatly emphasizes the character's gender and sexuality over her role as a moral corrective. Although it is not as transgressive as *Gallathea*, it melds the most controversial aspect of Julia—the fact that she remains in her male garb at the play's close—with Rosalind's greatest complexities. She too takes on a male guise, again, to ensure her safety in a strange land without a male chaperone. While in that

guise, she falls in love with Orsino, who in multiple scenes seemingly returns her affection even though he believes her to be a eunuch, in a way that mirrors Orlando and Ganymede in *As You like It*. Olivia falls in love with the disguised Viola, mirroring Phoebe's love for Ganymede. While the issues raised by Viola's male guise are similar to those raised by Rosalind, they are less resolved by the play's end. I would also claim Viola and Rosalind as more transgressive in one key aspect unmentioned by Hunt, as they center their respective plays. While they both serve ideational roles, the men in these plays become supporting players. Rosalind and Viola are three-dimensional characters, complex, contradictory, rather than merely one-dimensional figures supporting the central men. To highlight *Twelfth Night*'s use of the cross-gendered character and its relationship to laughter, I will use the 2012 Shakespeare's Globe all-male production principally in this analysis, contrasting its choices with the 1988 filmed stage adaptation directed by Kenneth Branagh and the 1969 adaptation broadcast on British television featuring Joan Plowright.

The first thing one notices in viewing the Globe production is the technique used to create the female character from the male actor. This technique stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by the all-male casts of the Redlands Shakespeare Festival or the Sacramento Shakespeare Festival. Kevin Whitmire, Kate in the RSF's all-male production, describes his process of transformation as follows:

> I embrace the fact that I am a man in a dress. It's all about confidence. I embody the essence of Kate, but there will always be people who don't buy it. The illusion became important to me. I could only go so far with memorizing lines, so I

> watched RuPaul's *Drag Race* to help with the illusion, took lessons with a few queens. I brought in my own wig. It takes two hours to get ready. I use the first scene with Kate to establish my Kate; it is my beauty pageant moment—just walking across the stage, before the talent or answer/question. My goal is to make the audience forget that I am a man.

There are a few comments of note here. First, he understands that his maleness will always be present, that he is a "man in a dress." He does not seek advice from female family members or friends on how to be more like a woman. Instead, he seeks out male role models who take on the female guise professionally. Whitmire's goal, however, is to make the audience forget that Kate is being played by a man, so his goal is to create the most realistic female form that is within his grasp.

This quest contrasts with the one employed by the Shakespeare's Globe, which mirrors the technique outlined by Mann. Mann highlights clothing, makeup, and hair as the sites of aesthetic difference. He notes that the fashionable garments of early modern England produced "a series of gender-specific costume shapes that bore little resemblance to the natural figures of either sex and drew their strength as icons of gender" (112). The wired and laced waist partnered with the padded hips versus the visible codpiece and peascod belly—this binary dress code references the image of gender rather than the realism of gender representation. The clothing becomes a shorthand of allusion. Mann continues, stating that "make-up was a highly sex-specific phenomenon in Elizabeth society indicating and constructing female beauty" (113). Given the materials used in the make-up of the period, Shirley Nelson Garner notes that a

"highly artificial mask-like appearance" was often the result (133). This make-up helped to construct the time's beauty ideal: "lily-white skin, rosy cheeks, cherry lips, and teeth of pearl" (Garner 132). Coupled with the wigs, boy actors engaged in "complete transformation to give the appearance of the thing itself, of archetypal, erotic womanhood" (Mann 116). Gender here is marked by "surface appearance" rather than "the body underneath," and the boys accessed the same markers as their female contemporaries (116). In that way, the boys' transformations were not markedly different, and, yet, the result was one not of "man as woman, but celebrating 'woman-ness'" (116). In other words, the boy players transformed into icons of women, using exaggerated surface markers of the female gender, rather than creating a true impersonation of womanhood. They were the thing and not the thing. Thus, what is noticed is less their femaleness and more their alterity.

The three male players of the Shakespeare's Globe production adopt the visible markers discussed in Mann and take on a form that clearly references "woman-ness" while still being "other." Johnny Flynn's Viola wears thick white make-up, red lips and cheeks, and a long wig of red yarn. Her bosom is obscured but her voice is soft. The only titter from the audience in this early scene comes from the Captain's scoff that Viola could pass as a eunuch. When dressed in the male guise of Cesario, the actor wears the same wig and make up (less the red cheeks), speaks softly, but wears male garb.[60] The

[60] Consequently, the only discernable difference between Cesario and Sebastian in this production is Cesario's red lip. Both have the same wig, pale make-up, and male garb. The markers used to transform the actor into Viola also create the illusion of twin-ness between Cesario and Sebastian. It is the only production I have seen in which Olivia's

actor then carries the markers of both female and male for much of the play. Paul Chahidi's Maria dons a brown wig, more natural in appearance than Viola's, white make-up with rosy cheeks, and a corseted dress that gives the appearance of a female bosom. Mark Rylance's Olivia speaks in an especially soft falsetto, wears white make-up and red lips and cheeks, and dons a black wig decorated with an ornamental crown. The only laughter elicited by these characters' appearances is when said appearance is explicitly referenced. For example, when Maria invites Sir Andrew to bring his hand "to the buttery-bar," Chahidi gives a pointed glance at his own bosom (I.iii.59). The appearance of Rylance's Olivia does elicit laughter, but it stems from her highly stylized voice and movements, one that demonstrates she actively cultivates a persona. For example, Olivia does not walk; she glides, almost as if Rylance were wearing roller skates underneath his skirt. When Olivia becomes excited, she drops the façade, further eliciting laughter from the audience. Again, though, the laughter is not directly tied to the male player as a female character; it instead is directed at the Olivia's false airs.

Moments, though, that call for a character to reference a gendered disguise do elicit laughter, much more so than what is created in the other two productions. For example, when Olivia asks Cesario if he is a comedian, Flynn's "I am not that I play" is much more layered than that of Plowright's or Barber's (I.v.164). The audience's laughter here seems to acknowledge not only that Viola is not Cesario but that Flynn is not the same gender as Viola. Similarly, Viola's incredulous "I am the man," spoken in response to her realization that Olivia has fallen in love with her, elicits great laughter in

---

confusion of Sebastian for Cesario seems possible. Productions featuring a female actress as Viola make this confusion improbable.

the Shakespeare's Globe production. In contrast, Barber, for example, speaks directly to the camera, breaking the fourth wall, but she is wry and is prevented from building a rapport from her audience in the way that a live production would allow. She emphasizes "man," as in the man that Olivia loves. Flynn's reading not only earns laughs throughout the entire speech, but a great laugh at this specific line, as it reveals Viola's great pride in having pulled off her male guise. He emphasizes "am," or the transformation from female to male. The laughter here is similar to that found in the following exchange between Viola and Olivia:

VIOLA That you do think you are not what you are.

OLIVIA If I think so, I think the same of you.

VIOLA Then think you right, I am not what I am. (III.i.130-132)

Here, Olivia has just confessed her love for Cesario. Without being explicit, Viola is attempting to warn Olivia that she is not in love with whom she thinks. The lines, though, highlight the precariousness of both characters' identities and gender. The language of the negative that Viola employs emphasizes what they are "not" rather than what they "are." The verbal gymnastics highlight the cross-dressed players and the one cross-gendered character, but it also highlights how engaging in these illusions brings one's identity into question. What does it mean to be a man if he can play a female character so convincingly? What does it mean to be a man if a female character can portray one so convincingly?

Act II, Scene iv is the first in which a mutual attraction should be evident between Cesario and Orsino. Viola's Cesario fights her natural impulse to reveal her feelings for

him, as she needs to protect her identity; Orsino fights feelings he is developing for Cesario, to thwart same-sex desire. These sincere feelings should be evident to the audience and elicit laughter. Branagh's adaptation develops a warmth between Orsino and Cesario, and Viola's love for Orsino is evident in describing the woman she loves, but the scene is humorless. The tone is dark and somber rather than funny. The Shakespeare's Globe production balances the conflicted emotions and elicits laughter. In addition to the laughter prompted by Cesario's description of the woman he loves, who clearly matches Orsino, a tenderness develops between the two characters. They hold hands as Feste sings, and Orsino looks perplexed by his attraction for Cesario at the song's end. His order for Cesario to woo Olivia more forcefully, accompanied by violently overturning a bench, reads as an overcompensation to eliminate or ignore his feelings for Cesario. Viola reveals her isolation, her grief, and her destabilized identity when she says, "I am all the daughters of my father's house,/ And all the brothers too; and yet I know not" (II.iv.119-120). When she begins to cry, Orsino first gently slaps her shoulder, then tenderly strokes her, before they almost kiss. The audience's silence reveals its investment in the two characters' emotions and the tension in anticipating not only a kiss between Orsino and Cesario, nor Orsino and Viola, but the two male actors as well. When Viola breaks the spell with her "Sir, shall I to this lady?" the audience erupts in laughter, finally releasing the tension.[61]

---

[61] To be clear, I do not argue that the sole reason that one production elicits laughter over the other is due to the all-male casting. Other factors, Branagh's choice to film on a sound-stage perhaps being top amongst them, are at work here. The play, however, is intended to play with gender identity on multiple levels, not merely Viola as Cesario but

Orsino's reaction to Olivia's marriage to whom she believes to be Cesario is ripe for interpretation by productions. Their choices determine just how transgressive the play is. For example, in the 1969 televised adaptation, Orsino's face is not shown as Cesario declares the following: "After him I love/ More than I love these eyes, more than my life,/ More by all mores than e'er I shall love wife" (V.i.130-132). This declaration reveals Viola's love for Orsino, but everyone still believes her to be the male Cesario. By not showing Orsino's reaction, the 1969 production eludes much of the suggestion of homoeroticism. Further, when he prompts both Olivia and Viola to clarify the word "husband," his reaction singularly stems from the betrayal of Cesario marrying Olivia. It is also of note that no kiss is staged[62] between Orsino and Viola, still in male garb and called "Cesario," at the end of the play. Their story ends with Orsino and Cesario walking together but not hand in hand. This production's approach downplays much of the anxiety that could be caused by the gendered guise; however, much of the humor is lost here as well.

Branagh's adaptation takes a different approach to this scene. Orsino is in frame as Cesario declares her love for him, and Christopher Ravenscroft's Orsino appears proud, most certainly not confused or disgusted by his male companion's revelation. His reaction to the marriage announcement conveys a multitude of feelings. Jealousy is clearly evident as he spits out, "Husband?" The target of that jealousy, though, is unclear. Is he jealous that Olivia chose Cesario or that Cesario chose Olivia? Ravencroft's reading

---

male player as Viola as Cesario. The modern female casting of Viola undercuts much of this layering.

[62] To be clear, the text does not contain a stage direction for a kiss.

allows for both interpretations. Ravenscroft also emphasizes the word “boy” by adding a lengthy pause at line 260, and a kiss is staged after calling Viola Cesario and commenting that her male garb makes her a man. Although the earnestness of this production does not allow for many moments of laughter outside the holiday fun of Sir Toby or the humiliation of Malvolio, the choices made at the end of the play do highlight the play’s transgressive potential.

