The Shapes of Fancy: Queer Circulations of Desire in Early Modern Literature

Christine Varnado

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2011
Abstract

The Shapes of Fancy:
Queer Circulations of Desire in Early Modern Literature
Christine Varnado

This dissertation rethinks the category of queer desire in early modern drama and travel narratives. Moving beyond previous scholarship which has conceived of early modern sexuality chiefly in terms of same-sex erotic acts, proto-homosexual identities, or homosocial relations, this dissertation describes new forms of heightened erotic feeling which are qualitatively queer in how they depart from conventional or expected trajectories, and not because of the genders of lover and love object. Each chapter considers an iconic scene in early modern literature, and draws out a specific, recurring affective mode – paranoid suspicion, willing instrumentality, inexhaustible fancy, and colonial melancholia – which I argue constitutes a queer form of desiring.

Chapter 1 argues that both a witch trial pamphlet, *Newes from Scotland* (1591), and a witch trial play, *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) exemplify the violent, projective cycle of paranoid suspicion and confession by which the witch trial defines a witch according to his or her secret, deviant desires. Chapter 2 focuses on cross-dressed figures who are willingly instrumentalized as erotic facilitators in two comedies, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher’s *Philaster* (1609) and Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl* (1611), arguing that “being used” makes the go-between an integral part of an ostensibly-heterosexual relationship, transforming it into a queer triad. Chapter 3 takes up the promiscuous desire for too many objects in William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1602) and Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew
Fair (1614). I read these very different comedies as both propelled by impossible-to-satisfy hunger, and trace the etymology of the concept of “fancy” to show how desire for pleasurable and beautiful things became characterized as a queer desire for improper and unproductive commodities. Chapter 4 moves into the New World, analyzing two accounts of failed colonialism: Thomas Harriot and John White’s reports from the English expeditions on Roanoke Island (1590); and Jean de Léry’s memoir of the short-lived French colony in Brazil (1578). In these texts I uncover a distinctly melancholic and queer mode of colonial desire: one predicated on impossible longing, renunciation, and haunting, thwarted identification with lost native American “others.”
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1 - 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It Takes One to Know One: Paranoid Suspicion and the Witch Hunt</td>
<td>29 - 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Used, and Liking It: Erotic Instrumentality and the Go-Between</td>
<td>100 - 171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything That Moves: Promiscuous Fancy and Carnival Longing</td>
<td>172 - 235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Worlds, Lost Selves: Queer Identification and Colonial Melancholia</td>
<td>236 - 311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>311 - 327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


List of Illustrations

Figure 1, *Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life and death of Doctor Fian...* (London: for William Wright, 1591), Ciiv and title page verso. ........................................................................................................................................50

Figure 2, Jean de Léry, *Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Bresil, autrement dite Amerique* ([Geneva]: Pour Antoine Chuppin, [1580]), 107. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University. ........................................................................................................................................263

Figure 3, John White, “A weroan or great Lorde of Virginia III,” “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America Novv Called Virginia...,” *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Frankfurt, 1590), A. ........................................................................................................................................298

Figure 4, “A chieff Ladye of Pomeiooc VIII,” “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America Novv Called Virginia...,” *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Frankfurt, 1590), A6. ........................................................................................................................................299

Figure 5, “The trwe picture of one Picte I,” “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America Novv Called Virginia...,” *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Frankfurt, 1590), Ev. ........................................................................................................................................302

Figure 6, Jean de Léry, *Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Bresil, autrement dite Amerique* ([Geneva]: Pour Antoine Chuppin, [1580]), 246. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University. ........................................................................................................................................307
Acknowledgements

This project would never have been completed without the help, support, and forbearance of a great many people. My chiefest debt is of course to my main advisor, Jean Howard, whose care and mentorship are as staggering as her insight is brilliant. This dissertation would be a paltry fragment without the rigorous and thorough advice – and matter-of-fact, much-needed levity – of my other advisors, Julie Crawford and Alan Stewart. I was fortunate to have in these three an absolute dream of a dissertation committee. Mario DiGangi has provided invaluable mentorship at many stages, from coursework to the dissertation defense, and I am deeply grateful to him and to Kim Hall for the wonderfully thoughtful and clarifying comments they brought to this project as external readers. I have grown as a scholar and teacher at Columbia thanks to the brilliant pedagogy and welcoming friendship of other faculty as well, chiefly Jenny Davidson, Anne Lake Prescott, and Erik Gray in the English department, and Elizabeth Povinelli in Anthropology. I am also, of course, forever in the debt of Virginia Kay, Pamela Rodman, and Joy Hayton.

