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# Theater of Exchange: The Cosmopolitan Stage of Jacobean London

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**THEATER OF EXCHANGE:  
THE COSMOPOLITAN STAGE OF JACOBAN LONDON**

A Dissertation Presented

by

ELIZABETH L. FOX

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

MAY 2021

English

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**THEATER OF EXCHANGE:  
THE COSMOPOLITAN STAGE OF JACOBAN LONDON**

A Dissertation Presented

by

ELIZABETH L. FOX

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## **DEDICATION**

To Dan,  
obviously.

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## ABSTRACT

### **THEATER OF EXCHANGE: THE COSMOPOLITAN STAGE OF JACOBEOAN LONDON**

MAY 2020

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This dissertation, *Theater of Exchange: The Cosmopolitan Stage of Jacobean London*, examines how early modern theater reflected and participated in the developing global economy and corresponding emergence of London as a capital of world mercantilism. I argue that moments of economic and cultural exchange appearing in work from Jacobean playwrights, including William Shakespeare, Francis Beaumont, Ben Jonson, Thomas Heywood, and John Marston, mediated native and foreign influences and promoted cosmopolitan attitudes among playgoers. Reading plays through a lens of hybridity, this dissertation positions the early modern playhouse as a site of international integration and exchange that, like the emerging marketplace, united goods, services, and cultures from around the world. *Theater of Exchange* is organized around popular commodities, such as coins, art objects, and plays themselves, as well as commercial services including the sex trade, and argues that Jacobean drama engaged its audiences in processes of reevaluation across economic and cultural networks. Parallel to my project's critical engagement with networks of economic and cultural exchange is its attentiveness to the ways in which London theater mediated value for native and foreign commodities, as well as how



playwrights ultimately showcased qualities such as mutability, integration, hybridity, and adaptability as profitable both to London and its playhouses. Drawing on contemporary approaches to dramatic literature, including audience reception theory, new economic criticism, and cultural materialism, the chapters are connected by a consideration of how theater not only topically addressed popular debates about value, but it also enacted those debates by inviting audiences to participate in processes of reevaluation within the fiction of the performance. Although largely centered on the London of city comedies, the geographical scope of this project extends to countries that composed England's growing commercial networks, since well-defined local markets were superseded by an indistinct global economy. By paying attention to the cultural effects of commercial globalization, *Theater of Exchange* participates in shifting critical discourse away from perceptions of England as xenophobic by arguing that through representations of cultural and economic exchange, early modern theater promoted attitudes and fostered desires among its audiences that contributed to London consumers' openness to foreign cultures.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In *The Guls Horn-booke* (1609), a satirical guide to fashionable behaviors for Jacobean young men, Thomas Dekker informs his reader:

The Theater is your Poets Royal-Exchange, vpon which, their Muses (that are now turnd to Merchants) meeting, barter away that light commodity of words for a lighter ware then words. Plaudities ... which ... vanish all into aire. Plaiers and their factors, who put away the stuffe, and make the best of it they possibly can (as indeed is their parts so to doe) your Gallant, your Courtier, and your Capten had wont to be the soundest paymaisters, and I thinke are still the surest chapmen: and these by meanes that their heads are well stockt, deal vpon this comical freight by the grosse: when your Groundling and Gallery Commoner buys his sport by the penny, and, like a Hagler, is glad to utter it again by retailing.<sup>1</sup>

This description integrates the theater with the market and draws parallels between them. Dekker connects the details of marketplace processes to their correlating playhouse processes: plays are the commodities created by playwrights, traded by actors, and purchased by audiences. According to Dekker, even the Muses transform into merchants, no longer inspiring art, but preoccupying themselves with soliciting profit from the wares in which they trade. Praise, in the form of applause, functions as the currency of the playhouse. Dekker also emphasizes the ability of both the marketplace and the theater to generate profit through the relationship between retelling and retailing as the repetition of popular, well-received, performances generated greater profit for the theater. By transforming the theater into a marketplace, Dekker presents the playhouse within a distinctly economic context, foregrounding the commercialization of his medium.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horn-booke* (London: Nicolas Okes, 1609), E2r-E2v.

2. For more on the commercialization of the theater see Kathleen E. McLuskie, "The Poets' Royal Exchange: Patronage and Commerce in Early Modern Drama," in *Patronage, Politics, and Literary Traditions, 1558-1668*, ed. Cedric C. Brown (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 125-134.

Dekker's analogy not only creates a parallel between marketplace and theatrical processes, it implicates the theater as a site of international integration. London's Royal Exchange itself was a physical monument of foreign influence, since it was modeled after Antwerp's Bourse.<sup>3</sup> As England's central marketplace, the Royal Exchange relied on the presence of both native and foreign merchants to conduct trade and profit the country more broadly. In fact, according to one contemporary account, within the Royal Exchange:

Each nation has its own quarter, so that those who have business with them can find them more easily. The English occupy about half the Exchange, and the French have their particular station too, as do the Flemish and the Walloons, the Italians and the Spanish. However, they are all at liberty to go hither and thither through the Exchange according to their need.<sup>4</sup>

The floor of the Exchange in London brought together people from all over the world in a microcosm of the increasingly immaterial emerging global marketplace. The international ambition of the Royal Exchange is further exemplified by the dedicatory verse by H. Peacham, which appears framed by an ornate cartouche in Wenceslaus Hollar's 1644 etching of London's Royal Exchange (See Figure 1.1):

Lo here the Modell of Magnificence  
The EXCHANGE of LONDON thorough [sic] EVROPE fam'd  
Erected first by GRESHAMS greate expence  
And by the Roial'st Queene the ROYAL namd  
The mother Antwerps farre exelling where  
But emptiness is scene or trifles sold  
Arabian odors Silkes SERES here  
Pearles Sables fine linen Iewels clothes of gold  
And what not rare or rich our kinges take places  
Without Within a World of beauteous faces.

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3. For a discussion of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and marketplaces in London, Antwerp, and France, see Margaret C. Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006), 66-94.

4. L. Grenade, "Les Singularitez de Londres, 1576," quoted in Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 33.



Figure 1.1: Wenceslaus Hollar. *Royal Exchange*, 1644. The Art Institute of Chicago.

The verse not only emphasizes the variety of commodities available at the Royal Exchange, it also foregrounds the global ambition and sense of competition that undergirded London's role in the emerging global market. While Antwerp's Bourse is empty in Hollar's depiction, London's Exchange is crowded with consumers, merchants, and shopkeepers from all over the world. Further, while Antwerp's Bourse sells cheap goods of low quality, London's Exchange contains rare and peerless luxury commodities such as pearls, furs, textiles, jewels, and gold. Along with the commodities available in the Exchange, the verse emphasizes that consumption itself is an international relation on a smaller scale. While kings negotiate England's ideological relationships with foreign countries in palaces, consumers similarly negotiate England's economic relationships with foreign markets through their purchases inside London's Royal Exchange.

By referring to the theater as the “Poets Royal Exchange,” Dekker invites his reader to view the theater alongside the Royal Exchange as a centerpiece of cultural and economic activity. Acting as an epicenter of international integration, the theater, like the Royal Exchange, situated London among other world cities as a center of commercial and cultural activity. Through this comparison of the theater and the market, Dekker suggests that the hybridity available in both establishments is a source of their potential profit. Dekker underscores the commercial stakes for the theater in an emerging global market where plays must compete with foreign luxury commodities as well as other kinds of visual culture and commercial industries.

While Dekker makes this relationship between theater and marketplace explicit through his reference to the “Poets Royal Exchange,” other early seventeenth century playwrights take up similar interests in the cultural and economic hybridity as well as the commercial opportunities offered by London’s participation in the global market to varying degrees. Some early modern plays are explicit in their staging of precious metals, currency, and the mechanics of economic conversion; others turn to the staging of popular commodities such as art objects and the theater itself; while still others examine the commercial industries, such as the sex industry, that model hybridity as a path to profit. Through the examination of commodities and industries on stage, playwrights attempt to better understand their own medium’s place in the global economy. This project examines how theater shaped and reflected London’s global interactions by staging moments of economic and cultural exchange. These moments, as I aim to demonstrate, negotiate native and foreign influence in ways that promote cosmopolitan



attitudes among its audiences and ultimately contribute to London's success in the world market.

### Economic Hybridity: Balancing the Global Market

The sense of economic hybridity that Dekker imparts in his comparison of the theater to London's central marketplace was particularly relevant for Jacobean playgoers as their city underwent massive economic changes. In the early seventeenth century London was seeing the effects of England's trade expansion. Merchants traveled around the world conducting commercial exchange and returning with the fashionable foreign commodities that English consumers desired.<sup>5</sup> While English merchants strengthened the country's presence abroad and brought a variety of foreign commodities to London consumers, this same overseas trading was often blamed for England's economic struggles at home. In 1621, the Privy Council commissioned a committee of English merchants to investigate the reasons for the decline of English trade in an effort to better understand the global market and manipulate it for greater profit. One prevailing ideology emerged: the balance of trade. This model defended England's expenditure on foreign goods and emphasized the need for the steady circulation of coin and commodities.

Following the balance of trade model, Edward Misselden, a prominent merchant, argued

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5. See, for example, Ralph Davis, *English Overseas Trade 1500-1700* (London: Macmillan, 1973); Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); James D. Tracy, *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World 1350-1750* (Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ceri Sullivan, *The Rhetoric of Credit: Merchants in Early Modern Writing* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002); Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London: Verso, 2003), 3-50; Mark Netzloff, *England's Internal Colonies: Class, Capital, and the Literature of Early Modern English Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Barbara Sebek and Stephen Deng, eds., *Global Traffic: Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature and Culture from 1550-1700* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

that England's re-exportation of foreign commodities elsewhere would lead to profit, eliminating the distinction between native and foreign through processes of economic exchange.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Mun, director of the East India Company, added, "wee must sell more to strangers than wee consume of theirs in value."<sup>7</sup> Although "balance of trade" implies an equal exchange of money and goods to create balance, numerous scholars show that the "balance" of the balance of trade is misleading. As Joyce Oldham Appleby points out, "It was not the poise of perfectly balanced weights that [Mun] evoked in his writings but rather the persistent, complementary, and orderly flow of goods and money."<sup>8</sup> Valerie Forman makes a similar observation, observing that this is not actually a "balance" at all, but tipping the scale in England's favor.<sup>9</sup> The balance of trade model positioned merchants, with their expert knowledge of market conditions, as the authorities for advantageous exchange.

As my work will show, the balance of trade model identified profitability as intimately linked to hybridity. Uniting native with foreign markets through the equitable exchange of a variety of coins and commodities was essential to generating profit for England, whether through advantageous economic valuation or simply selling more than consuming. The balance of trade model urged consumers to view goods not as native or

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6. Edward Misselden, *The Circle of Commerce. Or the Ballance of Trade in Defense of Free Trade*. (London: John Dawson, 1623).

7. Thomas Mun, *English Treasure by Forraign Trade or, The Balance of Our Forraign Trade is the Rule of Our Treasure* (London: J.G., 1664).

8. Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 38.

9. Valerie Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 5. For more on merchant writing in the period, see Theodore Leinwand's *Theatre, Finance, and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Bradley D. Ryner's *Performing Economic Thought: English Drama and Mercantile Writing, 1600-1642* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); and Lars Magnusson, *The Political Economy of Mercantilism* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

foreign but as profitable or unprofitable, encouraging cosmopolitan attitudes and interests among London consumers. Such attitudes crafted an understanding of the market as a global space that requires hybridity to generate profit for England in the form of coin and precious metals.

The history of currency in London is well known. The determination of value for precious metals and coins was the subject of numerous publications throughout the period.<sup>10</sup> Scholars have shown that James struggled to modify the weight of coin to equate it with international currencies, resulting in the loss of English currency.<sup>11</sup> James also grappled with shortages of the small coins needed for daily transactions since the minting of such coins by the crown was unprofitable.<sup>12</sup> As a result, token currencies quickly sprang up, in the form of base metal coins for daily use. Taking currency and precious metal as its first example, my work will show how daily marketplace transactions demanded hybridity from London consumers whose adaptability and willingness to integrate foreign, native, and civic currencies and commodities was a lived and material experience. In their daily lives Londoners regularly circulated and alternated between a variety of currencies: the gold and silver currencies minted by the English crown; a range of coins from foreign countries minted in a variety of metals; and the token currencies crafted by London shopkeepers. In this sense, London's day-to-day economy, influenced by the emerging global economy, provides context for the Jacobean

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10. See Gerald de Malynes, *The Maintenance of Free Trade* (London: I. Legatt, 1622) and *The Center of the Circle of Commerce* (London: William Jones, 1623); Edward Misselden, *Free Trade, or, The Means to Make Trade Flourish* (London: John Legatt, 1622) and *The Circle of Commerce* (London: John Dawson, 1623); and Thomas Mun, *A Discourse of Trade, From England unto the East Indies* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1621).

11. Barry E. Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England 1600-1642: A Study in the Instability of a Mercantile Economy* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1959), 185.

12. Stephen Deng, *Coinage and State Formation in Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 99.

theater's growing fascination with systems of value creation that get expressed through commodities as well as currency.

### Cosmopolitan Culture: London and Luxury Consumption

The “fine linen sables,” jewels, and clothing embroidered with gold, that Peacham points to in his verse commending the Royal Exchange illustrates that the hybridity with which Londoners regularly engaged was not only economic in the form of currency, it was also cultural in the form of the material commodities from all over the world that Londoners consumed daily. Conspicuous consumption of foreign luxury goods was becoming increasingly fashionable in England. James was eager to establish himself as a major political player in Europe; while he used costly foreign policy and military strength, he also displayed England's prosperity through his own conspicuous consumption. James' clothing serves as another oft-cited example of the extravagant spending at his court, in which, “Over a period of five years from 1608-1613 he bought a new cloak every month, a new waistcoat every three weeks, a new suit every ten days, a new pair of stocking, boots, and garters every four or five days, and a new pair of gloves everyday.”<sup>13</sup> Although his empire was rapidly expanding with new colonies in North America, Newfoundland, Bermuda, and Nova Scotia, James' attention remained fixed on his court, where he bestowed extravagant gifts, knighthoods, lands, and honors to his favorite courtiers.<sup>14</sup> He spent enormous amounts money on sumptuous feasts, spectacular

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13. Lawrence Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 563.

14. Keith M. Brown, “Monarchy and Governments in Britain, 1603-1637,” in *The Seventeenth Century*, ed. Jenny Wormald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21-24.

entertainment, and magnificent architectural projects.<sup>15</sup> Occasionally, these interests intersected when James' entertained his guests at court with opulent masque performances that not only displayed James' wealth, they also served political functions by "honouring the representatives of foreign powers."<sup>16</sup> To sustain his lavish lifestyle, a mere two years into his rule James began selling off royal lands at less than their market value for quick cash. From 1610-1614 Parliament and the crown negotiated a contract that removed James' "traditional rights of wardship and other feudal rights in exchange for large annual payments from Parliament."<sup>17</sup> James' attention was fixed on foreign luxury consumption during the first half of his reign, a fixation which had lasting consequences for the nation.

Following James' lead, London's aristocracy similarly indulged in the variety of lavish goods available in the global marketplace. Luxuries like ornate mirrors, hourglasses, gloves (embroidered with gold and silver thread), tapestries, velvets, and silks from France, Italy, and Spain were available in increasing numbers.<sup>18</sup> A nobleman in Jacobean England was obligated to "live in a style commensurate with his dignity" and as a result England's foreign spending dramatically increased.<sup>19</sup> The consequences of this lifestyle became a national issue because, at the aristocratic level, private consumption had far-reaching effects: "It was argued that the gentry and nobility flocked [to the city] on their shopping sprees, and lived there *privately*, neglecting their *public* duties, draining their districts of the benefit of their expenditure and, insofar as the luxuries that they

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15. Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 188-189.

16. Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.

17. R. H. Tawney, *The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640* (London: Economic History Review, 1941), 139.

18. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 16.

19. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 547.

bought were foreign, the whole country as well.”<sup>20</sup> The crown’s solution to England’s mounting debt that resulted from frivolous spending on foreign luxury was to encourage the native manufacture of foreign goods, resulting in wares that varied in material, price, and quality.<sup>21</sup>

James’ efforts to cultivate foreign industry at home caused an influx of foreign workers who established foreign industry within England, dramatically diversifying London’s population. The city was becoming increasingly diverse, generating a lived experience of cultural hybridity for the average Londoner. As the immigrant population of London increased in response to England’s desire to cultivate foreign industry at home, Englishmen pursued their own foreign interests overseas. Increasingly, the luxury pursuits of the elite “all demanded educational training abroad, and thus contrived to stimulate a remarkable growth of foreign travel among the English nobility and gentry.”<sup>22</sup> Travel abroad became increasingly popular among the aristocracy, since “Travel and its literature brought other cultures and other continents to English consumers. The results helped to sharpen, deepen desire for new goods, proffer new standards of comfort, and provide new ways to express individual identity.”<sup>23</sup> In addition to the influx of foreign commodities to London markets, translations of work like *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* sponsored by the Crown indicate the growing interest in cultures and customs beyond England as well as the nation’s stake in cultivating global curiosity (see Figure 1.2). As interest in and taste for foreign culture developed among English elites, similar interests

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20. Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550-1960* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 1995), 70.

21. Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of Consumer Culture in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

22. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 693.

23. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 121. See also Edward Chaney and Timothy Wilkes, *The Jacobean Grand Tour: Early Stuart Travellers in Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

developed among the general public as well. The variety of available wares grew and patterns of consumption changed at all levels of the evolving social structure. As Allison Games explains, “demand for cheap goods was as stimulating and expansive as the demand for expensive quality wares, probably even more so.”<sup>24</sup> The increased popular

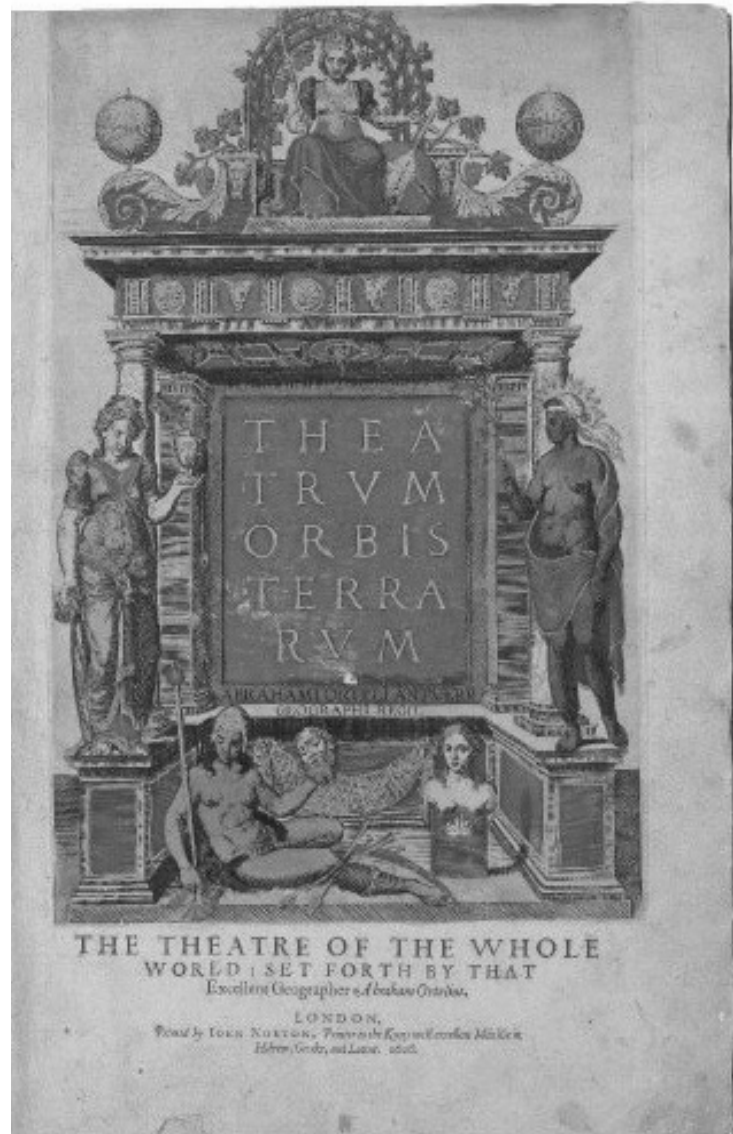


Figure 1.2: Abraham Ortelius. *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, 1606. Folger Shakespeare Library.

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24. Alison Games, *Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.

interests in global travel, imported luxury goods, their native knock-offs, and foreign industry solidified London's emergence as a center of world mercantilism, thus shaping and reflecting London's cosmopolitan attitudes and interests that allowed the city to thrive commercially.

### Economic Exchange and Cultural Expansion

Although London's economic and cultural expansions during James' reign are intimately intertwined, scholars frequently separate London's economic growth from its cultural development into different areas of criticism. In his study of early modern theater and nascent capitalism, Jean-Christophe Agnew rightly argues, "The early modern stage did more than reflect relations occurring elsewhere; it modeled and in important respects materialized those relations."<sup>25</sup> But for Agnew, the relationships that the theater modeled and materialized were exclusively economic, rendering tangible the invisible forces that shaped the early modern economy. Building from Agnew's foundational work, numerous scholars have discussed the ways in which early modern drama represented economic exchange and the global market. Scholars of city comedy such as Theodore Levin and Jean Howard have echoed Agnew's sentiment: Levin argues that "plays do not mirror attitudes, they participate in them, and in men's imaginations."<sup>26</sup> Howard asserts that, "through its fictions drama helped less to transcribe than to construct and interpret

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25. Jean-Christophe Agnew, *World's Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Although the critical history I offer here begins with Agnew, there are essays prior to Agnew's work that point to the economic implications of language in Shakespeare's plays. See for example, Robert B. Heilman, "The Economics of Iago and Others," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 68, no. 3 (June 1953): 555-571.

26. Levin, *Theatre, Finance, and Society*, 13-14.



the city.”<sup>27</sup> Other scholars similarly draw from Agnew’s argument that the early modern theater materialized the economy both through its representations of fictional economic exchanges on stage and its own material participation in the economy. For example, recent scholarship by Bradley D. Ryner and Cyrus Mulready addresses theater and the economy by pointing out the ways in which theatrical form is influenced by developments in early modern economic thought.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Valerie Forman usefully argues that the development of economic theories and the popularity of tragicomedy on stage developed paradoxical ways of thinking about loss in the period.<sup>29</sup> Alternatively, recent scholarship on specific playing companies, such as Eva Griffiths’ work on the Queen’s Servants, Melissa D. Aaron’s book on the King’s Men or Lucy Munro’s study of the Children of the Queen’s Revels, often address the business of theater industry to consider the ways in which plays and playing companies were active participants in London’s marketplace.<sup>30</sup> While the work of these critics is essential to understanding the relationship between the theater and the developing global economy, most of these critics focus so exclusively on the economic systems of the marketplace that they fail to fully recognize the cultural systems of wants and desires for fashionable, luxury, and (more often than not) foreign commodities that fueled England’s participation in the global

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27. Howard, *Theater of a City*, 3. For more city comedy scholarship that makes similar claims, see Theodore Leinwand, *The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy 1603-1613* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986) and Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy* (New York: Routledge, 1980).

28. See Ryner, *Performing Economic Thought*, and Cyrus Mulready, *Romance on the Early Modern Stage: English Expansion Before and After Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

29. Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions*, 4-6.

30. Eva Griffiths, *A Jacobean Company and its Playhouse: The Queen’s Servants at the Red Bull (c. 1605-1619)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013); Melissa D. Aaron, *Global Economics: A History of the Theater Business, the Chamberlain’s/King’s Men, and Their Plays, 1599-1642* (University of Delaware Press: Newark, 2005); and Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen’s Revels: A Jacobean Playing Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); and Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

economy in the first place. As a result of this omission, we cannot appreciate the ways in which representations of the economy on stage contributed to London's emerging status as a center of world mercantilism. We overlook London, its marketplaces, and, most importantly, its playhouses as locations of cultural integration that united goods, services, and people from around the world.

Similarly, scholarship that approaches London's commercial and cultural interests overlooks the playhouse as a site of international engagement in favor of more elite economic concerns. Some historians examine consumers' conspicuous consumption and the social display of luxury objects, exploring the ways in which consumers gained cultural capital through their purchases.<sup>31</sup> Others examine the intersection of commercial and colonial enterprises, arguing that England's international interests in the early seventeenth century fostered the growth of its empire in the later half of the century.<sup>32</sup> There is also a bevy of scholarship that examines specific objects, such as gloves, textiles, and rings, purchased by members of the aristocracy or those who wished to appear as such to better understand how objects of material culture resonated for early modern audiences.<sup>33</sup> These cultural studies pay little attention to the economic context of their objects, just as the new economic scholars largely side-step the cultural implications and repercussions of the global economy. The theater itself is glaringly absent from

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31. See Peck, *Consuming Splendor*; Alison V. Scott, *Literature and the Idea of Luxury in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2014); and Chaney and Wilkes, *Jacobean Grand Tour*.

32. Alison Games, *Web of Empire*, Miriam Jacobson, *Barbarous Antiquity: Reorienting the Past in the Poetry of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); and Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

33. See, for example, Catherine Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Question of Culture: Early Modern Literature and the Cultural Turn* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Lena Cowen Orlin, *Material London, ca. 1600* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); and Roze Hentschell, *The Culture of Cloth in Early Modern England: Textual Constructions of a National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2016).

studies that foreground conspicuous consumption, despite the fact that a significant number of plays from the period illustrate and interrogate the obvious displays of luxury consumption and model the developing cosmopolitan attitudes that fortify such consumer interests.

### Negotiating Methodology

Although English consumer interest in foreign culture and commodities grew in the early seventeenth century, twentieth-century critics often characterized England as xenophobic since England primarily defined its own national identity against other countries.<sup>34</sup> For example, in his discussion of the volatile social relations in London in the late sixteenth century, Ian W. Archer characterizes English attitudes toward immigrant populations as inhospitable: “Strangers provided a suitable scapegoat for all of the ills that afflicted Londoners: they were responsible for inflation and increase in house prices; they took away jobs that might be performed by the English; they were poor and disease flourished among them.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, another study from Laura Hunt Yungblut points to the ways in which antagonistic attitudes among native Englishmen toward immigrant populations were solidified through policy decisions implemented by the central government in an effort to regulate the substantial numbers of foreigners entering London

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34. See Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

35. Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

from the continent.<sup>36</sup> Such studies emphasize the geographical and ideological distance between native and foreign populations of London, offering a segregated view of the city.

Very recently, however, scholars have begun to investigate a more nuanced view of England's identity. For example, as Jane Pettegree puts it, English identity was "not simply a binary opposition between 'us' and 'them', but more often a complex and interpenetrated matrix of ideas of 'foreign' and 'native.'"<sup>37</sup> According to Gerald MacLean, "For the insular British, personal and national desires and identities were no longer constructed only from within the local, the familiar, and the traditional, but increasingly became inseparably connected to the global, the strange, and the alien."<sup>38</sup> As social historians further invest in the construction of English identity through cultural hybridity and international integration, such language becomes useful for thinking about the consumer culture that thrived in London. Although "hybridity" was a scientific term in the seventeenth century employed by travel writers and natural historians, recent use of the term in American and Post-Colonial Studies provides scaffolding for my project's interest in the intermixture of the materials and cultures that defined London amidst the

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36. Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions, and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

37. Jane Pettegree, "Introduction: Metaphor and Social Subjectivity," *Foreign and Native on the English Stage, 1588-1611: Metaphor and National Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3. See also Nigel Goose, "'Xenophobia' in Elizabethan and Early Stuart London: An Epithet Too Far?," in *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, eds. Nigel Goose and Lien Luu (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005): 110-135; Janette Dillon, *Language and Stage in Medieval and Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson, eds., *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theatre* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008); and Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck, eds., *The Mysterious and the Foreign in Early Modern England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

38. Gerald MacLean, "Ottomanism before Orientalism? Bishop King Praises Henry Blount, Passenger on the Levant," in *Travel Knowledge: European "Discoveries" in the Early Modern Period*, eds. Ivo Kamps and Jyotsna G. Singh (New York: Palgrave, 2016), 86. See also Lloyd Kermode, *Aliens and Englishness in Elizabethan Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton, eds., *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland, and Colonial America, 1550-1750* (London: Huegenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2001); and Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani, eds., *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

rapid globalization of the period.<sup>39</sup> The theater, as new work from Marjorie Rubright, Nina Levine, and Kelly J. Stage argues, offered audiences opportunities to engage with London's evolving cultural landscape through the performed interplay between native and foreign populations that ultimately helped audiences to define London and English identities.<sup>40</sup> The interaction that audiences encountered between native and foreign commodities and industries in the theater cultivated cosmopolitanism, which Margaret C. Jacobs defines as, "the ability to experience the people of different nations, creeds, and colors with pleasure, curiosity, and interest, not with suspicion, disdain, or simply a disinterest that could occasionally turn into loathing."<sup>41</sup> With this definition in mind, this project reveals the ways in which theatrical representations of economic and cultural exchanges promoted qualities such as mutability, integration, hybridity, and adaptability as profitable both to London and its playhouses. By analyzing the cultural effects of economic globalization this project participates in shifting critical discourse away from perceptions of England as xenophobic.

Given the recent rise of modern performance studies and its related fields, the questions raised by economic and material methodologies to early modern theater over the past twenty years are worth revisiting. Recent scholarship demonstrates that performance studies, and reception theory in particular, offers new answers to old

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39. For examples of scholarship that makes use of hybridity as a cultural term, see Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Marwan Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); and Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman eds., *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-colonial Studies in Transition* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

40. Marjorie Rubright, *Doppelganger Dilemmas: Anglo-Dutch Relations in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Nina Levine, *Practicing the City: Early Modern London on Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Kelly J. Stage, *Producing Early Modern London: A Comedy of Urban Space, 1598-1616* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2018).

41. Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World*, 1.

questions about early modern plays.<sup>42</sup> Performance theory elucidates the relationship between theater, the early modern imagination, and the material conditions that informed both. Audience reception theory engages with theater as a dialectical activity, examining how economic and cultural attitudes shaped performance and vice versa. For example, Susan Bennett employs a dual-frame model of audience reception.<sup>43</sup> What she calls the “outer frame” of performance accounts for the conditions outside of the performance that create and inform the theatrical event. The “inner frame” is comprised of the performance itself: the production strategies, ideology, and material conditions, highlighting the actor’s direct relationship with the audience. Bennett places the audience’s experience of the performance at the intersection of these two interactive frames as their lived experience outside of the playhouse informs the imaginative possibilities available in the performance. Erika Fischer-Lichte prioritizes the relationship between actor and audience as well, understanding “performance” as the dynamic relationship between actor and audience, not merely as the action that takes place on stage.<sup>44</sup> These vibrant layers of exchange between performance and audience informed the audience’s understanding of the material performance, allowing the actors, as well as the objects onstage, to be constantly reinterpreted and their meaning continuously renegotiated as setting and context changed throughout the performance. The relevance of this approach to my work

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42. See Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill eds., *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama 1558-1642* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Henry S. Turner ed., *Early Modern Theatricality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Chloe Porter, *Making and Unmaking in Early Modern English Drama: Spectators, Aesthetics and Incompletion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

43. Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 1997).

44. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

is that through the interactive relationship between audience and performance, playgoers are invited to reevaluate and renegotiate economic and cultural systems of value creation inside the playhouse that maintained or distorted existing systems outside of the theater.

A number of scholars have begun to assimilate ideas from performance studies and audience reception theory to the study of early modern theater and my approach is in line with contemporary developments in studies of early modern plays and theatrical culture. In particular, my efforts in placing early modern theatrical representations of commodities and services in conversation with the cultural and economic histories that fueled the formation of the global market place are informed by recent work that locates the theater within the early modern experience and imagination. Specifically, Erika T. Lin's revision of Robert Weimann's concepts of locus and platea in *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* illuminates the ways in which performances became legible to early modern audiences. She argues that, "regardless of *who* is socially privileged within the world of the play and regardless of *what* is privileged, thematically or otherwise, in a text-based analysis, moments in these plays that foregrounded the process by which elements presented onstage came to signify within the represented fiction were *theatrically privileged*."<sup>45</sup> Merging a twentieth century performance studies approach with early modern theatrical and cultural histories, Lin analyzes the cultural attitudes that led to typical methods of thinking and feeling and explains how these understandings permeated the performance medium. I share the fundamental principle underlying Lin's work, that "in order to understand how everyone else experienced the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, we must shift our frame of reference from drama to

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45. Lin, *Shakespeare and Materiality*, 37.

theatrical event.”<sup>46</sup> This approach to considering plays allows greater understanding of how theatrically privileged elements on stage such as commodities and service trades shaped and reflected national and global influences for early modern audiences. Play-going, like shopping in the marketplace, required expertise that relied heavily on visual and aural cues that allowed consumers to negotiate and evaluate the materials that composed both spaces. The theater and the marketplace became locations of international integration that depended on the adaptability and cultural competency of their consumers. In this sense, theater not only addressed popular debates about value, but it also enacted those debates in the playhouse by inviting audiences to participate in the economic and cultural processes of evaluation and negotiation through the fiction of the performance. Ultimately my methodology for this project combines textual analysis, performance studies, theater history, new economic criticism, and cultural materialism to reconstruct the cultural and economic worlds and imaginations of theater audiences grappling with English cultural identity in an expanding global market. No other scholars have brought these approaches into conversation to explore how the medium of performance uniquely invited audiences to participate in the evolving attitudes of seventeenth-century London consumers. Driven by its central interest in representations of the goods, industries, and attitudes that animated the early modern economy, *Theater of Exchange* ultimately argues that early modern plays shaped and reflected London’s global interactions through representations of economic and cultural exchange on stage.

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46. Lin, *Shakespeare and Materiality*, 14.



## Objects of Desire: Gold, Art, Whores, and Plays

The theater, like the Royal Exchange, is not only a site of literal international integration, it is a location of imaginary expansion—through the material objects from which theater is made and understood, it invites audiences to think about people and cultures beyond their own. At the same time that this study locates commodities within the larger frameworks of the economic and cultural networks in which they are circulated, it also recovers the individualized and authorial critiques of these networks of exchange and systems of value creation. Commodities on stage are representative and imaginative—they are simultaneously modeled on or against historical goods and conventions and they are also a product of the playwright's and audience's imaginations. As such, they are dynamic objects that characters (and audiences, upon occasion) interact with and respond to. Commodities on stage are material goods whose cultural significance and economic worth is influenced during each performance based on the economic, cultural, and theatrical competencies of the audience. Objects that become imbued with meaning through the international ambitions they materialize capture the imaginations of consumers—both of the theater and the goods themselves. Of course, the objects and industries of this study, each with their own economic and cultural systems of value creation, do not inspire cosmopolitan attitudes in uniform ways. Rather than apply one literary theory or model to the variety of plays and genres addressed here, this project argues for a methodology that treats each object's relationship to the larger economic and cultural contexts that both the commercial goods and the theater itself address through overlapping and intersecting networks of marketplace exchange and processes of circulation.

My chapters are organized around specific objects or industries rather than specific authors, genres, or chronology, and each chapter emphasizes a different theoretical model. While the play groupings in these chapters may appear unconventional, the range of goods and services with which they engage allows for greater consideration of the role that theater played in advancing London's status as a cosmopolitan center of world mercantilism.

Chapter Two investigates transactions between local, national, and foreign currencies on stage. I argue that the staging of economic exchange of local currencies casts an ironic eye on the fetish for precious metals that underpinned the value of coinage in the period. This chapter examines instances of the economic valuation of precious metals and coins in plays like William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1598), Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), and Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Sea Voyage* (1622). Employing numismatic archives of London token currencies, I show that processes of value creation for coins on the early modern stage expose the multivalent value of coinage both onstage and off. At the same time, each of these plays integrates civic, national, and foreign currency through staged exchanges that illustrate the benefits of cosmopolitan attitudes in the early modern economy.

Chapter Three takes up the previous chapter's interest in the exchange between native and foreign currencies and extends its examination of economic valuation to the cultural relationships between native and foreign that influence the early modern marketplace and the theater itself. This chapter examines representations of foreign art objects to argue that early modern playwrights drew on the *paragone* tradition by integrating a variety of popular media into their plays in ways that placed static foreign

paintings and statues in competition with the dynamic English theater. Turning to examples like Hermione's statue in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1609), the tableau and funeral monuments in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), this chapter examines how playwrights integrated other art forms into their medium, thereby elevating the theater to the level of its elite competitors, just as London absorbed fashionable foreign cultures to elevate its own status as a cosmopolitan city on the world stage.

Chapter Four departs from the previous two chapters in that, rather than a particular commodity, it shifts in scope to examine commercial industry. Taking up the industries of both theater and the sex trade, this chapter analyzes representations of whores as models of cultural hybridity that encouraged and capitalized on the cosmopolitan interests and desires of theater audiences. This chapter argues that although some viewed the global economy in binary terms of native and foreign, whore plays offered a much more nuanced encounter with the web of desires, performances, goods, services, and values that composed the early modern world. In plays like *The Honest Whore I* (1604), *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605), and *The Costly Whore* (1620), playwrights characterized whores as models of an industry that flourished precisely because of its cosmopolitan attitudes and willingness to participate in international integration.

Building from the economic, cultural, and commercial interests from the previous chapters, Chapter Five examines plays themselves as commodities by highlighting meta-theatrical moments that foreground the economic and cultural concerns of the theater. I argue that early modern plays fostered cosmopolitan attitudes through the self-reflexive incorporation of the theater industry's own struggle to appeal to the evolving taste of its audience. This chapter examines scenes from *Hamlet* (1601), *The Knight of the Burning*

*Pestle* (1607), *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), and *The Staple of News* (1626) that demonstrate the struggle shared by the theater and the market more broadly: how to profitably appeal to a wide variety of tastes. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates the ways in which the theater staged its own commercial struggles in an emerging global market and how theater reconciled London's civic identity with the cosmopolitan attitudes and interests necessary to thrive in the new global economy.

Despite each chapter's different focus on popular commodities, industries, and systems of value formation, there are several thematic threads that run throughout the project as a whole and unite my readings of individual plays. All of my chapters address the relationship between London's civic and global identities, most notably through London consumers' tastes and desires for foreign luxury goods. Additionally, each chapter examines the ways in which the theater materialized the complex layers of interactions between civic, native, and foreign identities and markets to promote its own commercial interests despite the fashion for foreign goods. Chapters Two and Four address consumer desires and the nebulous networks of supply and demand that underpinned consumer culture. Chapters One, Two, and Three consider the mutability of economic and cultural value in popular conversion narratives. Chapters One, Three, and Four examine the ways in which the adaptability of the theater itself presents a model for potential profit for any industry seeking economic gain. Art and visual culture unite all four chapters as portraits, paintings, and performance come up in a variety of contexts, their presence foregrounding the role of representation and renegotiation within processes of exchange and value creation. This is, then, a project that explores how the material theater, along with the processes through which it was made and understood, intersects

with the material and imagined developments of the emergent global economy. The majority of the plays I address treat the objects and industry that are the subjects of my chapters as what Erika T. Lin might call “theatrically privileged” objects—things whose lives beyond the playhouse inform how audiences view and understand them within, merging marketplace with play-going competencies.

CHAPTER TWO

EVALUATING PRECIOUS METALS:

ECONOMIC MUTABILITY AND MATERIAL HYBRIDITY

Morocco: All that glisters is not gold—  
Often have you heard that told.  
Many a man his life hath sold  
But my outside to behold.  
Gilded tombs do worms infold.  
Had you been as wise as bold,  
Young in limbs, in judgment old,  
Your answer had not been enscrolled.  
Fare you well, your suit is cold.  
-William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* 2.7.65-73<sup>47</sup>

When the young Prince of Morocco, the first of Portia's suitors on stage, opens the gold chest in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596) a skull with a scroll in it greets him, mocking his poor judgment. The scroll reprimands Morocco for basing his selection on the outward appearance of value and for his assumption that the precious metal of the casket would lead him to the precious metal of Portia's wealth.<sup>48</sup> Portia's father, who designed the casket test before he died, challenges her suitors to locate a portrait hidden within one of the three caskets, respectively crafted in gold, silver, and lead. The suitor to select the correct casket wins Portia's hand in marriage and inherits her father's copious fortune. The potential to gain this treasure attracts suitors from all

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47. William Shakespeare, "The Merchant of Venice," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al., (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 1121-1175.

48. *The Merchant of Venice* is ubiquitous in new economic criticism as scholars point to the range of implications for precious metals in the casket test to mine the socio-economic ideology that informs the play. For scholarship that focuses on the relationship between appearance and reality that underpins the play's representation of personal and economic encounters, see Peter Grav, *Shakespeare and the Economic Imperative: "What's aught but as 'tis valued?"* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 83-107 and Netzloff, *England's Internal Colonies*, 19-20. For scholarship that addresses early modern mercantilism, see Harris, *Sick Economies* 52-82; and Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions*, 27-63.

over the world who, like merchants traveling the globe, hope to gain wealth through their expert economic evaluation of the caskets.

Despite the scroll's mockery, the Prince of Morocco did not idly choose the gold casket for its opulence alone. Before selecting the gold chest Morocco reasons:

They have in England  
a coin that bears the figure of an angel  
Stamped in gold; but that's insculped upon;  
But here an angel in a golden bed  
Lies all within. (2.7.55-59)

Morocco's choice is informed by the same system of value creation that undergirds the value of English currency. His error lies in his assumption of consistent value for the English angel, which actually fluctuated wildly during the one hundred years it was issued.<sup>49</sup> As the golden casket's scroll lectures, despite Morocco's youth, his evaluation of precious metals displays "judgment old." It is outdated and reckless, indicating that a newer and more prudent system of value creation is required to accurately assess the caskets.

While the casket test is a game of risk for Portia's suitors on stage, Shakespeare's audiences are invited to play along and navigate the fluctuating systems of value creation that influence the test. In her short essay on games on the early modern stage Gina Bloom argues that "staged scenes of cards and backgammon invited audiences familiar with the games to repurpose their gaming competencies in order to become skilled theater goers."<sup>50</sup> In this sense, the casket test is not unlike other games of skill that appear in other plays of the period. Shakespeare engages his audiences' ability to understand the

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49. Deng, *Coinage and State*, 100.

50. Gina Bloom, "Games," in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 191.

rules of the game and evaluate the caskets alongside Portia's suitors. Thus, the scroll's rebuke of Morocco chastises members of Shakespeare's audience who would have likewise chosen the golden casket. This scene, and others like it, undermine the assumed value for precious metals and engage its audiences' ability to determine value for coin and commodity, merging marketplace competency with play-going skill. Coins on stage often bear a hybrid value that combine economic systems of value creation with the cultural system of value creation made available by the theater. Moments that call attention to processes of value creation appear in a number of plays throughout the early seventeenth century. As I will discuss in this chapter, scenes that foreground the profit and process of value creation invite playgoers to reevaluate the precious metals and currencies that appear on stage in ways that integrate economic and cultural competencies. Value was renegotiated regularly throughout the period, both ideologically in parliament and practically through playgoers daily marketplace transactions.

Understanding how precious metals function in the playhouse requires addressing the broad resonances between theater and the market, since experiences in the daily marketplace influenced the ways in which audiences imagined and understood transactions on stage. The systems of value creation for coin and precious metals that operated outside of the playhouse informed the value for coin and precious metals on stage. Recent criticism, from scholars such as Stephen Deng and David Landreth, addresses early modern coins by applying three formal systems of value creation to evaluate currency.<sup>51</sup> The first, *intrinsic value*, is based on the quantity of precious metal

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51. For a discussion of coin as a tool of nation building, see Deng, *Coinage and State Formation*, 9-16. For a discussion of coin imagery in Elizabethan literature and poetry, see David Landreth, *The Face of Mammon: The Matter of Money in English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7-13.



contained in the coin. Though intrinsic value seems stable, it is “subject to daily fluctuations of price in the international market for precious metal.”<sup>52</sup> Moreover, coins were often hybrid objects made from a mixture of precious metals and base alloys. The second system of value creation at work on coins is *extrinsic value*, which refers to an image or denomination stamped on the coin to determine its value. These images are intended to keep the value of the coin fixed regardless of its precious metal content. The final system of value creation is *exchange value*, which is determined by the market in relation to the commodities for which it can be exchanged.