The Shakespeare’s Globe production encourages laughter and underscores the sexuality of the character. In other words, it presents a Viola as Cesario that not only aids Olivia in overcoming her depression and returning to the normalized role of wife and teaches Orsino how to love up close rather than from afar, but also titillates with suggestions of homoeroticism and explicit references to gender and sexuality. First, Liam Brennan’s Orsino draws a sword on Olivia upon learning of her love for Cesario. This move stands in stark contrast to the BBC adaptation, for the anger is aimed at Olivia for stealing Cesario, “the lamb” he does “love” (V.i.126), away rather than the opposite. Although he then threatens Cesario with the sword as well, his first instinct is to attack Oliva. The suggestion here is that he has stronger feelings for Cesario than he does for Olivia. Brennan’s reading of “Husband?” is also the only one of the three that could, and does, elicit laughter. He is befuddled and the line is read in exaggeration.

More laughter comes from unexpected moments. For example, as the priest begins to describe their wedding, Viola as Cesario looks for a ring on her finger. Clearly she is confused by the veracity of a priest’s account, but her actions also betray a confusion about her identity. Playing as a man has caused her to question her very self:

perhaps she did marry Olivia and not realize? Further, upon Sebastian's appearance, Olivia almost faints and says, "Most wonderful," upon realizing that "Cesario" has a twin whom she has married (V.i.218), a line that reads as, "Goodness, there are two such beautiful creatures, and I get to keep one of them!" The near-faint is an exaggerated, theatrical representation of femaleness, but it is the laugh at line 218 that truly represents the audience's affection for this character. Irene Dash notes that Olivia often receives ire from critics, presented as the opposite of Viola who elicits an audience's sympathy and identification. Dash proposes that, although both characters challenge gender norms, only Viola is allowed to do so because she is in male garb. The laugh elicited here, though, demonstrates that at least this one audience so identifies with Olivia that they are pleased that she will be able to be with a version of Cesario. She is not laughed at here; her joy is celebrated by the audience.

However, it is Orsino's reactions that most drive how the final moments are interpreted. When Orsino haltingly, questioningly, wonders "if this be so," the audience laughs at his confusion and joy at discovering that he can be with Cesario after all (V.i.258). Brennan, too, emphasizes "boy," but he chooses to lilt his voice into a question (V.i.260). His love's gender is ambiguous and unknowable to him at this moment, yet he asks for Cesario's love anyway. The laughter elicited here stems from the untangling of the play's knotty portrayal of gender, but it is also in recognition that it cannot be completely untied as Viola is played by a man. Although the production does not stage a kiss between the two characters, Orsino does kiss Cesario's hand when he indicates that in other habits Viola will be his "fancy's queen" (V.i.375).

Although I do not want to claim that a modern all-male production and its effects upon a modern audience directly mirror that of an early modern production, the Shakespeare's Globe production of *Twelfth Night* is perhaps the closest a modern critic can come to understanding how a player's gender can affect a play's themes that center on gender. While a modern audience will reference modern constructions of gender, and, therefore, the anxiety elicited will be in reference to perhaps diverse specific expectations, the fact remains that challenges to gender norms will elicit anxiety and that anxiety will often reveal itself through laughter.

Again, my aim here is not to explicitly identify one motive of laughter as prompted by issues of gender. Such a claim would not only be impossible to prove given the transhistorical nature of this analysis but be reductive as well. Instead, my goal is to highlight the various moves made in early modern plays—in their textual form and under both Elizabethan England performance conditions and those of the modern theater—that connect issues of gender to laughter. Doing so underscores the ongoing anxieties stemming from a society's relationship to and constructions of gender, even if those very constructions have shifted over the centuries.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Decorum of Laughter

In his opening statement defending George Zimmerman, on trial for the murder of an unarmed seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin in 2012, Don West began with the following knock knock joke:

—Knock knock.

—Who's there?

—George Zimmerman.

—George Zimmerman who?

—Alright, good. You're on the jury.

The death of Martin, who was African American, sparked nationwide protests, inspired a Million Hoodie March, and was prominently remarked upon by President Obama, noting that if he had a son, he would have looked like Martin. The trial, hence, received extensive media coverage and was televised on HLN. The start of *The State of Florida vs George Zimmerman* was a serious matter, focused on the death of a teen and the fate of the accused murderer. Is the above joke appropriate for this occasion? If the public's reaction to it is any indication, then the answer is a decided no. West's joke and the public's reaction—ranging from the silence found in the courtroom to the bafflement and outrage of those outside the court—was covered on each of the network nightly news broadcasts, CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News, and it inspired articles on major online news

outlets, ranging from *Huffington Post* to *The Guardian*. Why did this joke prompt such a reaction? I contend that the answer lies in West's misreading of decorum.[63]

THE DECORUM OF THE JOKE

On its surface, West's joke structure is similar to the "failed jokes" found in Chapter One: The Framing of Laughter; it sets up a joke following a recognizable format and thwarts an audience's expectations by not following through with the traditional "knock knock" joke structure, for instead of turning the George Zimmerman name into a pun, it instead makes a comment about a real-life event. The incongruity between the joke's anticipated ending and its actual ending should have caused a moment of bafflement and an expression of relief at resolving the conflict, perhaps in the form of laughter or a knowing smile. Yet, no laughter is heard from the jury—the joke's immediate audience—and no smiles are seen in the courtroom. West expresses an understanding of his audience and the expectations it might have in the introduction to his joke: "At considerable risk, I would like to tell you a little joke. I know that might sound a bit weird, in this context, under these circumstances, but I think you're the perfect audience for it." Here he notes that the context—a murder trial—is a "risky" and "weird" space for telling a joke. In fact, he further urges the jury to not hold his client responsible if it finds the joke distasteful; in other words, he wants to take the risk upon himself not

[63] My understanding of "decorum" is informed by the following: Artistotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, Cicero's *De Oratore* and *Orator*, Bringham Young University's *Silva Rhetoricae*, Joseph J. Hughes's "Kairos and Decorum: Crassus Orator's Speech *De lege Servilia*," and Augusto Rostagni's "A New Chapter in the History of Rhetoric and Sophistry."

upon his client. Yet, he argues, this jury is the perfect audience for this joke, with its punchline grounded in the claim that the publicity surrounding the trial could be an obstruction to finding justice for his client and that the perfect juror would be one who knew nothing of Zimmerman prior to the opening statements. West then is flummoxed that his joke is not well received, saying, "Nothing? That's funny!"

Leaving aside that West seemingly was unaware that a Zimmerman knocking at one's door might leave some listeners feeling threatened, his insistence that the joke is funny for it found its perfect audience is erroneous on multiple levels. I believe the factors that elicit laughter are the same as those instrumental in persuasion. A joke can be well structured, but without understanding and adhering to decorum, the intended result of laughter will be unattainable. As Aristotle's *Rhetoric* outlines, there are three primary methods of persuasion: *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. In short, one may use logic and reasoning, credibility of the persuader, or emotional appeal to persuade an audience. However, these appeals will not be effective if decorum is not followed. As *Silva Rhetoricae* defines it, decorum (*to prepon*) is "a central rhetorical principle requiring one's words and subject matter be aptly fit to each other, to the circumstances and occasion (*kairos*), the audience, and the speaker." While current connotations of decorum often include modesty and etiquette, decorum as a rhetorical term rests in appropriateness, a notion divorced from gentility. Aristotle—who approaches the concept more narrowly as a virtue of style—writes that "language will be appropriate if it expresses emotion and character, and it if corresponds to its subject. 'Correspondence to subject' means that we must neither speak casually about weighty matters, nor solemnly

about trivial ones" (III.vii). This correspondence of style to subject is examined thoroughly in Cicero's *Orator*, in which he notes that "nothing is harder than to determine what is appropriate" (70). It is this aspect that West seems to have misread for he spoke of weighty matters with a trivial joke.

However, the concept of decorum, as can be seen in *Silva Rhetoricae*'s definition, demonstrates that appropriateness is more than just "correspondence to subject." It also includes *kairos*—literally, the right time, but with connotations of the right time and place. In addition, appeals are made to specific audiences, not only those who have found themselves together on a particular occasion as West assumes but those who have shared values and beliefs. Lastly, the speaker him/herself is a vital component. This claim goes beyond the notion of *ethos*, developing a character or persona that is credible to an audience, but instead focuses on how the beliefs and values of the speaker influence the ability to persuade. As Cicero writes in *De Oratore*, "It is impossible for the listener to feel indignation, hatred, or ill-will, to be terrified of anything, or reduced to tears of compassion, unless all those emotions, which the advocate would inspire in the arbitrator, are visibly stamped or rather branded on the advocate himself" (II.xlv). In other words, the speaker must, even if for just a moment, have the very beliefs and feelings that he/she wishes to inspire in the audience.

Although these factors have been identified as those that must be considered when determining if a particular rhetorical approach will persuade, I would argue that they are the same that determine a joke's success. In other words, both persuasion and the comic rely upon decorum. For example, a popular internet meme is the "Too Soon" response to

a joke whose subject matter is both recent and tragic or controversial. Its first recorded usage can be found in the Fall 2001 Friars Club Roast of Hugh Hefner featuring comedian Gilbert Gottfried. In it, Gottfried tells the following joke: “I have a flight to California. I can’t get a direct flight—they said they have to stop at the Empire State Building first” (qtd. in Holt).[64] The audience booed the comedian for referencing the World Trade Center attacks just weeks after the events of 9/11, and one audience member yelled out, “Too soon!” This response, and in its ensuing usage to criticize jokes made of topics ranging from Hurricane Katrina to the revelation that celebrities such as Jared Fogle, Bill Cosby, or Josh Duggar have committed sexual assault, demonstrates the importance of *kairos.* There is a right time to make a particular joke, and if a tragic or controversial event is too recent, there then has not been enough emotional distance to find such a joke funny. Indeed, researchers A. Peter McGraw, Lawrence E. Williams, and Caleb Warrant found in a study tracking responses to jokes made on the topic of Hurricane Sandy and its ensuing devastation that psychological distance, which partly relies upon the temporal, shapes “humorous responses to tragedy” (567). In the study, participants found Hurricane Sandy jokes the funniest the day just prior to the storm making landfall in 2012. During the event and in the days immediately following the storm, humorous responses to these jokes were at their lowest, but then spiked again to just short of their highest levels approximately a month afterward. This month marked the

---

[64] Although there is video evidence of the 2001 Friars Club Roast of Hugh Hefner, and of Gottfried’s set, the internet has been scrubbed of this joke and the audience members’ responses. Attendees have relayed the incident and Gottfried has retold the joke in interviews, but it should be conceded that the exact phrasing may have originally differed from what has become part of the official narrative.

transition from “too soon” to “the right time.” After that, the study concluded, the humorous responses plummeted, marking that the jokes were now “too late.” Given that West’s knock knock joke is told in the midst of the trial, it would have been deemed “too soon.” While this discussion of timing is a narrow approach to understanding *kairos*, it does demonstrate how a joke’s impact will be influenced by whether it is told at “the right time.”