I am grateful for the material support I have received throughout my time in graduate school from the English department’s Marjorie Hope Nicolson fellowship, a Graduate Fellowship from Columbia’s Institute for Research on Women and Gender, the (sadly now defunct) Andrew W. Mellon Graduate Fellowship in Humanistic Studies, and the Harry S. Truman Scholarship, which in 2001 generously and convincingly defined my chosen career as a professor of English literature, gender, and sexuality studies as “public service,” a designation which I strive every day to uphold.

The ideas in this project have been sparked and nurtured in Shakespeare Association of America seminars led by Will Stockton and Jim Bromley on “Intimacy and Interiority,” and by Stephen Guy-Bray and David Orvis on “Queer Theory Now”; as well as in conferences and panels organized by Tiffany Werth and Vin Nardizzi (Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society), Sharon Patricia Holland (Modern Languages Association), and Rafael Hernandez (American Comparative Literature Association). I also owe an inexhaustible debt to my undergraduate literature professors from Duke University: Maureen Quilligan, Laurie Shannon, Jan Radway, Ian Baucom, Tom Ferraro, and Melissa Malouf; and to my M. Phil. advisor Wes Williams, formerly of New College and now of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford.

The people without whom I undoubtedly would not have survived graduate school are of course my fellow students, friends and provocateurs: Fred Bengtsson, Marina Graham, Anjuli Raza Kolb, John Kuhn, Bryan Lowrance, and Sara Murphy. The indomitable Cohort which includes Alicia DeSantis, Mary Kate Hurley, Alvan Ikoku, Ruth Lexton, Jen Buckley, and Adam Hooks. And, for these debts as well as those I cannot express, Alice Boone, Armando Mastrogiovanni, Atticus Zavaletta, and my missing inverse, mirror-image twin Musa Gurnis-Farrell.
In marking the end of my formal education, this dissertation represents the culmination of a process my parents, Peggy and Carey Varnado, set in motion three decades ago by teaching me to read and cultivating my passion for language and learning. I hope that it will continue to bear fruit of which they can be proud.

And finally, my deepest thanks for the very life that I lived while engaged in this project – for every day, every thought, and every word – must go to the two people, Abigail Joseph and Anthony O’Rourke, without whom there would be nothing.
for Tony and Abigail
Introduction

“The Shapes of Fancy: Queer Circulations of Desire in Early Modern Literature” redefines queerness in early modern plays and travel narratives by identifying a set of erotic and affective modes which can be called queer because of how, and not by whom, desire is expressed. The English Renaissance has long been a privileged site, in academic inquiry and cultural fantasy alike, for pondering the history of sexuality, love, and erotic desire – especially the kinds of desire that might be regarded as part of the history and pre-history of homosexuality. Moving beyond previous scholarship that has defined sexuality before the nineteenth century in terms of sex acts, identities, or same-gender social bonds, my project re-conceives of queerness as a quality that is not determined by the genders of lover and love object. These forms of desiring have not previously been described as queer, though I argue that they are modes of feeling, affective expression, and relationality which are recognizable within genealogies of queer affect stretching across history. I will make the case that what is queer about a work of literature can sometimes be the circuit, trajectory or tone in which erotic energy is produced and transmitted. In doing so, I hope to offer new ways to account for such modalities of desire as part of a larger picture of sexuality represented in early modern literature: one which de-centers subjects and acts in favor of an emphasis on how forms and styles of desire are enacted across genders, genres, and social formations. The more expansive notion of queerness that emerges from this approach better integrates female and male, transgressive and recuperative, sexual and not-explicitly-sexual desires. Its heightened attunement to the wayward erotic currents running
within, beneath, and around social norms thus brings previously unrecognized forms of non-heterosexual affection into the scope of the study of Renaissance eroticism.