These three formal systems of value creation were crucial to evaluating coin since the material substance of money was also in flux. Two different currencies circulated in the London market: state-issued currency and token currency. State-issued currency was minted by the Crown either in “angel gold” (pure gold) or “crown gold” (a hybrid of gold and alloys).<sup>53</sup> The intrinsic value of state-issued coins hence varied even though their extrinsic value remained the same. Local shopkeepers and tradesmen, meanwhile, minted token currency. This civic currency was made from base metals, such as lead, steel, or tin, and its circulation eased the burden of what historical economists Thomas Sargent and François Velde refer to as “the big problem of small change” by facilitating daily market transactions that required currency smaller than the halfpenny minted by the crown.<sup>54</sup> Minting coins worth less than a half penny in precious metal was unprofitable for the crown, as well as impractical—the resulting coin would be too thin and too light to prove

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52. Landreth, *Face of Mammon*, 12.

53. The differences of ratios between reign and issue are well-documented. See, for example, British Museum Department of Coins and Medals, *Handbook of the Coins of Great Britain And Ireland In the British Museum* (London: The Trustees, 1899).

54. Thomas J. Sargent and François R. Velde, *The Big Problem of Small Change* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002).

useful.<sup>55</sup> Because of this practical difficulty, token currency was extremely popular. By 1612 there were “3,000 unofficial minters of token coins” in London even though the circulation of any given token was “limited geographically to only a few streets” from its original place of issue.<sup>56</sup>

Due to the variations among state-issued coins and token currencies, the intrinsic and extrinsic values for individual coins was difficult to determine. Value for currency, historical economists claim, was “not only situationally defined, but also constantly re-negotiated.”<sup>57</sup> For example, a token extrinsically stamped at five pence in one tavern might be worthless at another, and a shilling from King James I’s reign might contain greater gold content than a shilling from Queen Elizabeth’s, making it intrinsically more valuable even though extrinsically they shared the shilling denomination.<sup>58</sup> An intrinsic system of value was problematic because of the prevalence of counterfeit and clipped coins in the market, which, as Mark Netzloff points out, “could also be used to extract fraudulent profits from transactions.”<sup>59</sup> According to Deng, “Because heterogeneous coins continued to pass at the same nominational value, a case could be made that average everyday consumers had accepted an extrinsic value theory of money: value designated by the monarch’s stamp and not by the quantity of the precious metal.”<sup>60</sup>

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55. C. E. Challis, *Currency and the Economy in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (London: The Historical Association, 1989), 16.

56. For a brief discussion of the quantity of token currency minters, see Stephen Deng, *Coinage and State Formation*, 99.

57. Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch, “Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange,” in *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, eds. Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 23.

58. For scholarship on the circulation of token currency as it pertains to credit, trust, and social relations, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 54.

59. Netzloff, *England's Internal Colonies*, 40.

60. Deng, *Coinage and State Formation*, 9.

Merchants, shopkeepers, and citizens alike were encouraged by the crown to use a system of extrinsic value, assigning monetary value based on the appearance of a physical stamp rather than the precious metal content of the coin. Yet, despite the crown's efforts to impose standardization, London consumers were required to evaluate and negotiate the individual value of each coin in their daily transactions because value for currency remained grounded in precious metal content.

While evaluation and negotiation skills were necessary for a London consumer's daily marketplace transactions, the mutable value of currency was emblematic of more sweeping ideological changes in how value was determined. The economy itself was evolving rapidly as global systems of buyers and sellers replaced isolated local economies.<sup>61</sup> During this transition, processes of value creation were debated privately in Parliament and publicly in pamphlets.<sup>62</sup> Bullionists, such as Thomas Milles and Gerard Malynes, argued for a fixed model of the global market descending from God himself.<sup>63</sup> According to bullionists, sovereign authority, indicated by the state stamp, determined the value of coin and could not "fluctuate with supply and demand as price does for other commodities."<sup>64</sup> However, mercantilists, such as Thomas Mun and Edward Misselden,

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61. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 26.

62. For further discussions of the economic, intellectual, and political implications of these debates, please see, Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change*; Appleby, *Economic Thought*; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*; Andrea Finkelstein, *Harmony and the Balance: An Intellectual History of Seventeenth-Century English Economic Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Judith H. Anderson, *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic Cultural Change in Tudor-Stuart England* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); Harris, *Sick Economies*; and Christine Desan, *Making Money: Coin, Currency, and the Coming of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

63. Thomas Milles, *The Customer's Alphabet and Primer* (London: William Jaggard, 1608) and Malynes, *Center of the Circle, and Maintenance of Free Trade*. Also, it seems to be popular, when writing about mercantilists and bullionists, to include some kind of footnote that acknowledges these terms as anachronistic and these writers did not participate in movements as such—consider this my footnote to that effect.

64. Zachary Lesser, "Tragical-comical-pastoral-colonial: Economic Sovereignty, Globalization, and the Form of Tragicomedy," *English Literary History* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 884.

argued for an alternative model of the global market in which value is not fixed, but is constantly renegotiated.<sup>65</sup> According to mercantilists, neither the precious metal content inside nor the state stamp outside determined the value of coin. Instead, the value of coin fluctuated through its exchange value, based on the invisible forces of supply and demand, and influenced, in part, by consumer's desire for commodities. This meant that, ideologically, the economic value for coin, commodities, and precious metals was always in a state of reevaluation and negotiation.<sup>66</sup>

An understanding of value as mutable required London consumers to think more broadly about how to accumulate profit. Rather than through singular physical transactions between buyers and sellers, the mercantilist model of trade was more abstract and depended on consumers imaginations than the physical materials of coin and commodity. Historian Joyce Oldham Appleby points out:

[Mun and Misselden] focused on the profitable movements of goods and money. They drew attention to the difference between appearance and reality. Gold and silver leaving England for the East Indies was not what it appeared to be—an export of treasure—but rather a flow whose true consequences could only be gauged in reference to an explanation of the entire movement of trade.<sup>67</sup>

In order not to view the export of precious metals abroad as an economic loss, English merchants and consumers needed to adopt cosmopolitan attitudes in their daily transactions. An open willingness to do business with foreign merchants and traders could potentially lead to greater economic profit at home. Emerging ideologies of the global economy, as well as the replacement of a bullionist system of value with an

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65. Misselden, *Free Trade and Circle of Commerce*.

66. Deng, *Coinage and State Formation*, 2-3.

67. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 48. For more on the relationship between investment and the export of treasure, see Anderson, *Translating Investments* and Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions*.

mercantilist model, made possible the figure that Appleby calls “the expert, the one who through master of the mechanics of trade can determine what men’s eyes, and even their account books, cannot discover.”<sup>68</sup> Through their marketplace competencies, experts were able to determine value for coins and commodities based on the instability of supply and demand as influenced by consumers’ desires.

The material and ideological complexity through which value for precious metals was determined made processes of value creation popular subject matter for the stage. Playgoers’ familiarity with the codes through which theater was created were especially important for moments in which precious metals appeared on stage. Since coins were small hand props, audiences could not necessarily see the coins that were exchanged between actors and had to rely on their play-going competency to create value for them. Due to the financial limitations of playing companies, base metals often replaced precious metals on stage for a variety of costumes and props: copper lace replaced or supplemented gold lace on costumes and, similarly, pewter was polished and smoothed to give the illusion of silver.<sup>69</sup> Early modern audiences were aware “that the gold ... is ‘really’ just a prop, probably made of lead or paste, not gold.”<sup>70</sup> In this sense, transforming base metals into precious ones is only possible through two systems of value creation: the economic one made available by a mercantilist model, in which coin and commodity circulate freely based on supply and demand, and the theatrical one at work in the playhouse predicated on imagination. For each exchange of coin on stage its

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68. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 49.

69. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda, *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 190.

70. Anthony B. Dawson and Paul E. Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 142.

economic value is determined twice: first by the characters, who know exactly the kind of currency that changes hands, and second by the playhouse audiences, for whom their value is less clear. In these moments the audience must negotiate the value for the coins and precious metals by calling upon their play-going and marketplace competencies.

The plays I examine in this chapter employ their audiences' play-going and marketplace competencies in a variety of ways to cast a critical eye on the value for precious metals that underpins the value of currency in the period. For each play, I analyze the material appearances of precious metals, as well as civic, national, and global currencies, to demonstrate how plays model and reflect the complex ideological and material economic networks of the seventeenth-century global market. I begin this discussion with Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, in which I explore the theatrical methods through which Jonson foregrounds the mutability of value in the marketplace as Face, Subtle, and Doll, a group of tricksters who call themselves the "venture tripartite," accumulate profit by manipulating their consumers' desires for common commodities. Building on this idea I then turn to three insular moments in which playwrights pointedly undermine the assumed economic value of gold in plays such as *The Jew of Malta* (1589), *Volpone* (1606), and *Timon of Athens* (1605). Although each example presents gold as spectacle, they also call attention to different factors that influence systems of value creation and encourage audiences to reevaluate the precious metal that underpinned value for currency in the early modern period. Finally, I turn to *The Sea Voyage* to further explore the ways in which audiences were invited to understand economic value creation outside the familiar London market, which was no longer separate from the global market as England transitioned into a global economy. This chapter aims to better understand the

integral part theater played in London's development as a central participant in the early modern global market economy as plays with strong economic themes urged audiences to renegotiate their own understanding of processes of value creation for currencies and precious metals both on and off the stage.

### Golden Fleecing: Profit and Hybridity in *The Alchemist*

Barely one hundred lines into the first scene of *The Alchemist* the play makes its first reference to precious metals, specifically to manipulating the value of gold coins. Face, one of the tricksters, threatens one of his partners, Doll: "perhaps thy neck / Within a noose, for laund'ring gold and barbing it" (1.1.113-114). This accusation calls attention to the process of washing or clipping edges of coins in order to collect fragments of gold. This accusation foregrounds to the play's interest in gold, manipulation of value, and the slow accumulation of wealth over a prolonged period of time. While clipping coins was a common practice to manipulate the value of the coin materially, as this play illustrates, it was not the only means for manipulating value in the period. While the play's title hints at the art of transformation of base metals into precious ones to accumulate wealth via the philosopher's stone, the charlatans themselves illustrate a way to manipulate the value of base and precious metals that obviates coin clipping and alchemy altogether. Instead, Face, Subtle, and Doll demonstrate how to manipulate the market itself by creating desire among consumers that causes them to overvalue (and thus overpay) for common goods.

The play follows a highly repetitive structure that foregrounds the processes through which coin is transformed into commodity and back again in both native and global markets. Similar to the casket test in *The Merchant of Venice*, the playhouse

audience of *The Alchemist* is invited to participate in each moment of exchange alongside the group of cheats in increasingly complex market situations. This position allows the audience to fully view the processes through which Face, Subtle, and Doll create both economic and theatrical value within the play. The circulation of coins and commodities facilitated by the tricksters highlights the seemingly alchemical transformations of metal into coin and coin into commodity that embodied the processes of early modern markets. This metamorphosis is conducted through theater, a medium whose foundation is grounded in the power of illusion and the imaginative transformation of one object into another. Though Jonson makes his audience keenly aware of the differences between appearance and reality and the risk of investment for his characters, the risk for his audience lay in falling for the group's illusions anyway. By laying bare the processes through which both theater and economic value are created, Jonson foregrounds the link between economic profit and hybridity as base and precious metals join together materially to create currency and the charlatans' schemes expand how audiences conceptualize profit more generally within the London economy as an intermixture of both coin and commodity.

Although *The Alchemist* is a mainstay in new economic criticism, scholars often overlook the play's interest in ready money for the Face, Subtle, and Doll in favor of its interest in systems of credit for the city gulls. Ceri Sullivan reads the play as a commentary on merchant writing and the credit market drawing on the correlating debasements of credit and language in the play. According to Sullivan, the play is primarily interested "in the opportunities for profit that come from the credit—rather than



the cash—economy.”<sup>71</sup> While this is certainly true for the gulls it is less true for the tricksters, whose interest in extracting as much money as immediately as possible from each gull drives much of the humor. Although, as Bradley D. Ryner argues, the group of cheats depends “on a credit economy to generate later amounts of imaginary wealth in increasing excess of any material support,” this is, again, only accurate in the case for the gulls. For Face, Subtle, and Doll, the wealth they generate through individual exchanges is material and immediate.<sup>72</sup> The immediacy and materiality of the play is reinforced in modern productions through sound effects, such as Gregory Hersov’s 1987 production at the Manchester Exchange, which featured “the chink of money being dropped into a moneybox every time a gull handed over any cash, generating a powerful sense of the booty that was accumulating.”<sup>73</sup> In their encounters throughout the play with a progressive series of London gulls, Face, Subtle, and Doll employ a mercantilist ideology in their enterprise, emphasizing that the best path to wealth is not necessarily limited to the accumulation of gold.

Jonson accentuates the system of value creation by drawing attention to the coins Subtle receives from his first dupe, the London gallant Dapper, who seeks a familiar spirit to assist him in his tavern gambling pursuits. Subtle and Face enchant Dapper with fantasies of future profit, claiming that with such a spirit he will “win up all the money i’ the town” or even “all the treasure of the realm, / if it be set him” (3.2.77, 101-102).<sup>74</sup> In

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71. Sullivan, *Rhetoric of Credit*, 108.

72. Ryner, *Performing Economic Thought*, 153.

73. For more on this performance and others, see Elizabeth Shafter and Emma Cox, “*The Alchemist* on Stage: Performance, Collaboration and Deviation,” in *The Alchemist: Critical Reader*, eds. Erin Julian and Helen Ostovich (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013), 47.

74. Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed. F. H. Mares. (The Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967).

exchange, Dapper must pay for the services instantly, the details of which Face negotiates on Dapper's behalf:

Face:                   He has  
                          Four angels, here—  
Subtle:                You do me wrong, good sir.  
Face:                Doctor, wherein? To tempt you with these spirits? (1.2.36-38)

While Subtle's rejection is certainly a ploy to extract more money from Dapper, it draws attention to the coins themselves as Subtle's hesitation at the payment halts the fast-paced banter of the con.

The negotiations between Subtle, Face, and Dapper call attention to the mutable value for currency on and off stage. Within the play's fiction, Subtle, Face, and Dapper all know the kind of coin on offer and all have some idea of its value as they negotiate price. However, Subtle's hesitation implies that the angel is perhaps of little worth and invites Jonson's audience to determine value for the coin based on their own understanding of an "angel." This moment is complicated for Jonson's audience by the fact that there were a variety of coins circulating within London called "angel" because of the image stamped on its surface. First, an "angel" could refer to a state-issued coin stamped with the archangel Michael fighting the dragon (Figure 2.1). This coin was extrinsically valued at ten shillings even though its intrinsic value fluctuated based on the type of gold from which it was minted.<sup>75</sup> Alternatively, an "angel" could refer to a piece of London's token currency, particularly tavern tokens, since angels were a popular image used for these base currencies throughout the city from Angel Alley to Smithfield

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75. F. H. Mares' gloss of the angel describes the stamp on the state-issued coin. Mares, *The Alchemist*, 28. For more on the differences of gold to alloy ratios between reign and issue, they are very well documented in British Museum, *Handbook*.

Bars (Figure 2.2).<sup>76</sup> Face's pun that Dapper's payment tempts Subtle with "spirits" strengthens the likelihood that Dapper's angels are, indeed, four tokens used to purchase alcohol at local taverns. The spirit pun is repeated again in the final inventory as Face, Subtle, and Doll discuss the ale-wives single money, lending further support to the idea



Figure 2.1: Elizabeth I Gold Angel, 1582-1584. Folger Shakespeare Library.



Figure 2.2: Token currency for John Tudor's business at the Blackfriars Stairs, 1648-1673. Museum of London.

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76. R. H. Thompson and M. J. Dickinson, *Tokens of the British Isles, 1575-1750: Part 7: City of London* (London: Spink, 2007). See also J. R. S. Whiting, *Trade Tokens: A Social and Economic History*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971.

that Dapper is in fact paying with token currency. The likelihood that the group of trickers deals with token currency underscores, through material currency with which Jonson's audience would have been familiar, that the value of currency is mutable and in a constant state of renegotiation.

By inviting the audience to navigate the transaction along with Face and Subtle, Jonson calls attention to the similarities of economic and theatrical systems of value creation. The possibility that Dapper's "four angels" refer to token currency does not merely emphasize the competing systems through which value is created, it also increases the audience's sense of involvement in the transaction itself. R. L. Smallwood argues that *The Alchemist's* "liberal use of London place-names which recall the locations through which spectators had just passed on their way to the theater is a standard element in the dramatists' quest for a sense of immediacy with their citizen audience."<sup>77</sup> Building on Smallwood's argument, the use of London token currency performs a similar function. The possibly civic token provided Jonson's audience with a sense of familiarity and authority in fictional economic exchange, reinforcing the audience's position alongside the tricksters as merchant figures who regularly negotiate the systems through which value is created in order to negotiate the value of coin and commodity.

Whereas Jonson leaves the kind of coin exchanged ambiguous early in the play, the next time Dapper appears Jonson provides excessive detail about the coins. In Act Three Scene Four, Dapper returns to the house with the requested payment of twenty nobles and counts out each individual coin for Face:

Dapper:            Yes, here are six score Edward shillings.

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77. R. L. Smallwood, "'Here, in the Friars': Immediacy and Theatricality in *The Alchemist*," *Review of English Studies* 32, no. 126 (May 1981), 142.

Face: Good.  
 Dapper: And an old Harry's sovereign.  
 Face: Very good.  
 Dapper: And three James shillings, and an Elizabeth groat,  
 Just twenty nobles.  
 Face: O, you are too just.  
 I would you had had the other noble in Maries.  
 Dapper: I have some Philip and Maries.  
 Face: Aye, those same  
 Are best of all. Where are they? (3.4.142-148)

As in the previous scene, the moment of payment slows the quick repartee of comic timing to foreground the coin, not the con.

While this scene is another moment of accumulation of wealth for Face, Subtle, and Doll, it also further emphasizes the mutability of value for Jonson's audience through two processes with which playgoers would have been intimately familiar: adjustment and debasement. Although Face asked for twenty nobles, likely referring to the state-issued gold coins called nobles, what Face receives instead is "just twenty nobles." In a context of economic exchange, "just" does not mean "only," as F.H. Mares's gloss of the line indicates, but instead means "adjusted" as in "conforms to an agreed standard: right in proportion, aesthetic quality, etc."<sup>78</sup> Dapper pays the equivalent of twenty gold coins in the form of one hundred twenty-six silver coins. The emphasis on adjustment in this scene underscores the extent to which value is mutable and can be privately determined through a system of equivalencies of one coin for another.

This moment, which evokes the "huge and damaging fluctuations in the money supply" that resulted from the debasement in English currency, also highlights hybridity

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78. F. H. Mares' gloss of this moment interprets Face's response of "too just" to be indicative of Dapper's frugality in bringing "only" twenty nobles and makes no indication of the alternative meaning for "just" in this scene. See Mares, *The Alchemist*, 118. See also, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "just, adj." Accessed December 2015. Oxford University Press.

through the mixture of metals that were used for state-issued currency.<sup>79</sup> Dapper distinguishes between an Edward shilling and a James shilling because their differences were greater than the images stamped on them. While both coins appear to be made of silver, an Edward shilling had the potential to intrinsically carry only half of the value indicated by its stamp while a James shilling contained a much higher ratio of silver to alloy.<sup>80</sup> In her June 30<sup>th</sup> 1561 proclamation, Elizabeth ordered that three groats be equivalent to eight pence, adjusting the extrinsic value of the coin rather than its precious metal content.<sup>81</sup> Queen Mary restored the standard of both gold and silver coins during her reign, making a Marie the most intrinsically valuable coin in Dapper's roster in terms of their precious metal content.<sup>82</sup> By asking for Maries, Face reveals his expert knowledge of the market and draws attention to the instability of value creation that requires a system of adjustment. This scene reveals the fluctuation of value for coins due to the lack of standardization across reigns and denomination, foregrounding the extent to which gold itself became diluted within currencies. Dapper's detailed account of his payment foregrounds for Jonson's audience the mixture of precious and base metals that debased early modern currency, even though consumer's continued to desire gold in their transactions. This creates a clear comparison between English currency and the science of alchemy, drawing attention to the importance of hybridity in both enterprises. Although

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79. N. J. Mayhew, *Sterling, The History of a Currency* (New York: Wiley, 2000), 47.

80. The ratio of fine metal in Edward VI's silver coinage fluctuated across issue and series from three ounces of silver and nine ounces of alloy to six ounces of silver and six ounces of alloy. See British Museum, *Handbook*, 85. James increased the ratio of fine silver to eleven ounces two pennyweights and only eighteen pennyweights of alloys. British Museum, *Handbook*, 120.

81. British Museum, *Handbook*, 95. For more on English groats see Sandra K. Fischer, *Econolingua: A Glossary of Coins and Economic Language in Renaissance Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 83-84.

82. British Museum, *Handbook*, 75. For gold the old standard of 23 cts 3 1/2 grains fine gold and 1/2 grain alloy was restored, but the silver standard was actually reduced under Mary to 11 oz. fine and 1 oz. alloy.

the mixture of precious metals and alloys in the period is often referred to as “debasement” because it lessens the value of precious metals, one might also view the mixture of metals as way of elevating lesser metals. In this sense, hybridity generates value for base metals by joining them with precious metals, transforming leads, coppers, and tins into desirable materials.

Importantly, as Jonson invites his audience to determine value for coin in both of these scenes, he repeatedly subverts the expectation that the coins are, in fact, gold currency. By distorting this assumption, Jonson illuminates the flexibility of value creation and the ways in which value is constantly renegotiated. Jonson also invites his audience to participate in this process of value creation through their own practice of play-going. For Face, Subtle, and Doll, the instant availability of the coin contributes to its value. This transaction makes two distinct strands of hybridity visible, the first being the hybrid metal content, the second is the variety of coins themselves that the tricksters accept as payment. As Face, Subtle, and Doll navigate the various issues of coin their dupe is able to produce, the scene creates a clear correlation between hybridity and profit—the better they are able to determine value for individual coins, and the greater the variety of coins they accept, the bigger their profit from Dapper.

Although Jonson emphasizes hybridity through the variety of coins and their gold content, he also calls attention to hybridity and mixture of currency in an increasingly complex way. Eager to maximize his profits, the shopkeeper, Abel Drugger, seeks advice on how to best arrange his merchandise. Like Dapper, he consults with Face when it comes time to pay:

Drugger:                      Good Captain,  
   What must I give?

Face:                   Nay, I'll not counsel thee.  
                           Thou hear'st what wealth (he says, spend what thou canst)  
                           Th' art like to come to.

Drugger:             I would gi' him a crown.

Face:                 A crown! 'Nd toward such a fortune? Heart,  
                           Though shalt rather gi' him thy shop. No gold about thee?

Drugger:             Yes, I have a portague, I ha' kept this half year.

Face:                 Out on thee, Nab; 'Slight, there was such an offer—  
                           'Shalt keep 't no longer, I'll gi 't him for thee? (1.3.81-92)

As Face and Drugger argue over payment, Jonson's audience is once again invited to negotiate value for the named currency, further employing their economic and theatrical competencies.

This scene further underscores the systems of value creation and economic negotiation that were at work in the previously discussed scenes. The portague Drugger gives is interesting for two reasons in this context. First, a portague was a Portuguese coin, which emphasizes the play's interest in the expanding global economy, especially since this portague comes from the Drugger, a shopkeeper who deals in tobacco and other commodities available exclusively through import. Second, portagues were minted in pure gold, drawing attention to their intrinsic value. Face disregards the extrinsic stamp that marks the portague as foreign currency and instead desires it for the value of the precious metal from which it is composed.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, this dialogue reveals that Drugger does not possess much coin. In fact, Drugger likely retains the portague as a keepsake, treasured for sentimental, rather than economic value.<sup>84</sup>

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83. There was much debate in the period about how to deal with foreign coin in English markets. In *The Customers Alphabet*, Milles advised that foreign coin in England be "currant one penny in an ounce of Silver, and xij. Pence in Gold above their own" (G2r).

84. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, portagues in particular were kept as keepsake items. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "portague n.4." Accessed December 2015. Oxford University Press. For more on coins as keepsakes, see Deng, *Coinage and State Formation*, 1-22.



Although their transactions with Drugger initially foreground gold coinage, commodities slowly replace money as payment emphasizing the extent to which hybridity, this time in the mixture of goods and coins, increases value. This change in payment shifts attention further away from coin and their precious metal content as the singular measure of worth and presents an alternative model for what counts as valuable. Although he is short on ready money, Drugger possesses something equally valuable: the popular commodity of tobacco. As Face introduces Drugger, he also introduces the shopkeeper's product. For this introduction, Face uses language similar to that used to discuss the debasement of coin to talk about the quality of the tobacco itself, already drawing parallels between coin and commodity:

He does not  
Sophisticate it, with sack-lees, or oil,  
Nor washes it in mascadel, and grains,  
Nor buries it, in gravel, underground,  
Wrapp'd up in greasy leather, or piss'd clouts:  
But keeps it in fine lily-pots, that open'd,  
Smell like conserve of roses, or French beans. (1.3.21-29)

While Face's description of the tobacco emphasizes the tobacco's monetary value due to its purity as well as its foreignness, it also reveals to Jonson's audience that the systems of value creation for coin and commodity are similar, undermining the view of precious metals as the exclusive means to profit. As with coin, mixing materials of commodities corrupted their value as well. The term "sophisticate" specifically referred to the mixture of commodities "with some foreign or inferior substance" underscoring the possibility that the value of goods can also be manipulated.<sup>85</sup> The sophistication of goods was, in fact, a prominent issue for England since merchants who could not find buyers for

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85. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "sophisticate, v. 1a." Accessed December 2015. Oxford University Press.

English goods blamed the quality of the product, claiming it “involved the mixing of different materials—the mixing of copper with gold and silver thread, for example, or the mixing of silk with linen thread in ribbons and points.”<sup>86</sup> The debasement of commodities posed just as much of a threat to the early modern economy as the debasement of coin. In his description of Drugger’s product, Face uses economic language to accentuate the tobacco’s purity.

While much of *The Alchemist* is focused on the mixture of base and precious metals and materials, in Face and Subtle’s exchanges with Dapper however, Jonson foregrounds a different kind of hybridity: that of the marketplace itself. In Drugger’s plot foreign commodity progressively replaces precious coin since Drugger’s pipes, pounds of tobacco, and luxury textiles prove more profitable and more available to the group of tricksters than his limited coin. Through Dapper and Drugger, the play demonstrates that the system of value creation for commodities hinges not only on the supply and demand of the market, but on the quality and purity of the materials from which the commodities themselves were made. Importantly, this scene also demonstrates not only the integrated flow of coin and commodity themselves, but the integration of native and foreign coins and commodities, incrementally extending the scope of the Face, Subtle, and Doll’s trade network beyond London and expanding the audience’s understanding of profit beyond precious metals and currency.

Jonson further underscores the mutability of value for coin and commodity within the market’s system of supply and demand through the interlocking plots of the major gulls, Mammon and Puritans. The charlatans influences the systems of value creation by

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86. Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, 116-117.

manipulating consumes' desires that underpin a mercantilist ideology of the global economy. Sir Epicure Mammon's plot begins *in medias res* as he comes to check on the progress of the philosopher's stone, a magical tool that he believes will allow him to transform all the metals in England to gold. Mammon must bring coin in addition to goods made from base metals to the house for transformation. Subtle fosters a sense of urgency by pressuring Mammon to "Get your stuff here, against afternoon, / Your brass, your pewter, and your andirons. /.../ We'll change all metals" (2.3.115-118). Together with the Mammon plot, the tricksters work with Ananias and Tribulation, the Puritans who also seek the philosopher's stone to transform base metals into precious ones, a privilege for which they have already paid one hundred twenty pounds to Face, Subtle, and Doll (2.5.67-69). Although the Puritans plan to purchase the stone, unlike Mammon, the Puritans do not possess their own collection of goods to transform and therefore need to acquire goods made of base metals. They make arrangements with Face and Subtle to purchase a collection of what the Puritans believe to be orphans' goods but are actually "Mammon's jack, and andirons" that he has accumulated for his own use (2.4.23-24). Face, Subtle, and Doll constantly remind the Puritans that once they acquire the stone they will be able to transform the base metals into precious ones, "turning of this lawyer's pewter / to plate, ...changing / His parcel guilt, to massy gold," and have "so much silver / As there is tin there, so much gold as brass" (3.2.42-45, 123-124). This repetition of transformation encourages the Puritans to imagine gold and silver where there is brass and tin. Subtle convinces the Puritans to pay for the "orphans' goods" not based on their actual worth, but their potential value after they are transformed to gold.

The knitting together of the Mammon and Puritan plots lays bare for Jonson's audience the mutability of value creation for commodities through supply and demand. As Subtle and Face cunningly creates necessity for base metals, they transform the apparently less valuable commodities of brass, pewter, and iron into coin of precious metal through the transformative power of exchange and creating the desire among consumers for such goods. Jonson toys with his audience, subverting the desire for precious metal that underpins the process of value creation for Mammon and the Puritans and instead transforms base metals into valuable material through a performance of salesmanship that generates demand. The tricksters increase the objects' values by creating desire for base metals through a process of seduction that amplifies their clients desire for wealth and clouds their judgment.

For Jonson this system of value creation hinges on imagination and on Mammon and the Puritans' ability to see one metal but imagine another. This emphasis on imagination that is necessary for Face, Subtle, and Doll to make a profit on the base metal goods draws a clear parallel between the theater and the market. Jonson shows how the process of supply and demand, informed by consumer desire, bears a striking similarity to the connection in the theater between audience and players. What the tricksters' ruse actually shows to be valuable is the performance itself and the ability to con, creating a correlation between economic and theatrical systems of value. Much like theater itself, the deception is the source of profit.

The challenge for Jonson's audience is not to fall for these theatrical illusions themselves. Jonson exposes the theatrical illusion of Face, Subtle, and Doll's entire enterprise as they visibly stage-manage the props and costumes and slip in and out of the

characters that comprise the performance for each gull. With Mammon and the Puritans' elaborate fantasies fetishizing gold as the singular path to wealth, Jonson tempts the audience to covet the gold alongside the gulls. Mammon's elaborate descriptions of gold overwhelm the senses and seduce the audience to "feel gold, taste gold, hear gold, sleep gold" and encourages them to imagine "no shower, / But floods of gold, whole cataracts, a deluge" (4.1. 29, 126-127). Gold becomes something fluid with potential for movement in Mammon's fantasy, as it immerses the body and becomes a seductive experience. Mammon's gold fantasy increases the quantity of the precious metal as it increases in quantity from floods to a deluge. Mammon's verbal embellishment of gold, in addition to the repeated reminder to see one metal but imagine another, lures Jonson's audience not only into a bullionist ideology but entices them to become gulled as well, inviting his audience to fetishize the gold with Mammon and become seduced by the same luxury. At the same time, the tricksters' scheme reminds the audience to resist gold as the fixed path to profit. Mammon's fantasy threatens and seduces as the gold overpowers the senses and offers a fantasy of luxury and excess. Mammon's language also reveals the potential for disaster as the volume of the gold increases, escalating from "flood" to "cataract" to "deluge." Through this language that creates tension between luxury and disaster, Jonson reminds his audience of the destructive potential for a fixed understanding of gold as the singular path to wealth.

The representations of systems of value creation at work in *The Alchemist* become intertwined in significant ways within the playhouse when one considers the commercial aspects of the theatrical enterprise. However, as *The Alchemist* makes clear for the gulls and audience alike, the risk lies in rigidly adhering to a fixed system of value creation.

The Puritans, Dapper, Druggier, and Mammon are not only duped by the illusion of Face, Subtle, and Doll's performances but by the illusion of investment: that present loss can lead to future gain, that something of little worth can transform into something valuable. The same is not true, however, for the tricksters, for whom the intrinsically worthless metals are transformed into valuable commodities and precious metals through their con. Face, Subtle, and Doll's series of exchanges for fast profit create a stark contrast to the system of investment that underpins each gull's interaction. For the gulls, loss is loss: the only gain visible in the play is the tricksters' that occurs incrementally. In *The Alchemist* Jonson yokes together alchemy, theater, and the global economy, three devices in which, as Alan Rudrum claims of alchemy specifically, "There is ... a strong implication of the importance of process: reality is not simply fixed: there is the possibility of movement, development, change of state."<sup>87</sup> The alchemy at work in Jonson's play is not the transformation of base metals into gold, but the hybridity created through the global market in a mercantilist model—the seemingly magical transformation of coin into commodity through the processes of exchange.

The profitability of an integrated system is foregrounded in one of the final scenes of *The Alchemist* when Face, Subtle, and Doll eagerly catalogues the accumulation of the wealth they have attained through their schemes. As they tally, the scene calls attention to both the variety as well as the volume of their profit. Face, Subtle, and Doll sift through boxes and trunks overflowing with money and jewels, token currency, and a variety of foreign commodities such as tobacco, damask, girdles, hangers, bolts of lawn, and French

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87. Alan Rudrum, "These Fragments I Have Shored Against My Ruins: Henry Vaughan, Alchemical Philosophy and the Great Rebellion," in *Mystical Metal of Gold*, ed. Stanton J. Linden (New York: AMS Press, 2007), 334.

petticoats (5.4.105-121). Importantly, this abundant wealth accumulates slowly throughout the play not through investment, but through a series of seemingly trivial exchanges and expert manipulation of their consumers' desires. Face, Subtle, and Doll's enterprise materializes for Jonson's audience an otherwise abstract understanding of the global market in which "the accumulation of wealth depends not simply on an exchange of ware for money, but the repeated transformation of one into the other," a system predicated on the expertise of the merchant and his ability to determine value based on the invisible fluctuations in supply and demand.<sup>88</sup> Even in the play's final moments, when Face is confronted by Master Lovewit to explain the strange circumstances his neighbors have reported in his absence, Face declares: "There's no such thing. 'Tis all *deceptio visus*," a "deception of sight" (5.3.62). This declaration calls attention to illusion and perception that joins the two main interests of *The Alchemist* and plays like it: theater and the market. Each exchange that leads to this final spectacle of wealth calls attention to the small deceptions of sight and the mutability of value necessary for profit in a mercantilist model of the economy. The practice of early modern play-going is grounded in deceptions of sight as theater is made and understood through theatrical processes that required audiences to see one thing but imagine another. The cons the tricksters created relied on both the deception of sight facilitated by the theater as well as new processes of value creation made possible by the emergent global economy.

In *The Alchemist* Jonson invites his audience to participate in new systems of value creation as they navigate Face, Subtle, and Doll's deceptive yet profitable cons. In doing so, Jonson illustrates theater's role in preparing its audience to understand value in

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88. Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions*, 5.

increasingly complex circumstances. Ultimately, *The Alchemist* plays out anxieties caused by England's coin shortage and the downturn in global trade. Analyzing how the tricksters practically manipulate value for coin and commodity illuminates the ways in which economic value itself is mutable, not only reliant on intrinsic and extrinsic systems of value creation, but also determined by consumer desires. At the same time, through the metaphor of alchemy Jonson foregrounds the ways in which hybridity, not only in the mixture of base and precious metals but kinds of commodities, is essential to increasing profit. By inviting his audience to navigate increasingly complex networks of exchange alongside Face, Subtle, and Doll, Jonson's *The Alchemist* emphasizes the similarities between theater and marketplace competencies, modeling the skills and attitudes that ultimately contributed to London's growth in the global economy.

#### Evaluating Spectacle, Imagining Profit: Mutability and Desire on Stage

Although pamphlet and parliament debates about economic value and global exchange entered the public eye in the early seventeenth century, the issues that these debates addressed began much earlier, as did the theater's engagement with them. Questions about processes of value creation within a global economy became more pressing for the average consumer and the language of evaluation appeared more frequently in early modern plays. These questions are most visible when playwrights feature an abundance of gold on stage. In plays like *The Jew of Malta*, *Volpone*, or *Timon of Athens*, stores of gold becomes a theatrical spectacle that often arouses the desire for gold among their audiences. However, as audiences are invited to reevaluate the treasure beyond their initial lust, the scenes of golden fantasy call attention to the range of factors



that influence systems of value creation that were debated in the period. These moments frequently couple theatrical and market processes in ways that call attention to the very issues surrounding precious metals, currency, and profit that economists debated in the period.

While *The Alchemist* ends with the tricksters cataloguing the variety of coin and commodity that made up the profit of their con, Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589) underscores gold as the fixed measure of wealth and commodities as merely a means to acquire coin. The play begins with Barabas, the eponymous Jewish merchant, "in his counting house with heaps of gold before him," calculating profit from his recent investments as his ships return to Malta (1.1.s.d).<sup>89</sup> The scene calls attention to the volume of his profit as Barabas breaks down what first appears as "heaps of gold" into their smaller component parts. The merchant begins with precious metal in its purest form, a "wedge of gold, / Whereof a man may easily in a day / Tell that which may maintain him all his life" (1.1.9-11). He then moves on to tally his silver coin, calling it "paltry" and remarking, "what a trouble 'tis to count this trash" (1.1.6, 7). Barabas then meditates on others who are not as wealthy, "he whose steel-barred coffer are crammed full" and who labors arduously to count the steel equivalent of a single pound (1.1.14). And the wealthy merchant pities "The needy groom that never fingered groat" (1.12).<sup>90</sup> Once he finishes counting the gold bars and precious metals, Barabas lists his jewels—"Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts, / Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds, /

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89. Christopher Marlowe, "The Jew of Malta," in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 293-349.

90. For further discussion of Barabas and his wealth, see David H. Thurn, "Economic and Ideological Exchange in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*," *Theatre Journal* 46, no. 2 (May 1994): 157-170; Jerry Philips, "Cannibalism qua Capitalism: The Metaphorics of Accumulation in Marx, Conrad, Shakespeare, and Marlowe," in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, eds. Frances Barker et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 183-203; and Landreth, *Face of Mammon*, 52-101.

Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds” (1.25-27). The heaps of gold and Barabas’ vivid description of his treasure invites Marlowe’s audience not to count the precious metals alongside Barabas, as they were encouraged to do with *The Alchemist*, but instead to covet his wealth. Marlowe positions his playhouse audience in the role of the “needy groom” Barabas describes, who “would make a miracle of thus much coin” (1.1.13). The gold and precious jewels piled around the counting house are a spectacle at which the playhouse audience should marvel, activating the desire for gold among Marlowe’s audience.

The opening counting scene also reveals Barabas’ attitude toward commodities. At the end of this monologue we learn that the wares whereby he accumulates his wealth are luxury commodities such as oils and wines, or the “spice and silks” he awaits from his argosy (1.1.33, 45). While Face, Subtle, and Doll accumulated their wealth in the form of both coin and commodities, Barabas emphasizes the need to separate precious metals from the goods, identifying gold as the fixed measure of wealth that must be concealed rather than circulated:

This is the ware wherein consists my wealth;  
And thus, methinks, should men of judgment frame  
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,  
And, as their wealth increaseth, so enclose  
Infinite riches in a little room. (1.1.33-37)

Barabas offers a bullionist perspective on trade. He hoards the gold and jewels he earns, privileging them above the commodities in which he trades.<sup>91</sup> Questions about the practices that Barabas enacts here, whether it is better to hoard money in the country or

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91. For further discussion of the drugs and spices in which Barabas deals, see Harris, *Sick Economies*, 121.

freely spend it abroad to encourage further trade, will become important issues debated in parliament following the trade glut of the early seventeenth century.

Although the scene privileges gold through the abundance of wealth and embodies the advice to keep separate coin and commodity, the process through which Barabas accumulated his wealth offers global scope as well as a mercantilist model of value creation through circulation. In addition to emphasizing Barabas' wealth, the first scene of *The Jew of Malta* highlights the global reach of his trade networks as he names the numerous countries with whom he does business: Persia, Italy, Spain, Greece, Arabia, India, Cyprus, Crete, and Egypt. By naming the countries where he does business, Barabas illuminates the fact that the potential for profit increases as the market expands. This presents a contrasting view from *The Alchemist*, in which the tricksters increase their wealth by inflating the value of commodities. Barabas does not see the value of commodities beyond their ability to generate gold—for him, precious metal and stone are the only stable sources of wealth. This opening moment invites audiences to imagine circulation on the global market as a path to riches when the profits of such circulation are hoarded at home. It also urges audiences to view gold and precious metals as fixed measures of wealth, engaging in marketplace debates that question whether the best means to accumulate value is by amassing profit at home or circulating it abroad.

Performed seventeen years after *The Jew of Malta*, Ben Jonson's *Volpone* begins similarly with a spectacle of treasure but reveals a different process through which Volpone, a Venetian nobleman, generates his profit. The play opens with Volpone worshipping his gold, calling his servant Mosca to "Open the shrine that I may see my

saint” and Mosca dramatically pulling back a curtain from the alcove upstage (1.1.2).<sup>92</sup> Volpone waxes rhapsodic about his abundance of gold, comparing its color to the sun, kissing each piece, and naming it “the best of things, and far transcending / All style of joy” (1.1.16-17).<sup>93</sup> With the near thirty-line ode to precious metal Jonson encourages his playhouse audience to covet the precious metal as Volpone does by emphasizing not only the gold’s value, but the implicit power it brings to those who possess it. He remarks that gold “canst do naught, and yet mak’st men do all things” and enhances the social standing of those who can wield its power “Who can get thee, / He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise” (1.1.23, 226-27). For Volpone, gold’s value is seemingly pre-ordained, but his prime attraction to gold is the power it confers on its possessor. His soliloquy extolls gold’s virtues and fosters desire for the metal among Jonson’s playhouse audience.

Volpone goes on to reveal that more than admiring his resplendent wealth, he loves his gold for the power it gives him over others:

Yet I glory  
 More in the cunning purchase of my wealth  
 Than in the glad possession, since I gain  
 No common way, I use no trade, no venture;  
 I wound no earth with plowshares; fat no beasts  
 To feed the shambles; have no mills for iron,  
 Oil, corn, or men, to grind ‘em into powder;  
 I blow no subtle glass; expose no ships  
 To threatenings of the furrow-faced sea;  
 I turn no moneys in the public bank,  
 Nor usure private— (1.1.30-39)

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92. Ben Jonson. “Volpone, or The Fox,” in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 679-773.

93. This scene has a long history in discussions of idolatry and nascent capitalism. For recent examples of this see David Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace: Idolatry and Commodity Fetishism in English Literature, 1580–1680* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 3-26; and Katherine Eisaman Maus, “Idol and Gift in *Volpone*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 429-453.

Primarily, Volpone preys upon those who hope to be named his heir and who, like the gulls in *The Alchemist*, spend freely in the present bolstered by their fantasy of acquiring greater wealth in the future. These men flatter Volpone by bestowing on him their precious metals, jewels, and other lavish gifts such as “Romagnia and rich Candian wines / ... / sumptuous hangings and soft beds” that support his luxurious lifestyle (1.1.58-60).<sup>94</sup> While Jonson reveals a much larger network of currency, commodities, and desires that generates Volpone’s immense wealth, he also reveals the ways in which Volpone controls the forces of supply and demand. Volpone goes so far as to instigate competitions among his suitors to his own advantage, since each one hopes to be named his sole heir. As he describes his “cunning purchase,” Volpone illuminates the extent to which he exploits others’ desires to grow his own profit, which was a phenomena economists of the period were eager to understand. For writers like Mun and Misselden, supply and demand were mysterious forces that influenced the value of currency but operated beyond the control of the Crown or Parliament. Malynes agreed that supply and demand impacted currency, but maintained that the forces were dependent on human will. Volpone exploits the desires of those around him for personal gain. Although Jonson first invites his audience to worship at the shrine of gold as Volpone does, as the scene progresses Jonson foregrounds the ways in which expert knowledge of consumer desires makes such accumulation possible.