However, some would argue that many of the above topics are never funny—that a joke’s failure about 9/11 is related not to its being told too soon but to its very subject matter. Perhaps 9/11 jokes are never funny? If so, it would join a list of other topics that have been deemed as so by many: rape, incest, pedophilia, murder, etc. The mantra of “(blank) jokes are never funny” followed a rape joke told by comedian Daniel Tosh in 2012, a Trayvon Martin joke tweeted by political commentator J. Todd Kincannon in 2014, and a sexual abuse joke written by Amy Poehler for *Difficult People* in 2015 (Bassist; Frye; Yahr). The tweeted joke about Martin further illuminates the failings of West’s opening statement joke, for if jokes about Martin are never funny then by extension neither would jokes about Zimmerman. G. Legman’s *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor* collects more than two thousand examples of these types of jokes—jokes that many would deem go too far—and he uses a Freudian analysis to rationalize their appeal. Legman claims that the purpose of these jokes is to “absorb and control, even to slough off, by means of jocular presentation and laughter, the great anxiety that both teller and listener feel in connection with certain culturally determined themes” (13-14). I want to place this rationale alongside a critique made In *New York*

Magazine's 10th anniversary edition of 9/11. In it, Jim Holt counters the idea that "some things are too terrible to be joked about" by noting that if "Jews can make jokes about the Holocaust—and they do make jokes about the Holocaust—then Americans can make jokes about 9/11."

Legman argues that these "dirty" subjects as "culturally determined"; Holt specifically names Jews and Americans above. Hence, the key here is not that "(blank) jokes are never funny" but that they are not funny to particular audiences. When a joke is analyzed for its decorousness, the audience is often thought to be relatively narrow and within a particular space: the members in a jury box, the ticketholders at the Laugh Factory, or the viewers of a television show. Each of these narrow audiences are bound by specific conventions and expectations based on a venue's parameters. Yet, these audiences are also bound by larger constructs of appropriateness. In other words, culturally determined frames determine what is decorous; what fits decorum according to one ideology may not in another. This point about how the elements of decorum determine a joke's success clearly does not only explain why West's knock knock joke failed. Instead, it raises a question about humor's relationship with decorum: Is there a cultural moment in which a failed joke would be deemed funny? In other words, can a failed comic work become funny in another time and place? Conversely, can previously successful humor work once its themes are deemed indecorous?

THE KNIGHT OF THE BURNING PESTLE: A JOKE LACKING DECORUM

When examining early modern plays, the first question can be difficult to answer. The logical assumption is that most failed work has been lost, especially given that performed plays, successful or otherwise, were not usually published in early modern England. Failed stage plays have survived, though, such as Jonson's *Catiline*, Webster's *The White Devil*, and Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.[65] Jonson's play is a Roman tragedy based on the Gunpowder Plot (Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* 17), while Webster's is a tragedy mixed with grotesquely dark humor. Of these three, only Beaumont's is a comedy, and I believe discussing its failure and ensuing longevity are pertinent to answering the question above. If *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was such a failure, closing after only one performance at the Blackfriars in 1607 (Gurr, *Playgoing* 87), why did it then go on not only to be published but to be revived by the end of the century and curry favor even today?

The play today is perhaps best noted for its metatheater. The theatrical production of the play begins with a prologue, who, like many prologues, offers an overview of the play. It is clear that a city comedy will be played, what eventually will be known as *The London Merchant*, and within three lines, he is interrupted by two audience members,

---

[65] The poor original audience reception of these plays is well documented. Jonson's tragedy was reportedly booed (Bevington) and the writer's hope that a more elite reading audience would appreciate it is noted in the opening epistles. Webster includes a similar "To the Reader" indicating that the "ignorant asses" who attended the failed performances lacked "understanding" (9-10, 6). Reception to Beaumont's play is discussed in context of this analysis. I do not want to suggest that all failed plays of the time period, or even today, failed because they were indecorous; however, it should be noted that Thomas Rymer famously claimed that Jonson's play failed because it violated decorum.

grocers George and Nell. They say they are tired of city comedy and instead want to see a romance of spectacle with their attendant Rafe as the star. He performs a speech from Hotspur from *Henry IV* and earns a spot in the production. He references other plays throughout his adventures as a grocer knight, including Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy* and the plays of Thomas Heywood, and his escapades parody Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Spencer's *The Faerie Queene*. Andrew Gurr notes that many of the playwrights at the smaller theaters like Blackfriars were anxious about the mixing of classes within the audience and the varying taste levels that these audiences exhibited (*Playgoing* 85-89). The merchant class often gravitated towards romance, while its other patrons favored city comedies. Beaumont parodies this genre as well with *The London Merchant* being a comically reduced version of city comedy. Instead of a prodigal son, the play offers a prodigal father. Jasper tests Luce's love in a similar manner to the test seen in Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*; however, here it is all too clear how silly the test really is. In these parodies, Beaumont continually draws attention to the conventions of genre and lampoons the tastes of the Blackfriars audience members. Yet, it is the presence of George and Nell that most embodies the metatheatrical spirit. They continually interject throughout the work—not understanding plot, siding with the wrong characters, and often commenting upon the action—serving as a parody of the chorus, an antiquated device by the late 16th century (Mack). However, they sit on the stage next to those of the highest class in the audience. The audience members next to them are encouraged to deride these characters, yet it is clear from the play's initial failure that they were reluctant to do so. While the theater often blurs the line between the real and the constructed—the created

identity of the self and the created identity of the character—the lines were perhaps blurred too much here, causing audience members to rethink their tastes, their status, their very selves.

As the dedication of the 1613 published edition indicates, the performance was "utterly rejected" (6). If the play is interpreted as a mockery of the merchant class and its tastes, as many critics including Gurr claim, then "it could be inferred that there were too many citizens present to enjoy such an anti-citizen joke" (*Playgoing* 87). This argument suggests that the audience was comprised of numerous citizens, who—finding the satire too biting—overwhelmed the audience reaction enough to drown out the more positive reactions that their wealthier counterparts may have had. Gurr acknowledges that there are other views on the matter, most notably Alfred Harbage's, which states that the play's mockery of the citizens lacked "animus" and was not "savage enough" to please a "gentle" audience (87). Here, the argument is that the play's satire was not biting enough for an audience that he believes to be overwhelmingly comprised of an elite class. Brent Whited picks up this idea in arguing that the metatheatrical conventions created a "momentary illusory community of inclusion" that so unsettled the audience members of the highest classes that the play had to be rejected (113). To whichever theory of the audience makeup one subscribes, its belief system or systems regarding class[66] appears to

---

[66] I do not want to oversimplify the causes for anxiety that this play may have caused during its original performance. As Gurr notes in *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, issues of gender are also in play, especially as they relate to class. The Blackfriars female audience would more likely be comprised of ladies of the court than of merchant wives (121). Not only is The Grocer's wife the voice of "crass citizen tastes," but her methods of using her voice—through interruption—is also mocked, as a warning of how a woman should speak and behave (121). However, the issues of gender raised here are

have been the impetus for rejection of the play. In other words, decorum has been breached since the play's themes are framed in a way that was inappropriate due to the anxieties surrounding the shifting nature of class in early modern England.

If Zachary Lesser is correct, the answer as to how such a failed play survived is also linked to the audience aspect of decorum. In his "Walter Burre's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," he seeks to answer the question: Why would Burre, six years after the play's failed performance, "take the substantial risk" of publishing it (22)? In *The Shakespearean Playing Companies*, Gurr argues that due to Beaumont's success, both alone and famously with John Fletcher, the play becomes worth reviving (353). However, Lesser suggests that if Burre had intended to capitalize upon Beaumont's fame as a selling point for *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, he would have included the author's name on the title page. Instead, the title page includes a Latin quote, and a dedication is added lamenting its earlier staged failure for an audience who could not appreciate it. As Lesser points out, Burre used the same strategies to market Jonson's failed *Catiline*, and both serve to market the play to an elite, educated reader—one who perhaps would revel in his/her ability to appreciate what might put off other readers. These moves would ultimately work towards establishing the play form as literature (Lesser 29). While this focus on the rise of print culture helps to explain how *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was resurrected, it does not necessarily explain why. Lesser does link many of Burre's publications together through the thematic trope of scorning merchants, citizens, and gallants (33). When this knowledge joins Burre's strategies to target an educated reader,

---

inextricably linked with class in this example. Since issues of gender will be discussed below in the section on *The Taming of the Shrew*, I will only focus on class here.

the audience then becomes narrow but powerful: “Inns of Court students or those like them, typically the younger sons of gentry, lacking the wealth of inheritance and hence scornful of the prosperous merchants and new knights around them” (Lesser 35). This is the precise audience that would help drive the establishment of the drama as literature, and the fact that this play’s themes appealed to them allow for it to endure where many others faded away. In short, the play’s audience had to be narrowed from one that was multifaceted and reflective of the complex class anxieties of early modern England to one that was more homogeneous and whose feelings about class were more singular. This change of audience ensured that the play would then be deemed decorous, but importantly decorous for an audience that had the power to put the play on its eventual path: second and third quartos in 1635; revival performances in 1635 and 1636;[67] numerous revival productions during The Reformation; and inclusion in the Fletcher and Beaumont second folio (1679), after having been left out of the first (Hattaway v-vi).

The play then goes from staged failure to high prominence. Indeed, it is the one play attributed solely to Beaumont included in early modern drama anthologies such as The Norton *English Renaissance Drama* edited by Bevington et al.; the only Beaumont play to have been performed at the American Shakespeare Center, having been staged three times in the last twenty years; and one which enjoyed a successful run at the Shakespeare’s Globe’s Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2014. *The Guardian*’s Michael Billington calls the Globe production a “metatheatrical romp” full of “lively performances,” while Bridget Escolme’s review in *Shakespeare Quarterly* calls it a “joy”

[67] Gurr notes that “novelty of taste” was now in favor at The Blackfriars in the 1630s, with audiences responding well to plays that mocked old tastes (*Playgoing* 214).

(213). The ASC 2010 production is a joy as well, with modern references to Sarah Palin and *Legally Blonde*.[68] This modernization is also found in Merrythought's songs, which included "Walking on Sunshine" and "All the Single Ladies." ASC's Jim Warren argues that the songs found in Beaumont's text would have been known to his audience and brought joy and laughter; the ASC production uses contemporary songs with the same meaning in order to ensure that those moments would be equally joyful for a modern audience. While the RSC 1981 production also modernized the play, the Globe production, according to Billington and Escolme, did not. However, it did present the citizens as sympathetic. Billington notes that the production "simply shows…the intrusive spectators…as Jacobean citizens demanding their rights," while Escolme uses words such as "love," "pride," and "affection" to describe the merchants and their apprentice (213).

The above reactions reflect a modern, albeit Western, reaction to the play, and they indicate what about the play would be deemed decorous today—why modern productions enjoy success and are met with laughter while its first staging did not. While I do not intend to downplay current class struggles, today's audiences are much removed from the rigid post-feudalistic class structures of early modern England and class mobility and meritocracy are values of a Western democratic society. Those values allow for a modern audience to recognize that the mockery goes in all directions while still being more sympathetic towards the lower-class merchants than the gentle characters. While current class structures are not quite parallel to those depicted in *The Knight of the*

[68] The ASC 2010 production of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was viewed via DVD in its archives.