Each of the chapters in “The Shapes of Fancy” considers an iconic scene in early modern literature: the witch trial discovery scene, the scene of cross-dressed romantic interaction, the market scene of consumer desire, and the colonial encounter scene. These scenes have been produced as iconic moments of the period, in fact, in twentieth-century literary criticism; but, rather than adhering to the formative readings that have both made them iconic and obscured their other meanings, I point out instead how each scene is structured by a specific, recurrent affective mode. My reading practice for uncovering these modalities of desire is a psychoanalytic one, in which evidence of eros is found in the language of these texts, and the erotic is a primary vector of access to their dynamics. I am describing a set of qualitative, literary effects which create “a certain unsettling in relation to heteronormativity” – impulses that signal a crisis or disturbance in the telos of heterosexual reproduction; as well as those urges and attachments that are not even non-normative in the normative ways, which circumvent or refuse conventional trajectories of erotic investment altogether.¹ Chapter 1 looks at a popular pamphlet from the Edinburgh witch panics, Newes from Scotland (1591), and John Ford, Thomas Dekker, and William Rowley’s true-life domestic tragedy The Witch of Edmonton (1621), to examine the eroticized forces of paranoia and suspicion deployed in witch hunts to produce the sexually-suspect figure of the witch. Chapter 2 focuses on cross-dressed figures who are willingly instrumentalized as erotic go-betweens by heterosexual couples in two comedies, Francis

¹ Carla Freccero, “Queer Times,” in The South Atlantic Quarterly 106.3 (2007): 485. This structural and theoretical definition of “queer,” which is connected to rupture, subversion, category crisis, the uncanny, and jouissance of both positive and negative kinds, has been developed as a methodology by the psychoanalytic and deconstructive school of queer theory, represented by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michael Moon, and Leo Bersani, among others; one of the major contributions of this field is considering valences of feeling and desire in language as within the realm of the erotic (and thus sexuality studies), in the absence of genitality.
Beaumont and John Fletcher’s *Philaster, Or Love Lies A-Bleeding* (1609) and Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl* (1611). The circuits of affect and desire transmitted by these ambiguously-gendered “thirds” give rise to queer relational forms which subvert distinctions between agency and passivity, and natural and prosthetic erotic bodies. Chapter 3 focuses on the insatiable, all-consuming desires portrayed in William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1601) and Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* (1612), examining how indiscriminate appetites such as capricious fancy and voracious hunger create queer economies of generation, in both the material and aesthetic realms. And Chapter 4 argues that a certain melancholic turn of colonial longing – recorded in Jean de Léry’s account of the short-lived French Protestant colony in Brazil, and Thomas Harriot and John White’s reports from the failed English colony at Roanoke, Virginia – constitutes a queer form of colonial desire, founded not in triumphal possession but in loss and impossible trans-cultural affinities. Each of these chapters is also subtended by a different theoretical move from psychoanalytic literary criticism – by a notion of paranoia, fetishistic substitution, polymorphous perversity, or melancholia – which provides a vocabulary for the feelings I describe, and a connecting term linking literary language from the past to structures of affect and desire that are part of the discourse of non-normative sexualities today.

In grouping together four modes of desiring – paranoid suspicion, willing instrumentality, inexhaustible fancy, and colonial melancholia – I decouple the category of queer desire from the binary logics of sex, gender, and object choice that have long been definitive of how sexuality is studied in the period. Unlike either the homosexual acts (such as sodomy) and same-sex-oriented social types (like the tribade, or the tailor) which were specifically condemned as suspect in early modern culture, or the relatively more accepted homoerotic bonds (between
friends, or between master and servant) which made up a complex, contested regime of socio-sexual norms, the modes of desire at the center of this project do not depend on anatomy, gender, or sexual behavior. Instead, they are recognizable as queer for their excesses of scope, intensity, and duration, or for their atypical, errant, or perverse direction, wandering into peculiar investments and attachments to the wrong kinds of objects, too many objects, or none at all.