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94. For further discussion of luxury and leisure in *Volpone* see Jonathan Gil Harris, “‘I am sailing to my port, uh! uh! uh! uh!’: The Pathologies of Transmigration in *Volpone*,” *Literature and Medicine* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 109-132; Oliver Hennessey, “Jonson’s Joyless Economy: Theorizing Motivation and Pleasure in *Volpone*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 83-105; Jakob Ladegaard, “Luxurious Laughter: Wasteful Economy in Ben Jonson’s Comedy *Volpone, or the Fox* (1606),” *European Review* 24, no. 1 (February 2016): 63-71; and Scott, *Literature and the Idea of Luxury*, 111-140.

Each of the examples I have discussed up to this point feature gold and precious metals within vibrant local and global marketplaces that, through expert circulation of goods and equally expert exploitation of consumer desire, make abundant wealth possible. However, playwrights also positioned gold in unconventional settings away from the marketplace that forced audiences to reevaluate their fixed understanding of gold as the singular measure of wealth, an idea I will return to later in this chapter. For one example of this I turn briefly to a moment from William Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. By Act Four, the formerly wealthy and charitable Timon finds himself ruined. Abandoned by his friends and unable to repay his debts, the result of his own conspicuous consumption and lavish generosity, Timon renounces mankind, tears his sumptuous clothing from his body, and flees to the wilderness beyond the city where he takes up residence in a cave. While scavenging for food, Timon happens upon a collection of gold buried beneath a tree:

What is here?  
Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?  
No, gods, I am no idle votarist:  
Roots, you clear heavens. Thus much of this will make  
Black white, foul fair, wrong right,  
Base noble, old young, coward valiant. (4.3.25-30)<sup>95</sup>

Timon's initial response upon this discovery recalls the golden spectacle and echoes the covetous language of Barabas and Volpone from the previous two examples. Timon identifies the treasure's dazzling appearance and goes on to describe the transformative power of the metal to elevate what is base and common into something luxurious and exclusive.

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95. William Shakespeare, "Timon of Athens," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al., (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 2270-2323.

This discovery is no doubt meant to first appear as the solution to Timon's insurmountable debt as Shakespeare invites his audience to assume value for the abundant gold, yet as Timon continues in his soliloquy he reevaluates the assumed value of the gold.<sup>96</sup> Timon's tone sours and the gold that was pleasurable and powerful three lines ago is now a "yellow slave" that wins approval without merit and corrupts rather than elevates:

This yellow slave  
Will knit and break religions, bless th'accursed,  
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves,  
And give them title, knee, and approbation. (4.3.33-36)

Timon exposes the ugliness of the same power that only a few lines ago made the metal desirable. This turn in the middle of Timon's speech encourages Shakespeare's audience to reevaluate the gold as Timon himself recognizes the metal's ability to corrupt those who possess it and its ability to create a pleasing outward appearance that disguises vulgar intrinsic baseness. Timon reevaluates the gold once more, referring to it this time as "Thou common whore of mankind, that puts odds / Among the rout of nations (4.3.43-44). Shakespeare urges the playhouse audience to reevaluate the gold along with Timon as something common and filthy that, as Timon's experience prior to this scene has displayed, is more trouble than it is worth. Timon's multilayered response to the treasure, presents the value for precious metals as mutable and contingent on desire. Shakespeare further displays in this scene, through the irony of the forest setting, that gold's value is

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96. Most recent scholarship dealing with *Timon of Athens* addresses with the play's interests in debt and credit. See, for example, John Jowett, "Middleton and Debt in *Timon of Athens*," in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism*, ed. Linda Woodbridge (New York: Springer, 2003), 219-235; Grav, *Shakespeare and the Economic Imperative*, 131-156; Amanda Bailey, "Timon of Athens, Forms of Payback, and the Genre of Debt," in *Of Bondage: Debt, Property, and Personhood in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 27-50.

not intrinsic and fixed. Timon fled the city to avoid his mounting debts only to find gold in the forest, where he needs it the least. As Timon systematically reevaluates the gold Shakespeare's audience is invited to a further realization—outside of the bustling marketplace of the city, with no one to trade and no one desirous of it, the gold is effectively worthless. The scene underscores for Shakespeare's audience the degree to which value for precious metals is mutable and situationally determined.

As the examples of Barabus, Volpone, and Timon illustrate, early modern theater is extremely interested in the mutability of value for precious metals and the influence of desire on value creation. By foregrounding the variety of situational factors and forms that influence the accumulation and evaluation of precious metals, early modern playwrights underscored the ways in which the theater reflected existing practices about how to reevaluate gold. In each instance I have examined here gold appears as a theatrical spectacle, enticing audiences to assume value for the dazzling display. However, after arousing the audience's initial desire for the precious metal, each scene also reveals that gold is not the fixed measure of wealth. Instead, these moments offer representations of profit and reevaluations of precious metals that model and reflect the complex ideological and material networks that shaped the seventeenth-century global market.

#### The Matters of Mercantilism in *The Sea Voyage*

While my examples so far have foregrounded theater's interest in the mutable value of precious metals in local economies, John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The Sea Voyage* (1623) more fully addresses the relationship between local and global economies in an exotic foreign setting. Although *The Alchemist's* London setting relied



on its audiences' native competency for evaluating various types of currencies, the remote island setting of *The Sea Voyage* effectively removes currency from its familiar commercial setting and, by doing so, Fletcher and Massinger remove their playgoers' ability to determine value based on their own marketplace experiences. Instead, the play invites them to engage in new processes of economic evaluation that rely more heavily on audiences' play-going competencies to accurately evaluate and reevaluate the island's wealth. By the 1620's Londoners were experiencing the effects of London's trade glut as the country sank into an economic depression. Understanding the mutability of value and adapting marketplace competencies were imperative to London's economic success in a global market. By merging marketplace and theatrical competencies, *The Sea Voyage* calls into question the processes through which value for currencies and precious metal is determined, both on stage and off, materializing through performance the ideological processes at work in fashionable ideas about the global market.

Scholarship that examines *The Sea Voyage*, until very recently, placed the play in conversation with *The Tempest*.<sup>97</sup> However, the development of new economic criticism has renewed interest in the play on its own terms and arguments about the play's global economic contexts are fairly common. Some scholars inquire how the play represents English plantations abroad and questions how to maintain English identity outside of England through gendered and commercial relationships.<sup>98</sup> More often, however, critics

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97. See, for example, Gordon McMullen, "Discovery," *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 197-256; Anthony Parr "Introduction" in *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 20-32; and Heidi Hutner, "The Tempest, The Sea Voyage, and the Pocahontas Myth," in *Colonial Women: Race and Culture in Stuart Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21-44.

98. Jean Feerick, "'Divided in Soyle': Plantation and Degeneracy in *The Tempest* and *The Sea Voyage*," *Renaissance Drama* 35 (2006): 27-54 and Claire Jowitt, "'Her Flesh Must Serve You': Gender, Commerce and the New World in Fletcher's and Massinger's *The Sea Voyage* and Massinger's *The City Madam*," *Parergon* 18, no. 3 (July 2001): 93-117.

engage with the play's interest in lack. According to Gitanjali Shahani, the play deals with lack of consumption, while Zachary Lesser claims that the problem is "lack of trade. So much treasure and nothing to spend it on."<sup>99</sup> While I agree that the absence of commodities is the central problem of the play, my work examines the ways in which Massinger and Fletcher invite their audiences to repeatedly reevaluate the gold, calling attention to the mutability of value for precious metals based on the shifting marketplace conditions of a global market system.

Unlike *The Jew of Malta*, *The Alchemist*, *Volpone*, or even *Timon*, which were positioned at the epicenter of a bustling civic economy, *The Sea Voyage* is situated on a remote island void of even the most basic conditions necessary to a market economy. Sebastian, a Portuguese nobleman, himself the survivor of an earlier shipwreck, describes the conditions of his life on the island:

No summer here to promise anything,  
No autumn to make full the reaper's hands.  
The earth, obdurate to the tears of heaven,  
Lets nothing shoot but poisoned weeds.  
No rivers, nor no pleasant groves; no beasts.  
All that were made for man's use fly this desert;  
No airy fowl dares make his flight over it,  
It is so ominous. (1.3.134-140)<sup>100</sup>

The island of *The Sea Voyage* presents the opposite of English expectations of the New World—the island is a dystopian landscape, a godless place absent of promise or potential. Even the figure that would perform the harvest seems more akin to death's reaper when depicted empty-handed. The "poisoned weeds" that grow there, as well as

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99. Gitanjali Shahani, "Of 'Barren Islands' and 'Cursed Gold': Worth, Value, and Womanhood in *The Sea Voyage*," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 19; and Lesser, "Tragical-comical," 897.

100. John Fletcher and Philip Massinger. "The Sea Voyage," in *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, ed. Anthony Parr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

the repetition of “no” at the beginning of each line, emphasize the negative space of the island. This description of the space poses an interpretive problem for its new arrivals and for Massinger and Fletcher’s playhouse audience.

Setting the play on a barren island is one of the primary ways that Massinger and Fletcher emphasize the process of evaluation. Importantly, the island space is not only absent of natural materials, but it is also void of commodities, as “all that were made for man’s use” are absent as well. In fact, it appears that a purgation of goods is a prerequisite for entering the island space. The tempest that causes the French pirates to land on the island also causes them to cast all of their money and commodities into the ocean. Lamure, the usuring merchant, must part with his coin: “The money I ha’ racked by usury / To buy new lands and lordships in new countries / ... / I am undone, sir” (1.1.117-11123). Comically, the money that Lamure “racked” through usury is now “racked” from him by the storm. The gallant Franville purges his sumptuous clothing:

Will ye throw away my lordship that I sold,  
Put it into clothes and necessities  
To go to sea with?  
... I am undone  
Forever! (1.1.131-137)

The tempest eliminates social and theatrical markers as each character becomes socially and economically “undone” before entering the island. In this way, Fletcher and Massinger emphasize the similarities of economic and theatrical systems of value creation. The theatrical signifiers such as props and costumes on which Massinger and Fletcher’s audiences relied to read and understand the characters vanish. Lamure is no longer a usurer when he does not hoard the money attained through his trade. Franville is no longer a gallant when his ostentatious clothing does not render him visible as such.

This absence of signifiers establishes the island, like the stage itself, as a blank canvas, increasing the theatrical privilege of the objects that do appear there.<sup>101</sup>

Although Sebastian, having inhabited the island for a number of years, initially describes the land as entirely barren, it does possess a series of “heaps,” props likely brought on stage in Act One Scene Two to help distinguish the space of the desolate island from that of the bare wooden planks of the ship’s deck. Sebastian instructs the pirates: “Look on those heaps. They seem hard, ragged quarries: / Remove ‘em and view ‘em fully” (1.3.161-163). Sebastian’s language urges both character and audience to make meaning of the heaps based on what they see, as he asks them to “look” and “view ‘em fully.” But Sebastian also draws attention to the material composition of the heaps, as they “seem hard, ragged quarries.” The word “seem” is peculiar here, implying that the objects may not be as they first appear and that the mode of visual perception that Sebastian urges may not be reliable. After removing the heaps’ outer coverings (the details of which are not preserved in the script), the pirates indeed discover that the heaps are not as they “seem” but are actually glittering piles of gold and jewels. The pirates react instantaneously to Sebastian’s suggestion that the heaps are more than they appear, rushing to the piles of coin and wealth as Sebastian reminds them, “Be not too hasty, / Here lies another heap” (1.3.164-165). The pirates’ reveal their desire for the gold: they imagine that their “losses shall be made good” and that the gold is a means to replace the coin and commodities lost in the shipwreck (1.3.170). The sheer quantity of gold seduces the pirates as they assume its economic value—an attitude Massinger and Fletcher encourage their audience to share.

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101. For more on the performative emphasis of empty spaces, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative Power of Performance*, 107-114.

The series of events that reveal the heaps of gold invite a series of economic and theatrical reevaluations, all of which emphasize the mutability of value. Sebastian's language equivocates between singular and plural. "Heap" can refer to either a "single mass" or "a collection of things lying one upon another."<sup>102</sup> The term "quarries" is similarly ambiguous, referring to either a source where multiple things of value can be extracted, such as a mine, or, singularly, to "a large mass of stone."<sup>103</sup> The pirates assess the gold's value through a bullionist ideology, understanding the value of precious metals as stable regardless of their desolate island context. However, as Zachary Lesser points out, "*The Sea Voyage* shows us gold with no intrinsic value at all, making the greedy desire for it all the more ridiculous."<sup>104</sup> Massinger and Fletcher invite their audience to also desire the gold and share in the pirates' bullionist perspective, ultimately creating immense economic value for what initially appeared to be mounds of dirt with no economic value, similar to the piles of pewter, copper, and lead in *The Alchemist*. The reevaluation of the heaps that the pirates undertake in this moment continues throughout the play as Massinger and Fletcher repeatedly invite their audience to employ a mercantilist system of value creation in which value for coin and commodity is situationally determined.

The unexpected reveal of the glittering gold and jewels hidden within the heaps on the island foregrounds the similarities between economic and theatrical systems of value creation. Massinger and Fletcher present the gold to their audience in exactly the

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102. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "heap, n.1a, 1c." Accessed December 2015. Oxford University Press.

103. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "quarry n.1a, 2." Accessed December 2015. Oxford University Press.

104. Lesser, "Tragical-comical," 897.

same way at exactly the same time as they do the pirates. The audience receives no indication of the hidden wealth despite the fact that Sebastian and Nicusa are introduced a full scene before the French pirates wash ashore. The spectacular reveal of the gold thus dazzles all of its viewers, encouraging audience and pirates alike to desire the abundance of riches, a feeling that precedes the play for its audience. Sebastian's language equivocates between a single visible object and the multiple objects revealed beneath, calling into question the accuracy of either evaluation of the heaps. Massinger and Fletcher introduce the gold using the same ambiguous language employed to describe the island's terrain. When Sebastian reveals the abundant gold and jewels, he creates a theatrical spectacle intended to inspire a sense of wonder and an immediate assumption of economic value from pirates and playgoers alike (1.3.163).

The French pirates' assumption of the gold's economic value inspires mutiny and, while they clamor to gain the most gold, Sebastian and Nicusa make away with their ship. Like Timon in the forest beyond Athens, the pirates are left with all of the gold and jewels but no access to a market that, according to mercantilist ideology, is necessary to imbue the treasure with value through circulation. The pirates submit to their condition, accepting that they must "make the best use of our miseries. / They but begin now" (1.3.233-234). Tibalt wastes no time "making the best of his miseries" and banters with the other pirates over the uselessness of the gold:

Franville:	O, I Am hungry, and hurt, and I am weary.
Tibalt:	Here's a pestle of port[a]gue, sir; 'Tis excellent meat with sour sauce. And here's two chains – suppose 'em sausages. Then there wants mustard; but the fearful surgeon Will supply ye presently. (1.3.239-243)

These lines, like the equivocal language previously used by Sebastian to describe the heaps, capture both what the gold is and what it is not. When Tibalt imagines a “pestle of portague,” he references both the Portuguese coin minted in pure gold and the leg meat of an animal used for food, creating, as Anthony Parr’s gloss indicates, a correlation between the gold and the absent meat that Franville craves.<sup>105</sup>

Tibalt’s jests offer a distorted mixture of materials as he specifically invites the pirates to imagine the coins as pork products. A “pestle” can refer specifically to the “ham, haunch, or the foreleg of a pig.”<sup>106</sup> The mixture of pork products and gold coins emphasizes the men’s starvation and situates the play within a specific historical and geographical context.<sup>107</sup> For those in early modern England, a hog was the primary emblem of the Somer Islands because of the multitude of hogs that English colonists bound for Virginia happened upon in 1609 when their ship, *The Sea Venture*, was blown off course by a hurricane and they were cast ashore in Bermuda.<sup>108</sup> Six years after the shipwreck the Somer Island Company became its own enterprise and among the rights granted to the company was the privilege to issue its own coin. The coin was commonly referred to as “hogge money” because of the wild pig stamped on the obverse of the coin (Figure 2.3).<sup>109</sup> Hogge money was a token currency: “made of copper with a thin tin

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105. Parr, *Sea Voyage*, 155.

106. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “portague n.4a.” Accessed December 2015. Oxford University Press.

107. The presence of pigs and boars on the island are casually mentioned throughout the play. For example, Clarinda offers to help the injured Albert by using the same herbs and medicines her mother used on her “When last I was wounded by the boar” (2.2.47).

108. For discussions of hogge money and hog imagery, see V. D. Anderson, “Somer Islands’ ‘Hogge Money’,” *Environmental History* 9, no. 1 (January 2004): 128-131 and Louis Jordan, “Somers Island ‘Hogge Money’ of 1616: The Historical Context,” *The Colonial Newsletter* (August 2003), 2466.

109. Nathaniel Butler, *The Historye of the Bermudaes or Summer Islands*, ed. J. Henry Lefroy (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1882) quoted in Jordan, 2474-2475.

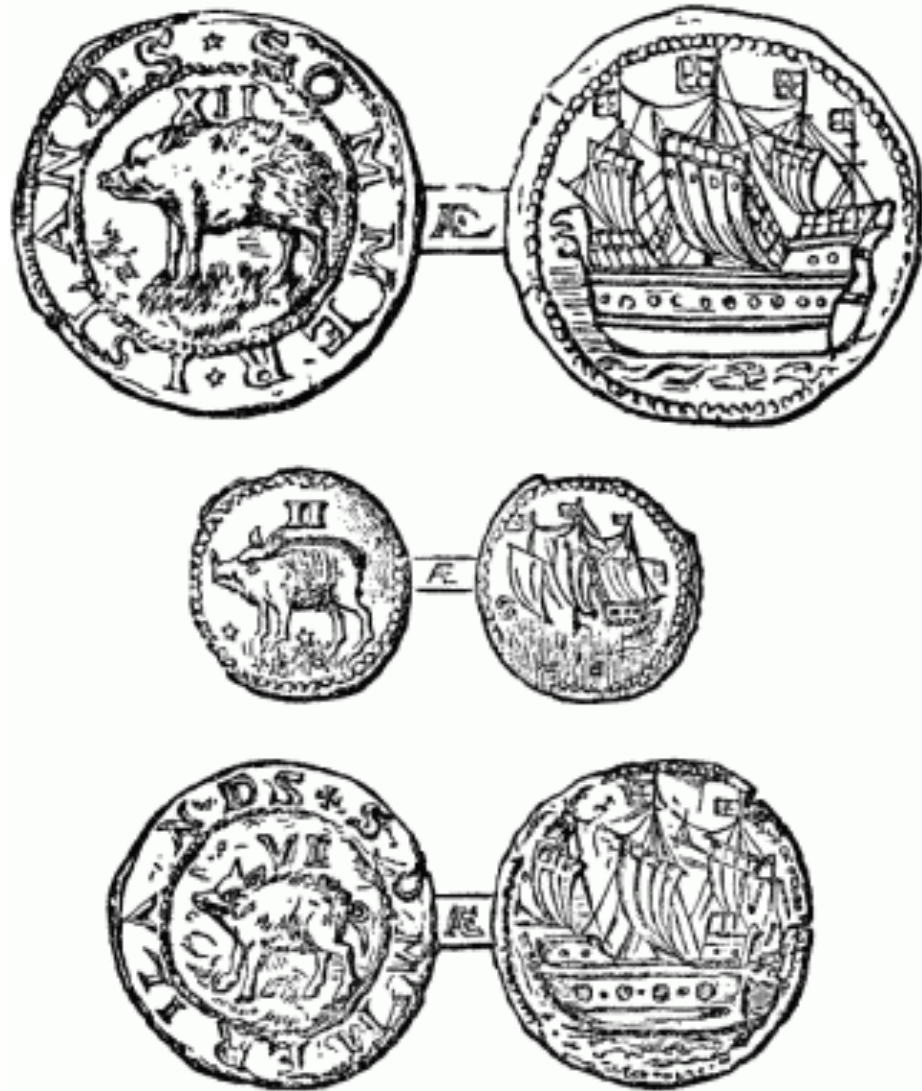


Figure 2.3: Hogge Money in Three Denominations. *Bay State Monthly: A Massachusetts Magazine* 2, no. 5 (February, 1885). Project Gutenberg.

wash, giving them the appearance of silver, but with little intrinsic value.”<sup>110</sup> Within five years of its first appearance, hogge money fell out of circulation and was replaced entirely by a commodity as “tobacco served in lieu of currency” on the island.<sup>111</sup> When Tibalt incorporates the fictional island’s gold coin and the pork products the pirates crave, he quite possibly evokes for Massinger and Fletcher’s audience the hogge money and an

110. Jordan, “Somers Island Hogge Money,” 2476.

111. Anderson, “Somers Island,” 131.



economy that operated entirely without currency. This oblique reference to hogge money, coupled with the mutability of value for the precious metal more generally, materializes the broad questions about value creation that the play addresses and invites the playhouse audience to reevaluate the privileged position of precious metals in the economy.

Tibalt's sardonic suggestion does not merely emphasize the gold's lack of value to starving men, it also foregrounds the mutability of value for the precious metal within the global economy. The pirates' position on the barren island forces them to reevaluate their initial assessment of the gold's value, changing it from something so precious it incites mutiny to something so worthless that pirates call for "A vengeance on these jewels" and name the bounteous precious metal "cursed gold!" (1.3.264). By eliminating the possibility of trade for the gold and jewels on the island, Massinger and Fletcher model the way in which value for precious metals is situationally determined. In this instance, rather than increasing the pirates' wealth as they initially assumed, the excess of precious metals leads to its devaluation. This moment illustrates for Massinger and Fletcher's audience the ways in which consumer desire influences value for coin and commodity in the economy. The men no longer desire gold, they desire food, thereby rendering meat more prized than precious metals.

When the pirates learn there is a neighboring island, lush with natural resources, they once again reevaluate the gold and jewels, hoping to exchange their treasure and jewels for the sustenance they desire. The abundant island, we soon learn, is inhabited by Rosellia, Sebastian's lost wife and her tribe of Amazonian Portugals. Led by Tibalt, the

pirates attempt to exchange their surplus of gold for meat and women.<sup>112</sup> But once again the pirates overvalue the gold and jewels as they display their riches to Rosellia and her women:

Albert:	Here, see the idol of the lapidary.
Tibalt:	These pearls, for which the slavish negro dives To the bottom of the sea.
Lamure:	To get which the industrious merchant touches At either pole.
Franville:	The never-failing purchase Of lordships and honours.
Morillat:	The world's mistress That can give everything to the possessors.
Master:	For which the sailor scorn tempestuous winds And spit defiance in the sea. (3.363-371)

The pirates expect the women to share in their assumed value and desire for gold, finding the precious metal seductive as the pirates initially did. The pirates attempt to foster desire for coin and commodity among the women by reveling in the rarity of the treasure they offer. In this sense the pirates are like the group of charlatans in *The Alchemist*, employing salesman-like tactics to foster desire among their potential consumers. However, Massinger and Fletcher invite their audience to view the potential consequences of fixed systems of value creation when the women do not share in the pirates' lust for the precious metals and instead despise the treasure.

Rosellia and her women present an alternative evaluation of the precious metals and jewels that is not grounded in economics. She evaluates the riches that the pirates offer her through their provenance, valuing them more for what they symbolize since she recognizes the treasures as her own:

Look on these caskets and these jewels.

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112. For more on the commodification of women and the conflation of meat with female flesh in *The Sea Voyage* see Shahani, "Barren Islands," 5-27; Jowitt, "Her Flesh Must Serve You," 93-117 and Jean Feerick, "Divided in Soyle," 27-54.

These were our own when first we put to sea  
With good Sebastian; and these the pirates  
That not alone deprived him of this treasure  
But also his life. (3.1.378-382)

Rather than serving as the instruments of seduction or exchange that Tibalt had hoped for, Rosellia and her women greet the gold and jewels, along with the men who possess them, with hostility and scorn. For Rosellia, Sebastian's widow, the gold implicates the pirates as Sebastian's murderers. Rosellia's evaluation of the treasure is not economic and no amount of economic reasoning or salesmanship can influence her interpretation of the gold. She rejects the pirates' pleas and explanations, remaining dogmatic in her own fixed evaluation of the treasure, preparing to execute the pirates in revenge for her husband's death. Rosellia's firm lack of interest in the gold's economic or exchange value illustrates clearly for Massinger and Fletcher's audience the influence of desire on value. At the same time it also demonstrates the danger of a fixed system of value creation in a global economy. Since neither the pirates nor Rosellia are willing to negotiate the value of the gold and jewels within their limited island economy, and as a result the pirates face not only the loss of their treasure but the loss of their lives.

Massinger and Fletcher provide their audience with a larger network of information within which to evaluate the gold, thereby inviting their audience to reconcile these seemingly conflicting systems of value creation. Thus, the playhouse audience reevaluates the gold one last time as the conflict of the play resolves. While Rosellia's evaluation of the coins is correct (the gold and jewels did belong to her and her women), she mistakes the circumstances surrounding the gold (no one murdered Sebastian; the pirates took possession of the gold from the island after Sebastian stole their ship). Rosellia's understanding of the gold, however, is contingent on Sebastian's

death—a crucial error evident to Massinger and Fletcher’s audience, who know that Sebastian is alive and well and stealing pirate ships off the coast of Bermuda. Massinger and Fletcher’s audience is not meant to share in Rosellia’s valuation as they did in the pirates’ assumption of the gold’s economic value. Instead, Massinger and Fletcher provide their audience with a much larger network of exchange than the economically fixed and geographically limited scope of the characters. When Sebastian reveals himself in the play’s final moments, he saves the pirates from death. But Sebastian does not offer a complete explanation to his wife, since the information for reconciliation and resolution is already obvious to playgoers:

I will not now, Rosellia, ask thy fortunes,  
Nor trouble thee with hearing mine.  
Those shall hereafter serve to make glad hours  
In their relation, all past wrongs forgot.  
I am glad to see you gentleman; but most  
That it is in my power to save your lives.  
You saved ours when we were starved at sea... (5.4.87-93)

In final moments of the play Massinger and Fletcher invite their audience to resolve the conflict of the plays by resolving the conflicting values for the gold and jewels based on their privileged position as spectators. Central to both economic and theatrical resolutions is a mercantilist ideology that emphasizes the circular movement of people as well as the treasure. While the play deals with issues of evaluation and circulation thematically, it also enacts a mercantilist ideology performatively, displaying for the audience exchange networks that put the gold into the pirates’ possession. As Rosellia and Sebastian are reunited, the pirates are paired off, the group discusses plans to return home, and the play reaches its theatrical resolution through the economic reconciliation of the gold—which,

presumably, upon their return home from the islands becomes economically valuable again as the possibility for its circulation in an active marketplace is restored.

When *The Sea Voyage* begins, characters and playhouse audiences alike are encouraged to assume value for and desire the gold based on fixed systems of intrinsic and extrinsic values, since the gold is presumably exchangeable for commodities within the marketplace. However, these fixed systems gradually transform and the gold is reevaluated several times, revealing its value to be multivalent and situationally determined. Massinger and Fletcher invite the playhouse audience to repeatedly renegotiate the value of the gold as the circumstances surrounding it change. *The Sea Voyage* depicts questions about the value of precious metal within the play's fiction and urges the audience to ask similar questions about where and how value is established on the stage. Emphasizing the construction of the theatrical world on stage, Massinger and Fletcher direct attention to the play's interest in its own systems of value creation, highlighting the imaginative processes that are implicit in both mercantilist and theatrical systems of value creation. Massinger and Fletcher foreground the mutability of gold as a theatrical prop and object of exchange to lay bare the systems of value creation and the fluctuating conditions that determine the value of gold and coin both on and off the stage.

### Conclusion

The plays I examine in this chapter all foreground the multivalent value of precious metals and currencies to demonstrate the ways in which economic value must be situationally determined in order to generate profit. These plays punish those who adopt a bullionist ideology—characters, and occasionally audience members, who view gold as

the fixed measure of commodities—and reward those who embrace a mercantilist ideology—those who understand precious metals, currencies, and commodities that are susceptible to the ebb and flow of the market. In this sense, these plays portray the material hybridity of the global market, encouraging audiences to view the boundaries between currency and commodity as permeable. Each play invites its audience to participate in a system of theatrical value that foregrounds the mutability that is essential to the theater, positioning the audience as the expert who navigates, negotiates, and alternates between systems of economic and theatrical value creation in the playhouse. By bringing performance studies to bear on plays typically discussed for their economic interests, we can begin to see some of the ways the early modern theater reflected and distorted ideological issues that shaped the early modern economy by inviting their audience to participate in the formation of those ideological concepts. Moreover, the dynamic relationship between theater and audience generates economic competencies among playgoers that not only enhance marketplace competency; it increases the practical value of play-going itself.

My reading of these plays draws attention to how the early modern stage did not merely portray contemporary concerns about the shifting value of gold—it performed those concerns by inviting its audience to renegotiate and revise their understanding of economic value based on theatrical systems of value creation. The gulls in *The Alchemist* lose their money because of their singular, fixed lust for gold and precious metals, embodying a bullionist ideology. Plays like *The Jew of Malta*, *Volpone*, and *Timon of Athens*, that feature large amounts of gold onstage, display the mutability of the value for gold by provoking their audiences' desire for gold while simultaneously encouraging

viewers to cast an ironic eye on the value of the precious metal. Likewise, *The Sea Voyage* undermines the pirates' assumption of the gold's value and invites audiences to view movement and circulation of goods and coins as essential to financial gain. As these plays draw attention to the processes through which theater is made and created (and the resemblance of these processes to the global market), early modern playwrights extend the imaginative possibilities for the early modern stage and create value for their own medium amid the increasingly nebulous network of wants and desires that developed among consumer in the early seventeenth century as their marketplace expanded.

Ultimately, this chapter addressed how early modern plays reflected the evolving economic systems of value creation for precious metals in the period and emphasized the similarities between economic systems of value creation in the market and the theatrical systems of value creation in the theater. While this chapter looked at the mutability of value creation and the desire for precious metals that underpins currency in the period, this next chapter attends to the competitions that develop between artistic mediums as playwrights incorporated desirable commodities, specifically foreign art objects, into their plays. The next chapter examines how playwrights generated value for their own artistic medium as London's thriving global trade generated desire for foreign luxury goods among its consumers.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PARAGONE IN PERFORMANCE: THE COMPETING VALUES FOR ART

A description is only a shadow, received by the eare, but not perceived by the eye;  
so lively portraiture is merely a forme seene by the eyes, but can neither shew  
action, passion, motion, or any other gesture to move the spirits of the beholder to  
admiration: but to see a souldier shap'd like a souldier, walke, speake, act like a  
souldier...Oh, these were sights to make an Alexander!

-Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* <sup>113</sup>

When Thomas Heywood argued in *An Apology for Actors* (1612) that theater's ability to "shew action, passion, motion, or any other gesture" made the stage superior to description and portraiture, he was participating in a classical form of debate known as the *paragone*. The *paragone* compares the virtues of various art forms in a rhetorical competition for supremacy.<sup>114</sup> The *paragone* appeared in ancient Rome and in the Italian Renaissance and it eventually emerged in the late sixteenth century in England through rhetorical manuals such as Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (1579) and George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesy* (1589).<sup>115</sup> Heywood and his contemporaries adapted the *paragone* for the stage by incorporating works of art into their plays, revealing the inferiority of static pictures and sculptures compared to the dynamic action of the theater. At the same time, early modern economists in England grappled with a trade imbalance between native exports and foreign imports caused by the emerging global market in the

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113. Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1612), 20-21.

114. Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art: Plato to Winckelmann* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 165. For a full discussion of the history of *paragone* in classical literature, see Clark Hulse, *The Rule of Art: Literature and Painting in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 1-25.

115. For a discussion of the *paragone* in Roman rhetorical manuals, see Jas Elsner and Michael Meyer, *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2014), 27. For examples of the *paragone* in English rhetorical manuals, see George Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesy* (London: Richard Field, 1589) and Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: Hentry Olney, 1595).



early seventeenth century. The staged *paragoni* illuminated growing economic concerns for early modern audiences as playwrights portrayed foreign art objects in theatrical displays. Hence, early modern playwrights expanded the *paragone* tradition from a competition between art forms into a global competition between native and foreign commodities. In staging a *paragone* between foreign art objects and English theater, playwrights invited their audiences to view theater as a superior art form, identifying it as a vibrant English art form superior to static foreign art objects. By staging the competition between living theater and static art as a competition between native and foreign commodities, early modern playwrights called attention to the intersection of theatrical codes and contemporary economic concerns in compelling ways that invited playhouse audiences to consider the economic and cultural values of the art objects that they encountered in the playhouse and through their daily commercial activity.

For audiences in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the words “picture” and “image” could refer to either painting or sculpture. According to Marguerite A. Tassi, “pictures” referred to the material image as well as the “immaterial ‘pictures’ formed by rhetoric and the mind. The various kinds of images were united by their second-class status as mere imitations of the real.”<sup>116</sup> The plays I examine in this chapter direct the audience’s attention to theatrical codes of signification that generate value for native and foreign art objects as commodities on stage. The competitions created by the developing global economy come up in each play in a variety of ways. For example, Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part Two* (1605) contains *paragoni* between poetry, portraits, sculptures, and theater, where each art form takes on either

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116. Marguerite A. Tassi, *The Scandal of Images: Iconoclasm, Eroticism, and Painting in Early Modern English Drama* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 23-24.

native or foreign status. The play also highlights the competition between money and commodities as the superior form of wealth. In *The Winter's Tale* (1609-1611) Shakespeare features two artistic mediums: common ballads and elite statues. The *paragoni* between poetic descriptions, ballads, sculpture, and theater become intertwined with the competitions between native and foreign art forms as well as between elite and common goods as Shakespeare invites his audience to view the ways in which theater's ability to incorporate its aesthetic competition increases its economic value. John Webster stages two kinds of sculpture—wax figures and alabaster statues—that ultimately perform *paragoni* between theater and sculpture in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614). Webster self-reflexively points to the living qualities of the foreign sculptures performed by English actors. By inviting the audience to renegotiate between living and static, native and foreign art forms, he thereby aligns the mutable economic value of commodities in the market with the mutable theatrical value of objects created through the fiction on stage. Examining these three plays, which foreground pictures in a range of artistic media, allows us to see how early modern playwrights commented on contemporary concerns about English consumption of foreign commodities through art. At the same time, these plays situate theater as a distinctly hybrid art form that is superior to other modes precisely because of its ability to incorporate, integrate, and appropriate those other forms into its own.

In order to understand how the stage creates value for material goods, we must address how the market itself does so. Value for commodities is broadly determined through two systems of value, economic and cultural.<sup>117</sup> In an economic value system,

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117. Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-91.

commodities are the goods that are exchanged for other things, typically money. However, the exchange rate between money and goods was unpredictable in the early modern economy. Economists in the period identified this unpredictability, along with trade imbalance and coin shortages, as the primary reason England entered a depression in the 1620s. Gerard de Malynes attributed England's economic trouble to the foreign export of money, claiming, "English consumption of foreign goods had created an imbalance, the fault lay not with the quantity of goods imported, but the price in English coin that had been paid for the goods."<sup>118</sup> Edward Misselden, by contrast, emphasized the process of exchange itself, arguing that supply and demand, rather than the fixed value of coin, dictates the value for both money and goods.<sup>119</sup> Finally, in *English Treasure by Forraign Trade*, Thomas Mun devotes an entire chapter to ideas on decreasing foreign spending in order to increase English wealth. Mun advises:

We may likewise diminish our importations if we would soberly refrain from excessive consumption of forraign wares in our diet and raiment, with such often changes of fashion as is used, so much the more to increase the waste and charge; which vices at this present are more notorious amongst us than in former ages.<sup>120</sup>

In the same pamphlet, Mun introduces the concept of "balance of trade," which cautions readers about the broader consequences of their local market purchases, indicating the symbiotic relationship between native and foreign goods in a global economy. As Joyce Oldham Appleby puts it:

Too much frugality at home would restrict foreign purchases of English goods, [Mun] warned, for, if the English did not use foreign goods, foreigners would not have the wherewithal to buy English ones and there would be no sale abroad. In a similar fashion, Mun cautioned that any

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118. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 42. For primary sources on bullionist ideology, see Malynes, *Center of the Circle* (1623) and *Maintenance of Free Trade* (1622).

119. Edward Misselden, *Circle of Commerce*, C4v-D3r.

120. Thomas Mun, *English Treasure by Forraign Trade*, B8v.

restrictions introduced by English authorities would inevitably lead to similar restrictions being laid upon the English by foreign princes.<sup>121</sup>

Though these assessments of the global economy did not appear in print until the 1620s, the forces shaping the competition between native and foreign commodities began as early as 1540, when England began projects to foster the native production of foreign goods and reduce dependence on imported commodities.<sup>122</sup>

While an economic system of value works strictly on a system of exchange, a cultural system of value works on the premise that commodities “must be not only produced materially as things, but also culturally marked as a certain kind of thing.”<sup>123</sup> According to Pierre Bourdieu, commodities become marked in this way through their association with the tastes of elite classes, which generates high culture,

Distinction and pretension, high culture and middle-brow culture...only exist through each other...It is in these struggles between objectively complicit opponents that the value of culture is generated, or, which amounts to the same thing, belief in the value of culture...although one of the effects of the game is to induce belief in the innateness of the desire to play and the pleasure of playing.<sup>124</sup>

Early seventeenth-century elite English tastes favored foreign commodities, which increased the cultural value of foreign goods. For instance, the cultural value of pictures grew “as they increasingly became the medium of exchange between ambassadors and favorites, kings and courtiers, and clients and patrons.”<sup>125</sup> Following the court fashion, a new figure emerged within the early seventeenth century aristocracy—the virtuoso. The virtuoso’s role, according to Lawrence Stone,

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121. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 38.

122. Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, 1-23.

123. Kopytoff, “Cultural Biography,” 64.

124. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 247-248.

125. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 162.

was to offer talented but politically thwarted or indifferent noblemen an alternative outlet for their surplus time, energy, and wealth. If denied an important official position, they could devote themselves to antiquarian research, architectural and pseudo-scientific experiment, and the collection of books, paintings, and *objets d'art*.<sup>126</sup>

Satisfying the virtuoso's appetite for art depended on England's trade expansion, which amplified contact with foreign art markets and increased the variety of work available to collectors.<sup>127</sup> English virtuosi relied on individuals with international positions, such as court-appointed ambassadors, to facilitate sales.<sup>128</sup> As James Stourton points out, "The British, insular in so many respects, were at their most Europhile through art collecting."<sup>129</sup> Foreign art, and Italian art in particular, became fashionable among elites early in James' reign, generating cultural value for pictures of all kinds in early modern London.<sup>130</sup>

Portraits were "the most important form of easel-painting in England in this period, both in amount and in contemporary estimation."<sup>131</sup> Portraits in particular became culturally valuable because, according to Catherine Richardson, "owning a portrait of oneself was a key marker of the borderline of elite status."<sup>132</sup> Although portraits had always played a key role for disseminating the royal image, especially during Queen Elizabeth's reign, in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, interest in

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126. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 721.

127. Art historians cite collectors such as John, 1st Viscount Lumley (1533-1609) and Thomas Howard, the 21st Earl of Arundel (1586-1646) as among the first of the virtuoso collectors. See Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, ed. Edward Chaney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

128. For discussion of requests for art made to William Trumbull, ambassador to the Low Countries, see Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 168. For details of Sir Dudley Carleton's appointment to the Venetian embassy and Italian art, see Robert Hill, "The Ambassador as Art Agent: Sir Dudley Carleton and Jacobean Collecting," in *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in Tudor and Stuart Periods*, ed. Edward Chaney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 241.

129. James Stourton, *British as Art Collectors* (London: Scala, 2012), 8.

130. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 166.

131. Eric Mercer, *English Art: 1553-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 145.

132. Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture*, 86.

the visual arts spread to nobles, gentry, and even civic communities. Wealthy Londoners commissioned foreign artists for their own portraits in a variety of mediums, including oil paintings, funeral monuments, miniatures, and medals.<sup>133</sup> Merchants, craftsmen, and livery companies likewise commissioned portraits of company magistrates and benefactors for display in their guildhalls that were painted by visiting foreign artists. Such portraits grew in popularity leading into the seventeenth century. For example, in 1598 the Haberdashers ordered that the Company's Wardens have ten paintings of the Company's benefactors for display in the hall. The following decade the Ironmongers and the Merchant Taylors made a similar request. During the 1610s the Drapers, Brewers, and Grocers purchased paintings and in the 1620s the Barber-Surgeons, Painter-Stainers, Carpenters, and Goodsmith also commissioned portraits.<sup>134</sup> In fact, portraits were so popular that in 1604 Parliament attempted to resolve a dispute between the Companies of the Painter-Stainers and the Plasterers. The resolution distinguished between house painting and decorative arts in an effort to define each trade and protect the native production of popular commodities. Even though Parliament established such laws to protect native artistic production, English elites stubbornly preferred foreign art and artists.<sup>135</sup>

Foreign portraits often captured further evidence of London's cosmopolitan interests through the intermixture of foreign fashions and commodities displayed in the

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133. For more on citizen portraiture see, Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 58; Robert Tittler, *The Face of the City: Civic Portraiture and Civic Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 47-56, and Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 118.

134. See Robert Tittler, *Face of the City*, 55-56.

135. For further discussion of Parliament's protection of native arts, see Michael North and David Ormrod, *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 170.

paintings. Thomas Gresham's full-length portrait offers a good example of a civic portrait that highlights London's global engagement (Figure 3.1). Gresham's fine lace collar and cuff are possibly products of Flanders or France, the gloves he clutches likely from Italy, and the skull cast on its side reflects a popular trend in Flemish art in the period. As taste for foreign commodities increased more generally through the early seventeenth century, early modern playwrights similarly reflected on these interests through pictures on the stage.

Despite the popularity of pictures in the period, prevailing modern criticism surrounding art objects on the early modern English stage assumes an absence of art and



Figure 3.1: Anonymous, Sir Thomas Gresham, ca. 1544, from Wikimedia Commons.

of visual culture more generally. Leonard Barkan perpetuates this line of criticism in an influential essay that declares, “Theatre is England’s lively pictorial culture,” implying that pictures were nearly non-existent in England following the Reformation.<sup>136</sup> Twenty-first century critics of early modern English literature follow in the wake of this sentiment for the visual arts, as scholars repeatedly note the underdevelopment of art in England compared to the continent.<sup>137</sup> While a few scholars, such as Frederick Kiefer and David Howarth, attribute this absence to Queen Elizabeth’s and King James’ preferences for words over pictures, more often scholars attribute England’s stunted visual culture to the lasting effect of the Reformation.<sup>138</sup> James A. Knapp argues that because of the Reformation, “The word was not only privileged over the image, but the visual sense was denigrated in its favor.”<sup>139</sup> According to Marguerite A. Tassi, Elizabethan theater created images through words to tempt the audience’s imagination but seldom staged the material picture, fearing accusations of idolatry.<sup>140</sup> Although the development of art was delayed by over one hundred years in England compared to the artistic progress on the continent, English art historians discuss the variety across medium and subject matter of artwork in

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136. Leonard Barkan, “Making Pictures Speak: Renaissance Art, Elizabethan Literature, and Modern Scholarship,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 338.

137. This attitude toward English art is prevalent among literature scholars. In addition to those discussed also see Alison Thorne, *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare: Looking through Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); and Richard Meek, *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

138. Frederick Kiefer, *Staging Shakespeare’s Personified Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and David Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485-1649* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). For scholars who examine the effect of the Reformation on theatrical practices, see Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) and Michael O’Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

139. James A. Knapp, *Image Ethics in Shakespeare and Spenser* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 9.

140. Tassi, *Scandal of Images*.



the period.<sup>141</sup> The perceived absence of visual art in early modern England by modern scholars, combined with critical focus on the Reformation, has obscured how pictures on stage functioned as commodities. Only recently have scholars begun to investigate the presence and use of pictures on the early modern stage. Chloe Porter, for example, explores early modern playwrights' fascination with artwork in progress. She argues that such objects draw attention to a developing visual culture that was itself being re-formed.<sup>142</sup> In this chapter I expand Porter's argument to tie the development of England's visual culture to the development of its economy, which was undergoing its own process of re-formation as the market shifted from local to global networks. I assert that early modern playwrights, through the use of *paragoni* on stage, reflected and distorted this market shift from local to global, thus providing audiences a forum through which to engage with the economic developments rapidly occurring around them.