Burning Pestle, analogies can be drawn between them. Yet modern theater-goers do not view the play as one that is too harsh on the characters of lower class. The terms of endearment used between the Grocer and his wife, and their championing of Rafe, undercut the satire directed their way. Further, today's belief in egalitarianism—realized in action or not—removes much of the sting that could arise from a class critique. In an age that embraces satire and carnival and values the right to freedom of speech, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* stands as a tame advocate for these ideals; *South Park* and *Charlie Hebdo* it is not. Hence, modern audiences focus on its "mirth." The 2010 ASC production even ends with a cast chorus of Jackie DeShannon's "Put a Little Love in Your Heart," replacing "love" with "mirth." Modern sensibilities are not offended and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is not only deemed appropriate but joyful.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE REWRITTEN ACROSS THE AGES

Above, the path of one play's journey from failed joke to praised comedy has been traced. As the cultural moments shift so too do the expectations of decorum and the humor that can then be found. But, how is the inverse handled? What happens to successful comedic works when they are deemed no longer decorous? The majority of these works fall out of popularity and are lost. There are notable exceptions that are studied for their historical significance as cultural artifacts, such as the minstrel shows of 19th and early 20th century America whose depictions and constructions of race are inappropriate today. Yet, when it comes to noted playwrights of the early modern era,

and especially Shakespeare, indecorous works have not only persisted in being studied—critiqued and assigned in college classrooms—but performed.

Many of Shakespeare's comedies cause problems for modern audiences because they offend modern sensibilities. The ending of *Measure for Measure* is one example. Here, the Duke pairs characters together in marriage at his whim and decrees that Isabella be his wife, a pronouncement made all the more uncomfortable for a modern audience as it is met with Isabella's silence. The resolution of *All's Well that Ends Well* further challenges modern audiences as it pairs the beloved Helen with the universally deplored Bertram. These short examples are merely representative of a lengthy list of Shakespearean work whose themes or depictions could be deemed indecorous to a modern audience: race in *Othello*; a monstrous "other" in *The Tempest*; race, ethnicity, and religion in *The Merchant of Venice*; and gender in *The Taming of the Shrew*. While none of these examples perhaps posed problems for an early modern audience, they all cause discomfort and debate for an audience today.[69]

To ease this discomfort, productions and critical approaches often amend the work to make it more appropriate for a modern audience. For example, in *Two Gentleman of Verona*, how is a modern audience to react to Valentine's offer to his old friend Proteus: "All that was mine in Silvia I give thee" (5.4.83)?[70] Is he literally offering Silvia, his love, to Proteus in order to mend the friendship? Many critics would

[69] I do not mean to imply that "discomfort and debate" are synonymous with offensive, or that those very feelings are not the intended audience reactions for some of these works. However, the named productions are problematic today in ways that they did not in their earliest performances due to changes in ideologies of gender, race, class, and religion.
[70] See Chapter One: The Framing of Laughter for an extended discussion of this line and critics reactions to it.

say yes; others, however, have attempted to reinterpret the line to indicate that all the love he has for Silvia is now bestowed upon Proteus as well, meaning he loves Proteus as much as he loves Silvia. Yet this is not what the line states. I would argue that this reinterpretation stems from a modern discomfort with a heroic character giving a girlfriend away as if she were property, and it is fairly representative of how not only the current age has dealt with indecorous Shakespeare but previous ages as well. In other words, instead of allowing indecorous Shakespeare to be lost to time, as not only would happen but has happened to much work that has been deemed inappropriate, the work has been "rewritten." Why is Shakespeare an exception?

To answer this question, I must return to the factors of decorum: corresponding style to subject matter, *kairos*, audience, and speaker. The revival of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* exemplifies how the determination of appropriateness can change once the audience and its belief systems do; in contrast, the response to Shakespeare stems from the speaker factor of decorum. As Cicero notes, for a speaker to be effective, he or she must believe what is being argued. Can modern audiences accept a Shakespeare that espoused racist, misogynistic, or anti-Semitic claims through his work? It would seem not, for the "Shakespeare" each era has constructed has been an idealized reflection of itself.

The construction of "Shakespeare"[71] perhaps begins with Jonson's poem "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And What He Hath Left

---

[71] As Garber notes in her introduction to *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, Shakespeare the man and author does not equal the "*idea* of Shakespeare and of what is

Us," featured in the front matter of the First Folio. In it, he writes: "He was not of an age, but for all time!"[72] As Northrop Frye explains in his *On Shakespeare*, the line establishes two Shakespeares: one who is historical—a playwright writing for an Elizabethan London audience—and one who "speaks to us today with so powerfully contemporary a voice" (1). Frye argues that there is great benefit in keeping both of these Shakespeares alive, for studying the historical author allows us to study the belief systems of a world unlike our own while embracing his contemporary voice enables us to wonder at his ability to transcend time and place. Critics such as Leah Marcus in her *Puzzling Shakespeare* focus on the "local" Shakespeare, placing his work in a historical context, while scholars such as Harold Bloom proclaim his universalism, as he does in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. Bloom begins his work with the following: "The answer to the question 'Why Shakespeare?' must be 'Who else is there?'" (1). While he makes a short attempt to actually answer that second question,[73] it is largely a

---

Shakespearean" (xiii). In other words, the historical Shakespeare has been lost and replaced with the era's conception of him and his work. When explicitly speaking of the idea of constructing this conception, I will put "Shakespeare" in quotation marks. However, since the two, as Garber notes, are "perceptually and conceptually the same" (xiii), I will forgo the quotation marks at all other times.

[72] This line can be read in two ways. One is that "not of an age" connotes "not just of one age." This interpretation seems to be the one that Frye takes here. The line, however, can also be read as denying a historical "Shakespeare."

[73] Certainly other scholars have attempted to answer this question as well, most notably Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino's argument in favor of Thomas Middleton in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. However, even here they are not suggesting that we embrace a "Middleton"—a construction divorced from the historical figure and author—but instead argue that no one author should supplant an entire era's dramaturgy and that if one voice were to be named as exemplary of early modern drama in England it should be someone more reflective of the era as a whole.

rhetorical one, for by the time he asks, Shakespeare has become "Shakespeare." Indeed, it is impossible to imagine another author's name in place of Shakespeare's in the following lines from Garber's *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*: "Shakespeare makes modern culture and modern culture makes Shakespeare….Shakespeare writes us" (xiii). The second line echoes the thesis of Bloom's work that Shakespeare invented the human; it affords him a power not only to reflect the inner workings and complexities of the human but to shape them as well. The first line identifies the reciprocal relationship audiences have had with his work: he shapes us but we construct him in our own image. This grandiose notion could be dismissed as mere bardolatry,[74] but the belief that Shakespeare has this power also explains why each era has felt compelled to find a way to work with his plays that are deemed indecorous rather than letting them fall out of favor. If he represents, speaks for, creates *us*, then he must be the idealized version of ourselves, the exemplar of what a speaker can be. However, that speaker, according to decorum, must believe what he says; therefore, the work must be "rewritten" so that what he says aligns with our own ideals. As A. C. Bradley claimed in response to the changing representations of race in *Othello*, "We do not like the real Shakespeare. We like to have his language pruned and his conceptions flattened into something that suits our mouths and minds" (qtd. in Garber 169). This "pruning" and "flattening" is what I refer to as

[74] The term "bard" predates Shakespeare, with its earliest recorded usage in 119 A.D., according to *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). *The Bard of Avon Birthday Text*, published in 1881, was an anthology of his plays and poems, and the title indicates that Shakespeare was recognizably known as "The Bard" by then. However, while OED defines "bard" as a poet or lyric poet, the definition of "bardolatry,"coined by George Bernard Shaw in the late 1800s, is specific to Shakespeare: "Worship of 'Bard of Avon', i.e. Shakespeare," indicating again his exceptionalism.

“rewriting,” a form of modification that is typically more subtle than overt adaptation but that has large implications in regards to its themes and representations of social issues like class, race, and gender.

The play that perhaps best demonstrates the rewriting that has taken place across multiple cultural moments is *The Merchant of Venice*. In *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, Garber analyzes and the performance and critical history of *The Merchant of Venice* around the term “intention.” Perhaps for more than any other Shakespearean work, authorial intention matters in this play. Did Shakespeare intend to humanize the Jewish Barabas of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* to create a more sympathetic figure in his adaptation? Did he have a progressive view of the European Jew and hope to inspire religious and ethnic tolerance in his audiences? Or, do the lines of anti-Semitism, uttered by otherwise sympathetic and noble characters, and a plot that apexes with the forced religious conversion of Shylock demonstrate that he intended for the character to merely be a clown figure and not worthy of audience sympathy? In other words, was Shakespeare “like us” or not (Garber 124)? While that question is unanswerable—the heart and intention of the author cannot be known—it can be said with certainty that “Shakespeare” is “like us” and the performance history of this play illustrates that this is the case, for the approach to the play has consistently aligned with how its respective era would answer the above questions. Garber identifies four broad historical moments that mark the shifts in attitudes towards Jews and Judaism and the ensuing productions and critiques of this play: early modern London, nineteenth-century capitalism, the anti-Semitism of the turn of the century, and the Holocaust and its aftermath (132).

In the first, the Jewish Shylock would be associated with “Jewish guilt,” the belief stemming from the story of Barabbas that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. Since there is no critical commentary on the play before 1709 and no artifacts remarking upon the first productions, much has to be surmised. For example, it is assumed that the actor playing Shylock—both Richard Burbage and John Heminge have been suggested[75]—probably wore a crooked nose and a red wig and beard (133) and was caricaturized in a manner similar to Barabas in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta.* A 1644 poem certainly describes Shylock this way (qtd. in Mahon 21). The only other early modern evidence that still exists is the Quarto printed in 1600, in which an inconsistent speech tag is used that waffles between “Shylock” and “Jew” (Mahon 5). Given Shakespeare’s inconsistency with speech tags throughout his work, I am hesitant to read intentionality behind the inconsistency, but perhaps it does give some indication of not only how Shakespeare viewed Shylock but how his audience would as well. In the early 1700s, adaptations of the play proved more popular, with the lighter adaptation *The Jew of Venice*—note that here Shylock is now the title character—offering a more palatable Shylock. John Russell Brown writes that Granville’s adaptation was “toned down” to “make the play acceptable to the taste of the time” (qtd. in Mahon 23); in other words, it was rewritten to be decorous to its audience. In it, Shylock is not forced to convert and the harshest of his language is modified. This tamer Shylock is then challenged, Garber claims, by Charles Macklin’s interpretation of Shylock, wearing a red hat rather than a red wig and beard and adopting a lisp (135). Macklin reinterprets Shylock as a cunning

[75] Garber suggests Burbage (*Shakespeare and Modern Culture* 133), while Amiel Schotz suggests Heminge (qtd. in Mahon 21).

but complex villain to acclaim, famously eliciting Alexander Pope's praise— "This was the Jew/ That Shakespeare drew" (qtd. in Garber 135, Mahon 23) —and it influenced productions for decades to come. Garber notes that the play "has always intersected, somewhat uneasily, with the politics of the time" (136). For example, Edmund Kean's romanticized villain allowed for the audience to focus on the warnings the play makes about the evils of money for both Christians and Jews, just as the early nineteenth century sees a more capitalistic economy and Jews gaining more economic prominence (Garber 136-137). His interpretation inspires "sympathies" more often than "his enemies," according to a William Hazlitt 1816 review (qtd. in Mahon 24). By the turn of the century, Henry Irving is playing Shylock as part victim, part villain, in what a *Times* of London review calls "two distinct Shylocks" (qtd. in Garber 139). This portrayal reflects the subtle anti-Semitism of the era, for the audience sympathizes with the one but laughs at the other, and Irving seems to invite these disparate reactions by donning an Orientalized persona (Garber 139).