The plays and prose narratives addressed in this project are super-saturated examples of each mode of eros I discuss; though they are by no means the only examples, and I intend for my readings to open up new vectors for the analysis of desire in other texts. The new readings I suggest of these well-read texts are attuned to the erotic valences of how feeling is materialized as affect, in bodies and things as they transmit desire – both within literary works, and through time, to us. I use the terms “erotic” and “desire” in the broad sense informed by psychoanalysis, to mean a felt craving or affinity which, though it need not be explicitly or concretely sexual, is infused with both the pleasure of investment in some love object (however ideational), and the pain of irremediable lack. Desire can be negative as well as positive, as in the heightened states of aversion, anxiety, paranoia, suspicion, and rage that I describe as erotically-invested affects in this project. The queerness of the affective dynamics I draw out in these texts emerges from the formal qualities of secrecy, impossibility, and excess that structure their erotic economies – in other words, out of the ways desire works in them. Often, these affects are staged through material objects – such as clothing and accessories, animals, body parts, instruments, and ornaments – which carry erotic charges and significations, altering the shape of desire in the scene. Recent work in material culture has been concerned with things as they bear upon early

---

2 In my definition of “desire,” I am beginning from the standpoint that desire (a feeling, in all the complex embodied, emotive, and mental ways that signifies in early modern literature) can be unconscious as well as conscious; that it can inhere in formal features, collectivities, and discourses as well as individual subjects; and that traces of desire are shown and seen in affect, the performance and expression of emotion.
modern subjects, ideologies, or practices.³ In this project I am, by contrast, investigating things as they transmit affect, mediate relations, engender and alter connections, and function as indicators or repositories of eroticized investment.

My project intervenes in a few major critical conversations, bridging disparate areas of literary studies. I am building on the wealth of scholarship on early modern sexuality, which examines the discourses and representations of sex and eroticism found in specific social contexts. Though my approach diverges from that work by extending the interpretive categories I pursue in these texts beyond the concepts of the erotic and desire, queer and normative, which were operative in the period.⁴ My intervention is also motivated by the many recent studies of the early modern history of feeling, on how affects were theorized and experienced, humoral theory, and the passions.⁵ The object of this work’s analysis – embodied and figurative manifestations of affect in literature, and the tacit, fantasmatic systems and economies that can be extrapolated from such traces – is often very closely akin to mine; but although it is replete with vocabularies of excess, danger, copiousness, degeneration, permeability, and compulsion, no one has undertaken a queer analysis of early modern affect until now.

I am also participating in a conversation taking place in queer studies which seeks to redefine what “counts” as queerness beyond agentive transgression and resistance, and beyond

---
³ Will Fisher connects historical work on material things to the construction of sexuality and gender identity in Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
exclusively sexual behavior, to feelings, moods, stylistic tropes, and registers of expression. My move to re-think queerness as a collection of affective stances and mechanisms, rather than as a subset of sex and gender relations, is a new intervention in early modern studies; but it has a history in the literary theory generated over the past decade by the “affective turn,” which explores how subjective and collective states of feeling can be archived and have historical persistence, and the “negative turn,” which posits a queerness defined by unruly, “antisocial,” and destructive affects. This work employs a psychoanalytically-inflected vocabulary to describe structurally queer desires: where queerness inheres in what is not done, or what is done “wrong,” rather than in a genital or gender configuration. Queer theory offers a set of tools for mapping such nebulous, alienated, impossible shapes of desire in modernist and Victorian literature, and naming them as part of the same vast, submerged continent of “queerness” as related or tangential dynamics of homoeroticism. I want to prove that this affect-based methodology can also be transported back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: that there are modalities of eros and feeling in literature of the distant past which have not been accounted for by rubrics of sex acts and social identities, and thus are likely to escape notice within a synchronic historicist framework. It is my hope that this intervention will open up new points of leverage for queer analysis within early modern literature, and new methods of reading it for its

---


cross-historical resonances, further illuminating why it has been so amenable to queer interpretation across so many different sexual regimes and literary traditions. I take the whimsical ejaculation with which Duke Orsino concludes his soliloquy on love at the opening of William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* – “So full of shapes is fancy/ That it alone is high fantastical!” – to be a meditation on the unpredictable queer generativity of erotic desire: the “fancy” that, unanswerable to heteronormative propriety, can be promiscuous and perverse in its “shapes” and objects. In what follows, I posit that this “fancy” takes many more shapes in the popular drama and prose media of this period than have been counted in previous accounts of early modern sexuality.