#### Aesthetic and Economic Paragone in Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, II*

At the center of Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody, Part Two* lies the construction of London's Royal Exchange, England's central marketplace erected by Thomas Gresham in 1565. Heywood combines theater, the market, and pictures in a compelling tapestry, first identifying portraits as Gresham's inspiration for building the Royal Exchange, then explicitly including statues to ornament the finished building, and finally performing an action that displays English dominance of the global market. Heywood creates a hierarchy of *paragoni* as art objects increase in their degree of animation in a play already deeply interested in consumer culture and foreign

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141. Mercer, *English Art*.

142. Porter, *Making and Unmaking*, 2.

exchange.<sup>143</sup> In fact, *If You Know Not Me, II* is traditionally understood as a celebration of merchants and merchant activity as critics have agreed to varying degrees with Brian Gibbon's declaration that the play is "a piece of banal mercantile hagiography."<sup>144</sup> Furthering this view, scholars also examine the ways in which Heywood decentralizes London to address issues of nascent capitalism.<sup>145</sup> While issues of mercantilism as well as local and global trade are well documented in the critical history of the play, critics have not significantly addressed the prevalence of art objects and how they leverage the play's focus on economic systems and global trade networks.<sup>146</sup> My purpose is to examine the artistic and economic markets that intersect throughout the play. Beginning with a *paragone* between poetry and portraits, then proceeding to a contest between words and sculptures, the play's interest in artistic commodities culminates in a competition between theater and the previously staged portraits and sculptures. Each *paragone* invites Heywood's audience to renegotiate value for portraits, sculptures, and, ultimately, the theater itself by comparing these commodities to one another in ways that reflect

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143. George R. Kernodle identifies the transition from painting to sculpture to theater as one of degrees of animation. See George R. Kernodle, *From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 1-9.

144. Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 118. For scholars who argue that Heywood redeems merchants by legitimizing their role in the city, see Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 20-24; Edward T. Bonahue Jr., "Social Control, the City, and the Market: Heywood's 2 *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*," *Renaissance Papers* (1993): 78.

145. Theodora A. Jankowski, "Historicizing and Legitimizing Capitalism: Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV* and *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 7 (1995): 305-337; Jesus Lopez-Pelaez Casellas, "'What Good Newes From Barbary?': Nascent Capitalism, North Africans and the Construction of Identity in Thomas Heywood's Drama," *Atlantis* 29, no. 1 (June 2007): 123; Andrew Griffin, "Thomas Heywood and London Exceptionalism," *Studies in Philology* 110, no. 1 (Winter 2013), 85. See also Barbara Sebek, "'After My Humble Dutie Remembered': Factors and / Versus Merchants," in *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550-1700*, eds. Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 113-128; and Ryner, *Performing Economic Thought*, 188.

146. Brian Sheerin discusses Heywood's interest in artistic and economic theory, but does not discuss art objects within this relationship. Brian Sheerin, "Good Credit and the Maintenance of Desire in Heywood's *Apology for Actors* and *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II*," in *Desires of Credit in Early Modern Theory and Drama: Commerce, Poesy, and the Profitable Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 73.

contemporary concerns about the developing relationship between money and commodities, and between native and foreign commodities in particular.

Heywood emphasizes the local London economy early in the play during a gallery tour of the citizen portraits hanging in Saint Paul's Cathedral. Gallery tours, according to Clark Hulse, were form of "ritualized group consumption in which viewing paintings is a theatrical and social experience" and were popular entertainments among early modern elites.<sup>147</sup> Doctor Nowell, the Dean of Saint Paul's, invites Thomas Gresham, Thomas Ramsey, and Hobson, the haberdasher, to view "A Gallerie, wherein [he] keepe[s] the Pictures / Of many charitable Citizens" (6.760-761).<sup>148</sup> As the group studies the portraits of six London citizens Nowell describes their charitable deeds with emphasis on their civic contributions. Some of the portraits' subjects built institutions for the poor, while others funded the education of orphans, "Leaving for Tutors 50. li. a yeare, / and Quarterly for every one a Noble" (6.842-843). The spectators comment on their viewing experience as a source of inspiration, yet they credit Nowell's words for their impact rather than the material pictures. Hobson, the haberdasher, remarks, "I thinke these words should make a man of flint / To mend his life" (6.867-868). Thomas Gresham reveals that his visit to the gallery, "[has] started teares into my eyes, / And M. D. Nowell you shall see / The words you have spoke, have wrought effect in me" (6.869-871). The gallery tour creates a *paragone* that favors description over pictures since each spectator remarks on the spoken word for its impact rather than the material image.

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147. Hulse, *Rule of Art*, 1.

148. Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody, Part Two*, ed. Madeleine Doran (London: Printed for the Malone Society by J. Johnson at the Oxford University Press, 1935).

The superiority of description over painting is compounded by the fact that, due to the prohibitive cost of portraits, it was unlikely for material pictures to appear on stage.<sup>149</sup> Nowell assumes the role of the poet by crafting a narrative for each portrait as the group moves through the gallery:

This sir John Allen Mercer and Ma[y]or of London,  
A man so gra[v]e of life that he was made  
A pri[v]ie Counsellor to King Henrie the eight,  
He gave this Citie a rich Coller of gold,  
That by the Ma[y]or succeeding should be worne;  
Of which Sir William Laxton was the first,  
And is continued e[v]en [u]nto this yeare,  
A number more there are, of whose good deeds  
This Citie florisht. (6.802-810)

Nowell's descriptions focus on each citizen's "good deeds" rather than the portrait itself. Rather than attempt to describe the portrait itself, discussing pigment, brush stroke, or composition, Nowell describes in detail the citizen's actions. His narrative emphasizes the charity of prominent individuals and attributes London's present-day greatness to the past economic generosity of its citizens. Nowell's words highlight the sitters' actions while the pictures themselves are static art objects. In the gallery scene Heywood obliquely stresses the movement and action that are conveyed through Nowell's words over the pictures hanging motionless in the gallery. In other words, Nowell's words convey information about the sitters that would be impossible to portray in an actual portrait.

In addition to the competition between poetry and pictures, the *paragone* Heywood models in the St. Paul's gallery suggests that the best representation of wealth

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149. Although it is possible that Queen Anne's Men used prop versions of civic portraits to stage this scene, I believe this possibility unlikely due to the lack of such portraits in other plays performed by the company during the period.

is a hybrid of money and commodities. The charity Nowell describes serves a dual function since, as Anita Sherman points out, charity is both “a form of poor relief and a means of securing status” in the play.<sup>150</sup> The pictures materialize status while the spoken word foregrounds poverty relief. As the scene progresses, however, Heywood distorts the concept of charity into a commercial enterprise that displays wealth through material goods that creates a sense of permanence around the objects themselves. Gresham remarks near the end of the scene, “And yet wee live like beasts, spend time and die, / Leaving no good to be rememb[e]red by” (6.818-819). The “good” that Gresham refers to is ambiguous, referring either to the moral good of charity or the material goods such as the gold collar for the Lord Mayor or the portraits themselves. The scene positions material goods as a superior form of wealth compared to money by foregrounding the citizens’ lasting material contributions to the city and the portraits themselves.

As the gallery scene illuminates competitions between poetry and painting and between money and commodities, it does so within a local economy. Though the subject of the first portrait, John Philipot, raised an army that “guarded the Realme / From the incursions of our enemies,” Nowell does not otherwise mention the world beyond London (6.773-774). Instead, Nowell emphasizes the local establishments these exemplary citizens improved, such as the Library at Gray-Friars, Whittington College, Saint Bartholomew’s in Smithfield, and Newgate prison (6.793-797).<sup>151</sup> Heywood also underscores the local setting with his focus on London citizens. Art historian Tarnya Cooper cites this passage to demonstrate how “the intention of sitters in commissioning

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150. Anita Gilman Sherman, “The Status of Charity in Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody II*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 12, (1999): 103.

151. Jean E. Howard points to the systems of charity and civic monument at work in the London of Heywood’s play and to those presented in Stow’s *Survey of London*. See Howard, *Theater of a City*, 49-60.

portraits was to privilege specific personal narratives of, for example, charity, piety, family lineage, marriage, personal ambition or the desire for civic office.”<sup>152</sup> Early modern citizen portraits often contained coats of arms or other symbols that specifically carried local meaning to indicate the sitter’s status (See Figure 1). Heywood showcases local setting even further by uniting his playhouse audience with the characters touring the gallery on stage. Gresham comments: “And we may be ashamed, / For in their deeds we see our own disgrace, / We that are Citizens are rich as they were” (6.811-813). Within the fiction of the play, Gresham’s “we” refers to himself, Ramsey, Nowell, and his wife. However, “we” also yokes Heywood’s playhouse audience into the gallery scene, implicating them in Gresham’s shame. Nowell’s oral history of London, inspired by the portraits, foregrounds systems of exchange, material goods, and the local market in particular. In this sense, the gallery scene points to the history of England’s domestic economy that flourished through its own citizens’ contributions.

While Heywood initially accentuates the local London economy in the gallery scene, his interests later turn to the global market. In Scene Nine two Lords excitedly compare London’s Royal Exchange to foreign marketplaces in Constantinople, Rome, and Frankfurt, declaring London’s new marketplace unparalleled. According to these men, even St. Marks in Venice:

T’is but a bable if compar’d to this.  
 The nearest that which most resembles this,  
 Is the great Burse in Antwerpe, yet not comparable  
 Either in height or wideness: the faire Sellerage,  
 Or goodly shoppes above. (9.1370-1374)

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152. Cooper, *Citizen Portrait*, 14.

The Lords position the Royal Exchange in a global contest with its foreign counterparts, creating a competition through architecture. The buildings that house each marketplace compete for superiority in grandness of scale just as their parent nations compete with each other for dominance of the global market. To this end, Heywood introduces a series of statues into this framework that is already concerned with the competition between domestic and foreign markets. One of the Lords informs his companion:

But when to fit these emptie rooms about here,  
The pictures graven of al the English Kings  
Shall be set over and in order plac't,  
How glorious will it then be? (9.1386-1389)

According to the Lords the statues will increase the Exchange's prestige, and their anticipation of the statues emphasizes the empty rooms at the top of the Exchange (see Figure 3.2). However, for Heywood's audience this same conversation accentuates the empty rooms at the top of the theater. This scene creates a *paragone* between words and to materialize the glory and wealth of England more completely than spoken words. Like the portraits hanging in the gallery, the statues are not physically present. Yet, by talking about them, Heywood evokes the material statues in his audiences' imaginations.

Importantly, the statues themselves are luxury art objects that ornament and enhance the building that will eventually sell luxury foreign goods in its shops. In this sense the luxury of the building itself hints at the luxury available inside. While words can merely describe the greatness of the Exchange, the statues will materialize its greatness, making England's superior position in the global market visible to any who enter the London marketplace.

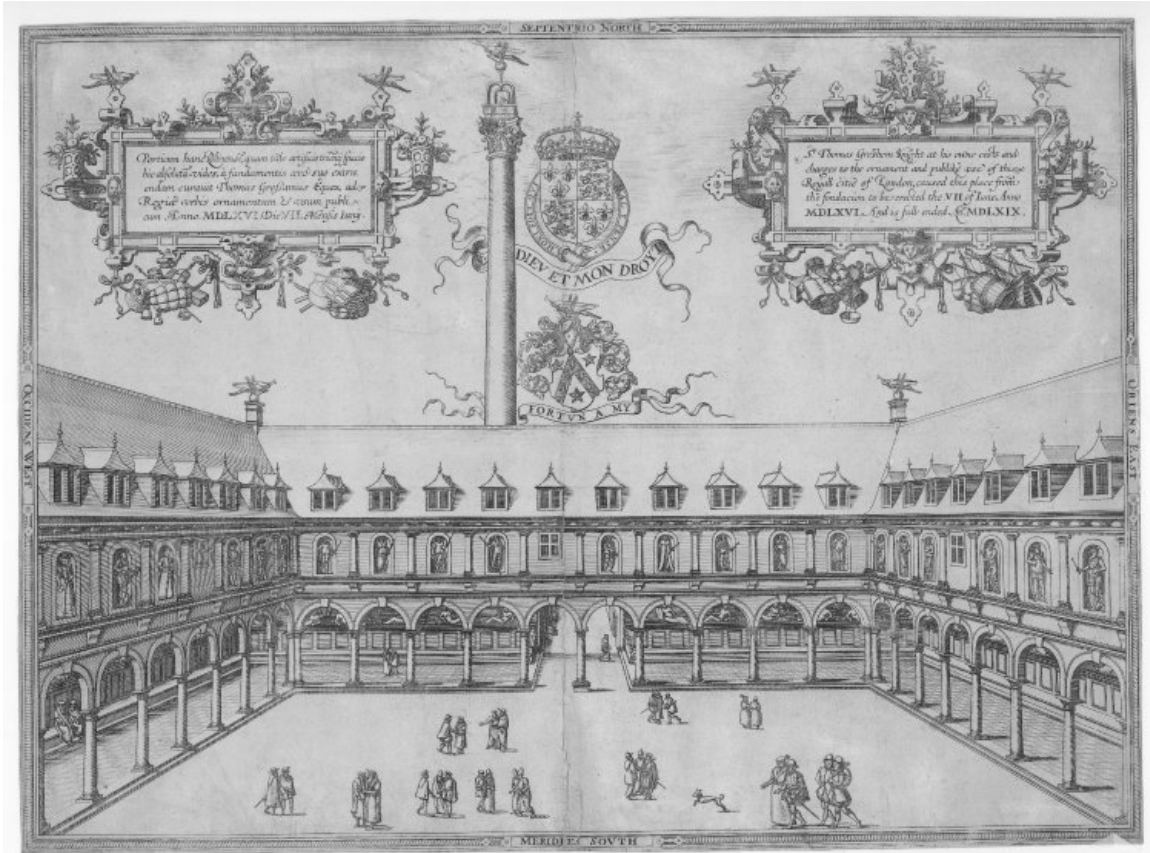


Figure 3.2: B. Howlett, 1808, after Francis Hogenberg, 1570. *The Royal Exchange* from Wellcome Collection.

Like the competition between words and portraits in Nowell's gallery, the competition between words and statues also reflects a contest between money and goods. Heywood makes his interest in the relationship between money and goods clear through Thomas Ramsey's interjection: "These very pictures will surmount my wealth" (9.1391). Ramsey explicitly creates a competition between economic wealth, accumulated through currency, and cultural wealth, in the form of art objects, inviting the playhouse audience to create multiple kinds of value for the statues. First, Heywood creates economic value for the statues since they are superior to money in that they "surmount" Ramsey's wealth. Second, Heywood generates cultural value for the statues as ornaments for the Exchange, materializing England's superiority. At least one, if not all, of these statues was imported



from Antwerp along with most of the stone and materials used to construct the Exchange. Finally, Heywood produces both types of value for the statues on a global rather than a local scale, indicating England's superiority on the global market. Without privileging one value system over another, Heywood entices his audience to consider the various processes that generate value on both the early modern stage and the global market.

Heywood magnifies his interest in market competition, especially regarding the relationship between money and goods, in a yet later scene featuring a banquet that Gresham hosts in Queen Elizabeth's honor. Amid foreign ambassadors and members of the English gentry, a Merchant informs Gresham:

Your ships in which all the Kings pictures were,  
From Brute unto our Queene Elizabeth:  
Drawn in white marble, by a storme at sea  
Is wrack't and lost. (10.1490-1493)<sup>153</sup>

Up until this point the statues symbolized England's superiority in the foreign market, but here the audience learns that the statues are foreign art objects.<sup>154</sup> Heywood invites his audience to renegotiate the value of the statues in this moment by seeing something foreign as something English. Foreign artists carved the statues in foreign marble but they depict English royalty, were commissioned by an English patron, and were paid for in English money. Consequently, the statues mediate between competing forces as Heywood points to the ways in which London appropriated foreign commodities, and art objects in

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153. In my research, I have found nothing to confirm that any of the statues for the Royal Exchange were ever lost or damaged in transport. The destruction of the statues is a fictionalized by Heywood, it seems, to enhance the economic issues of loss and recovery raised by the play more broadly.

154. Correspondence between the real-life Thomas Gresham and his factor, Clough, indicates that Queen Elizabeth's statue was created in Antwerp. In a letter dated August 17, 1567, Clough acknowledged the receipt of pictures from Gresham, "whereof I wyll cause the Queene's Majestie's to be made, and sende you the rest back againe with that, so soon as yt ys done." John William Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham...Founder of the Royal Exchange: Including Notices of Many of His Contemporaries...* (London: E. Wilson, 1839), 119. For more on interplay between English and Dutch cultural production, see Rubright, *Doppleganger Dilemmas*.

particular, to identify itself as a cosmopolitan city. Heywood here illustrates the power of exchange to generate hybridity, as objects initially identified as foreign transform into symbols of London's marketplace, reflecting England's superior position in the global economy.

The statues' destruction also illustrates the competitions between money and goods and between native and foreign commodities. Upon hearing the news, Gresham unhesitatingly proclaims to his guests: "The Losse, I way not this: / Onely it grieves me that my famous building, / Shall want so rich and faire an ornament" (10.1494-1496). He even declares, perhaps melodramatically: "I car'd not to have lost their waights in gold" (10.1503). As David Hawkes points out, Gresham "refuses to mourn his financial loss, lamenting only the loss of the material pictures that were to have adorned his Bourse."<sup>155</sup> Gresham's response emphasizes the loss of material goods over the loss of money, again pointing to material goods—ornamental, foreign commodities in particular—as superior representations of economic wealth.

While the demise of the engraved pictures suggests the sculpture's superiority over other art forms, Heywood presents one last *paragone* to show otherwise. Gresham recovers his loss through a series of events that ultimately position theater as the superior artistic medium. Gresham calls upon a jeweler who circulated among the foreign ambassadors advertising a sizeable pearl for sale:

Let's see thy pearle: goe pound it in a Morter,  
Beate it to powder then returne it me,  
What Dukes, and Lordes, and these Ambassadors  
Have even before our face refused to purchase  
As of too high a price to venture on,  
Gresham a London Marchant here will buy. (10.1542-1548)

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155. David Hawkes, "Thomas Gresham's Law, Jane Shore's Mercy: Value and Class in the Plays of Thomas Heywood," *English Literary History* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 35.

In a rapid succession of movements Gresham buys the ground pearl, orders his goblet be filled “till the brim or’e-flows,” and, in a literal gesture of consumption, drinks the pearl with a toast to Queen Elizabeth (10.1549-1550). Heywood creates a moment of pure action, generating a *paragone* that positions theater as a superior medium to sculpture. Unlike the sculptures in the Exchange or the portraits hanging in a gallery, drinking the pearl is a performance and it is superlative precisely because of its ephemerality.

Although Heywood previously used poetry, pictures, and sculptures to best represent wealth, through this action Heywood asserts theater’s superiority to all other art forms. Like the other *paragoni* in the play, the pearl scene exhibits a variety of competitions and processes of value creation. Critics often point to the ways in which this scene navigates between money and goods, citing Heywood’s interest in Gresham’s relationship to consumption, public display, and shifting attitudes toward wealth in the period. Jean E. Howard, for example, suggests that drinking the pearl is “a display of *sprezzatura* that defines [Gresham] as, indeed, a royal merchant, a knight of commerce, in short, a walking oxymoron, something new and almost indefinable.”<sup>156</sup> The pearl scene also foregrounds exchange, noting that the jewel transforms from a rare commodity, “Orient and round, weighing so many carets / That it can scarce be valewed” to a symbol of England’s dominance of the global market (10.1463-1464). Heywood further emphasizes Gresham’s own transformation, from a London “Citizen as rich as they come” to “an honour to all English M[e]rchants” as the play itself shifts from local to global market concerns (6.813, 10.1556). Like the statues intended to crown the

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156. Howard, *Theater of a City*, 56. See also Charles W. Crupi, “Reading Nascent Capitalism in Part II of Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 289.

Exchange, the pearl is a foreign commodity that demonstrates England's increasing preoccupation with imported goods. Yet, in purchasing the pearl, Heywood invites the audience once again to negotiate between native and foreign commodities.

While Gresham's purchase transforms the pearl from foreign commodity into a symbol of English wealth, drinking it further alters the pearl from material commodity into theatrical spectacle.<sup>157</sup> Consuming, in addition to buying, the pearl emphasizes action over static art, effectively replacing the statues as the crowning achievement of England's marketplace.<sup>158</sup> After Gresham imbibes the pearl he declares, "I doe not this as prodigall of my wealth, / Rather to shew how I esteeme that losse / Which cannot be regain'd" (10.1559-1561). By inviting his audience to think about value through the unrecoverable loss of the statues' destruction, Gresham also instructs them on how to value theater. Drinking the pearl is a dramatic gesture that performs the *paragone* between the theater and other art forms that Heywood argued for in the passage from *Apology for Actors* that serves as the epigraph to this chapter. Drinking the pearl depends on performance to recuperate the otherwise devastating loss. Whereas the statues in the Exchange and the portraits in St. Paul's offer mere representations of actions and superiority, this moment invites the staged audience of ambassadors and nobility, along with the playhouse audience, the primary experience of spectacular action—a superlative art form only available up to this point in the play through description. Gresham's gesture creates a

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157. Pliny features an account of Cleopatra consuming a pearl dissolved in vinegar to win a bet with Antony. This scene evokes this story and the opulence of such a gesture. For more on Cleopatra and the pearl, see Prudence J. Jones, "Cleopatra's Cocktail," *Classical World* 103, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 207-220.

158. Gresham and the pearl also presents a retelling of the parable of the pearl from the bible, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: / Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 1345-46). However, in this reshaping of the tale, Gresham gives up the pearl in order to demonstrate his earthly wealth. See Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett eds., *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20.

spectacle that displays the superiority of the theater, which simultaneously affirms England's dominance of the global market. As Joachim Frenk and Ceri Sullivan point out, Heywood seems to grant portraiture an elite position, since at the end of the plays the portraits remain hanging in St. Paul's while the statues are lost at sea.<sup>159</sup> However, this observation does not account for theater as an enduring art. Metatheatrically, Heywood's play survives, providing playgoers with a dynamic experience of Gresham's civic and national achievements. The theater offers a dynamic representation of civic and national power that the other aesthetic forms stated in the play cannot access.

Reading *If You Know Not Me, II* for the ways in which the play negotiates between money and goods as well as between native and foreign goods illuminates how theater reflected shifting processes of value creation precipitated by the emergent global economy. Heywood indicates the shortcomings of portraiture while highlighting Gresham's civic contributions that establish London as a central marketplace on the global stage. By highlighting the contrast between the civic portrait and civic theater, Heywood creates a *paragone* that invites the playhouse audience to view theater's superiority to other art objects-cum-commodities. By paying attention to what is exchanged instead of where and by whom in a play grounded in English economic history, we can begin to see how playwrights viewed their own medium both aesthetically and economically. *If You Know Not Me, II* plays out economic tensions through aesthetic form while at the same time insisting on the superiority of English theater precisely

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159. Joachim Frenk. "The Semantic Battle for Ownership in Heywood's 2 *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*," in *Realigning Renaissance Culture: Intrusion and Adjustment in Early Modern Drama*, eds. Stephan Laqué and Enno Ruge (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004), 42 and Sullivan, *Rhetoric of Credit*, 101.

because of its ability to integrate other mediums, just as London integrates foreign commodities and cultures to achieve the status of a cosmopolitan city.

### Ballads, Statues, and Performance in *The Winter's Tale*

Similar to *If You Know Not Me II*, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* combines aesthetic and economic interests through art. The critical attention *The Winter's Tale* has received is also similar to *If You Know Not Me II* in that, although a number of critics have examined the play's interest in economics, relatively few of these critics have touched on the art forms themselves as commodities in the play.<sup>160</sup> More often, critics who examine the art objects in the play do so with an eye to the play's treatment of the Reformation and issues of idolatry.<sup>161</sup> Each of these strands of scholarship, by and large, fail to notice the ways in which Shakespeare stages *paragone* between the different art forms that appear in the play that parallel the theater's own marketplace competitions between native and foreign as well as common and luxury goods. Beginning with the descriptions and ballads featured through Autolycus' appearance at the sheep-shearing

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160. For scholars who have examined the play's economic interests, see Michael Bristol, "In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economies in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 145-167; Stanley Cavell, "Recounting Gain, Showing Losses: Reading *The Winter's Tale*," in *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 193-211; and Barbara Correll, "Scene Stealers: Autolycus, *The Winter's Tale* and Economic Criticism," in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism*, ed. Linda Woodbridge (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 53-65; and Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions*, 85-109.

161. For criticism that addresses art and idolatry in the play, see Phoebe Jensen, "Singing Psalms to Horn-Pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm, and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 279-306; Walter S. H. Lim, "Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 317-334; Ruth Vanita, "Mariological Memory in *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry VIII*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 40, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 311-377; Huston Diehl, "'Strike All that Look Upon with Marvel': Theatrical and Theological Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Rematerializing Shakespeare: Authority and Representations on the Early Modern Stage*, eds. Bryan Reynolds and William N. West (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19-34; and Huston Diehl, "'Does not the Stone Rebuke Me?': The Pauline Rebuke and Paulina's Lawful Magic in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, eds. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir (London, Routledge, 2008), 69-83.

festival, then moving to a more complex understanding of the market through an escalating series of *paragoni* between ballad and description, then to sculpture and theater, this section argues that Shakespeare employs the *paragone* in a way that ultimately elevates theater to the level of other fashionable foreign commodities made available by the global market.

The first *paragone* occurs during Act Four Scene Four when a servant interrupts the lively music and dancing of the country sheep-shearing festival to announce an approaching peddler:

O, master, if you did but hear the pedlar at the door, you would never dance again after a tabor and pipe. No, the bagpipe could not move you. He sings songs faster than you'll tell money. He utters them as he had eaten ballads, and all men's ears grew to his tunes. ... He hath ribbons of all the clours I'the' rainbow; points more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learned handle, though they come to him by th' gross: inkles, caddises, cambrics, lawns—why he sings 'em over as they were gods or goddesses. You would think a smock were a she-angel, he so changes to the sleeve-hand and the work about the square on't. (4.4.182-207)<sup>162</sup>

In this moment the servant assumes the role of the poet, crafting a description of the peddler's wares and songs. Yet when Autolycus enters, singing songs that catalogue the impressive variety of brightly-colored wares he carries, the peddler himself becomes a theatrical spectacle that delights the eye since peddler's were often peculiar and festive characters (Figure 3.3). Shakespeare recalls Heywood's *paragone* for theater from *Apology for Actors*—the servant's description of the peddler is a mere shadow compared to the dynamic experience of both viewing Autolycus' commodities and hearing his songs first-hand.

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162. William Shakespeare, "The Winter's Tale," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 2892-2961.



Figure 3.3: Autolycus, Costume designs for the Viola Allen production of *Winter's Tale* at the Knickerbocker Theatre, 1904. Folger Shakespeare Library.

In addition to the competition between description and dynamic experience, the *paragone* Shakespeare models through Autolycus' festive appearance illustrates the integration of native and foreign, as well as common and luxury, commodities. Part of what establishes Autolycus as a spectacle is the sheer variety of commodities he carries with him, particularly the immense amount of textiles and sumptuary goods from all over the world. Autolycus sings of foreign textiles, such as white lawn, which was a Dutch



fabric; black cypress, which was a crepe-like material imported from Cyprus; and perfumed gloves, likely the products of Italy. However, the inkles and caddises the servant describes from Autolycus' wares are all fabrics and ribbons manufactured from English wools.<sup>163</sup> In addition, some of the commodities available in Autolycus' pack are those which were previously imported from foreign countries but were beginning to be produced domestically in England. For example, perfumes such as damask rose were "previously associated with foreign places like Damascus" but had begun to be produced domestically in England.<sup>164</sup> The pins used to fasten clothing that had previously been imported to England from Holland were also part of a newly thriving English industry.<sup>165</sup> In this sense, Autolycus' wares highlight marketplace competitions between native and foreign commodities by foregrounding England's ability to assimilate foreign commerce into native industry. By emphasizing the variety of native and foreign, common and luxury goods available in Autolycus' pack, Shakespeare positions the peddler as a site of international integration that connects even rural country shepherds to the global marketplace.

The *paragone* that Shakespeare creates between description and performance in the peddler scene also identifies performance over mere description as an element that enhances the economic value of Autolycus' commodities. Autolycus seduces his consumers-cum-audience members through a song that catalogues his wares and ends with an invitation: "Come buy of me, come. Come buy, come buy. / Buy, lads, or else

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163. For more on the developing native cloth industry, see Anne F. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005) and Hentschell, *Culture of Cloth*.

164. Holly Dugan, "Casting Selves: Rosewater, Casting Bottles, Court," in *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 44.

165. Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, 79-81.

your lasses cry. / Come buy” (4.4.224-225). His song transforms the familiar cry of a London shopkeeper into theatrical entertainment. Importantly, singing ballads is not merely a means of enhancing his wares, as broadside ballads are also one of the commodities Autolycus has available for purchase. Autolycus speaks at length about the variety, popularity, and novelty of the ballads he has available. He inventories his parcels of ballads for the potential customers, describing the qualities of each song. One is “a very doleful tune,” another he calls “very pitiful, and as true,” then, “a merry ballad, but a very pretty one” (4.4.253-275). Finally, he reaches a ballad that he describes as “a passing merry one and goes to the tune of ‘Two Maids Wooing a Man’. There’s scarce a maid westward but she sings it. ‘Tis in request, I can tell you” (4.4.277-279). Autolycus’ uses his salesmanship to increase his customers’ desires for this particular ballad, emphasizing its popularity in other, more fashionable areas of the country.

While Autolycus’ descriptions of the ballads do little to inspire their sale, when he performs one of the ballads with Mopsa and Dorcas the shepherd grows eager to purchase the broadsides, declaring, “We’ll have this song out anon by ourselves. ... Come, bring away thy pack after me. Wenches, I’ll buy for you both. Pedlar, let’s have the first choice” (4.4.297-300). Shakespeare thus models the value of performance, positioning the dynamic experience of the song and its ability to generate desire among consumers as superior to mere descriptions of the songs. Through Autolycus’ marketplace savvy Shakespeare demonstrates the ways in which performance increases the value of commodities in the marketplace. Autolycus’ increases his consumers’ desires for broadside through the dynamic experience available through performance despite the fact that ballads were cheap and common goods. This scene not only generates value for the

ballads themselves but invites playgoers to view performance as a skill that increases the value of cheap and common goods by transforming them into something desirable, illuminating the similarities between the theater and the marketplace.

While Shakespeare increases the value of popular commodities through performance over description in the rural country setting, his interests subsequently turn to a similar *paragone* between description and dynamic experience in a fashionable court setting later in the play. In Act Five Scene Two three anonymous Gentlemen describe the much-anticipated reunion between King Leontes and his long lost daughter, Perdita. As the Gentlemen describe the reunion in detail one of them begins with the caveat that “[he] make[s] a broken delivery of the business,” revealing they did not witness the event themselves (5.2.8). Although the Gentlemen continue to describe the scene for each other, Shakespeare repeatedly punctuates these descriptions with an acknowledgment of the limitations of description. One gentleman remarks, “Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour, that ballad makers cannot be able to express it,” while another begins with the lamentation that by not viewing the reunion, “Then you have lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of” (5.2.21-22, 38-39). Shakespeare thus creates competition between mere description in any form, ballad or poetry, and the dynamic experience of an event, positioning the latter as superior to the former. The Gentlemen’s conversation generates a *paragone* similar to Heywood’s argument for the superiority of theater in the *An Apology for Actors* by calling attention to the inferiority of mere words to accurately represent action. They thereby call attention to the limitations of description even as they employ elaborate descriptions of the reunion.

Following their conversion pertaining to art’s inability to accurately represent

action, the Gentlemen's conversation turns to the latest court news—an incredibly life-like statue of the deceased Queen Hermione. The Gentlemen's conversation functions much like their previous discussion and the servant's introduction of Autolycus in Act Four, further underscoring the limitations of description. The Gentlemen describe the statue as:

A piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape; he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of an answer. (5.2.86-92)

Shakespeare presents the statue to his audience incrementally, first through the art of description. This introduction is ironic given that Shakespeare introduces an uncannily life-like statue through mere description, the medium repeatedly derided for its inability to accurately represent the thing it describes.

Although this description initially appears to be another example of the limitation of description as an art form, in this instance the Gentleman prepares the playhouse audience to experience the statue since, as Christopher J. Cobb points out, "For the first time since Time's speech, the spectators face an unknown future."<sup>166</sup> The playhouse audience relies on the Gentlemen's description to understand the play's culminating scene. The Gentlemen provide three different ways to evaluate the statue without privileging one over the other. First, they value the statue for the time it took to complete, the "many years in doing" which takes on special resonance given the sixteen year gap in the play. This suggests that the statue took sixteen years to complete, marking it as something unique strictly for the time the artist invested in this statue. Second, by naming

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166. Christopher J. Cobb, *The Staging of Romance in Late Shakespeare: Text and Theatrical Technique* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 193.

an artist, and an Italian artist in particular, Shakespeare highlights the statue's foreign status, generating cultural and economic value for the statue. Finally, the Gentlemen value the statue aesthetically for its uncanny resemblance to Hermione, remarking that the statue cheats and deceives Nature. This directs the playhouse audience's attention to the value of the statue for its ability to accurately represent its subject, creating competition between the sculptor and the aforementioned ballad makers who are unable to express wonder through their art. The Gentlemen's description of the statue also emphasizes how the playhouse audience should view the statue when it does finally appear in the following scene.

Shakespeare's interest in the role of his own medium amid the developing global economy culminates in a climactic *paragone* between statue and theater that continues to illustrate the competitions between artistic mediums and the questions they raise about economic and cultural value. This moment, however, is delayed while King Leontes, newly reunited with his daughter, Perdita, tours Paulina's entire art gallery without seeing the statue of their Queen and mother. The dramatic action in a play with a sixteen-year gap in the middle slows, as Shakespeare builds his audience's anticipation of the statue. Since Paulina treasures Hermione's statue above all others in her collection, she displays the statue away from the rest because:

As she lived peerless,  
So her dead likeness, I do well believe,  
Excels whatever yet you looked upon  
Or hand of man hath done. Therefore I keep it  
Lovely, apart. But here it is. Prepare  
To see the life as lively mocked as ever  
Still sleep mocked death. (5.3.14-20)

Paulina reveals that she keeps the statue away from the others in her collection precisely because of its superiority. It surpasses anything the spectators have seen, as well as anything that the artist has previously rendered. However, it is unclear whether it is Hermione's superiority or the statue's for which Paulina keeps the statue separate. When Paulina finally pulls back the curtain to reveal Hermione's statue Shakespeare again reminds his audience of the limitations of words. Leontes and Perdita do not speak, to which Paulina comments, "I like your silence, the more shows off / Your wonder" (5.3.21-22). Their silence echoes the Gentlemen's assessment of the failure of words to capture the experience of wonder, gesturing toward the *paragone* between words and dynamic experience that emerges repeatedly throughout the play.

By drawing attention to the superiority of the statue as an unrivaled example of sculpture as an artistic medium, the scene generates cultural and economic value for the statue as a luxury commodity. While Perdita and Leontes marvel at the sculpture's lifelike qualities Paulina attributes its uncanny characteristics to "our carver's excellence," reinforcing the statue as a luxury art object (5.3.30). Paulina also reminds the spectators of her ownership, referring to the statue as "my poor image" (5.3.57). She also dictates how Perdita and Leontes should interact with the statue by reminding them only to look because "The statue is but newly fixed; the color's / Not dry" (5.3.47-48). As Chloe Porter points out, Paulina establishes herself as a patroness of the arts. Thus, her "role straddles the functions of spectator, consumer of images, and participant in the construction of spectacle."<sup>167</sup> Yet, the frequent reminders of ownership also explicitly

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167. Porter, *Making and Unmaking*, 71.

point to Hermione's statue as a commodity, a foreign luxury object for which Paulina exchanged money.

Mere moments after establishing the queen's sculpture as a superlative example of its form, Shakespeare reveals yet another aesthetic medium at work through the statue. Although Paulina's language previously insisted on the statue as a static art object, notable only for its uncanny resemblance to Hermione, she changes tone and presents her guests an urgent choice:

Either forbear,  
Quit presently the chapel, or resolve you  
For more amazement. If you can behold it,  
I'll make the statue move indeed, descend  
And take you by the hand. (5.3.85-89).

Paulina explains to Leontes and Perdita, as well as Shakespeare's playhouse audience, that to accomplish this "It is required / You do awake your faith" (5.3.94-95). Her remark emphasizes the importance of belief in the process of theatrical value creation, suggesting that the dynamic act of co-creation between spectacle and spectator contributes to theater's superiority over other art forms as Hermione steps down from her pedestal to embrace her daughter. Importantly, as James A. Knapp suggests, "The statue scene emphasizes the overcoming of both language and vision in favor of 'otherwise' something beyond both the stasis of visual image and the self-affirming word."<sup>168</sup> For Leonard Barkan that "something" is the theater: "It is [when the statue moves] that the central dream of all ekphrasis can finally be realized, that is, the work of art is so real it could *almost* come to life. Theatre removes that almost."<sup>169</sup> In this sense, Shakespeare

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168. James A. Knapp, "Visual and Ethical Truth in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 276.

169. Barkan, "Making Pictures Speak," 343.

does not merely depict a *paragone* between theater and other art forms—he performs it. The scene draws attention to theater’s superior ability to generate wonder rather than merely to describe the sensation—wonder, after all, according to the Gentlemen, is the very emotion ballad makers cannot express. Although Paulina asserts that statues can inspire wonder, Shakespeare demonstrates, through the statue’s dynamic animation, that playwrights can potentially generate wonder on cue, elevating theater to the realm of fine art and placing theater in a superior position to poetry, popular ballads, and elite sculptures.

The statue scene brings further cultural nuance to the *paragone* between theater and sculpture by staging Hermione’s statue as a distinctly Italian object. The sculpture is identified as the work of Julio Romano, an Italian sculptor, making the statue native to its Sicilian court setting. Importantly, the historical Julio Romano never worked in Sicily. Shakespeare evokes the famed sculptor’s name for the purpose of increasing the statue’s cultural value and status as fine art and perhaps evokes the extravagant tastes of the Jacobean court for foreign art. By animating the statue, however, Shakespeare merges the competing art forms and transforms the static sculpture into lively theater. In coming to life, Hermione’s statue performs the ways in which theater encompasses native and foreign commodities as well as other artistic mediums, and in doing so elevates popular theater to the level of already privileged elite art forms, particularly Italian sculpture. For Shakespeare’s audience the statue is positioned as a foreign object created by a foreign artist, but it transforms its medium from Italian sculpture to English theater when it moves, uniting native and foreign as well as sculpture and theater. All the while, the statue’s status as commodity remains the same: Paulina bought the statue for her



collection and Shakespeare's audience purchased their admission to the playhouse. In this sense, Shakespeare places his audience alongside Paulina, a patron of the arts who helps to generate the art itself.

Moreover, when the statue moves Shakespeare transforms the cultural and economic value generated for Queen Hermione's statue into cultural and economic value for the theater. This moment offers Shakespeare's audience the dynamic experience of theater's ability to encompass both description and sculpture. However, Shakespeare further imbues his own medium with value by highlighting the limitation of description. While Hermione descends and embraces her family, Paulina comments to Camillo and Polixenes: "That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale, but it appears she lives" (5.3.116-118). Shakespeare again creates a *paragone*, indicating theater's superiority to mere "telling." As Shakespeare underscores the limitations of description, he simultaneously generates value for the theater itself as a commodity by emphasizing the dynamic experience of the playgoers who witness the statue's animation. While a description of the play may sound ridiculous as London playgoers summarized the plot, the experience of the play is far superior. In this sense, the statue scene creates a dynamic experience that increases the value of the theater in ways that are similar to Autolycus' performance of the ballad that generates desire among the shepherds for the broadsides in his pack. The play, like the statue itself, must be witnessed.

This play demonstrates hybridity between native and foreign, as well as common and elite commodities in ways that accentuate the qualities unique to theater in order to elevate it to the level of other more privileged art forms. While sculpture can only be

viewed (as Paulina's frequent reminders not to touch the statue point out) and description merely heard (as the Gentlemen's preamble and Autolycus' ballads demonstrate), play-going is a dynamic experience that requires an interactive relationship between actors and audience. In *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare intermingles the classical *paragone* of competition between different art forms with the marketplace competition between native and foreign goods in both popular and elite settings, inviting his audience to negotiate and renegotiate the values of description, sculpture, and theater. Shakespeare explicitly plays out the tensions that develop between aesthetic forms, while at the same time he insists on the superiority of the English theater precisely because of its hybridity. The English theater was superior because it could combine and integrate other art forms, offering a timely model of the economy to London consumers as the city began to understand how the integration of foreign commodities through domestic production generated profit for the country.

#### Artificial Figures and Theatrical Competitions in *The Duchess of Malfi*

Like Hermione's statue and Gresham's pearl, the art objects in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* are framed by the cultural and economic concerns of the early modern market. Similar to the other plays I examine in this chapter, Webster invites his audiences to view different art forms throughout the play that vary in their degree of animation. Scholarship surrounding *The Duchess of Malfi*, broadly speaking, falls into two categories: scholars interested in the power dynamics of the Duchess' widowhood and scholars invested in the play's religious themes and Catholic iconography.<sup>170</sup> My interest

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170. For scholarship around widowhood, see Dymna Callaghan, "The Duchess of Malfi and Early Modern Widows," in *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*, eds. Patrick Cheney et al. (Oxford:

in the play, however, is in its art objects as examples of elite art forms. The wax figures of Antonio and his children, followed by the Duchess' funeral monument, I argue, encourage the playhouse audience to renegotiate theatrical spectacle in ways that call attention to the *paragone* that arises on stage when static art forms get presented with live actors. Webster pointedly draws attention to the actors' bodies playing commodities of wax figures and funeral monuments, likening the actor's bodies themselves to commodities. In this sense, Webster invited his audience to perceive not only the similarities between theatrical processes and other more elite art forms, but also to view the superiority of the theater for the technological innovations available there.

Webster first illustrates the tension between art forms in Act Four Scene One, which begins with the Duchess imprisoned by her twin brother, Ferdinand, who is furious because his widowed sister secretly remarried. Ferdinand vowed never to look on his sister again, so he comes to the Duchess' prison cell under cover of darkness. He presents her with a hand, claiming it belongs to someone "to which you have vow'd much love; the ring upon't / You gave" (4.1.44-45).<sup>171</sup> In the dark, relying exclusively on her brother's description to interpret the situation, the Duchess believes the hand belongs to

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Oxford University Press, 2006), 272-286; Linda Woodbridge, "Queen of Apricots: *The Duchess of Malfi*, Hero of Desire," in *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Naomi Conn Liebler (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 163-184; Jennifer Panek, "'My Naked Weapon': Male Anxiety and the Violent Courtship of the Stage Widow," *Comparative Drama* 34, no. 4 (2000): 321-344; Kimberly A. Turner, "The Complexity of Webster's Duchess," *Ben Jonson Journal* 7 (2000): 379-402; and Marliiss C. Desens, "Marrying Down: Negotiating a More Equal Marriage on the English Renaissance Stage," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 14 (2001): 227-255. For scholarship on religious themes, see Albert H. Tricomi, "Historicizing the Imagery of the Demonic in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no.2 (Spring 2004): 345-372; Lisa Hopkins, "Women's Souls: *The Duchess of Malfi* and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore,'" in *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 118-147; Thomas Rist, "Melodrama and Parody: Remembering the Dead in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Atheist's Tragedy*, *The White Devil*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*," in *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England* (London: Routledge, 2008), 97-144. 171. John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. John Russell Brown, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

her husband Antonio. She kisses it, observing, “You are very cold. / I fear you are not well after your travel” (4.1.51-52). Ferdinand exits the cell with a flourish and orders, “Let her have lights enough” (4.1.53). As the light returns, the Duchess realizes she holds a severed hand. The Duchess barely has a moment to react to this revelation when a new spectacle increases her horror. The dead bodies of her husband, Antonio, and his children appear from behind a traverse. Bosola, Ferdinand’s servant, informs the Duchess and the playhouse audience, “[Ferdinand] doth present you this sad spectacle / That now you know directly they are dead” (4.1.57-58). The scene creates immediacy and horror for the Duchess and the playhouse audience alike through this tableau of dead bodies on stage. However, mere moments later Ferdinand divulges that the bodies are not real corpses:

She’s plagu’d in art.  
 These presentations are but fram’d in wax,  
 By the curious master in that quality,  
 Vincentio Lauriola, and she takes them  
 For true substantial bodies. (4.1.111-115)

The bodies that the Duchess believes are her husband and their children, Ferdinand reveals, are works of art.