It is then the play intersects with history in such a profound way that it is difficult for a modern audience to imagine the play beforehand. As Garber explains, the 1905 German production directed by Max Reinhardt presented perhaps the most sympathetic and celebrated Shylock to date; however, Germany's relationship with the play changes under the rise of the Third Reich, to the point where a portrait of Richard Schildkraut who portrayed Shylock in the famed production was ordered taken down by Joseph Goebbels in 1933 (Garber 141). In 1933, 86 performances of *The Merchant of Venice* were staged in twenty German theaters, making it the fifth most popular Shakespeare

play. For comparison, *Othello* was staged 31 times in five theaters in the same year, making it the thirteenth most popular (Bonnell 168). 1933 also marked the year that plays that could be interpreted as presenting Jews in a positive light were banned (169). By 1940, *The Merchant of Venice*'s numbers were halved while *Othello*'s almost doubled.[76] What did these remaining productions look like? A 1934 production was praised for "refraining from trying to humanize" Shylock (170); a 1938 production did not allow Shylock to show grief over the loss of his daughter and modified the text so that Jessica was adopted, thereby allowing her marriage to Lorenzo to adhere to newly enacted racial laws (171)[77]; a 1942 production featured a "grotesque caricature" of Shylock and embedded a heckling anti-Semite in the audience (172); and a 1943 production was staged to coincide with the destruction of the remaining Jewish ghettoes in Byelorussia (173). The play's production history in Nazi-era Germany exemplifies how a culture approaches Shakespeare's work if its themes do not quite align with its own. As Andrew G. Bonnell remarks in his "Shylock and Othello under the Nazis," "The Germans have long regarded Shakespeare as their own" (166). Their "Shakespeare," then, must align with their ideals. Their "Shakespeare" is not one who would create a humanized portrait

[76] Here, I include the *Othello* comparison to indicate that the drop in *The Merchant of Venice*'s production numbers was not due to fewer theater performances overall.

[77] This focus on blood also indicates that for the Third Reich Germans, Shylock is to be demonized perhaps more for his ethnicity than his religion. Conversely, Marion D. Perret argues that early modern audiences would have reacted less to his ethnicity than to his occupation that connotes religion (261). In other words, negative reactions to Shylock from early modern audiences would have had more to do with religion than ethnicity. Since the Jewish are an ethnoreligious group, it is often difficult to parse the inspirations for stereotypes or the motivations for bigotry and discrimination.

of a Jew; instead, despite its infrequent stagings, the play is rewritten to be "proof that Shakespeare had a feeling for racial purity" (170).

Since its use by Nazi Germany to justify Jewish extermination, the play has been called repugnant by Ron Rosenbaum (qtd. in Magnus 108) and has inspired some critics such as Rhoda Kachuk to call for its banning (Mahon 1). Many argue that this play cannot be divorced from its ugly past. Yet, it has been performed often since World War II, filmed for the BBC five times, and adapted into the 2004 Michael Radford film starring Al Pacino as Shylock. Its popularity—if popularity can be gauged by these types of numbers—has not waned even as its themes have become the least aligned with an audience's belief system in the history of its performance life. The current cultural moment would be the least receptive to anti-Semitic sentiments of any in the last four hundred years. How then does the play become palatable to modern audiences?

Modern stage productions often attempt an ambiguous presentation of the play and its most famous character, a "rewriting" that does not eschew its more problematic elements but instead presents them as problematic. Shylock is sympathetic and repellant in equal measure and his treatment by others—even those whom the audience is supposed to admire—is often abhorrent, but the productions invite audiences to see the tale as one that not only reflects early modern prejudices but mirrors current ones. Prior to the opening night of The American Shakespeare Center's 2012 *The Merchant of Venice*, the company's co-founder Ralph Alan Cohen claimed that the production must remain true to its comic roots; it must be "comic but unsettling." Yet, as he later says in the podcast "ASC Special Lecture: On *The Merchant of Venice* and Being Jewish," the

play is “difficult for me, and I don’t know what it is like for other people because I’m not other people. Which I think is what this play is partly about. I think this play is very much about how we are trapped in who we are and how we view everything through that.” This notion that perception is controlled by the trapped self is extended to the author as well, as Cohen claims that Shakespeare was an anti-Semite but in the way that we are all products of our time and carry its prejudices (Personal interview). Cohen’s production embraces the problematics of the play, choosing to stay true to its complicated depiction of anti-Semitism but downplay its overt racist remarks. Cohen was especially concerned about putting an actor in the position of playing Morocco onstage while Portia mocked his skin tone and character. Thus, Act II, Scene vii was staged with Morocco far upstage as Portia confided these racially-charged lines to the audience downstage. Yet, as the audible “tsks” and gasps elicited from the audience during the ASC performance proved, the scene was still far more unsettling than comic. While I cannot account for how other performances were received, the audience who experienced it with me on June 2, 2012, never forgave Portia for her bigotry, illustrated by the fact that we never laughed with her. It is perhaps then no surprise, as many have noted, that most current productions of *The Merchant of Venice* choose to “rewrite” the play by downplaying the comic.

The strategy of rewriting Shakespeare’s problematic relationship with Jews and Judaism seems to be as follows: remove the reference to Jews and Judaism or remove the humor. For example, in Joss Whedon’s adaptation of *Much Ado about Nothing*, the reference to Jews is eliminated. After being gulled by his friends and convincing himself that Beatrice is in love with him, Benedick says, “If I do not love her I am a Jew”

(II.iii.231-232). In Whedon's version, the line is read as the following: "If I do not love her I am a fool." I am sure Whedon understood that using an anti-Semitic stereotype would distract a modern audience. The intended takeaway from this scene is not that audiences should dislike Benedick or think him to be bigoted; instead, they are meant to laugh at his foolishness, yet still believe him to be worthy of Beatrice.

This type of avoidance, however, is obviously not possible with *The Merchant of Venice*. The other approach is the one taken by both the 1973 John Sichel ATV adaptation starring Laurence Olivier as Shylock and the 2004 Radford film adaptation. If a joke can only successfully elicit laughter if it adheres to the factors of decorum—and, consequently, only if an audience believes that the author of that joke believes its message—then how does an audience reconcile a beloved author with a distasteful joke? If Sichel's and Radford's adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice* are any indication, it does not need to. Instead, turn the joke into a cautionary tale. In both, the humor has been virtually removed from the play and the product resembles more of a drama, in the current use of the word stemming from "melodrama," than a comedy or tragedy. With the comic removed, the text is mined for moments of emotion, sensationalism, and sympathy for all parties; without the humor, the play raises questions without demonization or degradation in a modern audience's eyes. It should also be noted that filmed adaptations also create more emotional distance than staged productions, also allowing for the play's more problematic aspects to be deemed more acceptable. Thus, while neither adaptation was heralded—both received fairly tepid reviews—neither did they offend.

TAMING *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

To my mind, the rewriting of the controversial play *The Merchant of Venice* is similar to that often found in the stagings of Katherine's famous closing speech of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In both of these cases, Shakespeare's words typically have not been transformed; instead, the plays are "rewritten" through staging and line readings. While the "rewriting" seen in these examples is far from the adaptation evidenced in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*'s or *Sons of Anarchy*'s reworking of *Hamlet*, they are perhaps even more important to identify as "adaptation" for they alter our perceptions of the works' themes while seemingly not being "adaptations" at all.

According to the OED, an "adaptation" is "an altered or amended version of a text, musical composition, etc., [especially] one adapted for filming, broadcasting, or production on the stage from a novel or similar literary source." With this definition in mind, any stage production can be identified as an adaptation as it necessarily requires a transference from the page to the stage. This understanding of "adaptation" is mirrored in Garber's claim that "every production is an interpretation" (67) in *Shakespeare after All*, a claim that is true perhaps for all theatrical productions but most especially so for those of early modern plays, notorious for their scant stage directions. However, here I am concerned with a different OED definition of "adaptation": "The action or process of altering, amending, or modifying something, esp. something that has been created for a particular purpose, so that it is suitable for a new use." This definition is picked up again by Garber, in her claim that "plays, like other works of art, are living things that grow and change over time in response to changing circumstances" (67). While Garber's claim

again may be true of all plays, she makes it pointedly in her discussion of *The Taming of the Shrew*, one of a handful of Shakespeare plays that have been lately deemed “problem plays” because they pose problems for us, the modern audience.[78]

The Reduced Shakespeare Company’s comedic presentation of Shakespeare’s comedies nicely illustrates why *The Taming of the Shrew*’s themes are problematic to modern audiences. The company—Adam Long, Reed Martin, and Austin Tichenor—rewrite all of Shakespeare’s sixteen comedies into one six-minute five-act play. Ultimately entitled *Four Weddings and a Transvestite*, it combines the four major tropes that Shakespeare recycled throughout these works. In addition to separated twins, shipwrecks, forest-dwelling, and disguise, a dichotomy of women is established: one sister of each of the three sets of female twins is a “contentious, sharp-tongued little shrew,” while her counterpart is a “submissive, airheaded little bimbo.” While these descriptors reduce the often complex female characters of Shakespeare’s comedies into oversimplified stereotypes, both of which should be equally unattractive to modern audiences, they do underscore what precisely makes this play so problematic today: it is ultimately seen as one that argues that the “submissive, airheaded little bimbo” is preferable to the “contentious, sharp-tongued little shrew.” Over the course of the twentieth century, a woman using her tongue has been come to be viewed as a virtue; hence, the play’s themes become indecorous if taming Kate means taming her tongue in

[78] This usage of “problem play” stands in contrast to the generic term, identifying plays that do not adhere to the generic conventions of comedy or tragedy, yet still focus on the solving a problem. *The Merchant of Venice* holds the title of “problem play” under both definitions, while *The Taming of the Shrew* only does so in the more colloquial usage discussed here.

order to make her obedient. In fact, critics have long reserved their harshest criticism for this play, beginning perhaps with George Bernard Shaw's famous review of Agustin Daly's 1888 production, of which he said that "no man with any decency of feeling can sit it out in the company of a woman without being extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied in the wager and the speech put into the woman's own mouth" and that no production can "make the spectacle of a man cracking a heavy whip at a starving woman other than disgusting and unmanly" (186-187). Although this whip does not appear in the text and productions have left it out of Petruchio's hand for decades now, the play has become inextricably linked with this image. Colleen Kelly of the ASC addresses the problematic nature of the play at the beginning of her podcast of "Dr. Ralph Reveals All." She claims that the response to playhouse donors and audiences requesting an explanation of why this play should be produced cannot be, "Because it's Shakespeare." Instead, she argues that productions have to be accountable to its themes. Some would argue then that the play should not be staged, echoing similar claims made about *The Merchant of Venice*, with one critic insisting that staging the play "constitutes irresponsible threatre-making" (Young 82). Rather than being absent from the stage, though, it is as popular as ever, serving as one of the theater's great money-makers even today (Kelly). However, modern productions typically tame the play's problematic elements through rewriting.