In defining “queer” as non-normativity *in the realm of desire*, I am conscious of dual, equal theoretical imperatives. First, I preserve “queer” as an unstable term that does “the work of *différance,*” “the ‘trace’ in the field of sexuality”9 which troubles categories, undermines assumptions about what goes together, and points out what doesn’t fit in to some received narrative of desire. Second, I am committed to the corollary project of insisting on “queer” as a force that must “intersect with, touch, or list in the direction of sex – the catchall word that here refers to gender, desire, sexuality, and perhaps anatomy,”10 a force that specifically describes feelings and disturbances around embodied desire. I argue that desire can be legible, and legible as queer, in the places in early modern literary texts where erotic energy wanders where it should not be, where surprising and weird affect leaps out and swerves the erotic dynamics of a scene, “unsettling” what we may have expected to see, and generating something else in its place.11

---

10 Ibid., 490.
11 This idea of a “swerving” or tropism inherent to eros, whereby its “natural” tendency might be towards homoerotic rather than heteronormative trajectories, is indebted to the idea of “homonormativity” put forward by Laurie Shannon in “Nature’s Bias: Renaissance Homonormativity and Elizabethan Comic Likeness,” in *Modern Philology* 98.2 (2000) 183-210.
Some of the alternate, non-genitally-focused erotic structures treated in this project include: non-reproductive desires (suspicion, narcissism, autoeroticism, being-instrumentalized) and asexual or immaterial forms of generativity (parthenogenesis, projective fantasy, artistic production); desires fixed on unnatural objects (use of prosthetic erotic instruments, fetishistic love of material goods, iconoclastic fear of efficacious objects); desires with multiple objects (three- and four-way erotic configurations, unplaced promiscuous hunger); and desires that conceal or annihilate their objects (violence, self- and mutually-destructive desires, unrequited, unconsummated, and impossible longings).\textsuperscript{12}

Because my intervention shifts what is being described as queer from persons, couplings, or relationships, to libidinal investments that do not obviously resolve in sex acts or social roles, these desires have tended to fall outside of both early modern society’s ways of categorizing sex and sexuality, \textit{and} modern scholars’ rubrics for uncovering the queer history of the period. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history of sexuality has largely been characterized, over the past three decades, by a strict interpretation of Foucault’s theoretical point that “homosexuality” – in fact, sexuality itself – is an artifact of a modern sexual regime.\textsuperscript{13} An early line of inquiry in the wake of Foucault’s reception in English was a search by historians and historically-oriented literary critics for archival evidence which would precisely trace the emergence into discourse of “sexual identity” as a discrete social fact (David Halperin),\textsuperscript{14} or of a proscribed category of

\textsuperscript{12} Including non-object-oriented and non-relational states such as paranoia, polymorphous perversity, and melancholia within the field of “erotic desire” is a central move of psychoanalytic queer theory, which considers the whole range of libidinal investments as part of the field of the sexual and questions definite boundaries between the erotic and the non-erotic. See Tim Dean in \textit{Beyond Sexuality} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); also Dean and Christopher Lane, \textit{Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).


\textsuperscript{14} Exemplified by David Halperin, \textit{One Hundred Years of Homosexuality} (New York: Routledge, 1990); and \textit{How to do the History of Homosexuality} (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
“homosexual” which came into being as it was first interdicted (Alan Bray).\textsuperscript{15} Out of this scholarship, the idea that sexuality was conceptualized in early modern England as a matter of “acts, \textit{not} identities” became a kind of historicist “common sense.”\textsuperscript{16} One kind of project to emerge from this notion of Foucauldian paradigms looks at how various forms of power and knowledge were exerted on sexed and gendered bodies, in order to differentiate among specific axes of sexual repression (i.e. the subjugation of women, the stigmatization of non-marital or non-reproductive sex, or the enforcement of gender conformity), and to isolate, if possible, the disciplining of homosexual acts as distinct from other kinds of repression (Bray, Jonathan Goldberg).\textsuperscript{17} This category of question can be paraphrased as: “What persons and acts were suspected and condemned as specifically queer?” I am asking, instead: “What queer desires potentially go unnoticed by that approach?”