As the Duchess and Webster’s audience rapidly process the unfolding information about the hand and the figures, the scene also creates a *paragone* between the tableau of the wax figures and the dynamic theater. In an early twentieth-century review William Archer pointed out about these scene, “It would have been infinitely easier, safer and more dramatic to have lied to her in words,” but the presence of the wax figures, I argue, underscores the competition between the two artistic mediums at work in this scene.<sup>172</sup>

Though Archer’s comment points to theater’s limitations, the wax figures promote theater

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172. William Archer, “Review of *The Duchess of Malfi*,” in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Norman Rabkin (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 128.

as a medium unrestricted by mere words, open to the possibilities of spectacle, presenting the theater as a complex hybrid art form. Webster creates a *paragone* between artificial figures and theater as he emphasizes the advantages of the spectacle over mere description. While in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare created *paragone* between sculpture and theater to showcase theater's ability to create wonder, in this play we see Webster employ similar tactics to generate horror among his audiences.

One of the primary tools Webster uses to generate horror in this scene also positions theater as a superior art form through its innovative technology unavailable to other mediums. Since *The Duchess of Malfi* was originally staged at the indoor Blackfriars playhouse, the wax figure scene likely took advantage of the innovations in stage lighting available there. Webster's lighting innovations at Blackfriars draw special attention to the ways in which theater encompasses other artistic media. The stark differences of brightness and shadow that Webster constructs throughout the play create a theatrical chiaroscuro, a popular painting technique that emphasized the contrast between light and dark areas to illuminate and conceal its subject.<sup>173</sup> Webster extends this technique, coupling it with the dynamic experience of the theater to generate horror among his playgoers.

Additionally, when Ferdinand reveals that the bodies of Antonio and the children are wax figures, Webster calls attention to the familiar theatrical convention of live actors playing dead bodies and, ultimately, a less familiar convention of live actors playing art objects. Numerous critics have discussed that it was unlikely the theater company purchased actual wax figures modeled after the actors; the actors probably played the

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173. I am indebted to Anna-Claire Simpson for this insight.

wax figures.<sup>174</sup> The scene invites the audience to view the spectacle as spectacle. As Lynn Maxwell points out, “moments when playwrights draw attention to the artificiality of their spectacle are noteworthy precisely because they rupture the illusion created on stage.”<sup>175</sup> Webster ultimately exposes the dynamic processes through which theater is made and understood, by inviting the playhouse audience to view actor’s bodies themselves as a kind of art object. Webster encourages his playhouse audience to appreciate the wonder and horror available in the theater. By foregrounding the theatrical processes at work in the wax figures, Webster creates a *paragone* between sculpture and theater that, like Hermione’s statue in *The Winter’s Tale*, elevates theater to the realm of elite fine art by directing attention not only to theater’s ability to incorporate elite art forms into its own medium, but also theater’s ability to elevate the form itself through the dynamic possibilities of the theater.

In addition to the competition between wax figures and theater that arises in this scene, Webster highlights the cultural nuance of the aesthetic competition. As Webster calls attention to the theater through the figures themselves he credits a foreign artist, “the curious master in that quality / Vincentio Lauriola,” for their creation (4.1.112-113). By underscoring the figures’ foreign origins Webster creates a *paragone* between native and foreign art forms, similar to the one Shakespeare crafted in *The Winter’s Tale* by

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174. Keith Sturgess, “‘A Perspective that Shows Us Hell’: *The Duchess of Malfi* at the Blackfriars,” in *Jacobean Private Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1987), 97-122; Brian Chalk, “Webster’s ‘Worthyest Monument’: The Problem of Posterity in *The Duchess of Malfi*,” *Studies in Philology* 108, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 394; Rory Loughnane, “The Artificial Figures and Staging Remembrance in *The Duchess of Malfi*,” in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Culture of the Post-Reformation*, eds. Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (Surry: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 213; and Margaret E. Owens, “John Webster, Tussaud Laureate: The Waxworks in *The Duchess of Malfi*,” *English Literary History* 79, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 861.

175. Lynn Maxwell, “Wax Magic and The Duchess of Malfi,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 50.

attributing Hermione's statue to Julio Romano. Since scholars are unable to identify a historical Vincentio Lauriola, consensus is that the name is Webster's invention. The significance of the attribution lay in the Italian name, indicative of the fashion for Italian art among English elites.<sup>176</sup> Webster's attribution of the figures to an Italian artist complicates the relationship between local and foreign commodities for the audience. The figures are Italian wax sculpted in Italy, making the figures local to the play's Italian setting. But for Webster's London audiences the figures are foreign art. When Webster reveals the dead bodies to be wax figures, he further tempts his audience to recognize the processes of the theater at work in the scene. Webster invites his audience to critically view the elite foreign art form of the wax figures by revealing that the bodies are not wax figures either, but actors performing on a London stage.<sup>177</sup> Thus, as Webster directs attention to the self-reflexivity of the scene and of the processes of the theater, he also underscores the Englishness of the performance. Webster creates a dynamic relationship in which the audience views the wax figures simultaneously as English and Italian commodities, elevating theater to the level of fine art and transforming Italian sculpture into English theater in a way that emphasizes the theater itself as a superior art form precisely because of its aesthetic hybridity across various art forms as well as its integration of native and foreign arts.

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176. Owens, "Tussaud Laureate," 862 and R. G. Howarth, "Webster's Vincentio Lauriola," *Notes and Queries* 2 (1955): 99-100.

177. Although wax figures were often used in Catholic devotional settings, these practices ended in England with the reformation. Critics are quick to point out, however, that the wax figures held significant cultural value for the playhouse audience since a wax effigy appeared in Prince Henry's funeral procession in 1612 and wax effigies were increasing popularity in funeral ceremonies of the English elite. For more on secular use of wax effigies in England, see Loughnane, "Artificial Figures," 211; David Bergeron, "The Wax Figures in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 331-339; Owens, "Tussaud Laureate" 851-877; and Brian Chalk, "Webster's 'Worthiest Monument,'" Lynn Maxwell deviates from this religious context, arguing for the figures' association with a wax magic attack on Queen Elizabeth and her councilors in 1578 in "Wax Magic," 39.

Webster also positions the *paragone* constructed by the figures within an economic context. According to Lynn Maxwell, “By mentioning the artist’s name, [Ferdinand] elevates the wax figures from mere curiosities to art object and underscores the extravagance of his ruse.”<sup>178</sup> Emphasizing the artist’s name indicates that Ferdinand spares no expense “to bring [the Duchess] to despair” (4.1.116), positioning the wax figures in economic terms. By obliquely referencing the economic value of the wax figures, Webster frames them as a financial investment. Ferdinand reveals his motivation in tormenting his sister in the following scene, that he “had a hope / Had she continu’d widow, to have gain’d / An infinite mass of treasure by her death” (4.2.283-285). Ferdinand hopes to gain her inheritance, positioning the expensive wax figures as an economic investment in the hope of future profit. Importantly, and as Rory Loughnane points out, Webster’s tableau “sequentially prompts its audience to misrecognize and then retrospectively re-interpret what they have seen.”<sup>179</sup> Furthering this argument, the audience is not only prompted to re-interpret what they see, but also to re-evaluate. As the figures get positioned economically as expensive luxury art objects, Webster further highlights the *paragone* and market interests through his attention to darkness and light. Ferdinand uses poor lighting to make wax figures appear as dead bodies, while in the playhouse Webster uses poor lighting to make actors’ bodies appear as Italian wax figures. Webster also discusses dim lighting early in the play within a market context. When Antonio initially declares himself unworthy of the Duchess’ love, she rebukes him, comparing his social transformation to such a trick:

You were ill to sell yourself—  
This dark’ning of your worth is not like that

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178. Maxwell, “Wax Magic,” 39.

179. Loughnane, “Artificial Figures,” 213.



Which tradesmen use i'th' city; their false lights  
Are to rid bad wares off. (1.1.431-434)

This metaphor integrates the theater and the market through the lighting techniques that each employs to deceive the viewer. Lighting, for both theater and the market, is an important sales tactic that generates desire among consumers and obscures the value of commodities in both settings. In this sense, Webster calls attention to the innovative technology of lighting that was available at indoor theaters and the more advanced spectacle that resulted, perhaps justifying the increased cost of admission to indoor theaters for a play like *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Although Ferdinand continues psychologically to torture his sister with various kinds of art, he ultimately murders her, leading to a scene in the graveyard where she is buried with an ornate funeral monument marking her tomb. Antonio and his friend, Delio, enter a graveyard on their way to confront the Duchess' brothers, unaware of the Duchess' death. As the two men speak to each other "an echo from the Duchess' grave" rebounds fragments of their dialogue (5.3.s.d.) Antonio recognizes the voice and remarks to his companion, "'Tis very like my wife's voice" (5.3.26). Stopping to examine the Duchess' funeral monument more closely, Antonio reports a curious phenomena—the statue seems to move:

Antonio:        I mark'd not one repetition of the echo.  
                     But that: and on the sudden, a clear light  
                     Presented me a face folded in sorrow.  
Delio:            Your fancy, merely. (5.3.43-46)

Antonio's description of the statue allows for its movement since "a face folded in sorrow" creates two possibilities for the scene. Either the tomb maker has carved creases in her face to indicate her grief, allowing for a static object, or the face shifts and it is the

face that suddenly changes and not the light, creating dynamic action in the statue. The men disagree on which is accurate: while Antonio believes the statue moved, Delio insists on its stasis.

Similar to his staging of the wax figures, Webster disrupts the theatrical illusion for his audience and draws their attention to the processes through which the monument is staged by creating the possibility for both movement and stasis. As with the wax figures of Antonio and his children, commissioning an artist to carve a funeral monument in the likeness of the actor playing the Duchess would have been prohibitively expensive for the theater company. The practical staging of this scene sometimes presents confusion to scholars. For example, in this introduction to the play, John Russell Brown comments, “The odd thing about Webster’s echo is that Antonio thinks she is also visible” suggesting that a lighting effect may have revealed the Duchess’ body in the grave.<sup>180</sup> Brown also noticed that the stage directions specify the echo comes from the Duchess’ grave directly, which “would have been a strange and unnecessary way of indicating that the voice came, simply, from anywhere off stage”<sup>181</sup> My understanding of this scene, which presents a fashionable and ornate funeral monument of the Duchess, with the actor playing the Duchess most likely playing the statue, eliminates this confusion. For Antonio and Delio the monument only seems to animate, but for the playhouse audience, the actor’s body does move—the shape of his lips and face vary as he speaks the echoed lines. By drawing attention to both the actor’s body as performer and the actor’s body as monument, Webster generates a *paragone* that again creates tension between dynamic

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180. John Russell Brown, “Introduction,” in *The Duchess of Malfi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), xxxv.

181. Brown, “Introduction,” (xxxv).

theater and static sculpture. The monument's speech and movement elicits the audience's awareness of the performance, inviting the audience to witness both the superiority of theater as an art form and the superiority of English theater in particular. Webster tempts his audience to resist fully viewing the statue as stone. Webster's attention to the statue's movement thereby obliquely references the living body of the actor and gestures toward the theater itself.

By repeatedly reminding his audience of the processes of the theater Webster creates a *paragone* between theater and sculpture that elevates English theater to the level of elite art forms such as the fashionable funeral monument. According to Bruce R. Smith, "sculpture in England was primarily associated with tomb makers and funerary monuments."<sup>182</sup> Funeral monuments were hugely expensive, some costing more than one thousand pounds and as Lawrence Stone summarizes, "These high prices persisted as long as the fashion lasted for large monuments with towering superstructure above full length effigies recumbent or reclining."<sup>183</sup> Earlier in the play *Bosola*, disguised as a tomb maker, remarks on the foolishness of conspicuous consumption among the fashionable elite on ornate funeral monuments:

Most ambitiously: princes' images on their tombs do not lie, as they were wont, seeming to pray up to heaven, but with their hands under their cheeks as if they died of the tooth-ache; they are not carved with their eyes fixed upon the stars, but as their minds were wholly bent upon the world, the selfsame way they seem to turn their faces. (4.2.155-162)

This discription pointedly ridicules the postures that English elites chose for their own funeral monuments. Moreover, the scene positions the Duchess' monument within a

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182. Bruce R. Smith, "Sermons in Stones: Shakespeare and Renaissance Sculpture," *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1985): 1.

183. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 580.

distinctly economic and cultural context that satirizes luxury consumption and conspicuous expenditure.<sup>184</sup>

In *The Duchess of Malfi* Webster does not merely integrate other art forms into his plays, he pointedly calls attention to the theatrical processes that make such aesthetic hybridity possible. He invites his audience to reevaluate fashionable art forms as theatrical in ways that call attention to the cultural and economic processes that influence the value of art objects in the first place. Ferdinand pays money for the fashionable funeral monument of the Duchess and the foreign wax figures that initially drive the Duchess to despair. Similarly, Webster's audience pays admission to see actors portray these elite art forms. By inviting his audience to constantly renegotiate their understanding of artistic figures identified as native theater and foreign art objects that become integrated in the playhouse, Webster calls attention to the superiority and innovation of his own medium. In this way, Webster highlights the ability of theater to integrate fashionable foreign commodities, thereby positioning the indoor theater itself as an elite art form.

### Conclusion

The plays I examine in this chapter foreground the processes of value creation for art as a commodity in both local and global markets. Whether pictures inspire London citizens to civic action or drive Italian Duchesses to despair, they reflect playwrights' interest in systems of economic and cultural value that ultimately generate value for the theater itself. By staging the ways in which pictures get caught up in the formation of the

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184. For further discussion of the social display and cost associated with funeral monuments during the period see Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 572-581 and Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 277-310.

early modern economy, we can begin to see how playwrights understood theater's place both economically and culturally. Thomas Heywood, William Shakespeare, and John Webster manipulate the classical *paragone* device in order to elevate theater to the level of other, privileged, forms of fine art by demonstrating the ways in which theater is a hybrid art that integrates poetry, painting, and sculpture in an approach that also balances the competition between native and foreign commodities. By using theater to show similarities between the broader processes of economic value and theatrical value, these plays ultimately emphasize that people create value within both the playhouse and the market.

In discussing how theater encompasses and incorporates other art forms in this chapter, I also gestured at the processes through which theater generates its own commercial value. Throughout the early seventeenth century, as the popularity of pictures increased among elite and middle classes, playwrights increasingly used pictures to elevate theater to the status of other fine arts. They also used pictures as a means to talk about and understand their own art form. One final example of this is the Epilogue to *The Roaring Girl* (1611), in which Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker compare their play to a painting hung out for sale in the market that is ultimately destroyed through the artist's attempt to incorporate all the interests and desires of potential consumers:

People who passed along, viewing it well,  
Gave several verdicts on it: some dispraised  
The hair, some said the brows too high were raised,  
Some hit her o'er the lips, misliked their colour,  
Some wished her nose were shorter, some the eyes fuller;  
Other said roses on her cheeks should grow,  
Swearing they looked too pale, others cried no.  
The workman, still as fault was found, did mend it,  
In hope to please all; but, this work being ended,  
And hung open at stall, it was so vile,

So monstrous and so ugly, all men did smile  
At the poor painter's folly. (Epilogue 4-15)<sup>185</sup>

This epilogue illustrates the ways in which early modern playwrights thought of their art as a commodity not unlike the painting and sculpture discussed in this chapter. Like any commodity, theater was subject to consumers' desires and theater catered to its audiences' shifting tastes and requests. The following chapter further examines questions about desire and the market by analyzing representations of whores. The foreign prostitutes that frequent the early modern stage model complex hybridity in a variety of ways while at the same time they encourage and capitalize on the cosmopolitan interests and desires of theater audiences. On a broader level, the following chapter considers more carefully the secondary ideas of these first two chapters—the ways in which salesmanship, in the form of seduction and trickery, preys on consumer interests to fuel the theater industry in a global market.

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185. Dekker, Thomas and Thomas Middleton. "The Roaring Girl," in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 1449.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SEX AND THE CITY STAGE: WHORE PLAYS AND COSMOPOLITAN DESIRES

Duchess:       Diamonds are of the most value,  
                    They say, that have passed through most jeweler's hands.  
Ferdinand:     Whores by that rule, are precious.  
                    -John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1.1.301-303<sup>186</sup>

This exchange between brother and sister in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614) pertaining to the Duchess's right to remarry evokes conflicting models of value creation. The Duchess compares herself to a diamond, which accumulates value through provenance and circulation. At the same time, her brother compares her to a whore, which reduces value through over-circulation, transforming something rare into something common. These models of value creation resemble those formed by early modern economists who attempted to understand the global economy in order to garner profit for England. Economists debated whether it was in the country's best interest to allow its currency and commodities to circulate or whether it was better for the country to hoard its wealth instead. Yet, what economists came to discover was that these systems were not mutually exclusive and that integrating circulation and accumulation led to wealth. As with this example from *The Duchess of Malfi*, women, particularly whores, got caught up in questions about economic and cultural integration. Playwrights simultaneously grappled with questions about international networks and fashionable consumption in an attempt to understand the place of their own medium within the global economy. Whores, prostitutes, and courtesans subsequently became popular figures

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186. John Webster, "The Dutchess of Malfi," in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002), 1755-1832.

through which playwrights talked about the economic and cultural systems that influenced the theater industry.<sup>187</sup>

Prostitution was a thriving trade in London during the early seventeenth century and, although many entered the business out of economic necessity, “other young women entered prostitution as a variety of service rather than an alternative to it.”<sup>188</sup> Like other commodities on the London market, some whores were common, meaning they were available to all kinds of Londoners, while others were more exclusive figures indicative of the emerging fashion for luxury.<sup>189</sup> Elite whores were paid with currency, along with gifts such as the fine clothing and jewels that allowed them to lead fashionable lifestyles, thus continually attracting more discerning clientele.<sup>190</sup> In fact, the fashion for luxury consumption transformed a sector of the sex industry altogether in the early seventeenth century:

Rooms became better furnished, and we can tell from early engravings that in high-class brothels music became more important. The girls were expected to be able to sing and play, and perhaps hold their own in conversation on the topics of the day. Some were prized for their mastery of foreign languages as there were foreign clients among the merchants and embassies.<sup>191</sup>

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187. I use the term whore, prostitute, and courtesan interchangeably in this chapter. In the period these terms were as indistinct. As Duncan Salkeld puts it in his discussion of prostitutes and courtesans, “the distinction should no longer distract us.” See Duncan Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans: Prostitution, Literature, and Drama, 1500-1650* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 23. Anne Haselkorn identifies the difference between whore and courtesan as one of degree, that courtesans were “the more ambitious prostitutes who had loftier ideas of becoming mistresses or wives”. Anne Haskellhorn, *Prostitution in Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedy* (Albany: Whitson Publishing Company, 1983), 2. For more on the ways in which these terms, along with the relationship between sex, language, and meaning evolved during the period, see Stephen Spiess, “Terms of Whoredom in Early Modern England.” I would like to thank Professor Spiess for allowing me to view this manuscript in advance of publication.

188. Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 107.

189. Mara I. Amster, “Introductory Note,” *Texts on Prostitution, 1592-1633* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), ix.

190. Hubbard, *City Women*, 225.

191. Fergus Linnane, *Madams: Bawds & Brothel-Keepers of London* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2005), 6.



While foreign language skills appealed to foreign clientele, they also enticed London's elite, reflecting the broader interest in elite tastes for foreign luxury in the period.<sup>192</sup> In fact, one of the most successful brothels in London, Holland's Leaguer, was reputed for its whores' accomplishments in the genteel arts, including their ability to speak both French and Latin, capitalizing on its client's desire for the cosmopolitan.<sup>193</sup>

The ways in which whores reflected the taste for foreign luxury among English elite are comparable to other industries in the period. As Duncan Salkeld puts it, "The myth of the courtesan is that she transforms sex into art. Cultured, articulate and educated, she is herself an art-object, an icon, and expensive."<sup>194</sup> Understanding the courtesan as an art object positions her as a commodity, especially given the growing fashion for collecting *objets d'art* among London's fashionable elite, particularly foreign art as I discussed in my previous chapter. The sex industry's embrace of cosmopolitanism exemplifies one of the ways London's consumer culture transformed in the period as a result of the global economy and the ways that many industries adjusted to suit the tastes of their consumers. The sex industry's ability to capitalize on Londoner's cosmopolitan tastes attracted early modern playwrights, since the theater struggled to appeal to the evolving and varied tastes of its audiences. The plays I turn to in this chapter feature whores who are luxury figures, distinct from the common prostitute because of their fashionable attributes and cosmopolitan identities.<sup>195</sup> Each play underscores the ways in

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192. For discussion of the fashion of traveling abroad for education among the aristocracy, see Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 692-702.

193. Linnane, *Madams*, 14.

194. Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans*, 6. For a definition of courtesan that addresses pleasure and leisure, see Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon eds., *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6-7.

195. I borrow this distinction between types of whores from Haselkorn, *Prostitution in Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedy*, 2.

which whores and the theater each rely seduction and the desire of their consumers, revealing how the global economy depends on similar processes.

The prevalence of whores on the early modern stage has garnered much attention from scholars of dramatic literature. For theater historians, the geographical proximity of playhouses and whorehouses offers insights into attitudes surrounding both industries that were relegated to London's periphery.<sup>196</sup> Feminist critics address theatrical representations of whores as part of larger narratives about female identity and sexualized female labor in the early modern period.<sup>197</sup> Feminist critics have recently argued that whore characters are models of female resistance that reveal a playwright's own feminist tendencies.<sup>198</sup> Alternatively, critics such as Duncan Salkeld resist the temptation to "lionize [prostitutes] as figureheads of social freedom or female agency" and instead compare dramatic texts and historical records in ways that "identify shifting, often very ambivalent literary and social attitudes toward such women" that inform their reading of dramatic texts.<sup>199</sup> Scholars also include prostitutes in discussions of transgressive figures such as transvestites and rogues that help to recover subversive histories of early modern

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196. See, for example, Joseph Lenz "Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution," *English Literary History* 60, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 833-852 and Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

197. See Natasha Korda, "Sex, Starch-Houses, and Poking Sticks: Alien Women's Work and the Technologies of Material Culture," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5 (Fall 2010): 201-208 and Jyotsna Singh "The Interventions of History: Narratives of Sexuality," in *The Weyward Sisters: Shakespeare and Feminist Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 7-58.

198. Kay Stanton, *Shakespeare's 'Whores': Erotics, Politics, and Poetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Celia R. Daileader makes a similar argument about Middleton's unchaste female characters, see Celia R. Daileader, "The Courtesan Revisited: Thomas Middleton, Pietro Aretino, and Sex-phobic Criticism," in *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: Rewriting, Remaking, Refashioning* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 223-238.

199. Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans*, 24, 20. See also Haselkorn, *Prostitution in Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedy*.

London.<sup>200</sup> Additionally, whores appear as a character type in discussions about the city comedy genre.<sup>201</sup> Jean E. Howard argues that city comedies used the prostitute “to figure the place of women in the changing landscape of expanding, commercializing, and multinational city London was becoming.”<sup>202</sup> For Howard, the prostitute was indicative of “perverse cosmopolitanism,” that distorted the global economy and carried negative implications.<sup>203</sup> In this chapter, however, I consider “perverse cosmopolitanism” further, viewing the hybridity that results from what Howard deems “perverse” as necessary to commercial success. Whore plays do not pervert cosmopolitanism per se. Rather, they foreground the ways in which hybridity is essential to cosmopolitanism—a key concern amid the cultural and economic pressures facing London in a rapidly expanding market.

At the same time that the city cemented its reputation as a cosmopolitan center, Jacobean playwrights invited their audiences to think about the popular desire for international commodities and elite tastes through representations of foreign prostitutes. As these plays foreground foreign commodities through the seduction of the foreign whore, they also illuminate the seductive powers of the theater. This chapter begins by looking at Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton’s *The Honest Whore* (1604). In this play, through the figure of Bellafront, Dekker and Middleton model the ways in which processes of integration and reevaluation, made possible by theatrical devices, are essential to value creation and commercial success. I then turn to John Marston’s *The*

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200. For example see Jonathan Dollimore, “Shakespeare Understudies,” in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 129-152 and Normand Berlin, *The Base String: The Underworld in Elizabethan Drama* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1968).

201. Alexander Leggatt characterizes whores as the personification of evil in *Citizen*, 99-100. See also Leinwand, *The City Staged*; Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*; and Richard Horwich, “Wives, Courtesans, and the Economics of Love in Jacobean City Comedy,” *Comparative Drama* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1973-74): 291-309.

202. Howard, *Theater of a City*, 121.

203. Howard, *Theater of a City*, 121.

*Dutch Courtesan* (1605), a play that demonstrates the potential threat of cosmopolitan desires while capitalizing on those same desires among its audience members. Finally, I analyze an anonymously written play, *The Costly Whore* (1620), which illustrates the prospective dangers for a nation distracted by a lust for foreign luxury that ultimately reveals that the threat is not commodities themselves but the desire for them. My interest in this chapter is not historical London prostitutes, but representations of prostitutes that comment on contemporary economic and cultural concerns in ways that engage with the theater's concerns about its own commercial value. The whore plays I examine in this chapter offer their audiences a nuanced encounter with the web of desire, language, performance, objects, and values that composed the early modern world.

#### Seductive Economies: Dangerous Desire in the Global Market

The fashion for foreign commodities among English consumers in the early seventeenth century resulted in the increased presence of foreign goods in London's marketplace. As the global economy and the traveling English merchant created greater access to such goods, the English economy began to suffer, seemingly as a direct result of the loss of English currency in pursuit of foreign goods. Early modern economists attempted to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the emerging global economy and the national repercussions of native preferences for foreign goods. Economists varied in their understanding of the relationship between currency and commodity. For Gerald de Malynes, England's trouble stemmed from currency. He argued that the coin shortage in England resulted from English merchants' overvaluation of foreign coin in their

procurement of foreign luxury goods.<sup>204</sup> Other theorists, such as Edward Misselden, pointed out that currency was superfluous to trade, that in fact “trade had and still did flourish without any money exchange at all.”<sup>205</sup> Additionally, Misselden emphasized that popular demand influences the kind of goods imported into the country.<sup>206</sup> According to Thomas Mun, commodities could supplement money as a source of wealth. As Joyce Oldham Appleby summarizes, for Mun, “the goods of a country were its natural wealth yet they could only create money when sold abroad.”<sup>207</sup> Similarly, Thomas Milles, who attempted to establish a sense of order for global trade, emphasized that traffic, the “mutuall bartering, or buying & selling circulation of Vendible wares by Merchants, Subjects or Strangers,” was essential to healthy trade and “the prosperitie of the Common-weale.”<sup>208</sup> In an attempt to compete with foreign industry, King James invited projects to promote native manufacture of foreign goods.<sup>209</sup> Despite these efforts, English elite consumers’ preference for foreign luxury goods persisted. As English merchants attempted to better understand England’s position in the global economy the balance of trade theory emerged, which recognized the need for steady circulation between native and foreign coins and commodities to generate wealth for the nation.

Although initially blamed for England’s economic downturn, integration between native and foreign coin and commodities became critical to England’s success on the global market, integration between native and foreign culture became crucial to the city of London as well. Cosmopolitanism, a willingness to engage with foreigners and their

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204. Malynes, *Center of the Circle*.

205. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 45

206. Misselden, *Circle of Commerce*, C4v-D3r.

207. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 40. See also, Mun, *English Treasure*.

208. Milles, *Customer’s Apology*, B2r.

209. Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, v.

customs, became essential to the country's economic success. Travel was an essential element of education for English elites, allowing them to gain an appreciation for contemporary art and architecture. During the seventeenth century the geographical range of these travels extended outward.<sup>210</sup> Travelers often returned to London with an increased skill for navigating foreign relationships and they brought back foreign fashions, languages, and literatures to London.<sup>211</sup> Interest in travel narratives—stories of others' journeys abroad—became a popular genre of literature. One popular example, *Coryat's Crudities* (1611), is an English traveler's account of his journey through European countries, which features a detailed description of Venetian courtesans.<sup>212</sup> Yet, as Linda Levy Peck explains, "Even as [travel narratives] embraced travel and the revelation of the new, they often reflect the seduction of the foreign and the fear of succumbing to the luxurious desires they created."<sup>213</sup> Foreign cultures and commodities both seduced and threatened English consumers, as curiosity about foreign lands prompted greater spending.

The threat of seduction by foreign luxury was directly connected to England's economic concerns. According to Allison Scott, immoderate consumption "involved not merely falling into worldly concupiscence and excess, but also enriching the foreign merchants of these ambitious goods at England's expense."<sup>214</sup> Economists framed the relationship between London merchants, English consumers, and foreign markets as one dependent on seduction, often attaching a tone of danger to the transaction. For example,

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210. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 692-696.

211. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 125-128.

212. Thomas Coryate, *Coryats Crudities* (London: W. S., 1611), V3v-X1r.

213. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 125.

214. Scott, *Literature and the Idea of Luxury*, 144.

in *The Customer's Replie* (1604), Thomas Milles personifies foreign markets as a dangerous woman:

And thus the faire Lady Merchandising Exchange enticed and allured the Merchant Adventurers of England, to procure themselves in fraternitie, and to seek meanes to plant their Marting Townes in a forraine Realme and Country, for the utterance of the commodities of the Realme, because they might make their returne and imployments, from thence into Englan[d], by the reckoning of Money currant in the said Merchandising Exchange.<sup>215</sup>

Lady Merchandising Exchange is whore-like in her seduction of English merchants, luring both merchants and their money to foreign lands. Her seductiveness coerces English merchants to pay too much native coin for foreign commodities, thus harming the nation's economy through foreign trade. The language of seduction, commerce, and culture intersect through the figure of the prostitute, warning of the dangers of the global market through prostitutes and siren-like figures like Lady Merchandising Exchange.<sup>216</sup> While associated with risk and loss, Lady Merchandising Exchange is also an essential source of cosmopolitanism, allowing commerce and culture to come together.

As economists attempted to understand the repercussions of England's foreign spending on its native wealth, playwrights employed foreign whores in their plays to invite their audiences to consider their own role as consumers in London's emergence as a world city. By staging consumers' cosmopolitan desires for foreign luxury commodities as the taste for foreign prostitutes, playwrights called attention to the intersection of theatrical processes and contemporary economic concerns by combining the seductive force of foreign luxury and the seductive spectacle of the theater. Because of these shared

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215. Milles, *Customer's Replie*, D3r.

216. Jonathan Gil Harris discusses the metaphors of syphilis in mercantilist writing to thinking about the damaging impact of global exchange. Although he does not address whores, their kind of marketplace seduction is the source of the disease that Harris discusses. See Harris, *Sick Economies*, 29-51.

qualities, prostitution was a particularly potent subject for playwrights to offer a timely reflection on its own participation in the developing cosmopolitan attitudes that shaped seventeenth-century London.

How to Do Things With Whores: Performance, Hybridity, and Reevaluation in *The Honest Whore*

Early in Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore* (1604), the play offers an important distinction between kinds of women. George, a shopkeeper's apprentice, urges a group of gallants to compare the smoothness of a bolt of fine cloth to another, rougher, fabric sample: "Looke you Gentlleman, heers an other, compare them I pray, *compara Virgilim cum Homero*, compare virgins and harlots" (1.5.32-33).<sup>217</sup> While this metaphor foregrounds the play's interest in commercial endeavors, it takes on further sexual innuendo as George employs the female pronoun to refer to the fine cloth, calling it "the purest shee that ever you fingered since you were a gentleman: looke how even she is, looke how cleane she is" (1.5.24-25). The conflation of women with textiles in this scene presents women as commodities, which, as Ronald J. Pulumbo points out, equates "selling cloth with selling flesh."<sup>218</sup> At the same time, this metaphor presents a system of

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217. Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, "The Honest Whore" in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 1-132.

218. Ronald J. Pulumbo, "Trade and Custom in *The Honest Whore*," *American Notes and Queries* 15 (1976): 34. The textile trade in particular was ripe for comparisons sexual innuendo and jokes about prostitution. For further discussion of this, see Korda, "Sex, Starch-Houses, and Poking Sticks," 203. Equating women with cloth is particularly striking for the period, since luxury textiles such as silks and velvets were the most prominent class of commodities imported to England and the popularity of foreign textiles reduced the value of English wool on the global market. For discussion of elite preference for foreign textiles, see Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 49; and Hentschell, *Culture of Cloth*, 105. For discussion of the downturn in English wool industry, see Peter J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 186.



value creation that hinges on distinct categories that value purity, whether in the form of chastity or fiber content.

While the play begins with strict categories of smooth and rough to classify kinds of textiles and kinds of women, Bellafront, a Milanese whore, defies this simple categorization. Before she appears on stage, the audience learns about Bellafront from a gallant who compares her skin to luxury textiles, claiming, “satten is not more soft, nor lawne whiter” (2.1.172). This comparison complicates the previous distinction between virgins and harlots with smooth and rough textiles in the draper’s shop. Satin, although a smooth fabric, is not pure. It is a hybrid textile created by blending smooth silk and rough wool. Comparing her skin to satin also associates Bellafront with cultural hybridity, since satin combines silk and wool. Silk was a foreign luxury textile and wool was one of England’s primary exports.<sup>219</sup> Satin associates Bellafront with economic hybridity as well, since combining silk and wool to make satin actually increases the value of the wool by transforming the rough, base fiber into something smooth and luxurious. Comparing Bellafront to satin underscores the play’s interest in economic and cultural hybridity and positions the whore as the culminating figure through which such concerns play out. As Bellafront converts from whore to honest, Dekker and Middleton repeatedly invite their audience to reevaluate her as she integrates distinct categories and becomes an increasingly complex figure of hybridity, requiring reevaluation each time she appears. Moreover, the bases for Bellafront’s reevaluations are distinctly theatrical and performative as she dresses for customers, declares chastity, or feigns madness. As

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219. The mention of silk is particularly striking since King James attempted to create a domestic silk industry, but the project failed despite its considerable expense. For more on James’ efforts to generate a domestic silk industry, see Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 73-111.

Bellafront increases and recovers her lost value, Dekker and Middleton emphasize the ways in which performance makes the complex hybridity necessary to increase value possible.

Critical interest surrounding *The Honest Whore* primarily examines the play as a conversion narrative, pointing out that the unifying feature between main and subplot is that “the converted shrew of the Candido scenes matches the converted courtesan of the Bellafront scenes.”<sup>220</sup> This scholarship considers the play’s distinct categories, such as Bellafront’s conversion from whore to wife. For example, Richard Horwich argues that “marriage throughout the play is seen as the bond of constancy; whoredom thus comes to symbolize the randomness of things shared or held in common, like money or property.”<sup>221</sup> Each of these approaches also takes for granted a binary relationship between categories of honest and whore. Jean Howard, however, examines Bellafront’s conversion plot to suggest that “in the urban context, a woman who refuses to blur the line between chaste and unchaste, the wife and the whore, is a throwback to another time and place, a holy fool, or maybe just a fool.”<sup>222</sup> Another point of critical interest in this play is the way it blurs its setting. Some scholars, for example, examine the conflation of Milan and London by pointing to the play’s commentary on civic institutions that integrate Bethlehem Monastery into the plot.<sup>223</sup> While issues of setting and female

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220. Peter Ure, “Patient Madman and Honest Whore: The Middleton-Dekker Oxymoron,” *Essays and Studies* 19 (1966): 27.

221. Horwich, “Wives, Courtesans, and the Economics of Love,” 297. See also Barbara Kreps, “The Paradox of Women: The Legal Position of Early Modern Wives and Thomas Dekker’s *The Honest Whore*,” *English Literary History* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 83-102.

222. Howard, *Theater of a City*, 135.

223. See Ken Jackson, “Bethlem and Bridewell in The Honest Whore Plays,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 395-413 and John Twynning “Bedlam and Bridewell in The Honest Whore Plays,” in *London Dispossessed: Literature and Social Space in the Early Modern City* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 20-53.

identity are well-covered in the critical history of *The Honest Whore*, scholars have yet to explore the ways in which the play takes up contemporary economic and cultural concerns through the integration of these seemingly opposing categories and, more importantly, how performance makes such hybridity possible. In *The Honest Whore*, Dekker and Middleton associate Bellafront with increasingly complex layers of hybridity, inviting their playhouse audience to reevaluate her each time she appears on stage.

The variety of goods that clutter the stage when Bellafront first appears visually reinforces her hybridity for playhouse audiences.<sup>224</sup> Bellafront's serving man, Roger, furnishes her chamber with common objects such as a cushion, mirror, and stool. As the scene progresses, Roger fetches luxury commodities for Bellafront, such as her ruff, poker, and gown. These objects further reinforce hybridity since the luxury fabric of her gown was imported from Spain, France, or Italy, while the fine lawn that composed the fashionable ruffs for England's elite, along with the starch that kept them stiff, was supplied by the Dutch.<sup>225</sup> While Bellafront's chamber fills with goods both common and luxurious, other goods, that are themselves hybrid, appear as well. As he prepares her chamber, Roger arranges two vials of cosmetics, one red and one white. Although cosmetics were produced with some common ingredients, "English compilers of cosmetic recipes attributed some of their most prized formulas for skin whiteners and rouges to European sources, and some of the most coveted cosmetic ingredients came to England from all corners of the globe."<sup>226</sup> The cosmetics and commodities that surround

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224. Jean E. Howard points to this moment, emphasizing the role of the market in Bellafront's acquisition of the objects that surround her. See Howard, *Theater of a City*, 134.

225. Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, 81

226. Kimberly Poitevin, "Inventing Whiteness: Cosmetics, Race, and Women in Early Modern England," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2011): 59-89. For further discussion of cosmetic practices, see Edith Snook, "The Beautifying Part of Physic': Women's Cosmetic Practices in Early Modern England," in *Women, Beauty and Power in Early Modern England: A Feminist*

her in this scene situate Bellafront as a spectacle of cosmopolitanism as native and foreign culture and commodities intersect in her chamber and on her person. By introducing Bellafront through the variety of objects that compose and surround her, Dekker and Middleton identify hybridity as essential to the whore's arts, and thus, her commercial success.

Importantly, the scene through which Dekker and Middleton introduce Bellafront is one that foregrounds transformation. By staging the processes through which Bellafront prepares for her customers in this scene, Dekker and Middleton allow their audience to view a process of transformation that requires audiences to reevaluate Bellafront from the beginning to end of the scene. Bellafront enters the stage "not full ready, without a gowne, shee sits downe, with her bodkin curls her haire, cullers her lips" (2.1.s.d.). But as she applies cosmetics, styles her hair, adorns herself in jewels and garments made from luxury fabrics, Bellafront converts into something luxurious throughout this scene. Importantly, by introducing Bellafront as in process, Dekker and Middleton reveal her, as well as her value, to be in a process of creation. In her chapter on incompleteness, Chloe Porter argues that unfinished creative processes on the early modern stage indicate incompleteness as a condition of early modern cultural production.<sup>227</sup> We see that in this scene as Bellafront prepares for her customers. However, this mutability is not exclusive to cultural production. As this scene indicates, economic

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*Literary History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 21-37; and Patricia Phillippy, *Painting Women: Cosmetics, Canvases, and Early Modern Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); and Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006). For discussion of the importation of pigments and the vocabulary surrounding them, see Jacobson, *Barbarous Antiquity*; Peck, *Consuming Splendor*; Scott, *Languages of Luxury*; Jardine, *Worldly Goods*; and Jerry Brotton and Lisa Jardine, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

227. Porter, *Making and Unmaking*, 98-128.

production is also in a state of fluctuation. She encourages her customers, as well as Dekker and Middleton's audience, to overvalue her by appearing more luxurious through the application of fine goods. By allowing their audience to watch Bellafront prepare, Dekker and Middleton invite their audience to reevaluate Bellafront as she transforms into luxurious spectacle throughout the scene.

The scene in Bellafront's chamber reveals her preparation as a creative process akin to the theater itself. Dekker and Middleton align Bellafront's seductive hybridity with theatrical processes by calling attention to the similarities between a whore's preparation for her customers and an actor preparing for their audience. This is achieved through Roger, who, although he tells Bellafront he is busy "drawing up a hole in your white silke stocking," he decorates his own face with her cosmetics (2.1.3-4). Upon seeing his reflection, he comically remarks: "Zounds I looke worse now then I did before, and it makes her face glister most damnably, theres knavery in dawbing I hold my life, or else this is onely female Pomatum" (2.1.9-12). By foregrounding the "knavery in dawbing," Roger emphasizes the deception of Bellafront's appearance, since the cosmetics and apparel that make her more desirable are mere artifice. At the same time, the "knavery in dawbing" and gendering the pomade as "female" gesture to the knavery of the theater itself, since young boys painted with make-up and clad in fine dresses performed female roles. "Dawbing" in particular draws attention to the artifice at work on stage because it applies to both art and fashion. In painting, dawbing means applying color "in a crude or clumsy fashion to paint coarsely and inartistically." In fashion it means "to cover (the person or dress) with ornaments or finery in a coarse tasteless

manner.”<sup>228</sup> Roger implicates the English boy actor’s preparation backstage in his attention to Bellafront’s artifice that seduces her clientele. By allowing the theater audience to view Bellafront’s preparation, as well as Roger’s mockery of it, Dekker and Middleton invite their audience to view the ways in which the hybridity between ordinary and opulent enacted in this scene increases Bellafront’s value. Additionally, the scene emphasizes theatrical processes as essential to reevaluation.

While the previous scene showed Bellafront’s transformation, illustrating the ways in which cultural hybridity increased her commercial value, the next time she appears on stage Dekker and Middleton introduce an alternative view of hybridity that prompts further reevaluation of Bellafront. Hippolyto, a gentleman lovesick for the Duke of Milan’s daughter, whom he believes dead, enters Bellafront’s chamber accompanied by his gallant friend and frequent brothel visitor, Matheo. Disgusted by Bellafront’s profession, Hippolyto rails against her:

For gold and sparkling jewels, (if he can)  
Youle let a Iewe get you with a Christian:  
Be he a Moore, a Tartar, tho his face  
Looke uglier then a dead mans skull,  
Could the divel put on a humane shape,  
If his purse shake out crownes, up then he gets,  
Whores will be rid to hell with golden bits. (2.1.336-344)

Like the scene in her chamber, Hippolyto’s invective against Bellafront associates her with racial, as well as cultural integration, since her body unites Jews, Christians, Moors, and Tartars. However, rather than increase her value as it did previously, in this scene her hybridity diminishes her worth, once again presenting the contradicting systems of value creation via circulation presented in the epigram to this chapter. Hippolyto further

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228. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “dawbing, v. 5, 6.” Accessed October 2018. Oxford University Press.

associates Bellafront with cultural integration by highlighting the variety of foreign customers among whom she circulates. Hippolyto goes on to proclaim, “A harlot is like Dunkirke, true to none, / Swallowes both English, Spanish, fulsome Dutch, / Blacke-beard Italian, last of all the French” (2.1.352-355).<sup>229</sup> As Hippolyto associates Bellafront with international integration he also reveals her commonness, indicating that her “body, / It’s like the common shoare, / that still receives / all the townes filth” (2.1.324-326). Instead of associating Bellafront with the exotic shores from which the foreign luxury commodities she adorns herself with come, Hippolyto associates her with a “common” shore of “filth” that debases her worth, in part because of her hybridity, her willingness to “receive all.” Hippolyto’s appraisal of Bellafront invites Dekker and Middleton’s audience to reevaluate her from their earlier encounter with the whore in her chamber. While Bellafront’s previous association with hybridity increased her value, in this instance it diminishes it, reversing the transformation she underwent in her chamber and altering her from something luxurious and seductive into something base and common. By presenting contradicting views of Bellafront’s hybridity, Dekker and Middleton highlight Bellafront’s circulation in an increasingly complex network of evaluation.