Those elements can most clearly be seen in productions that excuse the play's controversial themes by claiming them as historically accurate—a claim that goes something along the lines of: "It can't be offensive because that's just how it was back

then. Put it into historical context and accept it for what it is." Productions that take this approach avoid any modernization of dress or setting, in order to firmly place the gendered themes in the past. This so-called "straight" reading—a term that implies that not only is Kate's "obedience speech" sincere but that it most closely aligns with Shakespeare's intentions—is evident in Franco Zeffirelli's 1967 film adaptation starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Zeffirelli commits to the Kate as falcon, who learns to love her lure. She is physically broken and cries tears of defeat on her wedding night. One alteration Zeffirelli makes is to have Kate acquiesce in Act IV, Scene iv, in which after being scolded by Petruchio for contradicting his assertion that it is seven o'clock, she agrees that it is seven—or what "o'clock [he says] it is" (IV.iv.179-187). This moment replaces the "henceforth" (IV.v.15)—the turning point identified by Garber as the moment of her transformation, signaling Kate's new approach (*Shakespeare after All* 64)—which has Kate beatifically agree that "be it moon, or sun, or what you please;/…/ it shall be so for me" (IV.v.13-15). By the time Taylor's Kate and Burton's Petruchio engage in the famous "sun and moon" scene, she has already transformed: she "knows the lure," to quote George Turberville's *The Book of Falconry or Hawking* (309). Hence, Kate's passing of the "love test" at the wedding of Bianca and Lucentio—in which each of the wives are called by their respective husbands to demonstrate their obedience and "come when called"—and her subsequent "obedience speech," spoken in earnestness and deference, symbolize that she "will always love the lure and her keeper well" (Turberville 310). She is a tamed shrew whose tongue now is only used to speak when and what is

deemed appropriate by her husband, and, hence, this production most exemplifies the play's problem status to modern audiences.

There is, of course, an adaptation—in the conventional sense—of *The Taming of the Shrew*: 1999's *10 Things I Hate about You*, starring Julia Stiles as Kat Stratford and Heath Ledger as Patrick Verona. This teen film adapts much of the play's plot to the high school setting, with the younger Bianca only being allowed to date and attend an upcoming dance if her shrewish older sister Kat finds a date as well. The fact that Patrick is paid to woo Kat is much more problematic in the 20th century than the transaction of the dowry would have been in the 16th, but that only serves to highlight just how far this tale has been modified for a modern audience, for this tale is not one of taming a shrew but of two equally-misunderstood and equally "shrewish" partners finding and taming each other. Indeed, Patrick is tamed by Kat just as much as Kat is tamed by Patrick, demonstrated by his teary reaction to her version of the obedience speech—a list of ten things she hates about him that ironically proves that she loves him; in other words, he responds emotionally to a speech lacking any of what could be called "obedience." Instead of Kate performing obedience, the last scene in fact depicts Patrick working to win Kat back. The modifications to the play's story are not merely made to target the youth demographic; instead they reveal the problematic nature of the play in its original form for audiences with modern sensibilities. It has been made "suitable" for modern audiences by avoiding the very elements—the obedience speech and the one-directional taming—that earn the play its "problem play" status.

One way to avoid the problematic nature of the play's gender themes is to stage it as a farce—the term used by Harold Bloom in his critique of the play (29) and described as staged with a wink by Garber in hers (67). The strategy here stands in direct opposition to the one taken by productions of *The Merchant of Venice*, for instead of removing the humor, it is amplified instead. Sandra Young explains the rationale for staging the play as a farce: "The genre of farce…frees us from having to deal with the bothersome agitations of conscience" (81). The 1976 American Conservatory Theatre (ACT) of San Francisco's Commedia dell'Arte production of *The Taming of the Shrew* exemplifies this approach. Invoking the travelling Commedia dell'Arte troupe's conventions—comic sound effects, masked types, exaggerated cod pieces and noses—emphasizes the production's farcical and slapstick approach from the start. Fredi Olster's Kate is the lone player offering a "straight" reading of the play through to Act IV, Scene v, which sees her resigned in her vow to "henceforth" obey Petruchio's whims. It is a production that highlights Garber's seemingly contradictory descriptions of their relationship: "passionate," "abusive," and "mutual collaboration," the last of which is best evidenced by Kate's delight in partnering with Petruchio to "play" with Vincentio. The "obedience speech" as performed by Fredi Olster also exemplifies Garber's final descriptor: "oddly tender" (62). She tenderly touches his shoulder, runs her hands through his hair, lowers her voice in sincerity, and prostrates herself before him as she places her hand beneath his feet. It is a performance of obedience and love, and, it is just for Petruchio.[79] As Bloom claims of this scene, here

[79] Garber claims that the Kate of the text performs solely for Petruchio (70); however, not all productions take this approach, Taylor's obedience speech in Zeffirelli's adaptation being just one example. While Taylor's Kate does perform for Burton's Petruchio, her

she “acts[s] her role as the reformed shrew” (29). For a brief moment, the audience believes it has witnessed a true taming, one whose problematic implications has been tempered by the farce that preceded it; after all, how seriously can an audience take a message about gender politics when the players have been engaged in choreographed but silly acrobatics throughout?[80] However, Olster’s Kate ensures that the audience knows that her performance of obedience is just choreographed acrobatics as well, for directly after their kiss, she turns to the audience with an exaggerated wink. The performance is not then for him, as an act of obedience and love, but *for* him as in to *fool* him; in fact, the only ones to know the true Kate at the end of this type of production are the audience members—she is acting for everyone, including her husband. As Martha Andersen-Thom writes, she has transformed from “shrewish woman to shred wife…from bullying to deviousness” (123). While not all farcical approaches include a “literal wink,” these productions do ensure that an audience will not take the play’s themes—or its claims of taming—seriously, and, therefore, any problematic bite it may have had has been neutralized. The play has been tamed.

---

speech targets the entire banquet; it is a public performance that lacks intimacy. Olster’s Kate is the best illustration of the approach outlined by Garber, creating an intimate performance that happens to take place in public.

[80] This methodology of tempering the play’s indecorous message through farce is also found in the 2013 Redlands Shakespeare Festival production. As Kevin Whitmire explains in a phone interview, at the end his Kate “100% giv[es] herself over to this man.” However, including this message within a farce does not go far enough in making the final moments palatable to him, for he also rationalizes her kneeling during the obedience speech as a performed marriage proposal. He reminds me, “She never did say yes” to Petruchio’s proposal of marriage. This speech gives her the power to not only say yes but to ask him to join her in return.

However, there is at least one other important "rewriting" of this play. One proponent of this approach—the ASC's Cohen—introduces it with this question: "What if Petruchio isn't enslaving Kate in a world that oppresses women, but rescuing her from that very world?" (187). In other words, what if Kate is not "tamed," but taught the tools to survive and thrive? This theory rests upon the play's metatheatrical aspects and especially upon its Induction. It should be noted that none of the above mentioned productions nor the vast percentage of productions staged at all include the Induction. Yet, it is key to this alternative interpretation that avoids the play's problematic elements. As Cohen notes in his *ShakesFear*, there are three main similarities to be drawn between Christopher Sly—the tinker and fodder for the Lord's amusement in the Induction to the play—and Kate. First, representatives of power structures contrive to persuade them to accept an alternative reality. Second, both characters submit to the new reality in order to gain access to food, clothing, shelter, sex, and social status. Finally, although both Sly and Kate give speeches indicating their acceptance of these new realities, it remains unclear if they truly believe their respective speeches or are merely getting the "last laugh" (188). These three points of similarity indicate that the choice to transform rests with Sly and Kate. Further, they emphasize the idea of the "alternative reality"—a term that necessitates the continued existence of the original reality. In other words, Sly the Tinker still exists, as evidenced by his periodic slippage back into prose.[81] Similarly, Tranio the servant still exists even as the world sees him as Lucentio. He says, "When I am alone, why, then I am Tranio,/ But in all places else your master Lucentio" (I.ii.234-

[81] See Ind.II.121-123.

235). “When I am alone” and “in all places else” indicate that time, place, and audience affect not only how one is perceived but who one is. This third interpretation rests in the idea that Kate is not tamed; she is not transformed. Instead, she fashions a public self that allows her to thrive in her world, while still allowing her to maintain a true, private self.

Tranio’s words distinguishing between when he is alone versus with others is mirrored by many of Petruchio’s. He first introduces the idea in Act II, Scene I, when he says that despite her objections in the presence of others, when “being alone” Kate loves him (297). At his wedding, he notes the distinction between the true self and the fashioned or public self when he says, “To me she’s married, not unto my clothes” (III.ii.107). Further, the audience sees that Petruchio presents a fashioned self when in the company of others that rests in performance. These instances include the pretend love scene featuring Kate’s acceptance of his marriage proposal, the “play” of rescuing Kate from a kidnapping after the wedding, and the staged, violent outbursts against his dog and servants, most of whom do not seem to exist.

However, none of these moments have much importance if they are removed from the Induction. Thus, a production like that of the 2012 Shakespeare’s Globe would read as fairly “straight” if not for the inclusion of the Induction. Samantha Spiro’s Kate curtsies towards Petruchio while scowling at all others during her obedience speech and prostrates before him in much the same fashion that Fredi Olster had in the 1976 ACT production. However, Spiro does not wink towards the audience; in fact, no ironic distance is to be found here. Yet, the production does not seem to pose a problem at all for the audience. Why? I would claim it is because it has created a world in which the

performance bleeds into the real—or does the real bleed into performance? The Induction features the production's actors playing with the drunken football fan Sly[82] and then performing what most now know to be *The Taming of the Shrew*—the play within the play. The layers of metatheatricality employed here establish the themes of performance, or of fashioning a public self. So, in a production such as this one, what is the audience to make of Kate's "obedience speech"? Is she sincere? Is she performing? As Cohen writes, "We [the audience] cannot know whether or not [Kate] believes what she says; only she knows, and that, I believe is the point" (190). What we do know in this type of production is that the Kate onstage is happy—blissfully so; she has learned to function in a world no matter what its constraints on women.

This then finally begs the questions: Is this approach to the play an adaptation, at least given the parameters that began this discussion? Is it "rewritten" at all? If not—especially given that it is the approach that most strictly adheres to the text in its entirety—does the play deserve its "problem play" status or need to be tamed at all? Admittedly, these questions are phrased in such a rhetorical manner that they imply that The Globe's production, and therefore its interpretation, are not only of Shakespeare's intention but unproblematic. Part of me believes these conclusions to be correct, but I must wonder if I only have embraced this interpretation because it most aligns with an ideology that I hold. Is it possible that I do not see it as problematic in the same way that theater-goers largely did not find the whip-wielding Petruchio problematic in the 1800s because the productions corroborate their respective audience's frames of gender?

---

[82] Sly is played by Simon Paisley Day, who will later appear as Petruchio.

Perhaps this phenomenon best illustrates how a culture rewrites a play in order to have its "Shakespeare" fit its ideals—it does not believe or acknowledge that it has rewritten it at all. In other words, we have given ourselves permission to laugh.