One of my central contentions is that looking at discipline, whether religious, legal, or otherwise, as the privileged evidentiary trace of early modern queerness risks limiting what we think of as “queer” to same-gender erotics \textit{as} they were constructed in the official discourses.\textsuperscript{18} This presumptively exempts all the rest of the culture from the possibility of being queer (which too easily slides into presuming it to be “straight,” by excluding it from the discussion of


\textsuperscript{16} In Gramsci’s sense of the term: a culturally hegemonic “common sense” without single cause or origin – a consensus-effect, so to speak, which is nonetheless always multiple and potentially fluid. See \textit{Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci}, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart), 1971.


\textsuperscript{18} Of sex between men in fifteenth-century Florence, where \textit{almost half} the male population was formally incriminated for sodomy (a statistic which problematizes sodomy’s criminality in a way that is never engaged), Halperin concludes from the fact that defendants fall into a clear demographic pattern of older/penetrative and younger/receptive pairs that “This is sex as hierarchy, not mutuality, sex as something done to someone by someone else, not a common search for shared pleasure or a purely personal, private experience…” (115). His taxonomy of premodern sexual categories thoroughly isolates the discursive tradition of male friendship, predicated on likeness, from male “sexual love,” which is “all about penetration and therefore all about position, superiority and inferiority, rank and status” – in other words, “a contradiction in terms: sexual penetration is not the sort of thing you would do to someone you really love” (121).
sexualities altogether). Instead, this project aims to offer an alternative to defining early modern sexuality in terms of the acts and identities marked in contemporary discourse. I hope, by pursuing the nuances of affective investment in drama and narrative, to reach towards the goal suggested by Eve Sedgwick of articulating “some ways of understanding human desire that might be quite to the side of prohibition and repression.”\textsuperscript{19} Attending to traces of queerness which reside beyond disciplinary force reminds us that not all queer feelings are oriented towards the completion of sex acts, not all desires to act resolve in acts, not all acts carried out are detected, not all desires correspond to fixed social roles, and neither all feelings nor all acts are necessarily visible in archives – in the period, or now, to us as readers – in the expected ways. This imperative is borne out across my chapters: I notice forms of queer longing which escape suspicion altogether (Jean de Léry’s investments in his native American love objects), queer transactions and relationships which come under suspicion and risk punishment but triumphantly evade it in the end (the scandalous cross-dressing of Moll Frith, the “Roaring Girl”), queer appetites that are somewhat suspect but never disciplined (Bartholomew Cokes’s voracious consumption-rampage in \textit{Bartholomew Fair}), and phobic queer-producing projection as a force of sexual suspicion, which constructs its objects of desire in order to condemn them (the paranoid erotics of Jacobean witch trials).

But the drive to access the exact beginning of something called “sexuality” is also problematic, because – as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out in her critique of David Halperin’s use of Foucault to authorize such a “Great Paradigm Shift” – to differentiate between a “before” and an “after” to sexuality is to posit the decisive term of comparison, “homosexuality as we currently understand it,” as a present which is then reified as foreknown, inevitable,

homogenized, and renaturalized by having its history told in this linear fashion. While praising efforts to use Foucault to de-essentialize “homosexuality” in its unfixed multiplicity, she points out the common pitfall of emphasizing “the complete conceptual alterity” between earlier homoeroticisms and “homosexuality as we know it today”: that the only way to get from there to here (“homosexuality as we know it today”) then becomes a unidirectional, teleological narrative of the supersession of one model of sexuality by another.