Bellafront’s hybridity, along with the processes through which she is evaluated, is complicated even further as the scene between Hippolyto and Bellafront continues. Before Hippolyto’s evaluation of Bellafront takes hold she transforms herself once again. She reveals that she would prefer to have “one kind gentleman, / That would have purchasde sin alone, to himself, / For his own private use...” (2.i.268-270). In order to

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229. Dunkirk is a port town in the north of France that changed loyalty and leadership between England, Holland, Belgium, and Spain in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. “History of the Port,” Port of Dunkerque, accessed July 2018. <http://www.dunkerque-port.fr/en/dunkirk-port/history-dunkirk-port-origins.html>

increase her commercial value that might prompt someone to purchase her for private use, Bellafront converts from whore to honest, declaring: “ile prove an honest whore, / In being true to one and to no more,” and hopes “would all whores were as honest now as I” (2.1.310-311, 456). Bellafront’s conversion further associates her with increasingly complex hybridity. As she integrates the seemingly binary categories of chaste virgin and lascivious harlot, Bellafront requires reevaluation yet again as she attempts to recover and increase her commercial value.

While Bellafront’s earlier transformation from common to extraordinary in her chamber called attention to theatrical processes through alterations in her appearance, her conversion from whore to honest highlights a different kind transformation available in the theater. Here, Dekker and Middleton foreground theater’s ability to alter objects through mere words. When Bellafront declares that she will “prove an honest whore,” she performs her conversion through an intangible change that invites the playhouse audience to reevaluate her once more.<sup>230</sup> This transformation and reevaluation evokes the same difficulties early modern merchants and consumers faced in the emerging global marketplace—how to determine economic value for goods given the invisible forces of the market. With this scene of performative conversion, coupled with the frequent reevaluation of Bellafront, Dekker and Middleton illuminate the similarities between processes of value creation on the market and in the theater.

The next time Bellafront appears, she composes a song that extends her performative conversion as she sings and accompanies herself on the lute. Like

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230. Bellafront’s conversion from whore to honest is a performative statement. According to J. L. Austin, a performative “is not normally thought of as just saying something, [...] “the outward utterance is a description, true or false, of the occurrence of the inward performance.” J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 7-9.



Bellafront's other scenes, Dekker and Middleton associate her with hybridity, this time through her range of clients and their preferred methods of payment:

The Courtiers flattring Jewels  
(Temptations onely fewels)  
The Lawyers ill-got monyes,  
That sucke up poore Bees Honyes:  
The Citizens sonne's ryot,  
The gallants costly dyet:  
Silks and Velvets, Pearles and Ambers,  
Shall not draw me to their Chambers.  
Silks and Velvets, & c. (3.3.1-9)

Bellafront's song underscores the ways in which her transformation evokes increasingly complex layers of hybridity of the early modern global market. The song calls attention to cultural hybridity as Bellafront details the civic identities of her clientele, naming city-types with whom London audiences were familiar: the courtier, lawyer, citizen, and gallant. Pairing this client list with Hippolyto's references to her international clients further associates Bellafront with a cosmopolitan hybridity that connects London to the world. The song also foregrounds economic hybridity as Bellafront calls attention to the variety of payments she previously accepted, including commodities like jewels and luxury textiles along with the "ill-got monyes" of her clientele, which was no small sum (3.3.3). The song explicitly evokes Bellafront's previous identity as a whore while it simultaneously rejects that identity, further calling attention to Bellafront's hybrid status of both whore and not. Even the song itself is a hybrid—the melody Bellafront, a Milanese whore, sings in this scene is a popular English ballad, "one of the most famous tunes of the age."<sup>231</sup> Through lyric, melody, and performance, Dekker and Middleton further complicate Bellafront's association with hybridity for their audience.

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231. Ross W. Dufflin, *Some Other Note: The Lost Songs of English Renaissance Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 324.

As Bellafront transforms both in her performative conversion and in her musical performance, Dekker and Middleton invite their audience to reevaluate her once more. Bellafront's economic worth must be reevaluated since she declares in her song that "Silkes and Velvets, Pearles and Ambers / Shall not draw me to their Chambers." She rejects the same varied forms of luxury that composed and surrounded her when she first appeared in her own chamber (3.3.7-8). She also rejects currency, which, according to her bawd was no small sum: "Twenty pound a night, [...], in good gold and no silver" (3.2.17-23). Rather than accept payment in the form of currency and commodity, in her conversion Bellafront attempts to recover the lost value of her chastity, which requires the playhouse audience to completely reevaluate her through a moral lens. Audience members must navigate the binary previously established in the play between virgin and harlot as Bellafront's conversion renders her a whore no longer even though her history as a whore excludes her from being categorized as chaste. Dekker and Middleton leave this reevaluation up to their audiences, offering no clear directive for how to navigate Bellafront's complex hybrid status.

Once again, Bellafront's transformation and reevaluation is presented through processes of artistic creation—while the song rejects prostitution, it emphasizes creative process. As she sings, Bellafront accompanies herself on the lute and pauses periodically to write something with the "pen, inke and paper being placde before her" (3.3.s.d). This scene further reiterates that value is mutable and in a constant state of creation. In a song that emphasizes the instability of value by illuminating creative processes, Dekker and Middleton destabilize the trope of the singing prostitute that was popular to both paintings and performances of the period (see Figure 4.1). According to Bonnie Gordon,

“Song allowed courtesans to take control of their listener/admirers by enticing them to lascivious thoughts and actions and forcing them to abandon reason.”<sup>232</sup> But when Bellafront pauses to write her newly composed lyric it disrupts any seductive quality the song may evoke. Bellafront’s performance rejects lascivious behavior and discourages the audience from abandoning reason. Dekker and Middleton blend a traditionally seductive trope with lyrics about abstinence, further inviting their audience to reevaluate



Figure 4.1: Dirck van Baburen, *The Procuress*, 1622, from Wikimedia Commons.

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232. Bonnie Gordon, “The Courtesan’s Singing Body as Cultural Capital in Seventeenth-Century Italy,” in *The Courtesan’s Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 182-198.

Bellafront in ways that require an increasingly complex hybridity and emphasizes the ways in which performance makes such hybridity possible.

The play's final scene continues this interest in integration by bringing everyone together in Bethlehem monastery. The monastery is where Hippolyto is meeting the Duke's daughter, Infelice, whom he previously believed dead, to marry her. Hippolyto, Matheo, and Infelice are disguised as Friars and the Duke rushes in to stop the wedding. Following a brief performance from three madmen in the hospital, "Bellafront enters mad" and reveals Hippolyto, Matheo, and Infelice's disguises to the Duke (5.5.s.d.). Believing Bellafront insane, the Duke offers her anything she has wit enough to ask for in exchange for reuniting the Duke with his daughter. Bellafront asks for "a pretty soule" and she explains to the Duke:

Bellafront:	I had a fine jewell once, a very fine jewell and that naughty man stoale it away from me, a very fine jewell.
Duke:	What jewell pretty maide.
Bellafront:	Maide nay thats a lie, O twas a very rich jewell, calde a Maidenhead, and had not you it leerer.
Matheo:	Out you mad Asse away.
Duke:	Had he thy Maiden-head? He shall make thee amends, and marry thee.
	...
	I tell you sir, And if he beare the mind of a Gentleman, I know he will.
Matheo:	I thinke I rifled her of some such paltry jewell.
Duke:	Did you? Then marry her, you see the wrong Haz led her spirits into a lunacie
	...
	So much her hard fate moves me, you should not breathe under this aire, unless you married her. (5.2.406-429)

This final scene presents conflicting evaluations of Bellafront that must be integrated for the play's resolution. Although the discussion takes on moral gravity since Bellafront's

soul is at stake, the resulting evaluation is pointedly interested in the economic and cultural integration. Bellafront demands that her value be renegotiated on new terms. While for Bellafront the jewel is “rich” and “fine,” for Matheo it is “paltry”; particularly in this instance because he is commanded to marry a mad whore. However, for Bellafront, marrying Matheo will restore the original value of her jewel, thus restoring her honesty. As Bellafront and Matheo debate Bellafront’s value, Dekker and Middleton further underscore the instability of value creation as they invite the playhouse audience to generate their own value for Bellafront as neither rich nor paltry, honest nor whore, but rather somewhere in between as the integration of these categories ultimately increases Bellafront’s overall value.

In addition to reevaluating Bellafront, Dekker and Middleton invite their audience to reevaluate the setting for this final scene. Dekker and Middleton select Bethlehem monastery as the culminating site for the conversion-turned-integration narrative, a definitively English setting for a play purportedly set in Milan. The transformation of the setting from Milan to Bethlehem integrates native and foreign locations, generating cultural hybridity as it asks the theater audience to renegotiate a setting that is neither London nor Milan, but somewhere between. The hybrid location of the final scene makes Bellafront’s transition from a reformed whore to a wife possible as the boundaries between seemingly fixed categories must be renegotiated.

In this final scene of reevaluation, the play once more calls attention to the centrality of theatrical processes to hybridity that ultimately creates value. After the Duke orders Matheo to marry her, Bellafront reveals:

Matheo, thou art mine:  
I am not mad, but put on this disguise,

...  
Matheo, thou didst first turn my soule black,  
Now make it white agen: I doe protest,  
I'm pure as fire now, chaste as Cynthia's breast. (5.2.432-438)

Although the playhouse audience was previously allowed to view the creative processes through which Bellafront was fashioned, in this scene they are unaware that her madness is a mere performance. They, along with Matheo and the Duke, must evaluate and then reevaluate Bellafront a moment later when she reveals her madness was feigned. This, like the other moments that foreground theatrical devices and performativity, emphasizes the instability of value which is in a constant state of integration and renegotiation as new information becomes available. As Bellafront performs madness in order to restore the whiteness of her soul and the fineness of her jewel, when she reveals she was only playing mad her value must be determined once again. Since Bellafront restores her value by feigning madness, Dekker and Middleton underscore the ways in which integration, along with theatrical processes, are profitable. Bellafront literally plays the market, restoring her lost value by relying on the complex hybridity and processes of reevaluation made possible by performance and theatrical devices.

In *The Honest Whore* Dekker and Middleton integrate economic and cultural systems of value creation with theatrical systems of value creation. In doing so, they illustrate the theater's role in preparing its audience and cultivating the skills necessary for English success in the developing global economy. Ultimately, *The Honest Whore* plays out anxieties caused by England's downturn in trade and the influx of foreign commodities to London. Analyzing Bellafront's association with the complex hybridity of the cultural and economic systems through which value is determined, illuminates the ways in which whore plays are uniquely interested in hybridity and the resulting

processes of reevaluation that are essential to London's success in the global market. *The Honest Whore* employs performance and theatrical devices to underscore the mutability of value creation and emphasizes the ways in which performance makes possible the complex hybridity that increases value for goods. For Dekker and Middleton, the same systems of evaluation that audiences employ in the theater contribute to the systems of economic evaluation and cultural hybridity that allow London to be successful in the global economy.

### Seductive Performance and Cosmopolitan Desire in *The Dutch Courtesan*

The complex hybridity that allows for resolution in *The Honest Whore* emerges early in John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*, where prostitution once again allows playwrights to engage with issues surrounding the emerging global economy. Like Bellafront, Franceschina, the eponymous Dutch Courtesan, is a hybrid figure. According to her bawd, Mary Faugh:

I have made you acquainted with the Spaniard, Don Skirtoll; with the Italian, Master Beieroane; with the Irish lord, Sir Patrick; with the Dutch merchant, Haunce Herkin Glukin Skellam Flapdragon; and specially with the greatest French; and now lastly with this English – yet in my conscience, an honest gentleman. (2.2.13-18)<sup>233</sup>

In addition to identifying Franceschina as a global commodity, Mary Faugh identifies the social status of the men: Dons, Masters, lords, and merchants, all members of the elite from around the world. Emphasizing this point, Mary Faugh continues, "Who helped thee to thy custom, not of swaggering Ireland captains nor of two-shilling Inns o' Court men, but with honest flat-caps, wealthy flat-caps, that pay for their pleasure the best of any

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233. John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. David Crane (New York: New Mermaids, 1997).

men in Europe, nay, which is more, in London?” (2.2.29-34). As she catalogues Franceschina’s cosmopolitan clientele, Mary Faugh accomplishes three things. First, she associates Franceschina with cosmopolitanism, since she circulates among men from so many different countries.<sup>234</sup> Second, Mary Faugh establishes London as a center of economic power greater than all of Europe, since its consumers are the best paying in the world. Finally, she makes an oblique reference to the playhouse audience, London playgoers who, like her other customers, pay to view Franceschina. Marston’s play explores the ways that hybridity and cosmopolitanism allow industry (in this case, the sex industry) to thrive, while exposing the ways in which theater allows access to hybridity and capitalizes on its audience’s own cosmopolitanism desires. The play displays consumers’ cosmopolitan desires on stage and enacts it among its audience members through two figures: Franceschina, whose complex hybridity ultimately threatens her customers, and Cocledemoy, “a knavishly witty City companion” whose own display of hybridity entertains. Through both of these characters Marston emphasizes performance as seductive, generating cosmopolitan desires, while capitalizing on that same fashion for cosmopolitanism to promote the theater itself.

Scholarship surrounding *The Dutch Courtesan* has yet to take up the ways in which the play engages with early modern consumer culture. Most often, critics focus on the imagined differences that define the categories at work in the play. As Jean Howard points out, Marston is interested in the dynamic relationships “between wife and whore, native and stranger, the household and the marketplace.”<sup>235</sup> Some critics examine the

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234. For more on Franceschina’s cosmopolitanism via the international clients she serves, see Howard, *Theater of a City*, 153.

235. Jean E. Howard, “Mastering Difference in *The Dutch Courtesan*,” *Shakespeare Studies* 24 (1996): 107.



distinction Marston formulates between wife and whore to think about how the role of women evolved along with London's commercial status.<sup>236</sup> Others examine the relationship between brothels and shops as a response to the "rampant commercialization of urban life."<sup>237</sup> More recently *The Dutch Courtesan* has been featured in criticism that considers prostitutes as cross-class dressers, either by discussing Franceschina's adoption of Venetian custom and elite clothing or by pointing to the ways in which her accent disrupts language as an indicator of class.<sup>238</sup> Others discuss Franceschina's harsh Dutch accent as indicative of the hybridity between native and foreign identity in the play.<sup>239</sup> While issues of dynamic relationships are well covered in the critical history of *The Dutch Courtesan*, scholars have yet to significantly address how the complex hybridity generated by these dynamics intersect with Marston's interest in theatrical devices and performance itself to explore cosmopolitanism as both a threat and a source of profit.

Marston associates Franceschina with complex hybridity early in the play. Before Marston's audience ever meets Franceschina they hear about her in an exchange between friends. Young Freevill, newly engaged to be married, invites his malcontented friend,

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236. Howard, *Theater of a City*, 114-161. See also Laura Mandell, "Bawds and Merchants: Engendering Capitalist Desires," *English Literary History* 59, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 107-123.

237. Garret A. Sullivan, Jr., "'All Things Come into Commerce': Women, Household Labor, and the Spaces of Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*," *Renaissance Drama* 28 (1997): 19-46.

238. For discussion of sartorial cross-class dressing in *The Dutch Courtesan*, see Cristine M. Varholy, "'Rich Like a Lady': Cross-Class Dressing in the Brothels and Theaters of Early Modern London," *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 4-34. See also Melissa M. Mowry, "Dressing Up and Dressing Down: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Seventeenth-Century English Textile Industry," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 78-103. For discussion of linguistic cross-class dressing, see Matthew Hunter, "City Comedy, Public Style," *English Literary Renaissance* 46, no. 3 (Autumn 2016): 401-432.

239. For criticism on the relationship between native and foreign identities via Franceschina's accent, see Rubright, *Doppelgänger Dilemmas*, 38-55; Alice Leonard, "'Enfranchised' Language in *Henry V* and *The Dutch Courtesan*," *Cahiers Elisabethains: A Biannual Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 84 (November 2013): 1-11; Andrew Fleck, "The Custom of Courtesans and John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*," *American Notes and Queries* 21, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 11-19; and Andrew Fleck, "'Ick verstaw you niet': Performing Foreign Tongues on the Early Modern English Stage," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 20 (2007): 204-221.

Malheureux, to the brothel, where “I will show thee my creature: a pretty, nimble-eyed Dutch Tanakin; an honest, soft-hearted impropriation; a soft, plump, round-cheeked frow” (1.1.147-149). Although Freevill initially refers to Franceschina as “my creature” implying her difference, he primarily emphasizes her foreignness, referring to her as “Dutch,” “Tanakin,” and “frow,” all of which foreground her Dutch identity. However, while Franceschina’s Dutchness identifies her as foreign, it also further positions her as a hybrid figure, since, as Marjorie Rubright argues, to be Dutch was to be a “jumble.”<sup>240</sup> Even her name is an amalgamation of foreign countries, France and China, further associating the whore with hybridity. Franceschina’s hybrid identity, along with the language used to refer to her, is further complicated by the marketplace influence of fashion. Malheureux inquires:

Malheureux: Ha, she is a whore, is she not?  
 Freevill: Whore? Fie, whore! You may call her a courtesan, a cockatrice, or  
 (as that worthy spirit of an eternal happiness said) a suppository.  
 But whore, fie! ‘Tis not in fashion to call things by their right  
 names. (1.2.99-103)

Freevill highlights the artifice of fashionable consumption—that there is no distinction between whore and courtesan. Though fashion would have one believe courtesans are more elite than common whores, they are the same.<sup>241</sup> By emphasizing Franceschina’s complex hybridity that defies distinct categorization, Marston identifies her cosmopolitanism as part of her appeal to her London clients.

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240. Marjorie Rubright, “Going Dutch in London City Comedy: Economies of Sexual and Sacred Exchange in John Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605),” *English Literary Renaissance* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 88-112.

241. Alternatively, Anne Haselkorn identifies the difference between whore and courtesan as one of degree, that courtesans were “the more ambitious prostitutes who had loftier ideas of becoming mistresses or wives.” See Haselkorn, *Prostitution in Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedy*, 2.

While Marston associates Franceschina with hybridity, he also positions the prostitute as a threat to the moral, social, and financial standing of her London clients. Malheureux preaches against prostitution to persuade Freevill away from the brothel, enumerating the risks that Freevill takes by frequenting such a place:

To expose your health, and strength and name,  
Your precious time, and with that time the hope  
Of due preferment, advantageous means  
Of any worthy end, to the stale use,  
The common bosom, of a money creature,  
One that sells human flesh, a mangonist!" (1.1.96-97)

Malheureux believes prostitutes not only present a moral risk, but a financial one that limits the success of their investors. Malheureux shares a similar view on prostitutes to Hippolyto in *The Honest Whore*, placing whores in a distinctly economic context, characterizing them through their lust for wealth. Moreover, according to Malheureux, attending a brothel exposed oneself to the risk of both economic and social loss.

Despite Freevill and Malheureux' conflicting views of prostitution, in their discussion about Franceschina neither of them directly refer to sex. Instead, they employ a series of euphemisms that integrate the theater with the sex industry. Malheureux calls the brothel a "common house of lascivious entertainment" and the prostitute an "odious spectacle" while Freevill refers to the prostitutes' trade as a "fleshly entertainment" (1.1.60-61, 112, 155). Through this series of euphemisms Marston calls his playgoers' attention to the fact that they are themselves in a "common house of lascivious entertainment" by virtue of their attendance at a play called *The Dutch Courtesan*, the title of which suggests foreign luxury and sensual spectacle. Marston invites his audience to notice similarities between the theater and sex industries. Since the audience came to

see a potentially alluring play, they become implicated in later repercussions for characters who similarly pursue the Dutch courtesan.

As Marston highlights the similarities between theater and prostitution he attaches a tone of danger to Franceschina's performative scenes of seduction. Inviting Franceschina to sing for himself and Malheureux, Freevill twice refers to her as a siren: "Come, siren, your voice!" and "Siren, your voice, and away!" (1.2.108, 114). The comparison between Franceschina and a siren suggests a potentially lethal relationship between spectator and spectacle, as Freevill likens her to the mythical feminine creatures that lured sailors to their deaths with enchanting melodies. Courtesan songs were seductive to their auditors, urging anyone who heard them to abandon common sense for pleasure. Calling Franceschina a siren also evokes the economic metaphor discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Franceschina, like Milles' "Lady Merchandising Exchange," is a jezebel who lures her customers to spend their money and risk financial loss.<sup>242</sup> Yet Franceschina offers a variety of entertainment for her customers, illustrating her theatrical hybridity as well. Each time she appears she either dances or sings in a new style with a different musical instrument, further integrating the seduction of the courtesan's entertainments with the seduction of the theater.

Marston further reinforces the idea of Franceschina as threatening through Malheureux's reaction to her lute performance. Although he previously railed against prostitutes, Malheureux now responds incredulously, "This? ... A courtesan?" and in an aside he confesses to the audience, "Now cold blood defend me! What a proportion afflicts me!" (1.2.77, 79-80). He calls for cold blood to help balance the passion that rises

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242. Milles, *Customer's Replie*, D3r.

up in him at the sight of her, revealing the allure of her foreign beauty and command of her lute performance. Malheureux's reaction is instantaneous and undermines his original intention "to make her loathe / the shame she's in" (1.1.189-190).<sup>243</sup> Believing himself to be alone, Malheureux continues to lust after Franceschina:

Are strumpets, then, such things so delicate?  
Can custom spoil what nature made so good?  
Or is their custom bad? Beauty's for use.  
I never saw a sweet face vicious;  
It might be proud, inconstant, wanton, nice,  
But never tainted with unnatural vice. (1.2.134-139)

Malheureux's irrational desire for Franceschina is woefully clear: he wonders if a prostitute is chaste! Rather than a scene of a courtesan converting to chastity as in *The Honest Whore*, Malheureux converts from staunch abstinence to wanton lust. In this moment Marston invites his audience to laugh at Malheureux's obsession as Freevill eavesdrops on his friend's declamation of love for a prostitute. Freevill delivers asides of laughter at Malheureux's expense: "Wa, ha, ho! ... By the Lord, he's caught! Laughter eternal!" (1.2.133, 142). These asides turn Malheureux's response into its own kind of spectacle—inviting Marston's audience not only to laugh at Malheureux's reaction but similarly to laugh at members of the audience whose own responses mirror Malheureux's. Marston emphasizes that such excessive desire should be ridiculed rather than imitated, and showcases the theater's unique ability not only to display for its audience this corrective, but to enact it among them through their own responses.

The humor of Malheureux's desire for the foreign whore vanishes as the symbolic danger and potential risk of Franceschina's seductive power turns literal when she

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243. David Crane, "Patterns of Audience Involvement at the Blackfriars Theatre in the Early Seventeenth Century: Some Moments in Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*," in *Plotting Early Modern London*, eds. Dieter Miehle, et al., (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), 97-107.

convinces Malheureux to murder Freevill. Alone with Malheureux for the first time and upset upon learning of Freevill's engagement to another woman, Franceschina asks Malheureux to swear he loves her. He hastily replies, "So seriously, that I protest no office so dangerous, no deed so unreasonable, no cost so heavy, but I vow to the utmost tenation of my best being to effect it" (2.2.132-134). In light of Malheureux's hyperbole, Franceschina stipulates that only after he murders Freevill will she share her bed with Malheureux. Consumed with his irrational desire for the foreign courtesan, Malheureux agrees to murder Freevill, illuminating the risk he is willing to take in his desire for Franceschina.

While the Franceschina plot positions hybridity and performance as seductive yet threatening, in the subplot of the play Marston positions the hybridity offered by performance as essential to profitable entertainment. Similar to Franceschina, Marston introduces Cocledemoy as a complex hybrid character. Although initially described as a "knavishly witty city Companion," Cocledemoy's knavery and wit lie in his ability to take on a variety of foreign accents and costumes. His ability to perform distinguishes him as a truly cosmopolitan figure. Cocledemoy first disguises himself as a barber to carry out a jest with Master Mulligrub, a London vintner. He borrows the basin, razor, and apron and ponders his disguise: "Let me see – a barber. My scurvy tongue will discover me; must dissemble, must disguise. For my beard, my false hair; for my tongue – Spanish, Dutch, or Welsh – no, a Northern barber! Very good. Widow Reinscure's man, well. Newly entertained, right" (2.1.204-210). Cocledemoy has cultural access that allows him to circulate and profit from his hybrid status in ways that are similar to Franceschina's circulation among international clients. While Franceschina's cultural

hybridity is determined for her by who is willing to pay for her, Cocledemoy controls his cosmopolitanism, choosing the nationality he will improvise to generate the most profit from Mulligrub.

In Cocledemoy's plot Marston highlights performance as essential to hybridity in the form of theatrical devices such as Cocledemoy's disguises, accents, and entertaining stories that all create a clear link between hybridity and performance. When Cocledemoy arrives at Master Mulligrub's house to shave him, Cocledemoy presents himself as Andrew Shark, a former peddler in Germany and a London barber-surgeon at present. As Cocledemoy prepares Mulligrub for his shave Mulligrub inquires for news, hoping to increase his own cultural capital by learning the happenings around the city and court. But Cocledemoy plays on Mulligrub's cosmopolitan desires. The first news that Cocledemoy shares with Mulligrub is a story of the conduit in Greenwich, from which snakes emerged then transformed into mastiffs, then cocks, then bears, and the bears are now available for viewing in Paris Garden. The second story Cocledemoy concocts is "that twenty-five Spanish jennets are to be seen hand in hand dance the old measure, whilst six goodly Flanders mares play to them on a noise of flutes" (2.3.60-63). While the news from Cocledemoy is designed to entertain and make a fool of Mulligrub as Cocledemoy steals from him, the stories themselves feature hybridity as snakes transform into bears and Spanish and Flemish animals come together to play music, foregrounding the essential nature of hybridity to entertainment, which Cocledemoy's own disguise confirms. The entertaining story distracts Mulligrub enough that Cocledemoy may place a coxcomb on Mulligrub's head and exit with a bag of money without Mulligrub's notice. Like Malheureux's response to Franceschina, Marston invites his audience to laugh at

Mulligrub's foolishness while it underscores the ways in which Cocledemoy's cosmopolitan performance leads to profit.

This formula repeats several times between Mulligrub and Cocledemoy as the city knave appears as a variety of foreign characters each designed to con Mulligrub out of more wealth. Cocledemoy appears later as a French peddler who tries to sell Mulligrub soap for his shaving needs and plots to "shave [Mulligrub] smoother yet!" (3.2.29-30). Following this, Cocledemoy appears as a London goldsmith's apprentice, Master Burnish's man, who has come to pick up a silver cup newly delivered to the Mulligrubs. Cocledemoy plays on the Mulligrubs' desire for social affluence, informing Mistress Mulligrub that Master Burnish and his wife "will come to dinner to season your new cup with the best wine; which up your husband entreats you to send back by me that his arms may be graved o' the side, which he forgot before it was sent" (3.3.33-37). In this sense, Cocledemoy's knavery is a seductive performance similar to Franceschina's. He plays on the Mulligrubs' desire for social advancement just as the courtesan plays on Malheureux's desire for her. In both of these characters Marston displays the ways in which hybridity grants them the ability to manipulate other characters. Cocledemoy's tricks also threaten as Mulligrub's debts increase, a direct result of Cocledemoy's tricks.

In the culminating scene of the play Franceschina's and Cocledemoy's victims face punishment for their crimes: Malheureux for Freevill's murder, Mulligrub for outstanding debt. Although Freevill and Malheureux had planned to fake Freevill's death to punish Franceschina, Freevill crafts his own plot to punish Malheureux and cure his friend of his lust for the whore. Now facing execution for Freevill's murder, Malheureux repents his desire for Franceschina, regrets the risk he took, and grieves for the resulting



losses:

He that's of fair blood, well-miened, of good breeding,  
Best famed, of sweet acquaintance and true friends,  
And would with desperate impudence lose all these,  
And hazard landing at this fatal shore,  
Let him ne'er kill nor steal, but love a whore! (5.3.25-29)

He no longer desires but loathes Franceschina. Malheureux's language evokes a tone of danger around Franceschina since the "fatal shore" Malheureux "hazards" is a foreign one, evoking the threat of the mythical siren that lured sailors to their deaths. She is no longer a luxurious creature but an "unprosperous divel," a "comely damnation," and a "whore" (5.3.42, 48, 29). Hearing his friend repent, Freevill reveals his disguise, proclaiming that his purpose was "to force [Malheureux] from the truer danger"—his lust for Franceschina for whom he almost lost all (5.3.43). As the play resolves the men attribute all accountability for the near murder to Franceschina, as Freevill declares, "only what you can think / has been extremely ill is only hers" and Franceschina exits the stage to be whipped and imprisoned (5.3.53-54). Through this resolution for Freevill and Malheureux, Marston identifies Franceschina's complex hybridity as the central, and potentially fatal, threat of the play that must be contained in order for the play to resolve.

While Franceschina is punished, Cocledemoy cleverly escapes penalty for his thievery from the Mulligrubs. When Mulligrub is about to be punished for his outstanding debts, the prosecuting sergeant urges the abused vintner to not press charges against Cocledemoy. Mulligrub excuses Cocledemoy, assuring the crowd, "I forgive as I would be forgiven" (5.3.127-128). Only following Mulligrub's exoneration, does the sergeant reveal himself to be Cocledemoy in yet another disguise. Amid cries of "knave" from onlookers, Cocledemoy defends himself and his actions:

No knave, worshipful friend, no knave; for, observe, honest Cocledemoy restores whatsoever he has got, to make you know that whatoe'er he has done has been only *euphoniae gratia*—for wit's sake. I acquit this vintner as he has acquitted me. All has been done for emphasis of wit, my fine boy, my worshipful friends. (5.3.134-139)

Cocledemoy avoids punishment by framing his own threat as mere entertainment, returning the stolen goods, and stipulating that he posed no legitimate threat to Mulligrub. Cocledemoy's final lines of the play emphasize that the play itself is also a "hurtless mirth" performed for "trivial wit" and does no actual harm (5.3.161). Cocledemoy's lines emphasize the extent to which the theater itself offers pleasure, entertainment, and wit, even though, like Mulligrub's purse and cup, the material gain for its consumer is difficult to see.

As Marston examines the seductive power of hybridity and performance through the figures of Franceschina and Cocledemoy throughout the play, he enacts this same seductive power of the theater through the play itself. By positioning Cocledemoy as the witty city mountebank who performs cosmopolitanism to entertain, Marston invites his audience to view the commercial value of the theater itself. Meanwhile, by positioning Franceschina's complex hybridity in similarly entertaining performance and the central spectacle for whom his play is named, Marston capitalizes on the emerging cosmopolitan desires of his audience members. The provocative title draws in customers, generating economic profit for the theater. In the same way that Franceschina's seductive arts tempt Malheureux, Marston tempts his playgoers to the same lusty reactions. By punishing Malheureux, Marston obliquely chastises his audience for their similar lust for the foreign implied through the playgoer's attendance at a play called *The Dutch Courtesan*. Through the theater Marston integrates the courtesan's seductive arts into his own artistic medium,

capitalizing on the cosmopolitan desires of his audience in ways that benefit the theater industry while simultaneously offering a didactic rebuke of such desires through Malheureux and Mulligrub. Ultimately, *The Dutch Courtesan* allow us to view the ways in which whore plays were deeply interested in the hybridity that allowed the sex industry, the global market, and potentially the theater industry to thrive.

Triple Threat: Desire, Commodity, and Conspicuous Consumption in *The Costly Whore*

Like *The Honest Whore* and *The Dutch Courtesan*, *The Costly Whore* (1620) deals with the threat and allure of foreign commodities. Performed fifteen years after the other examples in this chapter, this play addresses the national implications of a court distracted by foreign luxury. *The Costly Whore* combines the conversion narrative of *The Honest Whore* and the fatal seduction of *The Dutch Courtesan* in fascinating ways as England felt the effects of the trade glut more intensely. The play is set in Meath, a region of Eastern Ireland, where the Duke of Saxony falls in love with Valentia, a Venetian courtesan, and ignores his obligations to his country and family while distracted by foreign luxury and pleasure. By viewing Valentia as a foreign luxury commodity, *The Costly Whore* examines the effects of the excessive desire for foreign luxury on a national scale. It illustrates complex economic issues that identify the problem of foreign goods as English consumers' unnatural devotion to them rather than the commodities themselves. The play also highlights artistic representation as a means of incorporating the desire for foreign commodities in a way that ultimately profits the native economy.

Critical interest in *The Costly Whore* is limited to debates about when the play was first written. These debates illuminate the ways in which *The Costly Whore* engages

with the contemporary cultural and economic concerns of England in the period.<sup>244</sup> They are grounded in decrees delivered by King James I regarding coinage, trade, and patents that illustrate an English court distracted by luxury and pleasure. As I discussed in the introduction to this project, James was eager to establish himself as a major political player in Europe and one of the chief ways he did this was through conspicuous consumption in the form of sumptuous feasts, spectacular entertainments, lavish gifts, and magnificent architectural projects.<sup>245</sup> But to sustain this lavish lifestyle across the length of his reign, James was forced to sell royal land and some speculated that the country suffered as a result of their sovereign's commercial distractions.<sup>246</sup> While the other plays in this chapter examine the repercussions of lusting after foreign goods for private individuals, *The Costly Whore* more explicitly portrays the threat of foreign commodities on a national scale by targeting a national figurehead.

The playwright establishes Valentia as a foreign luxury commodity by delaying her appearance on stage, instead introducing her via her glove, integrating the desire for the object and the person to whom it belongs. Frederick, the Saxon Duke's son, enters with a petite glove he found near the statehouse. The Duke and his son admire the glove's fine embroidery, calling the needlework "very excellent, and the fashion rare" (C1r).<sup>247</sup> The Duke's enchantment with the glove and its implied owner is reminiscent of Malheureux's response to Franceschina's song in *The Dutch Courtesan*. The Duke

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244. For debates on the dating of *The Costly Whore* see Hans Werner, "A Vindication of A.H. Bullen's Dating of 'The Costly Whore,'" *Notes and Queries* 42, no. 3 (1995): 352-357; A. H. Bullen, *A Collection of Old English Plays*, vol. 3 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), 221; G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), 165.

245. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 188-189.

246. R. H. Tawney, *Business and Politics Under King James I: Lionel Cranfield as Merchant and Minister* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 137-139.

247. Anonymous, *The Costly Whore* (London: Augustine Matthews, 1633).

confesses in an aside, “I cannot tell, but in my minde I feelee / A wondrous passion of I know not what” (C1r). Publicly, the Duke rejects the glove when he learns it belongs to Valentia, asking incredulously, “What should a Prince retaine a strumpets glove?” (C4r) Privately, however, he confesses his growing passion:

I feelee within my breast a searching fire,  
Which doth ascend the engine of my braine,  
And when I seeke by reason to suppress  
The heate it gives, the greater the excesse:  
[. . .]  
O but I love her, and they say she is faire. (C4r-C4v)

The Duke fosters an unnatural devotion to the glove and to a woman he has never met in a way that conflates the glove’s owner and the glove itself, positioning Valentia, via her glove, as a desirable object of foreign luxury. He exits the stage declaring to the playhouse audience, “Now faire Valentia, Saxon to thy bower, / Comes like a Jove to raine a golden shower” (C4v).

The Duke’s reaction places Valentia and her glove within an economic context. Gloves were expensive, particularly embroidered ones—imported from Venice and Milan, made with supple leather, ornately embroidered with silver and gold thread, gloves alone carried a duty of “30 shillings per dozen pair.”<sup>248</sup> According to Lawrence Stone, the embroidery “really ran away with the money, for the stuff itself was expensive and the labour involved prodigious.”<sup>249</sup> Because of their conspicuous cost, gloves were a favorite gift among the English elite.<sup>250</sup> Like gloves and other luxury commodities, the Duke intends to purchase Valentia herself using excessive amounts of gold. This scene establishes Valentia as a commodity and illustrates a ruler’s excessive desire for and

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248. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 16.

249. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 564-565.

250. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 42-43.

conspicuous consumption of foreign luxury. By positioning Valentia as a foreign luxury commodity, the playwright invites the playhouse audience to understand Valentia, like the other whores discussed in this chapter, as the very type of foreign commodity that threatened native wealth.

In addition to the expense of the glove, the Duke is attracted to the foreignness of it and its owner. As he explains to Frederick:

[...] Curtezans are strange  
With us in Germanie, except her selfe,  
Being a Venetian borne and privildg'd,  
The state allowes none here. (C3v-Cv4r)

The fact that courtesans are forbidden intensifies the Duke's lust for her. These lines emphasize the cosmopolitan setting of the play. Although Meath was rural in the early seventeenth century, in this play it becomes a fantasy of international integration for characters of varied identities as the Saxon Duke falls in love with a Venetian courtesan in northern Ireland. Her foreignness, along with her novelty and the foreign setting in which they meet exacerbates the Duke's lust for Valentia. Moreover, that courtesans are outlawed in Saxon further emphasizes Valentia's novelty and increases the Duke's lust for her.

As the Duke reveals his extreme desire for both the glove and its owner, the play pointedly calls attention to aesthetic representation in fascinating ways. Prior to learning the identity of the glove's owner, the Duke laments:

Birds that by painted grapes have bin deceived,  
Had yet some shadow to excuse their error,  
Pigmalion that did love an Ivory Nymph,  
Had an Idea to delight his sence,  
The youth that doted on Minerva's picture,  
Had some contentment for his eye  
But love, or rather an infernal hagge,

Envyng Saxons greatnes and his joys,  
Hath given me nothing but a trifling glove... (C3r-C3v)

The circumstances with which the Duke compares his situation are instances from literature in which love is mediated through art objects such as painting, sculpture, or tapestry. Through this comparison the Duke further objectifies Valentia, positioning her on the level of art objects such as the revered paintings and adored statues of myth. By emphasizing the relationship between viewer and art object, the playwright foregrounds the captivating power of art, blending the seductive properties of art and luxury. Moreover, by pointing to desire mediated by art, the playwright invites the audience to view the ways in which theater performs similar acts of mediation for its audience.

Valentia herself is introduced as a fantasy of a flourishing foreign nation. Her chamber is a den of foreign luxury, perfumed with “Arabian Drugs” and “costly Arras.” She is decorated in gems and her customers adorn themselves in satin, silk, and gold (D1r- D1v).<sup>251</sup> She boasts that she cares nothing for gaining additional wealth:

Riches to me, are like trash to the poore,  
I have them in abundance, gold’s my slave,  
I keepe him prisoner in a three-fold chest,  
And yet his kindred daily visit me. (D1r)

Valentia’s chamber illustrates excessive wealth wrought from flourishing trade. She attributes her success to her powers of seduction, boasting, “The story of the Syrene in my voice, / Is onely verified, for Millions stand / Inchantred, when I speake” (D1v). In addition to a siren, Valentia compares herself to another figure from mythology: “Circe is but a fable, I transforme / The virtuous, valiant, and the most precise, / Into what forme of

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251. For discussion of Venetian courtesans and fashion, see Margaret F. Rosenthal “Cutting a Good Figure: The Fashions of Venetian Courtesans in the Illustrated Albums of Early Modern Travelers,” in *The Courtesan’s Arts: Cross Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 52-74.

mine my fancie please” (D1v). The playwright’s mythological comparisons directly attribute Valentia’s economic success to her ability to seduce her clients and transform both them and herself. In her chamber the Duke and Valentia watch a masque performance in which Valentia takes part, transforming from spectator to spectacle. She dances in the revels and participates in a scene of gambling in which she wins every dice roll. Watching Valentia’s antics, the Duke remarks, enraptured, “The more I drinke of her delicious eye, / The more I plunge into captivitie” (D2v). The play’s interest in transformation is especially underscored through the Duke’s declamation at the end of the scene that he will wed Valentia, making her a Duchess.

The scene in Valentia’s chamber exemplifies economic thought in the period as English theorists attempted to understand how currency and commodity interacted with one another in order to generate wealth. Economists believed that the export of English bullion to foreign countries was the direct result of the coin shortage at home. Valentia, as a Venetian courtesan, plays on this belief since the scene underscores her abundant gold and commercial wealth. Like the other plays in this chapter, *The Costly Whore* initially positions Valentia as an enchantress who lures native consumers to foreign spending through seduction. By comparing herself to a siren, Valentia encourages both the playhouse audience and the Duke to view her this way. However, seduction alone is insufficient. She also attributes her wealth to her ability to transform. By foregrounding transformation Valentia evokes Thomas Mun’s balance of trade theory that privileges the constant flow of money and commodity together, repeatedly transforming one form of wealth into another in order to generate profit. It is precisely because of her ability to transform both herself and her customer’s desires that she is able to generate profit



through the constant flow of money and goods to her chamber, revealing the ways in which transformation is essential to economic success.

The scene in Valentia's chamber calls attention to cultural themes as well. In addition to emphasizing Valentia's foreign identity both for the play's setting in Meath and for the English audience, the scene foregrounds the ways in which elite and low-brow culture have become integrated through conspicuous consumption. As Valentia attempts to determine what sort of man the Duke is by virtue of his clothing, she remarks, "O the attire, in these corrupted daies, is no true signe / To show the gentleman; peasants now weare robes / In the habiliments of noblemen" (D1r). Valentia's ability to seduce and transform one thing into another is coupled with a consumer's own ability to transform themselves via consumption. The attention to transformation and cross-class dressing becomes particularly important when the Duke informs Valentia she will become his Duchess. Through marriage Valentia herself transforms, rather than her client, from Venetian whore to Saxon Duchess.

As the playwright calls attention to the excessive luxury of Valentia's chamber and her ability to seduce and transform, he also calls attention to the theater itself through an opulent masque performed in her chamber by actors and dancers. Although indicated almost exclusively through stage directions, the masque performance would have offered theatrical spectacle to the playhouse audience. While the Duke and Valentia begin by viewing the performance together, Valentia leaves her position as spectator to dance in the revels for the Duke. Following this, the masque performers invite her to play dice and, unsurprisingly, she "wins" the gold every time. The "golden shower" the Duke

bestows on Valentia is mediated through theatrical performance.<sup>252</sup> This moment situates theatrical performance alongside other elite art forms to which the Duke previously compared her and elevates performance to the level of fashionable commodities that highlight theater's ability to be economically productive. The masque scene in Valentia's chamber combines the seductive power of the foreign courtesan with the seductive power of the theater, as Valentia becomes a spectacle herself to receive payment through a fictional frame of gambling.

Moving away from the luxurious foreign setting of Valentia's chamber, the Duke assembles his parliament and summons Valentia to announce his intention to marry the foreign whore. The nobility immediately objects to the union but the Duke insists he will wed Valentia. Valentia, rather than fighting or threatening anyone who opposes her, transforms herself by committing to a life of virtue that is more becoming of her new position:

Princes, forbear, I doe not seeke the match,  
It is his highnesse pleasure I sit here,  
And if he love me tis no fault of mine,  
Behooves me to be thankfull to his Graces,  
And strive in virtue to deserve this place. (E2r)

Valentia's declaration of virtue emphasizes her ability to transform—not only can she transform others into whatever she pleases, she can repeatedly transform herself as well. This scene illustrates Valentia's conversion from base Venetian whore to virtuous Saxon Duchess and illustrates the ways in which the threat of the foreign is neutralized through its integration into the nation, in this instance through marriage.

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252. Valentia's performance in an elaborate masque for the Duke evokes Queen Anne's historical performances in masques at court such as Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) or *The Masque of Queens* (1609). Thanks to Catherine Elliot for bringing my attention to this similarity.