WORKS CITED

10 Things I Hate about You. Dir. Gil Junger. 1999. Touchstone. 2009. DVD.

Aristotle. *On the Parts of Animals*. Trans. William Ogle. *The Internet Classics Archive*. Ed. Daniel C. Stevenson. Web Atomics. 2009. Web. 10 April 2013.

---. *Poetics.* Trans. S. H. Butcher. *The Internet Classics Archive.* Ed. Daniel C. Stevenson. Web Atomics. 2009. Web. 22 May 2014.

---. *Rhetoric.* Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. *The Internet Classics Archive.* Ed. Daniel C. Stevenson. Web Atomics. 2009. Web. 2 December 2015.

As You like It. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Thea Sharrock. Shakespeare's Globe. The Globe, London. 6 and 8 October 2009. Opus Arte, 2010. DVD.

---. Sacramento Shakespeare Festival. William A. Carroll Amphitheatre, Sacramento, CA. 11 Jul 2015. Performance.

Asbury, Nick. "Failed Jokes." *Asbury and Asbury*. n.p. 16 March 2012. Web. 14 May 2013.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. 1965. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. Print.

Barber, C. L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1959. Print.

Bartholomeusz, Dennis. *The Winter's Tale in Performance in England and America 1611-1976.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. Print.

Bassist, Elissa. "Why Daniel Tosh's 'Rape Joke' at the Laugh Factory Wasn't Funny." *Daily Beast.* The Daily Beast Co LLC 11 July 2012. Web. 2 December 2015.

Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and Ovid*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1993. Print.

Bate, Jonathan and Eric Masmussen. "In Performance: RSC and Beyond." *The Winter's Tale*. By William Shakespeare. New York: Modern Library, 2009. 131-177. Print.

Bateson, Greg. "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." *Steps to an Ecology of Mind.* New York: Ballantine, 1972. 177-193. Print.

Beaumarchais, Pierre-Augustin Caron de. *The Barber of Seville, or the Useless Precaution*. 1775. *Online Library of Liberty*. Liberty Fund. 2016. Web. 4 January 2016.

Beaumont, Francis. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Bevington, et al. 1074-1139.

Beeman, William O. “Humor.” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9.2 (2000): 1-3. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 14 May 2013.

Bergson, Henri. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. 1900. Trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2008. Print.

Bermel, Albert. *Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982. Print.

Bevington, David. “*Catiline*: Textual Essay.” *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*. Cambridge UP. 2014. Web. 2 December 2015.

Bevington, David, et al., eds. *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*. New York, Norton: 2002. Print.

Bevis, Matthew. *Comedy: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. Print.

Billington, Michael. “*The Knight of the Burning Pestle* Review.” *The Guardian.* Guardian News and Media Limited. 27 February 2014. Web. 2 December 2015.

Billington, Sandra. *A Social History of the Fool*. New York: St. Martin’s, 1984. Print.

Bliss, Lee. “The Boys from Ephesus: Farce, Freedom, and Limit in *The Widow’s Tears.*” *Renaissance Drama* 10 (Jan. 1 1979): 161-183. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. July 12 2013.

Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead, 1998. Print.

Blur. “Girls and Boys.” *Parklife*. Food, 1994. CD.

Bonnell, Andrew G. “Shylock and Othello under the Nazis.” *German Life and Letters* 65.2 (April 2010): 166-178. *EBSCO*. Web. 2 December 2015.

Bowen, Barbara C. *Humour and Humanism in the Renaissance.* Farnham: Ashgate, 2004. Print.

Bright, Timothie. *A Treatise on Melancholy. The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva.* Ed. Jennifer Radden. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 119-128. *Google Books.* Google. Web. 3 January 2016.

Bristol, Michael D. *Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance Britain*. New York: Routledge, 1985. Print.

Browne, Sir Thomas. *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. 6th ed. 1672. *Sir Thomas Browne*. Ed. James Eason. n.d. Web. 7 January 2016.

Burbach Mahler, Denice. Personal interview. 16 June 2012.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Byron, Lord. *Don Juan: In Sixteen Cantos*. Halifax: Milner and Sowerby, 1837. *The Project Gutenberg*. 3 Aug 2012. Web. 12 Jun 2014.

Cicero. Book III. *De Oratore*. Trans. J.S. Watson. *Roman Texts in English*. Ed. Christopher Chinn. 2015. Web. 2 December 2015.

---. *Orator*. Trans. H.M. Hubbell. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present.* 2nd ed. Eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. Boston: Bedford, 2001. 339-343. Print.

Cohen, Ralph Alan. "ASC Special Lecture: On *The Merchant of Venice* and Being Jewish." *American Shakespeare Center Podcast Central*. Blogger. 24 June 2012. Web. 2 December 2015.

---. "Blackfriars Backstage Pass: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.*" *American Shakespeare Center Podcast Central.* Blogger. 12 October 2012. Web. 8 May 2013.

---. "Dr. Ralph Presents: *Much Ado about Nothing*." *American Shakespeare Center Podcast Central.* Blogger. 28 March 2012. Web. 10 March 2013.

---. Personal interview. 19 June 2012.

---. *ShakesFear and How to Cure It*. Clatton, DE: Prestwick House, 2007. Print.

Darwin, Charles. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. 1872. *The Complete Works of Charles Darwin Online*. Ed. John van Wyhe. Arts and Humanities Research Council. 2002. Web. 14 March 2013.

Dash, Irene G. "Challenging Conventions: *Twelfth Night*." *Women's Worlds in Shakespeare's Plays*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997. 210-244. Print.

Davis, Natalie Zemon. "Women on Top." *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1975. Print.

"Decorum." *Silva Rhetoricae*. Ed. Gideon O. Burton. Brigham Young University. n.d. Web. 2 December 2015.

Draper, R. P. *The Winter's Tale: Text and Performance*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985. Print.

Eco, Umberto. "The Frames of Comic Freedom." *Carnival!* Ed. Thomas A. Sebeck. Berlin: Mouton P, 1984. 1-9. Print.

Endel, Peggy Goodman. "South Florida Shakespeare Festival at Vizcaya." Rev. of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, by the South Florida Shakespeare Festival. *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36.4 (Winter 1985): 468-470. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 May 2013.

Escolme, Bridget. "*The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and *The Malcontent*: Shakespeare's Globe, January – April 2014." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65.2 (Summer 2014): 209-218. *Project Muse*. Web. 2 December 2015.

Findlay, Alison. *The Shakespeare Handbooks: Much Ado about Nothing*. London: Palgrave, 2011. Print.

Ford, John. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Bevington, et al. 1911-1969.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious*. 1905. New York: Penguin, 2002. Print.

Frye, Northrop. "The Argument of Comedy." *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Ed. Russ McDonald. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. 93-99. Print.

---. *On Shakespeare.* Ed. Robert Sandler. Brighton, MA: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1986. Print.

Frye, Patrick. "Trayvon Martin like a Dead Baby?" *Inquisitr*. The Inquisitr News. 31 May 2014. Web. 2 December 2015.

Fulton, R. C. "Alabama Shakespeare Festival." Rev. of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, by Alabama Shakespeare Festival. *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32.2 (Summer 1981): 221-227. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 May 2013.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare after All.* New York: Anchor, 2005. Print.

---. *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2008. Print.

Garner, Shirley Nelson. "'Let Her Paint an Inch Think': Painted Ladies in Renaissance Drama and Society." *Renaissance Drama*. Ed. Mary Beth Rose. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1990. 123-140. Print.

Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. 1974. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1986. Print.

Gosson, Stephen. *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582). *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook*. Ed. Tanya Pollard. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. 84-114. Print.

---. *The Schoole of Abuse. The Wayback Machine*. Internet Archive. n.d. Web. 2 January 2016.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. Print.

Greenblatt, Stephen et al., eds. *The Norton Shakespeare*. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 2008. Print.

Gurr, Andrew. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

---. *The Shakespearean Playing Companies.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

---. *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970. Print.

Hall, Joseph. Liber 1. *Virgidemiarum: Satires*. 1597. London: William Pickering, 1825. *Google Books*. Google. Web. 10 May 2013.

Harling, Robert. *Steel Magnolias.* New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1988. Print.

Hattaway, Michael. Introduction. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle.* Francis Beaumont. New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2002. v-vii. Print.

Heywood, Thomas. *An Apology for Actors Containing Three Briefe Treatises*. 1612. *Early English Books Online.* Text Creation Partnership. 2015. Web. 12 June 2015.

Holland, Norman N. *Laughing: A Psychology of Humor*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982. Print.

Holt, Jim. "Humor." *New York*. New York Media LLC. 27 August, 2011. Web. 2 December 2015.

Honigman, E. A. J. *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries.* Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Imports, 1982. Print.

Hopkins, Lisa. "Marriage as Comic Closure." *Shakespeare's Comedies*. Ed. Emma Smith. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004. 36-53. Print.

---, ed. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Critical Guide*. London: Continuum, 2010. Print.

Howard, Jean E. Introduction to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Greenblatt, et al. 103-110.

Hughes, Joseph J. "Kairos and Decorum: Crassus Orator's Speech *De ege Servilia*." *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis.* Eds. Philip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin. New York: State U of New York P, 2002. 128-137. Print.

Humphreys, A. R. Introduction. *Much Ado about Nothing*. By William Shakespeare. London: Methuen, 1981. Print.

Hunt, Maurice A. *Shakespeare's* As You like It*: Late Elizabethan Culture and Literary Representation*. New York: MacMillan, 2008. Print.

Hyman, Timothy. "A Carnivalesque Sense of the World." *Carnivalesque*. London: Hayward Gallery Pub, 2000. 9-72. Print.

Jackson, Russell. "Shakespeare Performed: Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1996-98; or the Search for a Policy." Rev. of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, by Royal Shakespeare Company. *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50.2 (Summer 1999): 185-205. *JSTOR*. Web 14 May 2013.

Jephson, Valerie and Bruce Boehrer. "Mythologizing the Middle Class: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and the Urban Bourgeoisie." *Renaissance and Reformation* 18.3 (1994): 5-28. Print.

Jones, Ann Rosalind and Peter Stallybrass. *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

Jonson, Ben. *Epicœne.* Bevington, et al. 782-860.

---. *Volpone.* Bevington, et al. 679-773.

Joubert, Laurent. *Treatise on Laughter*. Trans. Gregory David de Rocher. Alabama, U of Alabama P, 1980. Print.

Kelly, Colleen. "Dr. Ralph Reveal All: *The Taming of the Shrew.*" *American Shakespeare Center Podcast Central.* Blogger. 3 April 2008. Web. 1 November 2015.

Kennedy, Dennis. *The Spectator and the Spectacle*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

King, Ros. *The Shakespeare Handbooks: The Winter's Tale.* London: Palgrave, 2009. Print.

The Knight of the Burning Pestle. By Francis Beaumont. Actors' Renaissance Season. American Shakespeare Center. The Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 2010. DVD.

Lakoff, George. *Don't Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2004. Print.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980. Print.

Legman, G. *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor*. 1st Series. 1968. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006. Print.

Lesser, Zachary. “Walter Burre’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.” *English Literary Renaissance* 29.1 (Winter 1999): 22-43. *JSTOR*. Web. 4 September 2015.