Although the threat to the nation is no longer directly foreign, the Duke's marriage to Valentia causes lasting economic repercussions for his nation and turns fatal for the commonwealth. The Duke consistently chooses pleasure and luxury over his responsibilities to the state, going so far as to allow his brothers to run the country. His brothers concoct a plot to rid the nation of its poor by starving them out of the country and selling the country's food to foreign nations for the brothers' personal profit. When the Duke learns of his brothers' abuses of the poor, he casts the poor's pleading letters into the fire, laughing that:

So I may live quiet with my wife,  
Let fathers, mothers, children, all lose life.  
If thou have issue, in despite of fate,  
They shall succeed in our Imperiall state.  
Come sweet to dauncing, then to sport and play,  
Till we have ruled all our life away. (F4v)

That the Duke chooses a life of leisure rather than tend to his responsibilities of state illustrates the degeneration of the nation that results from a ruler governed by pleasure and conspicuous consumption. Frederick even remarks, "fatal is [the Duke's] pleasure, 'tis to please his wife" (G2r). The pursuit of foreign luxury turns fatal as the Duke plots to kill his children for treason due to their dislike of the new Duchess. The threat comes from the Duke's desire to either please his wife or live with her undisturbed, never from Valentia herself—the danger is not the foreign commodity, but rather the Duke's overvaluation of it.

Indeed, *The Costly Whore* makes this danger perfectly clear by showing how the Duke's desire for and marriage to Valentia thrusts a nation into shambles. When Frederick captures Valentia and threatens to kill her, the Duke offers his Dukedom in exchange for her life:

Let me have my beloved, and take my state,  
My life I undervalue to that rate:  
Crave any thing that in my power doth lye,  
Tis this, so faire Valentia may not dye. (E4r)

This moment highlights the degree to which the Duke undervalues his own life, nation, and Dukedom, and the degree to which he overvalues Valentia, the symbol of foreign luxury. Although Frederick and other members of the nobility view Valentia as a foreign threat and express concern that Valentia enchanted the Duke, it is important to once again notice that the Duke voluntarily offers up his dukedom through no coercion from Valentia.

The play's final scene calls attention to the ways in which Valentia's powers of transformation actually protect the nation more than they threaten it. As the Duke rails against his country and threatens to execute his children, Valentia concocts an elaborate plot to save their lives. Rather than poisoning Frederick as the Duke intended, Valentia gives him a sleeping potion to make Frederick only appear dead. She also helps the Duke's daughter, Euphrata, escape the country with her lover, Constantine. Euphrata's servant, Julia, and her lover, Otho, appear for the execution instead and ask to be executed in their friends' place. This gesture appeals to the Duke's sympathy and he forgives his children. However, moments later two men enter in a funeral procession, explaining that Euphrata and Constantine drowned crossing the river in their escape. The Duke, in his grief, turns on Valentia, blaming her for his losses:

Tis for thy sake, thou vilde notorious woman,  
That I have past the limits of a man,  
The bonds of nature.  
'Twas thy bewitching eye, thy Syrens voice,  
That throwes me upon millions of disgrace... (H1v)

Mere moments later, Valentia reveals the Duke's children are alive—she protected the Duke's family and she goes on to protect the country by compelling the Duke to embrace a life of humility rather than luxury. She promises: "Our sinnes we'l number with a thousand sighes, / Fasting shall be the Steward of our Feast: / Continual prayer instead of costly cates" (H4r). The play ends as they exit to repent for the rest of their lives and the kingdom is restored to prosperity since its ruler no longer wastes the nation's wealth on conspicuous consumption.

As Valentia protects the Duke's family from his wrath she ensures the country's protection economically as well. In repentance for their abuses to the poor she condemns the Duke's brothers "to the Mynes, / Where live like golden drudges all your lives: / In digging of the metal you best love" (H3v). The brothers' sentence transforms their plot to sell the nation's store of food abroad for their own personal gain and instead sends the men abroad to labor for gold for the nation's prosperity rather than their own. The brothers' punishments for their crimes against the state underscore two lessons for the playhouse audience: first, that pursuit of individual wealth is detrimental to the nation, and second, that excessive desire for gold is particularly problematic since blind pursuit of it is likewise harmful to the country. The brothers' excessive desire for gold in the subplot underscores the Duke's unabashed pursuit of pleasure and luxury commodities in the main plot, emphasizing for the playhouse audience that a balance between both forms of wealth is essential to the economic health of a country.

Although the Duke attempts to cast Valentia as the dangerous foreign whore that threatens the nation, this scene reveals the ways in which foreign integration and transformation helps the nation to prosper. She transforms herself from Venetian

courtesan to Saxon Duchess who contributes more directly to the nation's prosperity than its own leader. Moreover, she transforms the Duke, bringing about his repentance of his lustful appetite for foreign goods. Although his pursuit of luxury nearly destroyed his own country, he now vows to live "In some removed cell or hermitage, / Unto the which, poore travellers mislead, / May have direction and reliefe of wants" (H3v). She transforms the Duke from someone obsessed with foreign commodities and luxury into someone willing to spend his life in service to his country and its people, thereby helping the country to prosper.

As Valentia reveals the ways in which she protected the nation from a foolish Duke, the play foregrounds theatrical convention as essential to transformation. As Frederick, Euphrata, and her husband, Albert, recount how Valentia helped them to escape the Duke's wrath, Albert even declares, "And know we are all actors in this plot," inviting the playhouse audience to view the theater as illuminating the ways in which Valentia's plot to save the nation employs theatrical convention in the form of sleeping potions, disguises, and fake deaths (H2v). As she does so, Valentia transforms the potential tragedy of the play into comedy as well, remarking, "We have a varietie of joyes in woe" (G3v). This generic transformation from tragedy to comedy connects transformation to the theater, since the theatrical convention that Valentia employs makes such transformation possible at all. The generic tension that develops between tragedy and comedy, as Valerie Forman explains, carried larger implications in the period as the English struggled to reconceptualize economic loss as something potentially productive, as this play ultimately does.<sup>253</sup> Moreover, Valentia's redemption of the Duke through

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253. Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions*, 2.

theatrical convention connects virtue to the theater. Valentia's ability to transform the Duke's moral character foregrounds theater's didactic role for its audience, since both Valentia and the theater possess the ability to seduce, convert, and ultimately transform. Valentia's transformation of the Duke in the play's final moments protects the health of the nation he rules. The Epilogue emphasizes theater's own ability to protect the nation, as it solicits applause from the audience:

Without your favour, every labour dyes,  
Save such whose second springs comes from your eyes:  
Extend your beams of love to us at full;  
As the Sunne does unto the Easterne clime:  
And England may bring forth like India,  
As costly spice, as oriental Iems:  
The earth's all one, the heate refines the moulede:  
And favour makes the poorest ground yelde gold (H4v)

The Epilogue places the theater itself within a global economic context that tells the audience that one way they can help England to flourish in the global economy is by liking this play and attending the theater.

As *The Costly Whore* examines lust for foreign commodities and conspicuous consumption through Valentia, it suggests that foreign commodity itself is not threatening to the nation, but rather the excessive desire for such commodities among the nation's consumers. Moreover, the play emphasizes that foreign commodities can actually help the nation prosper if managed correctly. By positioning Valentia as the elite foreign commodity and the native Duchess, the playwright illuminates the ways in which transformation is essential to both theatrical and economic processes. At the same time, the play also emphasizes the extent to which both of these processes are crucial to London's prosperity in a global marketplace dominated by foreign luxury.

## Conclusion

The whore plays I examine in this chapter call attention to systems of value creation and the role seduction and desire play in generating value. In underscoring the ways in which whores and the theater each rely on powers of seduction and the desire of their consumers, these plays reveal how the global economy relies on similar processes as well. Each play in this chapter examines these processes in different ways. *The Honest Whore* navigates systems of economic and cultural value as it simultaneously underscores theatrical devices and the performative processes of conversion that restore value. *The Dutch Courtesan* attracts London playgoers interested in foreign luxury and then rebukes them for such desires, illustrating the ways in which the fashion for foreign luxury threatens the English economy. Finally, *The Costly Whore* invites audiences to view foreign luxury in more nuanced ways, exemplifying that while English consumers' desire for foreign commodities is threatening to the nation, the commodities themselves are passive.

Reading whore plays for the ways in which they attend to cultural and economic interests illuminates the theater's role in reflecting the developing global economy along with London's emergence as a world city. By reading each play through a lens of cultural and economic concerns we can begin to see how playwrights developed their own medium both aesthetically and commercially. Viewing Bellafront, Franceschina, Valentia, and characters like them as models of complex hybridity allows us to understand the ways in which playwrights viewed their own art amid a market flooded by foreign luxury goods.



As each play demonstrates, one of the things that generates value for whores or any commodity is seduction, a promotional and marketing technique that creates artificial value for commodities based on consumer desire. The titles of each of the plays alone reveal the way in which the theater seduced its customers. *The Honest Whore*, *The Dutch Courtesan*, and *The Costly Whore* each prominently feature a term for prostitute in the title, which attracts prospective audiences to pay admission to the theater. In the following chapter I explore more meticulously the ways in which the theater promoted itself as a commodity in order to increase its own cultural and economic value despite the escalating fashion for foreign luxury in London.

CHAPTER FIVE  
(STAGE)MANAGING PROFIT:  
COSMOPOLITAN ATTITUDES AND THE VALUE OF THEATER

Ben Jonson's *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* (1609) celebrates the opening of the New Exchange with a theatrical tour of one of the luxury shops housed within. The New Exchange, located in the Strand, was a shopping center that exemplified the emerging fashion in London for foreign luxury goods. Attended by the royal family and London's diplomatic community, the performance begins with the Key Keeper greeting the audience at the door as if the New Exchange itself were a strange and foreign land: "I think you scarce know where you are now, nor by my troth can I tell you, more than that you may seem to be upon some land discovery of a new region here, to which I am your compass" (ll. 6-9).<sup>254</sup> Upon entering a shop with an abundance of commodities, the spectators are greeted by a Shop Boy with the ubiquitous London cry, "What do you lack? What is't you buy?" (ll. 50). The commodities are a cornucopia of foreign luxury goods made available through the England's global trade network. The Master directs the viewers to Chinese porcelains, trays with Turkish varnishes, "umbrellas made of the wing of the Indian butterfly," rugs crafted from parakeet feathers, and fans "of flying fishes' fins" (ll. 117-118). He then invites the spectators to view a peculiar inventory of beards: "This file of vizards and beards by some would be carelessly regarded as being the common vulgar ornaments of ever milliner's shop, but I must clear it to you. There is no face here that hath not his morality nor form of beard but I can derive from the time and

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254. Ben Jonson, "The Entertainment at Britain's Burse," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds. David Bevington, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 357-368.

place of their first original amongst us” (ll. 148-153). All the while, he emphasizes the range of specific foreign characters accessible through the London theater via the facial hair, including a Turkish moustache and Calais, Maccabean, Alexandrian, and Casarean beards. The *Entertainment* closes with the Master directly addressing the audience, “I will ask no other security but their good words and fair handsels” (ll. 240-241). This line parodies the public theatrical trope of the actor asking his audience for their approval and applause at the end of a performance, such as Puck’s invitation to “give me your hands if we be friends” and Prospero’s plea to “let your indulgence set me free” (Epilogue 15, Epilogue 20).<sup>255</sup> Jonson begins like the others, by asking his viewer to speak well of the performance, but rather than asking for applause, the Master asks for “handsels.” A handsel, according to James Knowles’ commentary, is “a present expressive of good wishes offered to inaugurate a new enterprise” or “a first payment, often the first money taken by a trader in the morning, as an earnest of more to come.”<sup>256</sup> By having his actor ask for “fair handsels,” Jonson invites the audience to offer good wishes to the New Exchange as an economic endeavor. At the same time, Jonson conflates theatrical performance with the other luxury commodities available in the shops and cleverly positions his own entertainment as the first commodity sold in the New Exchange. Through this conflation, Jonson effectively elevates English theatrical entertainment to the level of the foreign luxury commodities sold there.

The way in which Jonson’s *Entertainment* navigates between native and foreign,

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255. See William Shakespeare, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 849-895 and William Shakespeare, “The Tempest,” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al., (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 3064-3115.

256. James Knowles, “Entertainment at Britain’s Burse,” 367n225.

common and exotic, and familiar and strange throughout the performance emphasizes the variety of wares available in the New Exchange and positions the new building as a site of hybridity. These comparisons position both theater and the Exchange as sites of international integration where both local and foreign unite in a display of London's economic success.<sup>257</sup> The edifice itself "was designed to rival Gresham's Royal Exchange in London as well as the Antwerp Bourse and the Venetian rialto."<sup>258</sup> While Jonson identifies the New Exchange as one location to access this international variety, through the inventory of theatrical beards coupled with the subtle inquiry for applause and payment, he positions theater as the other. As Jonson sets it up, consumers can visit the New Exchange to purchase diverse goods from all over the world, and they can visit the theater to access a range of foreignness as featured in plays. The variety on offer in each case modeled and cultivated adaptability in its customers' tastes and desires that were critical to generating economic profit. Moreover, through their cosmopolitan displays, both the theater and the New Exchange teach their consumers about variety in a broad sense by modeling the ways in which foreign goods and merchants intersect with native commodities and consumers.

Commercial interest in the adaptability of the theater was not exclusive to private performances like Jonson's entertainment. In fact, playgoers' varied tastes feature prominently in a number of plays throughout the early seventeenth century. Along with

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257. For further discussion of the ways in which Jonson's *Entertainment* comments on commercial ambition, see James Knowles "Jonson's Entertainment at Britain's Bourse," in *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson: Text, History, Performance*, ed. Martin Butler (New York: St. Martin Press, 1999), 114-151 and David J. Baker "'The Allegory of a China shop': Ben Jonson's 'Entertainment at Britain's Bourse' and 'Volpone,'" in *On Demand: Writing for the Market in Early Modern England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 93-120.

258. James Knowles, "Introduction to 'The Entertainment at Britain's Bourse,'" in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds. David Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 353.

Jonson, other early modern playwrights call attention to the intersection of theatrical processes and economic concerns in ways that invited playhouse audiences to imagine adaptability as a profitable quality. Each of the examples I have discussed in the preceding chapters focuses on the stage as a site of international engagement that invites playgoers to think about their expanding world through representations of commodities such as coins and art, or service industries such as the sex trade. While I have obliquely addressed theater as one of these commodities in previous chapters, here I examine it explicitly, as early seventeenth century London and its theater both struggle with overlapping questions regarding how to appeal to a wide variety of tastes in ways that are profitable.

Despite the prevalence in early modern theater of scenes and tropes that deal with questions about taste and cultural variety, the popular stage is frequently omitted from discussions about how Londoners accessed variety and learned cosmopolitan behaviors.<sup>259</sup> More often, critics address taste and variety in the theater within exclusively economic contexts that seek to understand the practical material conditions of theater's joint stock companies, since "stage playing was the primary source of income for [Shakespeare] and his fellows and that a proper concern about this way of making money was part of the texture of their lives."<sup>260</sup> Alternatively, some critics extend the scope of

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259. See, for example, Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen eds., *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World*; and Games, *The Web of Empire*.

260. William Ingram, *The Business of Playing: The Beginnings of the Adult Professional Theater in Elizabethan London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 16. For additional examples of criticism dealing with the playhouses as commercial entities, see Roslyn Lander Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Aaron, *Global Economics*; Bruster, *Drama and the Market*; Baker, *On Demand*; Eva Griffith, *A Jacobean Company*; and Helen Ostovich, et al. eds., *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583-1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

these commercial claims to address the intersection of the stage and the expanding global economy.<sup>261</sup> Critics who are attentive to the cultural impact of England's rapid economic expansion often do so by looking outward as England extended its cultural influence rather than looking inward to address the cultural impact of England's growth on London and its citizens.<sup>262</sup> Meanwhile, scholars who address culture at home through the English fashion for foreign goods credit luxury commodities as the primary conduit for cultural integration in London, neglecting popular theater entirely.<sup>263</sup> However, as this chapter argues, the early modern English theater, like other fashionable commodities was critical to London's development into a world city both economically and culturally.

The plays I turn to in this chapter feature moments that call attention to the processes through which theater is made and understood. For example, theater uniquely represents an astounding variety of people and locations through its signifying capacity. Theater also encapsulates a diverse range of genres and conventions with which playgoers were familiar. The plays I turn to in this chapter underscore the ways in which that representational and generic variety leads to greater profit. So while these plays foreground theatrical processes, they also illuminate market processes by modeling adaptability as a profitable quality. Moreover, the moments within certain plays that foreground theatrical processes are the very same moments that illuminate market processes. As the forthcoming examples demonstrate, playwrights were increasingly interested in the ways in which commerce and culture intersect in both theatrical and

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261. See, for example, Agnew, *World's Apart*; Harris, *Sick Economies*; Henry S. Turner, "Corporations: Humanism and Elizabethan Political Economy," in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 153-176; Ryner, *Performing Economic Thought*; and Sheerin, *Desires of Credit*.

262. For examples, see Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions* and Henry S. Turner ed., *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

263. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*; and Cheney and Wilkes, *Jacobean Grand Tour*.

global economies, often promoting the theater itself as a site of integration where varying needs and desires could be satiated. By cultivating variety as a means of generating profit, early modern playwrights invited their audiences to practice adaptability in the form of cosmopolitan behaviors in their viewing and judgment of plays. Such behaviors were critical to London's development into a center of global mercantilism.

I begin this chapter by identifying four insular moments where playwrights address the complex relationship between theater and commerce in plays such as *Hamlet* (1601), *The Roaring Girl* (1611), *The Isle of Gulls* (1606), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). In each brief example, the playwright embraces adaptability as theater's greatest asset since actors can call upon the representational and generic variety available through their medium to accommodate their audience's requests, ultimately leading to greater profit. Some of these examples also point to the varied tastes of audiences as theater's greatest obstacle since one play cannot suit the taste of all audiences. Following these examples, I discuss Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), a play that celebrates both the range of variety and the limit of adaptability in the playhouse by transparently displaying how catering to audience taste can lead to greater economic capital. Finally, I turn to Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News* (1626), which positions theater as a popular commodity comparable to the fashionable foreign news trade. Jonson foregrounds the ways in which both the theater and news office function as models of adaptability and cosmopolitanism for the city. By focusing on playwrights' engagement with contemporary economic and cultural concerns, this chapter aims to better understand the ways in which early modern playwrights championed their art as a model of

adaptability, a quality that was critical to London's cultural and economic development into a cosmopolitan city.

### Material World: Cultural and Economic Variety in London

London's market was rapidly expanding in the early seventeenth century, not only materially in terms of the kinds of goods available, but conceptually as well, as economic theorists attempted to understand the effects of a global market on England's wealth. Materially, the market became more diverse as international trade brought commodities from all over the world to London's marketplace. Native manufacturing and marketing projects also promoted a diverse range of quality, artistry, style, and price among English-made goods thanks to the spread of rural industries to communities that varied in class structure, material wealth, and local resources.<sup>264</sup> Although King James and Parliament attempted to standardize production of wares throughout the period to protect the reputation of English exports in an international market, projects benefitted the national economy by diminishing England's reliance on imported goods. England's commercial expansion both at home and abroad made London's economy "exceptional in both its scale and its diversity" as the city became "England's leading centre of manufacturers, premier trading city, largest consumer market, an the hub of internal commerce."<sup>265</sup> England's trade expansion further augmented the diversity of London's economy as merchants traveled around the globe and returned with foreign commodities that brought increased variety to London marketplaces and raised new questions about

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264. Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, 116-117.

265. Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 165.



economic processes.<sup>266</sup> In fact, as Joyce Oldham Appleby puts it, “Production for an expandable market presented Englishmen with more choices, more options, more decisions. An economy contained within the limits of supply slowly became attuned to the peculiarities of demand.”<sup>267</sup> These changes to the London market brought increased attention to the role of the consumer in the market, whose choices and tastes in the local market influences trends in the global economy.

London’s increasing role on the stage of international trade caused a conceptual shift as England attempted to understand economic processes. Although English merchants increased the country’s presence abroad, their overseas trading, as I have discussed throughout this project, was often blamed for England’s economic struggles at home. The balance of trade model that emerged out of Parliament and pamphlet debates prioritized the circulation of coin and commodities both at home and abroad.<sup>268</sup>

According to Joyce Oldham Appleby, “In Mun’s view the trading universe was essentially a coherent and mutually supporting community.”<sup>269</sup> While the balance of trade theory models hybridity as essential to profit, this model also reveals adaptability as essential to the hybridity that generates profit, since native and foreign coin and commodities all come together in a single process of circulation. As such, merchants, shopkeepers, and makers all must adapt to the shifts of supply and demand of a global market in order to generate profit.

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266. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 3-50.

267. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 25.

268. Mun, *English Treasure* and Misselden, *Circle of Commerce*.

269. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 38.

Adaptability became essential to the production of cultural capital in the form of cosmopolitanism as well, and foreign trade was critical to these developing attitudes.<sup>270</sup>

According to Linda Levy Peck,

these increasingly diverse luxury imports of the seventeenth century appeared as both fruit and stimulus of expanding travel and trade networks by the English within Europe, the Atlantic world, and the known continents. ... The well-off increasingly identified themselves as cosmopolitan through the appropriation of continental luxuries.<sup>271</sup>

Not only did Londoners become consumers of foreign commodities, they became consumers of foreign culture as well, as Englishmen began to travel abroad more frequently for pleasure in addition to trade. In fact, “In the early seventeenth century men began to travel for a new reason, since it alone could teach them the aesthetic, art-historical, and antiquarian knowledge and understanding which went to make a virtuoso.”<sup>272</sup> According to Lawrence Stone, “The quarter century between 1594 and 1620 seems to have been the most active period of education by travel.”<sup>273</sup> Importantly, the taste for foreign culture was not exclusive to merchants or members of the aristocracy. Similar interests developed among the general public as well. According to Allison

Games:

Those who journeyed abroad merely acted more enthusiastically on impulses that led their counterparts at home to invest in overseas companies, or to pounce avidly on new commodities in the marketplace, or to read about foreign ventures in the steady stream of travel accounts, promotional literature, and histories that English printers produced for an interested market.<sup>274</sup>

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270. For a discussion of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and marketplaces in London, Antwerp, and France, see Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World*, 66-94.

271. Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 18.

272. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 692-693.

273. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 702.

274. Games, *Web of Empire*, 9. Although Games' project intersects with my own in terms of England and time period, her interests lie in England's outward expansion to other regions, namely the Mediterranean, rather than the development of cosmopolitan attitudes at home.

Londoners developed cosmopolitan attitudes through the variety of commodities that provided access to foreign culture. As London adapted to the presence of foreign culture and commerce through its citizen's attitudes and behaviors, it ultimately developed into a global center of cosmopolitanism.

Commerce and culture intersect more readily in the early modern theater than anywhere else. As Jean-Christophe Agnew puts it, "the theater became a laboratory of and for the new social relations of agricultural and commercial capitalism."<sup>275</sup> Numerous para-theatrical materials and meta-theatrical moments indicate how playwrights grappled with adapting to the varied interests of their audiences. Audiences were growing increasingly diverse in the early seventeenth century and scholars debate the social composition of London's playgoers. While some scholars contend that audiences were divided socially between venues with the elite patronizing private playhouses and commoners attending public playhouses, others argue that all audiences were members of the elite, given the cost of a boatman to cross the Thames, food and drink at the theater, and admission.<sup>276</sup> Meanwhile other scholars believe that the theaters attracted people from all social spheres, workers and noblemen alike.<sup>277</sup> Despite these different speculations about who early modern playgoers were, it is clear that not only were theater audiences becoming more diverse, but the way plays earned money was evolving. According to Suzanne Westfall, "The theatre was rapidly becoming commodified and

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275. Agnew, *Worlds Apart*, xi.

276. For examples of these positions, see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

277. See Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

patronage shifted from the upper strata of society to include the general public.”<sup>278</sup> This struggle to identify and understand the taste of the consumer was not exclusive to playhouses—as Joyce Oldham Appleby puts it, in a balance-of-trade model “the consumer remains a shadowy figure who appeared to enjoy cheap East Indian goods or to be reproved for a taste in foreign luxuries.”<sup>279</sup> The difficulty of understanding the consumers and their impact on the market loomed large for sellers whose livelihoods depended on the ability to anticipate and cater to consumer tastes. As sellers attempted to gain a greater understanding of their consumers, playwrights tackled this quandary by showcasing the problem itself. Plays that underscored the struggle to identify consumer tastes simultaneously promoted adaptability as profitable, which provided audiences with a forum through which to engage with the emerging cosmopolitan trends and attitudes that contributed to London’s status as a world city in the early seventeenth century. This chapter argues that early modern playwrights promoted the theater as a site of international integration that celebrated variety as it modeled adaptability. By foregrounding these characteristics, the theater offered a timely reflection on its own participation in the developing cosmopolitan attitudes that shaped the economic development of seventeenth-century London.

#### “The Best Actors in the World”: Adaptability and Theatrical Variety

Playwrights grappled with the same questions about how to generate profit for their commodity in the London market in the same way that merchants and traders also

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278. Suzanne R. Westfall, “‘The Useless Dearness of the Diamond’: Theories of Patronage Theatre,” in *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England*, eds. Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41.

279. Appleby, *Economic Thought*, 38.

struggled to understand the intricacies of the global market. The moments when this struggle is most visible on stage come when playwrights foreground theater's adaptability by calling attention to the structural and generic variety available within the playhouse. These moments frequently couple theatrical processes alongside market processes that emphasize theater's adaptability in ways that explore the economic consequences of their audience's varied expectations. In *Hamlet* (1601), for example, the scene between Hamlet and the players who will perform "The Mousetrap" calls attention to theatrical processes as it addresses the ways in which the players' adaptability influences their ability to turn a profit. When the players arrive Hamlet inquires how it is that the company of city tragedians has come to travel, when "their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways" (2.2.317-318).<sup>280</sup> Rosencrantz explains that adult acting companies have fallen out of popularity in the city as child actors who "cry out on top of the question and are most tyrannically clapped for't. These are now the fashion..." (2.2.326-327).<sup>281</sup> As a result of the popularity of children's companies in the city, adult companies must travel in order to earn money. This moment calls attention to theatrical processes by illustrating for Shakespeare's audience how popular fashion and topical issues impacted the profitability of performances in the early modern theater. In fact, as Rosencrantz puts

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280. William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 1696-1784.

281. This passage from *Hamlet* as it appears in the different editions of *Hamlet* are well-discussed by scholars. Theater historians examine this passage in an attempt to recover the events it refers to, usually in the context of the War of the Theaters. For examples of this scholarship see Gurr, *Shakespeare Company*, 33, 135, 142; James Bednarz, "Ben Jonson and the 'Little Eyases': Theatrical Politics in *Hamlet*," in *Shakespeare and the Poet's Wars* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2001), 225-256; and Roslyn Lander Knutson, "Falconer to the Little Eyases: A New Date and Commercial Agenda for the 'Little Eyases' Passage in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 1-31. This passage also frequently comes up in discussions of children's companies. For examples of this scholarship, see Lucy Munro, "Children's Companies and the Long 1580s," *Shakespeare Studies* 45 (2017): 97-105. While some scholars examine the commercial implications of this passage, none engage with the relationship between taste and profit that I attempt to draw out here.

it, “There was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question” (2.2.339-340). This line illuminates the trend for addressing the popular quarrel between children’s and adult playing companies topically, while recognizing that plays could not make money if they did not take up the debate in some fashion. The line itself functions as Shakespeare’s own acquiescence to include the debate. Shakespeare invites his audience to view the effect of popular tastes on how theater gets made—declining popularity of adult playing companies means declining profits for them as well. At the same time, Rosencrantz’s explanation of the topicality of rivalry between adult and children’s companies is Shakespeare’s way of addressing the popular question in his own play to contribute to the popularity and, thus, the economic profitability of his play. This moment of meta-theatricality invites audiences to consider the relationship between popularity and profit.

As Shakespeare underscores the effects of relationship between popular trends and profit on the theater itself, he also foregrounds the adaptability of the players and the sheer variety of plays they have available in performance. Polonius refers to the players as “the best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited” (2.2.379-382). While these lines ridicule the myriad genres available in the theater, they simultaneously celebrate that variety. That one acting company can be superlative in a wide range of genres points to the generic variety available from the actors and their plays, underscoring the ways in which plays and players integrate and adapt to their audience’s tastes in order to generate profit for their company.

Similarly, Shakespeare underscores the theater's ability to adjust to new conditions, through both his portrayal of the traveling players and their capacity to adapt to their audience's particular needs at Elsinore. Hamlet inquires, "You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in 't, could you not?" (2.2.517-519). The players' ability to study and insert these requested lines into a pre-existing play is crucial to their economic success, further underscoring the ways in which the variety available within the theater operates as one of its primary selling points. The First Player eagerly accommodates Hamlet's preferences, responding to each request, first for the Murder of Gonzago and then for variation to the existing play, each with an acquiescent, "Ay, my lord" (2.2.515, 520). Although Hamlet's payment to the players is not explicit in the text, Shakespeare's attention to the economic circumstance that brought the players to Elsinore allows us to reasonably assume that Hamlet will pay the troupe for their performance. The players generate profit through this adaptability—they travel to foreign countries, they are experts in a range of genres, and they integrate new and existing material to please their audience's tastes. This scene reveals how playwrights viewed the theater as a commodity made resilient by its ability to adapt to and negotiate between disparate tastes in order to generate economic profit.

Notions of the theater as the locus of variety and integration also informed meta-theatrical moments on stage that were more overtly interested in economics. Turning briefly to an example from Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), which I discussed at length in Chapter One, we can see more clearly the ways in which the representational variety offered by the theater became the chief means of profit for Face, Subtle, and Doll. Although each scene in *The Alchemist* remains structurally consistent—a greedy gull

enters the house in Blackfriars desirous of wealth, pays for their “services,” and leaves empty-handed—the play foregrounds theatrical processes as well. While pointing to Lovewit’s home as a metaphor for the theater is not an original claim, what I hope to contribute to this conversation is a consideration of the ways in which the charlatans’ theatricality foregrounds the variety within this meta-theatrical context.<sup>282</sup> Jonson’s attention to theatrical processes throughout, emphatically displays the ways in which the adaptability of the tricksters leads to economic profit. Numerous scholars have made observations about *The Alchemist* and the economic systems it displays, but my interest here is the role of variety within this contained economic network.<sup>283</sup> While in Chapter One I examined the adaptability and variety of payment the tricksters accept, here I turn to the theatrical variety that allows them to accumulate profit. In effect, Jonson lifts the curtain and allows his audience to view the processes through which the Face, Subtle, and Doll Common each change clothing and character to cheat Dapper, Drugger, and Mammon out of their money and goods.

Through a predictable pattern, Jonson foregrounds adaptability as the key means to profit and invites his audience to view theatrical processes that foreground the representational variety available in the theater as its chief means of generating profit.

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282. For further discussion of theatrical metaphors in *The Alchemist*, see Anthony J. Oulette, “‘The Alchemist’ and the Emerging Adult Private Playhouse,” *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 45, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 375-399 and Mary Thomas Crane, “What Was Performance” *Criticism* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 169-187.

283. For scholarship that addresses *The Alchemist* and the developing economy, see, for example, Elizabeth Rivlin, “The Rogues’ Paradox: Redefining Work in *The Alchemist*,” in *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, eds. Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 115–29; Melissa D. Aaron, “‘Beware at what hands thou receiv’st thy commodity’: *The Alchemist* and the King’s Men,” in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage* ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 72–79; Ceri Sullivan, *Rhetoric of Credit*, 108-121; and Lynn S. Meskill, “Jonson and the Alchemical Economy of Desire: Creation, Defacement and Castration in *The Alchemist*,” *Cahiers Elisabethains: A Biannual Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 62 (October 2002): 47-63.



Jonson demonstrates the flexibility available in the playhouse as Face, Subtle, and Doll each alter their costume and character multiple times throughout the play. Depending on the con, Subtle plays the Doctor, as indicated by his robes, while Face plays either a Captain who goes about London recruiting potential gulls or the Doctor's assistant Lungs. Doll Common, a prostitute, plays the Queen of Fairie, a character central to extracting Sir Epicure Mammon's wealth. In its final turn *The Alchemist* toys with the codes of theatrical signification by revealing for the first time that Face is not Face at all, but Jeremy the Butler. "All my Captain's beard / Must off, to make me appear smooth Jeremy" (4.7.130-131). Jonson underscores the layers of adaptability available through theatrical processes at the end of the play as Face alters his appearance by removing his Captain's beard to return to his "real" identity of Jeremy the Butler who cheated all of the other characters out of money through his disguises.<sup>284</sup> This additional layer of theatricality, subtly suggests that actors cheat their audiences using the same practices of adaptability that Face, Subtle, and Doll employed throughout *The Alchemist* to cheat their gulls. In fact, the more adaptable the actor, the greater potential they have for generating profit as each servant in Jonson's play performs multiple roles.

As Jonson displays the adaptability of theatrical processes for the gulls in the play as well as his own playhouse audience, he does so in explicitly economic terms. While economic interests are unambiguous throughout *The Alchemist*, Jonson further

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284. For general discussions of costume and con in *The Alchemist*, see Derek B. Alwes, "Service as Mastery in *The Alchemist*," *Ben Jonson Journal* 17, no. 1 (May 2010): 38-59; and Lois Potter, "How Quick Was a Quick Change: *The Alchemist* and Blackfriars Staging," in *Thunder at a Playhouse: Essaying Shakespeare and the Early Modern Stage* eds. Peter Kanelos and Matt Kozusko (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), 200-211. For discussions specific to the Spanish suit as an inter-theatrical object, Sean McEvoy, "Hieronimo's Old Cloak: Theatricality and Representation in Ben Jonson's Middle Comedies," *Ben Jonson Journal* 11, no. 1 (2004): 67-87; and Jonathan Gil Harris "Shakespeare's Hair: Staging the Object of Material Culture," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 479-491.

emphasizes adaptability as critical to fiscal gain in the Epilogue, when the actor who plays Face/Jeremy comes forward and speaks as an actor rather than a character:

And though I am clean  
Got off from Subtle, Surly, Mammon, Dol,  
Hot Ananias, Dapper, Drugger, all  
With whom I traded: yet I put my self  
On you, that are my country: and this pelf  
Which I have got, if you do quit me, rests  
To feast you often, and invite new guests. (5.5.159-165)

It is the actor's ability to effortlessly transform from one character to another, or play multiple parts at once, that generates the profit for Jeremy, once again displaying the ways in which adaptability leads to profit. By allowing his audience to view the transitions and changes between different characters, Jonson calls attention to theatrical processes as the house in Blackfriars where the play is set becomes a loose stand-in for the theater itself.<sup>285</sup> In doing so, Jonson portrays the theater as a site of integration where different kinds of plays and performances come together, any number of characters are available, and different kinds of spectators and their desires all come together. In this sense, the theater becomes a site of integration that brings together people from all over London with all different expectations for what they can gain from the playgoing.

As these insular examples from *Hamlet* and *The Alchemist* demonstrate, economic and cultural concerns intersect in the theater as a play's capacity to please its audience's desires influenced its commercial success. In brief, the more people who came to see the play, the more money the theater took in, and the more playgoers liked the play, the greater potential it had to enjoy multiple performances, thereby earning greater profit. However, adapting to the tastes of their audience was also a point of frustration for

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285. For further discussion of this claim, see R. L. Smallwood, "'Here in the Friars,'" 142-160.

playwrights. They increasingly addressed these frustrations through para-theatrical materials such as Prologues and Inductions. For example, in Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (1611) the Prologue comments at length on audience expectation and tastes:

A play expected long makes the audience look  
For wonders, that each scene should be a book  
Composed to all perfection. Each one comes  
And brings a play in's head with him; up he sums  
What he would of a roaring girl have writ,  
If that he finds not here, he mews at it. (Prologue 1-6)<sup>286</sup>

The Prologue assures the audience that tragedies are out of fashion and if they give this play a chance they will enjoy it—but they must set aside their individual expectations to do so. The Epilogue for *The Roaring Girl*, however, issues a warning about the limits of variety available on stage, pointing out that not all tastes can be accommodated within a single play: “If we to every brain that's humorous / Should fashion scenes, we with the painter shall / In striving to please all please none at all” (28-30). Additionally, *The Roaring Girl* addresses the issue of adaptability and fashion through the Epistle for the published text, which compares “the fashion of play-making” to the “alteration in apparel,” noting how both plays and clothing must constantly be changed and altered to suit the season as well as the tastes of their consumers.<sup>287</sup> Through this Epilogue, Dekker and Middleton draw an important distinction between the adaptability of a single play and the variety available within the theater more generally. While a play is limited in the

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286. Dekker and Middleton. “The Roaring Girl,” 1449.

287. While I turn to material that appears in a published play text for this example, I refrain from a full treatment of published playbooks in this chapter. Prefatory material of printed playbooks could certainly extend this discussion, however, I view playbooks as a secondary example of theater's ability to adapt to its audience. Performance was the primary medium through which playwrights explored theater's variety and adaptability. Prefatory materials in playbooks frequently offered revisions or remonstrations to audiences for failed performances.

extent to which it can change to suit different tastes, the theater itself can offer a range of plays to complement different tastes. Each of the para-theatrical materials of *The Roaring Girl* point to the theater's ability to adapt to the changing fashions and tastes of its audience and invite the audience to practice this same trait in their own tastes and desires.

For many playwrights, as numerous prologues and inductions suggest, the variety available in the theater was also a problem insofar as audiences came to expect different qualities from the plays they attended. Variations among audience's tastes were a problem to be dealt with at the risk of losing profit for the playing company. These challenges made their way to the stage through para-theatrical materials. For example, in John Day's Induction to *The Isle of Gulls* (1606) the Prologue airs his frustration to the Blackfriars audience directly:

Alas! Gentlemen, how is't possible to content you? You will have rayling and invectives, which our Author neither becomes his modesty to write, nor the eare of a generous Auditory to hear: you, must have swelling comparisons, and bombast epithetes, which are as fit for the body of a comedy as Hercules' shoe for the foote of a Pigmei: yet all these we must have, and all in one play, or 'tis already condemned to the hell of eternal disgrace.<sup>288</sup>

Here, the range of genre available in the theater becomes a problem for the single play, as the variety overwhelms the potential for success. The above examples from *The Roaring Girl* and *The Isle of Gulls*, foreground theater's adaptability by emphasizing the variety of genre and representation available within the playhouse. At the same time, these examples also call attention to the limits of adaptability—that a single play cannot possibly accommodate all of these different desires and expectations even though a single theater potentially can.

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288. John Day, *The Isle of Gulls* (London: The Harrow in Britain's Burse, 1606), A3r.

In an attempt to contain his audience's expectation and their detrimental effects on his plays, Ben Jonson places concerns about audience expectations in explicitly economic terms that emphasize theater as a commodity in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Rather than a Prologue, Jonson employs a Scrivener who presents the business of playgoing as a contract "between the spectators or hearers at the Hope on the Bankside, in the County of Surrey, on the one party, and the author of *Barthol'mew Fair*, in the said place and county on the other party" (Induction 65-68).<sup>289</sup> Jonson stipulates that each audience member shall judge the play individually, according to their opinion and no one else's. This Induction calls attention to theatrical processes in the form of the relationship between the playwright and his audience as it attempts to formally lay the groundwork for the interactive exchange of performance. Yet Jonson positions the process of judgment within an explicitly economic framework:

It shall be lawful for any man to judge his sixpenn'orth, his twelvepenn'orth, so to his eighteenpence, two shilling, half a crown, to the value of his place, provided always his place get not above his wit. And if he pay for half a dozen, he may censure for all them too, so that he will undertake that they shall be silent. He shall put in for censures here, as they do for lots at the lottery. Marry, if he drop but sixpence at the door, and will censure a crown's worth, it is thought there is no conscience or justice in that. (Induction 87-96)

The contract Jonson stipulates foregrounds the variety of audience members in the playhouse, emphasizing the theater as a site of both economic and cultural integration where various classes of Londoners convene paying various prices for admittance. As in the *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, we again see emphasis on variety as Jonson calls attention to the different price points available to playgoers, making theater accessible to audience members of varying social classes. Jonson highlights this as yet another

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289. Ben Jonson, "Bartholomew Fair," in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 969-1065.

example of theater's adaptability to changing conditions that allowed the theater to profit economically. London's population was growing at an astonishing rate as members of the aristocracy were drawn into the city for both business and pleasure.<sup>290</sup> Native industry also contributed to the growth of the city as wage laborers took up residence in and around London.<sup>291</sup> The theater, as Jonson showcases here, attracts its profit from both of these populations, appealing to a stratified audience. Although economically profitable, Jonson suggests this model may be culturally damaging as it encourages his audience to judge the play based on the coin for which they paid admittance.

The theater in this period is extremely interested in its own ability to generate profit amid the emerging global economy as consumer desires became diversified among the range of wares available. This comes up in a variety of ways, be it passingly in scenes or as the subject of entire plays. Early modern playwrights underscored the variety available in the theater that generated profit for the theater by foregrounding how the theater adapts to suit the preferences and needs of its audience. At the same time, playwrights also promoted the theater itself as a site of integration where varying needs came together, which ultimately generated greater profit and solidifies London's global reputation. By foregrounding the ways in which consumers of the theater valued the variety available there, early modern playwrights underscored the ways in which the theater models adaptability as the path to profit and cultural capital in the form of learned social competencies.<sup>292</sup> The performance medium, in other words, did not simply reflect existing cultural practices about how to value adaptability, but contributed to them by

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290. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 385-392.

291. Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 149.

292. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 5.

offering representations of value that participated in ongoing discourses—including, as I discuss further, notions of variety and adaptability as traits that were essential to profit.

“You Are Like to Pay For It”: Variety as Profit in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*

While some playwrights explored their medium’s adaptability and variety through contained instances as discussed above, other playwrights sustained this interest as their play’s central focus. One such example is Francis Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. At the center of this play are two fictional audience members, the citizen grocer George and his wife Nell, who came to the Blackfriars theater to see a play called “The London Merchant.” However, their disruptive behavior cripples the intended performance and transforms spectator into spectacle. Throughout the show George and Nell interrupt scripted scenes to speak directly to the actors as well as to members of Beaumont’s Blackfriars playhouse audience seated on stools alongside them on stage.<sup>293</sup> In these moments of disruption, George and Nell demand that the actors perform entirely different scenes and incorporate their apprentice, Rafe, into the performance, altering the course of “The London Merchant” through a series of outlandish requests. Moreover, Beaumont displays the ways in which theater is uniquely capable of such contortions. Because of George’s status as a citizen and a grocer and the Blackfriars’ reputation as a theater for elite audiences, criticism of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* typically takes up the

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293. For a discussion of the Blackfriars stage audience and social performance, see Amanda Bailey, *Flaunting: Style and the Subversive Male Body in Renaissance England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) and Tiffany Stern, “Taking Part: Actors and Audience on the Stage at Blackfriars,” in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 35-53. For a discussion of Nell and George’s seating as a transgression of social boundaries, see Janette Dillon, ““Is Not All the World Mile End, Mother?”: The Blackfriars Theater, the City of London, and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 9 (1997): 127-148.

competing tastes of audience members to speculate on why the play failed commercially.<sup>294</sup> However, in what follows I will examine the ways in which this play foregrounds the processes through which audience taste steers theater and theater potentially profits economically by obliging to its audiences' desires, despite the play's historical commercial failure. Although George and Nell's requests, at first blush, display popular taste of an unworldly audience, and the intended play, "The London Merchant," belies the sophisticated tastes of a cosmopolitan audience, Beaumont situates London as the site of convergence for the plot of both plays and the tastes of both audiences. Thus, amid the citizen's interjections, Beaumont positions both the theater and London as sites that integrate competing tastes and cultures to gain profit. Beginning with the interruption of the Prologue, then proceeding to a pair of disruptive moments that vary in genre and representation, I examine the staged economic transactions of the play that culminate in a series of rapid-fire vignettes that pay tribute to London. Each of these moments foreground theatrical processes and underscore the ways in which the representational and generic variety of the theater reflects and participates in the emerging relationship between adaptability and commercial success, both for London and its stage.