Lodge, Thomas. *A Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage-plays. The Wayback Machine*. Internet Archive. n.d. Web. 2 January 2016.

Lopez, Jeremy. *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.

Luntz Global. Luntz Global LLC. 2013. Web. 16 May 2013.

Lutz, Tom. *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*. New York: Norton, 1999. Print.

Mack, Robert L. “Minding True Things by Mock’ries: The *Henry V* Chorus and the Question of Shakespearean Parody.” *The Genius of Parody*. New York: MacMillan, 2007. 104-119. Print.

Magnus, Laury. “Michael Radford’s *The Merchant of Venice* and the Vexed Question of Performance.” *Literature/ Film Quarterly* 35.2 (1 April 2007): 108-120. Pdf.

Mahon, John W. “The Fortunes of *The Merchant of Venice* from 1596-2001.” *The Merchant of Venice: New Critical Essays*. Eds. John W. Mahon and Ellen Macleod Mahon. New York: Routledge, 2002. 1-94. Print.

The Malcontent. By John Marston. Actors’ Renaissance Season. American Shakespeare Center. The Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 2011. DVD.

ManHovec, Frank J. *Humor: Theory, History, and Applications.* Springfield, Ill., C. C. Thomas, 1988. Print.

Mann, David. *Shakespeare’s Women: Performance and Conception*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. Print.

Marcus, Leah. *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1988. Print.

Marlowe, Christopher. *The Jew of Malta.* Bevington, et al. 293-349.

Marston, John. *Antonio and Mellida*. *The Malcontent and Other Plays*. Ed. Keith Sturgess. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997. 1-56. Print.

---. *The Malcontent*. Bevington, et al. 550-613.

Maslen, R. W. *Shakespeare and Comedy*. London: Bloomsbury Pub, 2014. Print.

Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff and Susan McCarthy. *When Animals Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*. New York: Delta, 1995. Print.

Maus, Katharine Eisaman. Introduction. Bevington, et al. 1905-1910.

McDonald, Russ. *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare: An Introduction with Documents.* 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford, 2001. Print.

McGraw, Peter A., Lawrence E. Willliams, and Caleb Warren. "The Rise and Fall of Humor: Psychological Distance Modulate Humorous Responses to Tragedy." 2013. *Social Psychological Personality Science* 5.5 (2014): 556-572. *SAGE Journals*. 2016. Web. 2 January 2016.

The Merchant of Venice. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Jim Warren. American Shakespeare Center. Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 20 June 2012. Performance.

---. Dir. John Sichel. Associated Television. 1973. *YouTube.* You Tube LLC. 27 April 2010. Web.

---. Dir. Michael Radford. 2004. Sony. 2005. DVD.

A Midsummer Night's Dream. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Kathleen Powers. American Shakespeare Center. Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 17 June 2012. Performance.

Minton, Eric. "Let Loose the Hounds of Humor." Rev. of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, by the American Shakespeare Center. *Shakespearances.com*. Eric Minton. 18 July 2012. Web. 14 May 2013.

Much Ado about Nothing. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Jeremy Herrin. Shakespeare's Globe, London. 2011. Kultur. 2013. DVD.

---. Dir. Joss Whedon. 2012. Lionsgate. 2013. DVD.

---. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. 1993. MGM. 2003. DVD.

Orgel, Stephen. *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses.* Trans. A. D. Melville. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford U P. 2016. Web. 6 January 2016.

Paster, Gail Kern. *The Body Embarrassed.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993. Print.

Pepys, Samuel. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*. 1893. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: Daily Entries from the 17th Century London Diary*. Phil Gyford. 2012. Web. 22 February 2013.

Perrett, Marion D. "Shakespeare's Jew: Preconception and Performance." *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1988): 261-268. *EBSCO*. Web. 2 December 2015.

Plato. *Symposium. The Internet Classics Archive.* Daniel C. Stevenson, Ed. Web Atomics. 2009. Web. 1 January 2016.

Plessner, Helmuth. *Laughing and Crying: A Study of the Limits of Human Behavior*. Trans. James Spencer Churchill and Marjorie Grene. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1970. Print.

Provine, Robert R. *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*. New York: Viking, 2000. Print.

Rainoldes, John. *The Overthrow of Stage Plays*. 1st ed. 1599. *Renaissance Women: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England.* Ed. Kate Aughterson. London: Routledge, 1995. *Google Books*. Google. Web. 7 January 2016.

Ritchie, David. "Frame-Shifting in Humor and Irony." *Metaphor and Symbol* 20.4 (2005): 275-294. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 May 2013.

The Reduced Shakespeare Company: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged). The Reduced Shakespeare Company. Acorn Media. 2001. DVD.

Romeo and Juliet. Sacramento Shakespeare Festival. William A. Carroll Amphitheatre, Sacramento, CA. 5 Jul 2015. Performance.

Rostagni, Augusto. "A New Chapter in the History of Rhetoric and Sophistry." Trans. Philip Sipiora. *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis.* Eds. Philip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin. New York: State U of New York P, 2002. 23-45. Print.

Salingar, Leo. *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974. Print.

Schlueter, June, ed. *Two Gentlemen of Verona: Critical Essays*. New York: Garland, 1996. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *As You like It.* Greenblatt, et al. 1625-1681.

---. *I Henry IV.* Greenblatt, et al. 118-1254.

---. *II Henry IV.* Greenblatt, et al. 1333-1405.

---. *The Merchant of Venice.* Greenblatt, et al. 1121-1175.

---. *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Greenblatt, et al. 1265-1320.

---. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Greenblatt, et al. 849-896.

---. *Much Ado about Nothing*. Greenblatt, et al. 1416-1470.

---. *Romeo and Juliet.* Greenblatt, et al. 905-972.

---. *The Taming of the Shrew.* Greenblatt, et al. 169-228.

---. *Twelfth Night.* Greenblatt, et al. 1793-1793-1846.

---. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* Greenblatt, et al. 111-157.

---. *The Winter's Tale*. Greenblatt, et al. 2892-2961.

Shakespeare in Love. Dir. John Madden. 1998. Miramax. 1999. DVD.

Sidney, Philip Sir. *An Apologie for Poetrie*. 1583. *English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance*. Ed. O.B. Hardison, Jr. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963. 99-146. Print.

---. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia.* 1590. *Renascence Editions*. Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2015. Web. 12 June 2015.

Shaw, George Bernard. *Shaw on Shakespeare: An Anthology of Bernard Shaw's Writings on the Plays and Production of Shakespeare.* Ed. Edwin Wilson. 1961. New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema, 1989. Print.

Simmons, J. L. "Coming out in Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*." *ELH* 60 (1993): 857-877. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 Nov. 2012.

Siraisi, Nancy G. *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. Print.

Southworth, John. *Fools and Jesters at the English Court.* Gloucester: Sutton, 1998. Print.

A Spray of Plum Blossoms. Dir. Wancang Bu. Lianhua Film. 1931. Cinema Epoch. 2007. DVD.

State of Florida vs George Zimmerman. 18th Judicial Court. 13 July 2013.

Steggle, Matthew. *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007. Print.

Stubbes, Philip. *The Anatomie of Abuses. The Critical Edition of Philip Stubbes'* The Anatomie of Abuses. Ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie. Diss. University of Birmingham, 1996. Pdf.

The Taming of the Shrew. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Franco Zeffirelli. 1967. Sony. 1999. DVD.

---. Dir. Toby Frow. Shakespeare's Globe. The Globe Theatre, London. 2012. Kultur. 2012. DVD.

---. Dir. William Ball and Kirk Browning. The American Conservatory Theatre of San Francisco. 1976. Kultur. 2002. DVD.

---. The Redlands Shakespeare Festival. Redlands Bowl, Redlands, CA. 18 May 2013.

Tarlton Project. Ed. Diane Jakacki. 2015. Web. 9 Mar. 2015.

Taylor, Gary and John Lavagnino, eds. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

Teague, Frances. *Acting Funny: Comic Theory and Practice in Shakespeare's Plays.* Ed. Frances Teague. Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 1994. Print.

Timpane, John. "'I Am but a Foole, Looke You': Launce and the Social Functions of Humor." 1994. Schlueter 189-212.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore. By John Ford. Actors' Renaissance Season. American Shakespeare Center. Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 2006. DVD.

---. Dir. Declan Donnellan. Cheek by Jowl. Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA, Los Angeles. 12 January 2013. Performance.

---. Dir. Jim Warren. American Shakespeare Center. Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 16 June 2012. Performance.

Traub, Valerie. "Prince Hal's Falstaff: Positioning Psychoanalysis and the Female Reproductive Body." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.4 (Winter 1989): 456-474. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 May 2011.

Turberville, George. *The Book of Falconry or Hawking*. *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*. By William Shakespeare. Ed. Frances E. Dolan. New York: Bedford, 1996. 309-310. Print.

Twelfth Night. By William Shakespeare. Dir. John Sichel. ITV, 1969. Koch Vision, 2008. DVD.

---. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. Thames Television, 1988. Freemantle Media, 2012. DVD.

---. Dir. Tim Carroll. Shakespeare's Globe. The Globe, London. 2012. Kultur, 2012. DVD.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Don Taylor. BBC. 1983. Ambrose. 2005. DVD.

---. Dir. Ralph Alan Cohen. American Shakespeare Center. The Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 11 Jul 2012. Performance.

---. The Redlands Shakespeare Festival. Redlands Bowl, Redlands, CA. 12 May 2012.

Vaid, Jyotsna, et al. "Getting a Joke: The Time Course of Meaning Activation in Verbal Humor." *Journal of Pragmatics* 35 (2003): 1431-1449. *Web of Science*. Web. 12 May 2013.

Warren, Jim. Personal interview. 18 June 2012.

Webster, John. *The White Devil*. Bevington, et al. 1664-1748.

Weimann, Robert. "Laughing with the Audience: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and the Popular Tradition of Comedy." 1969. Schlueter 79-89.

Wells, Stanley et al., eds. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.

Welsford, Enid. *The Fool: His Social and Literary History*. New York: Anchor, 1961. Print.

White, Martin. *The Shakespeare Handbooks: 'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print.

Whited, Brent E. "Staging Exchange: Why *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* Flopped at Blackfriars in 1607." *Early Theatre* 15.2 (2012): 111-130. Pdf.

Whitmire, Kevin. Phone interview. 21 May 2013.

Wilkinson, Kate. "The Performance History." Hopkins 34-59.

Willeford, William. *The Fool and His Scepter: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience*. Evanston, Ill: Northwester UP, 1969. Print.

The Winter's Tale. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Barry Edelstein. The Old Globe. Old Globe Theatre, San Diego, CA. 16 March 2014. Performance.

---.Dir. Gregory Doran. Royal Shakespeare Company. Barbican Theatre, London. 1999. Kultur. 2005. DVD.

---. Dir. Jim Warren. American Shakespeare Center. Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, VA. 16 June 2012. Performance.

Yahr, Emily. "Amy Poehler's 'Difficult People' Slammed for Blue Ivy – R. Kelly Joke: Here's Why It's Extremely Meta." *The Washington Post.* The Washington Post. 19 August 2015. Web. 2 December 2015.

Young, Sandra. "A Charming, Troubling Circus." *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 23 (2011): 81-83. *EBSCO*. 10 September 2015.