A mere three lines into the Prologue for "The London Merchant" George halts the play and makes his way onto the stage, declaring, "Down with your title, boy; down with

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294. Most criticism of the play deals with its audience in some way. For example, Michael Shapiro argues that the play contained no elite characters for the Blackfriars' elite audience members to relate to, see Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 76-77. Andrew Gurr speculates that the audience contained some citizens who were offended by Beaumont's satire, see Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, 312. Joshua S. Smith argues that the play satirizes "both the citizenry and the Blackfriars' upper-class audience, thus obfuscating its ostensible satirical aim and perhaps explaining the failure of *The Knight's* debut," see Joshua S. Smith, "Reading Between the Acts: Satire and Interludes in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," *Studies in Philology* 109, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 474-495.



your title.” (Induction 9).<sup>295</sup> Rather than a play that is “From all that’s near the court” as the Prologue promises, George and Nell request “something notably in honour of the commons of the city” (Induction 25-26). The Prologue attempts to shuffle these interlopers off, citing various practical reasons, but George and Nell persist. They demand that their apprentice, Rafe, will play a grocer who will slay a lion with a pestle. The citizens negotiate what Rafe will wear for a costume, how his part will unfold, and even invent a title for their play. Each request underscores the variety available within the theater, as the citizens make generic and representational changes to the performance itself. Amid this flurry of requests George becomes especially preoccupied with the kind of instruments that will provide musical entertainment between acts. Although the Prologue insists it is impossible, George demands shawms, a type of woodwind instrument.<sup>296</sup> Proposing his own solution, George declares:

Citizen: I’ll be at the charge of them myself, rather than we’ll be without them. ... There’s two shillings. Let’s have the waits of Southwark. They are as rare fellows as any are in England, and that will fetch them all o’er the water with a vengeance, as if they were mad.

Prologue: You shall have them. Will you sit down then? (Induction 100-109)

George and Nell’s interruption to the Prologue draws attention to the processes through which theater is made and understood. As the citizens sort out practical matters like costume, plot, and title, they point to the theater as theater by drawing attention to the representational variety available there as they sort through the different options of costumes and plot devices based on different genres. The citizens’ interruptions foreground the variety that is available in the theater. They also call attention to the

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295. Francis Beaumont, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

296. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “shawm, n.” Accessed June 2017. Oxford University Press.

theater's ability to appease its audience through these choices, which culminate in this conflict over the shawms. The citizens keep Beaumont's playhouse audience perpetually aware of the play's status as a fictional entertainment, ultimately illuminating the ways in which the variety of taste influences theatrical processes.

In addition to underscoring the endless variety of possibilities available within the playhouse, the Induction highlights the variety of tastes at work in the playhouse between the interests of the fictional citizens and the sophisticated preferences of Beaumont's Blackfriars audience.<sup>297</sup> The shawms in particular exemplify the conflicting tastes of high- and middle-brow audiences since the instruments were considered unfashionable and were associated with the open-air public theaters.<sup>298</sup>

Beaumont highlights the theater as a site of cultural integration where popular and sophisticated tastes converge. As the Prologue and the other players work to accommodate George and Nell's popular tastes in order to continue their performance of the more sophisticated "London Merchant," Beaumont demonstrates the extent to which audiences shape the plays that get performed. By staging the differences between high- and middle-brow culture in one play, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* not only displays

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297. Critics who deal with issues of taste in the play generally make the distinction between the common taste of the public theater and the more elite taste of Blackfriars audiences. Often, this distinction is reflected in the three different plays happening simultaneously. First there is "The London Merchant," the play rehearsed by the playing company for the refined tastes of the gentlemen audience at Blackfriars. Second is "The Knight of the Burning Pestle," which features the grocer's apprentice, Rafe, suited to the common preferences of common London audiences. Third is the series of interactions between the Boy Prologue and Nell and George. For discussion of the three competing plots see Dillon "Is Not All the World?," 127-148; and Andrew Gurr, "Introduction," in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 1-96.

298. Zitner, Sheldon P., *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 60n99; for further discussion, see Bruce Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe: A History of the Hautboy, 1640-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 18. See also Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 215; and Smith, "Reading Between the Acts," 483. For more on outdoor use of shawms in London, see Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 518.

theater's adaptability, but invites its audience to practice cosmopolitan attitudes through their mutual tolerance of the conjoined plots.

The interaction between Nell, George, and the Prologue regarding the shawms places theatrical processes within an economic context as well. By having George pay two shillings to acquire the waits of Southwark, Beaumont exposes the economic processes through which theater is made, revealing the ways in which audience preferences, rather than systems of patronage, determine what makes it to the London stage. According to Alexander Leggatt, Beaumont "demystifies theatre by presenting it as a cash transaction."<sup>299</sup> Although the Prologue initially resists the majority of George's demands, once the citizen hands him two shillings for the shawms the Prologue appears more pliable and assures George that the company will grant his request. This exchange between Prologue and grocer foregrounds the theater itself as a commodity by positioning market processes alongside theatrical ones. Ultimately, the scene reveals the influence of money on commodities and how consumer desire shapes the market by determining the kind and degree to which items are available.

The next time George gives an actor money it is at Nell's suggestion, in order to circumvent their apprentice's fictional arrest. Having lodged at an inn, Rafe finds himself in debt to the Host, whom he calls, in keeping with generic convention, "the Knight of the Bell." Although Rafe attempts to use his status as a knight and the custom of courtesy to avoid paying the debt, the Host threatens to "cap," or arrest, Rafe. At this point, Nell implores her husband to intervene:

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299. Alexander Leggatt, "The Audience as Patron: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," in *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England*, eds. Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 20.

Wife: Look, George, did not I tell thee as much; the Knight of the Bell is in earnest. Rafe shall not be beholding him. Give him his money, George, and let him go snick-up.

Citizen: Cap Rafe? No. [Rises and goes to Host.]—Hold your hand, Sir Knight of the Bell; there's your money. Have you anything to say to Rafe now? Cap Rafe? [Returns to seat.] (3.175-180)

Upon George's payment of twelve shillings to the Host, the dispute resolves and Rafe continues on the episodic plot dictated by the citizens.

When George stops the play this time, he breaks the fourth wall to a greater degree than he and his wife did in their payment to the Prologue for shawms. Rather than speaking with the actor as a member of the company, George enters the world of the play and interacts with the fictional Host to resolve Rafe's fictional debt. Beaumont more explicitly underscores the theater's pliability through this interruption by having the scene completely change course. Beaumont calls attention to the generic variety available in the theater, and the competing cultural elements associated with genre, by integrating different genres into a single play. As Alexander Leggatt points out, the problem in this scene is that Rafe and the Host are "in a different play" and they talk past each other.<sup>300</sup> Extending Leggatt's reading, not only are they merely in different plays, they are in different genres of plays as Beaumont showcases the generic adaptability of the theater. Although the citizens initially demanded a performance in honor of the city, suggesting a civic pageant, the plot George and Nell invent, with its wandering knight-errant, is instead inspired by the romance genre, a genre readily identified as out of fashion, but

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300. Leggatt, "Audience as Patron," 301. See also Lucy Munro, "The Knight of the Burning Pestle and Generic Experimentation," in *Early Modern Drama: A Critical Companion*. eds. Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., Patrick Cheney, and Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 189-199.

very popular still.<sup>301</sup> Meanwhile, the Host's attempt to collect his money is indicative of an entirely different genre, city comedy, a genre native to London.<sup>302</sup>

By characterizing the stalemate between Rafe and his Host as a difference in genre, Beaumont points to the theater as a location that caters to both fashionable and common tastes through its generic variety. Through the merger of generic convention in this and later scenes, Beaumont implicates his audience in a kind of theatrical cosmopolitanism that invites the audience to seamlessly navigate and adapt to the burlesque of theatrical convention that he employs throughout the play. The tension that arises between taste and genre in this scene demonstrates the ways in which variety on the theater's part, and adaptability on the audience's behalf, potentially lead to greater profit for the theater.<sup>303</sup>

The scene in the inn also extends the economic context of the theater, showcasing it as a commodity that is uniquely situated to adapt to consumer desires. In the instance of the shawms Beaumont illustrated that audiences were willing to spend money on the elements of playgoing they found pleasurable. In this scene he shows that Nell and George are equally willing to spend money to avoid an unfavorable turn in the performance itself. In fact, after the grocer pays the Host twelve shillings to get Rafe out

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301. Although considered unfashionable, it is also worth mentioning that the romance genre was associated with foreign countries, such as Spain and Portugal. Thus the generic conventions that Beaumont integrates throughout the play carry with them undertones of native and foreign integration as well. See Zitner, *Knight of the Burning*, 71n212.2. For a full discussion of the influence of Spanish Romance on this play, see Lee Bliss, "Don Quixote in England: The Case for *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," *Viator* 18 (1987): 361-380; and Barbara Fuchs, "Plotting Spaniards, Spanish Plots," in *The Poetics of Piracy: Emulating Spain in English Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 55-78. Furthermore, Romance was primarily identified with the common tastes positioned throughout the play in contrast to the fashionable tastes of London's elite. See Zitner, "Introduction," 28.

302. Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 1-2.

303. Again, that the play actually failed at the very commercial aims that I argue it demonstrated, is indeed ironic.

of debt, Nell reveals that there was potential for even greater profit: “I would you should know it, Rafe has friends that will not suffer him to be capped for ten times so much, and ten times to the end of that” (3.181-183). Since admission at Blackfriars playhouse was set between three and sixpence, Nell’s claim hugely increases the potential economic capital available from her and her husband.<sup>304</sup> Even at the cost of twelve shillings, George pays twenty-fives times more to craft a play that accommodates his tastes than what he paid to enter the theater in the first place. The scene between Rafe, George, and the Host again makes visible theater’s ability to adapt to its audiences’ shifting tastes as is its primary path to profit. By having George interrupt the play to settle Rafe’s fictional debt, Beaumont calls attention to the commercial aspects through which theater is constructed, laying bare the potential for profit that arises from catering to the tastes of audience members willing pay. This scene illuminates the market system, further displaying how consumer preference shapes the market more generally by transparently demonstrating how taste influences the theater.

While the scene in the tavern emphasizes representational and generic variety through an instance of local commerce, the next time George gives money to the players it happens in a setting beyond London. In one of her interjections, Nell changes the geographical location of the play’s fiction entirely:

Wife:	George, let Rafe travel over great hills, and let him be very weary, and come to the King of Cracovia’s house, covered with velvet, and there let the king’s daughter stand in her window, all in beaten gold, combing her golden locks with a comb of ivory, and let her spy Rafe and fall in love with him, and come down to him and carry him into her father’s house, and then let Rafe talk with her.
Citizen:	Well said, Nell, it shall be so.—Boy, let’s ha’t done quickly.

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304. Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, 27.

Boy: Sir, if you will imagine all this to be done already, you shall hear them talk together. But we cannot present a house covered with black velvet, and a lady in beaten gold.  
 Citizen: Sir, boy, let's ha't as you can, then. (4.33-45)

Through the Boy's response to Nell's request, Beaumont underscores the representational limitations of the stage and what it can display. At the same time, moving the play to Cracovia showcases theater's ability to adapt on a global scale, representing both native and foreign locations. Instead of moving to set the scene as he has for other requests from Nell and George, the Boy hesitates and points to the limit of theatrical representation. The theater cannot stage beaten gold or a house enrobed in black velvet, however, it can display Cracovia. Rather than highlighting the representational variety of the stage as before, this moment calls attention to the audience's own adaptability as central to the processes through which theater is made. While the theater has limitations to what it can materially portray, spectators can imagine these qualities and adapt to theater's limitations. In the same way that the theater must adapt to suit the audience, the audience must adapt to the theater, revealing the reciprocal cycle of adaptability between actor and audience that is essential to theater's creation. Like the earlier examples from *The Roaring Girl* and *The Isle of Gulls* that highlight the dangers of theater's pliability, this moment in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* foregrounds the theater's generic and representational variety while it also works to limit its audience's expectations about what is possible in the theater. Ultimately, this scene highlights the ways in which the audience contributes to the theater's ability to adapt and contort based on their tastes and desires.

By setting one of the scenes in a foreign country, Beaumont invites his audience to view cultural adaptability as profitable as well. When the King of Cracovia's daughter enters, Nell remarks on her dress, to which George quickly responds, "Ay, Nell, it is the

fashion of that country, I warrant'ee" (4.57-58). Here, we see George attempt to display his cultural capital through his knowledge of foreign countries as he and his wife interact not with real Polish nobility or commerce, but Poland as it is imagined and mediated by the theater. To the Blackfriars audience, George and Nell appear foolish in their attempts to practice fashionable behaviors through theatrical illusion. However, while this scene encourages Beaumont's audience to laugh at Nell and George's cultural ignorance, it also invites them to imagine a space that is at once both London and Cracovia, blending one into the other and positioning the theater as the site where both converge. By calling his audience's attention to the ways in which the stage both is and is not London and Cracovia, Beaumont invites his audience to view the ways in which the theater's cultural adaptability promotes cosmopolitan attitudes among its viewers that ultimately cultivate cosmopolitan attitudes among London playgoers.

As the scene between Rafe and the Princess of Cracovia unfolds, Beaumont extends his audience's imagined English commerce from the local to the global scale by transitioning from a tavern to a foreign country. George interrupts this scene to give Rafe coins: "Hark thee, Rafe, there's money for thee. Give something to the King of Cracovia's house; be not beholding to him" (4.107-109). Rafe goes on to give a detailed inventory of how he spends George's money, distributing it among the household servants who care for him during his stay. The amount ranges from twelve pence each to the king's chamberlain and horse-keeper to a groat for the laundress. Finally, Rafe bestows to the princess, "Threepence to buy you pins at Bumbo Fair" (4.123). This scene stages the distribution of English money within an imagined foreign context. As George gives Rafe money to bestow on the imagined foreign household, Beaumont unites native



and foreign economies within the play. This exchange foregrounds the expenditure of English money in a foreign country, displaying not only the adaptability of the global economy, but also the superiority of English coin within that economy, since a mere London citizen is able to spend abroad and afford gifts for a foreign King's household. This moment evokes a sense of civic pride similar to the scene in which Thomas Gresham purchases the Orient pearl in *If You Know Not Me, II* that I discussed at length in Chapter Two. But in this scene George gives Rafe money unprompted and seemingly for the sheer pleasure of spending, presenting a contrast to the tavern scene, when George gave Rafe money to avoid being arrested, thereby altering the plot. George's coin, however, as the Blackfriars audience is no doubt aware, goes to the playing company, not to the Princess of Cracovia. Through this scene, Beaumont highlights the economic profit available from theater's ability to adapt and create any variety of foreign settings. This global scale of theatrical adaptation allows English audiences to vicariously experience the pleasure of traveling abroad, including spending their money abroad. However, because this is simply the illusion of foreign travel, the theater maintains the profit within the English economy.

The final series of interruptions from George and his wife return the focus to London, further foregrounding the variety available in the theater and pointing again to the potential for profit that arises from economic and cultural adaptability. The citizens request a collection of scenes that celebrate the city and the genres most closely associated with it:

Citizen:        Let Rafe come out on May Day in the morning and speak upon  
                      a conduit, with all his scarfs about him, and his feathers and his  
                      rings and his knacks.

Boy: Why, sir, you do not think of our plot; what will become of that, then?

Citizen: Why, sir, I care not what become on't. I'll have him come out, or I'll fetch him out myself. I'll have something done in honour of the City. Besides, he hath been long enough upon adventures. Bring him out quickly, or if I come in amongst you—

Boy: Well, sir, he shall come out. But if our play miscarry, sir, you are like to pay for't.

Citizen: Bring him away, then. (Interlude Four 9-20)

Although Rafe delivers a lengthy May Day speech to satisfy the citizens, no sooner has “The London Merchant” resumed than Nell interrupts again, this time demanding a scene indicative of an English history play. She requests that Rafe “call all the youths together in battle-ray, with drums and guns and flags, and march to Mile End in pompous fashion, and there exhort your soldiers to be merry and wise, and to keep their beards from burning” (5.57-61). Shortly after Rafe performs a rousing motivational speech to prepare his troops for battle, the citizens request a death scene. The Boy attempts to get the citizens to see the ridiculousness of this request: “’Twill be very unfit he should die, sir, upon no occasion and in a comedy too” (5.286-287). As the citizens’ demands become more frequent and more varied, Beaumont invites his playhouse audience to view more plainly the range of genres available in the theater and the theatrical processes through which such variety is maintained.

This last flurry of requests from Nell and George achieves the celebration of the city that George initially requested in the Induction to the play. For example, Rafe’s May Day speech glorifies all that the city has to offer in the spring season. Importantly, Rafe refers to the elite, who are “now abroad for their disport and play,” while the commoners enjoy the delights of the city (Intermean Four, 41). Because the elite travel abroad for their pleasure, Rafe urges his fellow Londoners to soak up all the city has to offer by

traveling to nearby London neighborhoods such as “Hogsdon or to Newington, where ale and cakes are plenty. / And let it ne’er be said for shame, that we the youths of London / Lay thrumming our caps at home, and left our custom undone” (Intermean Four, 57-58). Rafe suggests that while lords and ladies travel abroad as is the fashion, one never need leave London because of the variety the city itself offers, including the influence of foreign countries.<sup>305</sup> Beaumont invites the audience to view both the stage and London as sites of integration that champion cosmopolitan attitudes among theater audiences and London citizens. Beaumont celebrates the cultural variety available within the city while foregrounding the ways in which cultural adaptability in the form of cosmopolitanism is profitable to the city.

While the citizens plan their elaborate May Day scene the Boy becomes increasingly concerned with the economic success of “The London Merchant.” He ultimately holds George and Nell responsible with his threat that if the play fails they “are like to pay for it” (Interlude Four 19-20). Here the Boy uses the word “pay” to indicate that George and Nell will be held responsible for the play’s failure in both cultural and economic contexts. Although the Boy suggests that Nell and George are likely to pay for the play’s poor reception among the Blackfriars audience, no money changes hands this time. However, they do exchange the promise of future payment as the relationship

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305. The specific towns that Rafe mentions are worth further investigation. At Hogsdon or Hoxton, located north of London, there was apparently a well-known tavern which was the subject of a pamphlet published in 1609 titled “Pimlyco, or Runne Red Cap, ‘Tis a Mad World at Hoxton” that characterizes the neighborhood as a strange and exotic land inaccessible to foreigners. For more on this pamphlet and London leisure, see Peter Howell, “‘Tis a Mad World at Hogsdon’: Leisure, Licence and the Exoticism of Suburban Space in Early Jacobean London,” *The Literary London Journal*, 10, no. 2 (Autumn 2013). Newington, just south of the city was home to a little known theater called Newington Butts from 1576-1595. For a brief history, see “Newington Butts 1576-1595,” Shakespearean London Theatres. Accessed March 2018. De Montfort University.

between taste and money becomes almost formulaic by the play's final act. When Nell demands that Rafe perform a battle speech at Mile End, her list of demands for the scene ends with "and we'll pay for 't" (5.63-65). Importantly, Rafe's return to the familiar spaces of London following foreign travel generates a guarantee of additional payment. In fact, Rafe's travels generate more profit for the theater than would have otherwise been possible. Despite the Boy's repeated warnings that the theater's adaptability to its audience's taste may carry economic dangers if taken to extremes, through the final series of requests Beaumont demonstrates the ways in which adaptability in the playhouse potentially generates even further profit for the theater when audiences are willing to pay.

The play invites its audience to imagine London as a world city that values adaptability, staged here through generic and representational variety within the theater, as one of the city's own advantages in a global market just as it is in the playhouse. Importantly, the play takes a detour through foreign countries and encounters imagined foreign culture in order to reach the festive civic atmosphere of the final act. In addition to adaptability, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* also displays hybridity through its intermixture of genre and cultural tastes. Beaumont models for his playhouse audience the ways in which London, like the theater, is made greater by its ability to integrate variety in the form of competing tastes and foreign influences, just as the play is able to generate greater profit from its audience because of its ability to integrate theatrical variety. Through the constant interruptions, Beaumont invites his Blackfriars audience to view the adaptability of the players and cosmopolitanism as qualities that ultimately lead to profit for both the theater and for London.

“The Cornucopiae of Her Rumours”: Foreign News in the London Theater

While *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* only tacitly connects native and foreign integration, Ben Jonson’s *The Staple of News* (1626) addresses issues of native economy, foreign commodities, and the adaptability required for London to thrive much more directly. Performed well over a decade after the examples discussed so far, *The Staple of News* capitalizes on the foreign news trade. Foreign news had become a popular site of international engagement in London and Jonson incorporates the fashionable foreign news into the play itself. Theater and foreign news were intimately intertwined in early seventeenth-century London. As one Swiss traveler observed, Londoners had a habit of “learning at the play what is happening abroad; indeed men and women folk visit such places without scruple, since the English for the most part do not travel much, but prefer to learn foreign matters and take their pleasure at home.”<sup>306</sup> In this spirit, Jonson positions the theater as central to London’s developing cosmopolitanism by underscoring the similarities between the commercial theater and the foreign news trade. Jonson frames the play with spectators, a group of women called Gossips, who position themselves as consumers of popular theater. Meanwhile, within the play, Jonson features the consumption of foreign news. By foregrounding consumers of both the theater and the news trade, Jonson underscores the variety and cosmopolitan attitudes that generate profit, as well as cultural capital, for both the theater and the news trade. Although critics typically discuss this play in terms of its thematic and structural divisions, my aim in this section is to demonstrate how *The Staple of News* invites its audience to value theater as a

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306. Thomas Platter “Travels in England in 1599,” *The Journals of Two Travellers* (London: Caliban Books, 1995), xiv.

fashionable commodity, not unlike the foreign news trade itself.<sup>307</sup> Jonson situates integration as the central force for the accumulation of profit and cultural capital, which is integral to the success of the theater and is crucial to London's success as an emerging world city.

Like the citizen and his wife in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, a group of four Gossips, "gentlewomen lady-like attired," enter during the Prologue to take their seats on the stage.<sup>308</sup> Each Gossip names a different reason for attending the theater. Gossip Mirth asserts, "We are persons of quality, I assure you, and women of fashion, and come to see and to be seen," (Induction 8-10). Meanwhile, Gossip Tattle reveals that she came for the news, as she warns the Prologue, "Look your news be new and fresh, Master Prologue, and untainted. I shall find them else, if they be stale or fly-blown, quickly" (Induction 1. 25-27). The Prologue asks Gossip Expectation for sympathy, requesting that she "would

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307. For discussion of Jonson's juxtaposition of realism and allegory, see Ashley Thorndike, *English Comedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1929) and John Palmer, *Ben Jonson* (New York: Viking Press, 1934). See also Anthony Parr, "Introduction," in *The Staple of News* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988): 1-52. For discussion of structural division of the play between main plot and intermeans, see Catherine Rockwood, "'Know Thy Side': Propaganda and Parody in Jonson's *Staple of News*," *English Literary History* 75, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 135-149; and Devra Rowland Kifer, "The Staple of News: Jonson's Festive Comedy," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1972): 329-344. For discussion of Jonson himself as a divided playwright, see Mark Z. Muggli, "Ben Jonson and the Business of News," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 32, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 323-340 and Stuart Sherman, "Eyes and Ears, News and Plays: The Argument of Ben Jonson's *Staple*," in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (New York: Routledge, 2001), 23-40; and Jane Rickard, "A Divided Jonson?: Art and Truth in *The Staple of News*," *English Literary Renaissance* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 297. For critics who attempt to create unity for the play through a discussion of its thematic elements, see Edward Partridge, *The Broken Compass: A Study of the Major Comedies of Ben Jonson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 187; Calvin G. Thayer, *Ben Jonson: Studies in the Plays* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 177; Robert Knoll, *Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 174. For discussion of how the play mirrors economic theorists of the early seventeenth century, see Stephen Deng, "Global Oeconomy: Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News* and the Ethics of Mercantilism," in *Global Traffic: Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature and Culture from 1550-1700*, eds. Barbara Sebek and Stephen Deng (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 245-264; and Ryner, *Performing Economic Thought*, 133-165. Ryner ultimately returns to the traditional line of criticism remarking on how the play "oscillates between two different representational registers: the realist and the allegorical" (147).

308. Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*, ed. Anthony Parr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 64.

expect no more than [she] understand,” fearing that she set her expectation for the play too high (Induction 31-32). Finally, eyeing up Gossip Censure, the Prologue identifies an additional reason the group of women attend the play:

- Prologue: You come to see who wears the new suit today, whose clothes are best penned (whatever the part be), which actor has the best foot, what king plays without cuffs and his queen without gloves, who rides post in stockings and dances in boots?
- Censure: Yes, and which amorous prince makes love in drink, or does overact prodigiously in beaten satin and, having got the trick on’t, will be monstrous still, in despite of counsel. (Induction 40-48)

Gossip Mirth even provides an account of entering the tiring house “to see the actors dressed” (Induction 62-63). The Gossips’ chatter destroys the theatrical illusion before it could even be established.<sup>309</sup> Like Beaumont and Shakespeare, Jonson invites his audience to view the theater as theater; however, Jonson employs this technique in order to foreground theater as a fashionable commodity. For Jonson, the playhouse is a site where audiences can culturally elevate themselves, since in one location they can “be seen,” exchange news, and view current fashion, all under the pretense of going to a play.<sup>310</sup>

While Jonson points to the theater as a place where audiences can both learn and practice fashionable behaviors, he also underscores how the theater creates an opportunity for playgoers to display their cultural capital through taste. Despite the subtle variation in their incentives for attending the theater, the Gossips ultimately attend plays

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309. For a discussion of the Gossips as a pedagogical tool designed to control the playhouse audience’s response, see Nina Levine, *Practicing the City*, 139-148 and Kristine Steenbergh, “Gossips’ Mirth: Gender, Humor, and Female Spectators in Ben Jonson’s *The Staple of News* (1626),” in *Laughter, Humor, and the (un)making of Gender: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Anna Foka and Jonas Liliequist (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 85-102.

310. For discussion of the fashionable female consumer, see Karen Newman, “City Talk: Women and Commodification in Jonson’s *Epicoene*,” in *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 503-518.

in order to “arraign both [plays] and their poets” (Induction 21-22). At the same time, this kind of local chatter distracts from the play. Jonson emphasizes the need for good judgment from the audience regarding their taste as well as their ability to accurately recognize the innovation of the play itself, which would potentially generate cultural capital for the spectator through their appreciation of theater. The Prologue requests that the audience notice Jonson’s innovations:

Mark but his ways,  
What flight he makes, now new. And then he says,  
If that not like you that he sends tonight,  
'Tis you have left to judge, not he to write. (Prologue, 27-30)

Jonson positions the Gossips alongside his own audience as judges as well as spectators, inviting his audience to display their own cultural capital by noticing the play’s newness, rather than merely relying on idle playhouse gossip. By pointing to his own play’s newness, Jonson invites his audience to view the play itself as news, inviting a comparison between the commercial theater and the foreign news trade that identifies both as profitable to playgoers in the form of cultural capital.

In the Prologue to the play, Jonson highlights the theater itself as a source for news around the city that fosters hybridity. The news acquired in the theater joins together different neighborhoods of London under one roof:

Alas, what is it to his scene to know  
How many coaches in Hyde Park did show  
Last spring, what fare today at Medley’s was,  
If Dunstan or the Phoenix best wine has? (Prologue 13-16)

The different areas Jonson highlights through references to locations around London call attention to the cultural distinction between playgoers who are also joined together in the playhouse. Jonson brings together private and public spaces along with elite and common



locations from all over London to foreground the theater itself as a site of integration that unites the city together. Hyde Park was a private royal hunting ground, while Medley's was a public tavern. Jonson's reference to "Dunstan's" may refer to St. Dunstan in the East or St. Dunstan in the West (located at opposite ends of London), while the Phoenix theater, also known as the Cockpit, was located on the outskirts of the city.<sup>311</sup> Jonson underscores the variety of places that unite within the playhouse, highlighting the theater as the source for local news as well as emphasizing the theater as a model of hybridity that generates cultural capital for playgoers.

While Jonson positions the theater as a site for the exchange of local news and center of variety through the Gossips that frame the play, within the play itself, the Staple news office accentuates the same variety, adaptability, and cultural capital that Jonson identified for the playhouse. Jonson showcases the variety of news available from the Staple, ranging from "news of state" to "curious news" such as "Magic, or alchemy / Or flying I'the air" (3.2.19, 94, 95-96). The Staple also offers pieces of religious news, court news, "news o'the stage," news about city pageants, and even "forest news" (3.2.198, 307). The Register, who manages the news office, embraces the variety and proclaims to his customers that the Staple office:

'Tis the house of fame, sir,  
Where both the curious and the negligent,  
The scrupulous and careless, wild and staid,  
The idle and laborious: all do meet  
To taste the cornucopiae of her rumours,  
Which she, the mother of sport, pleaseth to scatter  
Among the vulgar. Baits, sir, for the people!  
And they will bite like fishes. (3.2.115-122)

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311. Janelle Jensted, *The Map of Early Modern London*. Accessed July 2017. Victoria: University of Victoria.

The language that the Register uses in this passage makes the process sound crude and violent in its comparison to fishing, hooking its prey and ultimately slaughtering them for profit. At the same time, the Register's description of the Staple office and its function evokes the description of the theater and its audience that Jonson laid out in the Prologue, thereby inviting the playhouse audience to view the Staple's similarities to the theater.

In particular, Jonson calls attention to the ways in which both Staple office and theater bait their customers. Inside the Staple, Jonson foregrounds the commercial aspects of the foreign news trade as coins fly about the office as furiously as news itself does. Although Jonson had framed plays in terms of cultural capital in the Prologue, in this scene characters discuss news in exclusively economic terms. Each piece of news is assigned a corresponding economic value. For example, "news / O' the saints at Amsterdam" costs "six pennyworth" and news from Constantinople is set at "nine pennyworth" (3.2.123-124, 141). When the customer asks for more news from Amsterdam, the Register informs her that this news is "dearer, it will cost you a shilling" (3.2.137). Through this transaction, Jonson reveals the way the Register baits his customers, exploiting their desire for the freshest possible news, in order to generate additional profit for the Staple office.

Jonson also illuminates the ways in which transactions in the news office are profitable to the consumer in the form of cultural capital. The news office enables customers who pay for news using economic capital to accumulate cultural capital. For example, Lickfinger, a master-cook, enters the Staple declaring, "News, news, my boys! / I am to furnish a great feast today, / And I would have what news the Office affords" (3.2.160-163). By having a cook furnish his feast with fashionable news rather than

sumptuous foods, Jonson emphasizes the ways in which both commodities are consumed. Moreover, Lickfinger asks for both court and stage news, conjoining elite and common interests through his inquiry (3.2.185,198). Lickfinger's feast increases the cultural capital of those who attend, by joining together both court and stage news which provides access to a range of information for his guests. Jonson calls particular attention to the relationship between profit and cultural capital when Pennyboy Junior, the son and heir figure of the play, ostentatiously pays Lickfinger's bill at the news office:

Lickfinger:     What must you have for these?  
P. Junior:        Thou shalt pay nothing,  
                    But reckon 'em I'the bill. There twenty pieces  
                    Her grace bestows upon the Office, Tom.  
                    *He gives twenty pieces to the Office*  
                    Write thou that down for news.  
Register:         We may well do't:  
                    We have not many such.  
P. Junior:         There's twenty more  
                    If you say so. (*Doubles it.*) (3.2.214-220)

This transaction illuminates two ways in which news increases cultural capital for those who possess it, and shows how both conspicuous consumption and cultural capital can, in turn, generate news. Again, the Register baits his customer, soliciting an additional twenty pieces from Pennyboy Junior in order to ensure that his display of wealth will be written down for news. Consumers can either purchase news or they can become news themselves. In this sense, those with access to wealth can purchase cultural capital as the scene illustrates. This self-propagating process recalls the Induction to the play and the Gossips' initial reason for attending Blackfriars: "to see and be seen" (Induction 1.10). Jonson again invites his audience to view both theater and news as fashionable commodities that generate cultural capital for their consumers.

Jonson highlights the Staple as a site of integration that joins together various types of Londoners as well as a wide assortment of international cities. He showcases the news office as a model of hybridity that attracts “both the curious and the negligent, / The scrupulous and careless, wild and staid, / The idle and laborious” (3.2.116-118). The Staple is a site of integration for elite and common Londoners, highlighting the fact that Londoners of all kinds were united by their interest in foreign news and their willingness to be baited into paying for it. The bustling office also creates a spectacle of adaptability by featuring customers rapidly requesting news from all over the world: Rome, Florence, Holland, Bohemia, Amsterdam, Constantinople, Leipzig, Spain, the Indies, Japan, China, and America. Moreover, the news office unites each of these seemingly disconnected places and locates them within London. The variety of news available in the Staple office, coupled with the variety of countries from which the news is imported, positions the office as a site of international integration. It also serves as an abundant source of cosmopolitanism that lures all sorts of Londoners in search of cultural capital.

Yet the Gossips reject the international hybridity offered in the Staple office, criticizing the foreign news available in favor of their own local chatter instead. Gossip Censure determines that the news is “monstrous! Scurvy and Stale!” (Intermean Three 14). Mistress Tattle agrees, criticizing that she “ha[s] had better news from the bake-house by ten thousand parts, in a morning, or the conduits in Westminster; all the news of Tuttle Street, and both the Almshouses, the two Sanctuaries and Cannon Row to boot!” (Intermean Three 17-23). Gossip Mirth joins in, indicating that she gathers better news on the streets in London, naming Gardiner’s Lane, Bowling Green, and Tuttle Field specifically (Intermean Three 25-28). The Gossips again locate the theater within a local

context. Like the locations mentioned by name earlier, these specific locations pointedly join disparate areas together within the space of the theater. The Gossips locate the theater as a site for the exchange of gossip just like the bake-house, conduits, and streets they name, pointing to the ways in which the theater functions as both a news source as well as an entertainment.

Importantly, the Gossips also locate the news they acquire, in the playhouse and around London, within a system of cultural capital. They claim of their news:

But whether it were true or no, we gossips are bound to believe it an't be once out and afoot. How should we entertain the time else, or find ourselves in fashionable discourse for all companies, if we do not credit all and make more of it in the reporting. (Intermean 3.37-41)

The exchange of news is itself a form of entertainment for the Gossips, not unlike the theater. Jonson again underscores the similarity between the theater and the news trade as sources of cultural capital. As the Gossips convey how and where they acquire their news, Jonson calls attention to the similar processes at work in the playhouse. He is thereby inviting his audience to consider the ways in which they accumulate cultural capital by attending the theater just as fashionable Londoners do by visiting the news office. The Gossips profit from attending the theater just as they profit from accumulating local news, emphasizing the processes through which the integration of both locations increases the cultural capital of consumers.

The final Intermean positions the theater within a system of economic value, underscoring the ways in which the theater (and this play in particular), like the news office, baits playgoers in order to generate profit. In this final appearance of the Gossips, they criticize the play just as they criticized the foreign news. They run through a list of alternative endings for the play and critique the characters they liked and disliked. When

Gossip Mirth mentions the Staple office, Gossip Expectation interrupts her to judge

Jonson:

Mirth:           And dedicated to the sustaining of the Staple –  
Expectation:       Which their poet hath let fall most abruptly.  
Mirth:           Bankruptly, indeed!  
...  
Expectation:       Broken —  
Tattle:           Nonsolvent —  
Censure:           And forever forfeit —  
Mirth:           To scorn. (Intermean Four, 73-75, 81-84)

The Gossips call attention to the theater as a commercial enterprise through their judgment, determining that the play is not good, and thus, is not economically sustainable. They critique the play through a series of economic wisecracks. When Mirth points out that Jonson let the plot about the Staple fall away, “abruptly” Mirth quips, “Bankruptly,” which highlights the relationship between the economic success of the play and the tastes of its audience. The Gossips launch further into a series of fiscal terms to judge both play and playwright: “Broken” indicates that the play is financially ruined, which is reiterated by “non-solvent,” signaling that Jonson cannot pay what he owes.<sup>312</sup> By calling attention to the economic context and judgment of the play, Jonson urges his audience notice to the broader processes of the commercial theater.

Through the Gossips’ criticism of the international news acquired through the Staple office in the play, Jonson reveals the “bait” for his own theater audience—the promise of news. For a play titled *The Staple of News*, both the Staple and foreign news play a relatively small part. This is, perhaps, the innovation he invites his audience to view initially in the Prologue. The Gossips (along with some members of Jonson’s own

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312. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* “broken, adj.” and “nonsolvent adj. 1a.” Accessed July 2017. Oxford University Press.

audience, perhaps) paid admission to the Blackfriars theater expecting a play about and including fashionable foreign news. In this sense, the promise of foreign news within the play functions as the theater's own "bait" to lure in a greater number of audience members in search of the latest fashion. Jonson not only thematically invites comparison between foreign news and local theater through this bait, he actually joins them together. This integration further positions the theater as a model of cosmopolitanism where the local news of the city and the international news of the Staple unite. By integrating the fashionable foreign news trade with the popular theater, Jonson identifies the ways in which adaptability is potentially profitable for the theater itself.

Jonson distinguishes the theater as a fashionable commodity, inviting the comparison between his own art and the foreign news trade throughout this play. Both the news office and the theater are models of integration. In the same way that the Staple positions London at the center of the world the Gossips establish the theater as the center of London, where news from all neighborhoods come together. Jonson also highlights that both the Staple and the theater function as a source of cultural capital for their audiences while they generate profit for themselves, and that they do so by baiting their customers to spend greater amounts of money. Ultimately, through this comparison Jonson attempts to elevate the theater to the level of other fashionable commodities such as the foreign news trade by identifying the ways in which theater functions as a model of cosmopolitanism. As Jonson baits his own audience by amalgamating the news trade and the commercial theater, he also demonstrates first-hand the ways in which adaptability and integration create the potential for greater profit for the playhouse and beyond.

## Conclusion

Returning to Jonson's *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, we can now see a different purpose for the interest in the adaptability and variety available both in the New Exchange and the theater. When the Master asks for "no other security but their good words and fair handsels," he solicits his viewers' good wishes for the opening of the New Exchange as a successful commercial venture while he also solicits payment symbolic of the future economic success of the new commercial venture (ll. 240-241). While I began this chapter by thinking about how this solicitation integrates theater's commercial success with the success of the New Exchange, we might further consider this moment in the light of the ways in which playwrights integrated London with the rest of the world in plays like *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* or *The Staple of News*. By calling attention to the adaptability and variety required for the theater, its audience, the Staple, or the New Exchange, playwrights repeatedly invited comparison between their art and other commercial ventures that implicated London's growing economic endeavors. The act of asking for fair handsels not only indicates hope for future commercial success for the New Exchange, or the theater, but commercial success for the city, as London transforms into a world capital with greater access to foreign novelty and fashionable entertainment.

In the early seventeenth century, as London experienced extensive cultural and economic changes and the tastes of London audiences became more difficult to predict, playwrights began to explore the extent to which the adaptability of their medium could prove an asset. As this chapter has demonstrated, on one hand plays themselves can be a variety of things and on the other hand they can portray that adaptability meta-theatrically. The ways in which London's economy began to value and explore variety to



accommodate a growing market intersects with playwrights' interests in the variety available within the theater in fascinating ways. Playwrights meta-theatrically staged their own commodity's struggle to remain appealing in a market inundated with fashionable novelty from abroad. To do this, playwrights integrated English theater and foreign commodities in ways that ultimately substitute the commercial success of the London theater with the commercial success of London itself. The hybridization of theater, variety, novelty, and international interests on view in this chapter continued well into the second half of the seventeenth century, as is evidenced by the well-known frontispiece to *The Wits* (1662), along with its title page that boasts, "Together with the variety of Humours of several Nations, fitted with the pleasure and content of All Persons, either in Court, City, Countrey, or Camp. The like never before Published" (See Figure 5.1). This text, much like the theater itself, promises something for everyone, highlighting the theater as a site of international and social integration. The variety available within *The Wits* is the very thing that makes it appealing to readers—virtually guaranteeing that there is something any consumer, regardless of nationality or social standing, will enjoy. Moreover, this text models hybridity as a marketing tool, including short dialogues from a range of popular plays in an attempt to attract a greater variety of consumers.

The plays I examine in this chapter foreground the different ways in which the early modern theater modeled adaptability and hybridity as something profitable, increasing the economic profit or cultural capital of those who were themselves adaptable to the fluctuating circumstances of the marketplace. Each example utilizes the

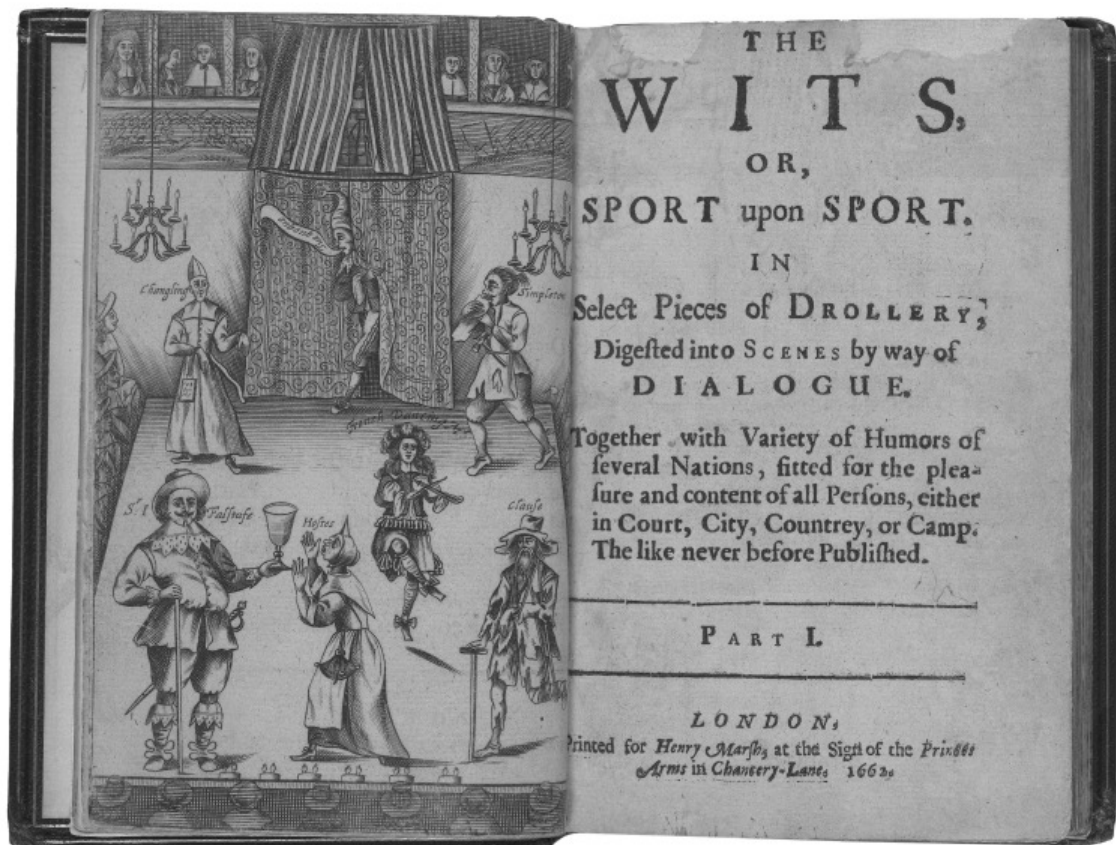


Figure 5.1: *The Wits, or, Sport Upon Sport*, 1662. Folger Shakespeare Library.

familiar medium of theater to display concepts that consumers and economists struggled to understand as the global market transformed the world around them. These scenes reflect early modern playwrights' interests in how theater participated in and reflected London's emerging status as a world city. Whether in brief scenes that illustrate the players' adaptability to their audience, or prologues that lament their audiences' varied tastes, playwrights confronted the generic and representational variety unique to their medium, exploiting theater's ability to adapt to evolving tastes and circumstances as its greatest selling point in a market inundated with foreign luxury commodities. Plays such as *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Staple of News* highlight theater's commercial value further by staging the very processes through which theater generates

its own profit. In doing so, playwrights invited their audiences to view plays as a commodity whose value extends well beyond mere entertainment. Instead, playwrights championed their art as a model of adaptation and hybridity, qualities that generate the economic profit and cultural attitudes that were essential to cultivating and maintaining London's status as a cosmopolitan city and center of world mercantilism well into the twenty-first century.

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