A focus on the historical emergence of sexuality also tends to leave out women, and a history of specifically female forms of queerness – a history which has, of necessity, been written around and despite less archival evidence of social discipline or specific discourses of lesbianism, and a longstanding cultural narrative of the invisibility of lesbian and female eroticisms. As a result of that structural difference, some scholarship on sexuality and early modern women has turned to more figural archives like poetic form (Julie Crawford on the sapphic) or artistic representation (Valerie Traub on painting), or to tropes and types not defined by same-sex contact, as archives of queer erotic meaning (Kathryn Schwarz on amazons, Theodora Jankowski on virgins). In that respect, my project is informed by a lesbian studies methodology of reading for queer structures and stances which are hiding in plain sight, requiring a shift of frame in order to make their queerness visible.

---

Other projects taken up by early modern sexuality studies in the wake of Foucault exist in a somewhat more ambivalent relation to the idea of queerness as transgression, or, in Michael Warner’s definition, “resistance to regimes of the normal.”

In contrast to the work that focused on the disciplining of deviant eroticism, more recent historicist scholarship has tended to focus on the ubiquity, rather than the criminality, of homosocial and homoerotic relations. A wealth of writing on social systems and institutions, from the court and the commercial theater to marriage and the household, has given accounts of how socially and symbolically central various same-sex bonds were to the constitution and sustenance of social life itself in the period – and to the transmission of knowledge and art (Julie Crawford, Richard Rambuss, Alan Stewart, Jeffrey Masten), material goods, power, and capital (Mario DiGangi, Frye and Robertson), theatrical fantasy, and social license (Stephen Orgel). This work tends to emphasize the social and ideological forces conditioning same-sex bonds, and the historical contingency of the period’s concepts of the natural, the body, sexual difference, and genderedness. These methodologies, with their standpoint of historical alterity (the past’s difference from the present), and their

---


rigorous commitment to reconstructing historical discourses of same-sex relationality, are not as well suited to the study of affective states and desires as they are to social systems and bonds; as immaterial, ineffable, often perverse phenomena with a vexed relationship to ideology, feeling and desiring are inherently problematic to historicize.

Building on the foundations of New Historicism, I intend this analysis of qualitatively-queer states of feeling in part as a re-conceptualization of what we regard as the literary trace of queerness, and a new theorization of how desires – especially weirdly, unconventionally non-normative ones – are held and communicated in early modern texts. To me, one requirement of this imperative is that we take seriously literature’s imaginative representations of the world, considering them as idiosyncratic, fictive performances of cultural fantasies and anxieties about desire – which only logically must include some queer fantasies and anxieties, as well as those about the queer. Thinking of both plays and prose texts as this kind of fantasmatic archive breaks down the nonfiction/fiction dichotomy; it also helps to counter the heteronormative assumption that the discourses of sex represented in the historical record include the entire range of erotic urges and affinities circulating in a culture at any given moment. This imperative has informed some historicist literary studies as well, which have sought to interrogate the contradictions within the period’s multiple discourses of sex, albeit still in the interest of more fully explicating early modern thought about sodomy.27

Although the erotic is frequently implicated in other, overlapping discursive categories – as in Alan Bray’s seminal reading of sodomy accusations, in which sodomy is used to signal a threat to the social order; or Gregory Bredbeck’s theory, in which it is used to define the

unacceptable – I contend that focusing on the functions of erotic language as social metaphor or analogy sometimes risks historicizing queer desire out of existence.  

This means that I make it a priority in this project to treat languages of eros as being centrally about desire, rather than as figurative rhetoric about other, more materially locatable ideological confusions or conflicts. Building on Alan Bray’s work, Jonathan Goldberg reminds us that the un-locatability of much homoeroticism and homosexual sex in the period is a problem of naming and reading, that if “sodomy named sexual acts only in particularly stigmatizing contexts, there is no reason not to believe that such acts went on all the time, unrecognized as sodomy, called, among other things, friendship or patronage.”

This project takes that observation one step further, to argue that there is no reason not to also believe that queer affective transactions – and un-acted-on queer desires – went on all the time which were not recognized as friendship, or patronage, or anything else in that culture’s taxonomy of sexuality, as it has thus far been described in criticism. These eruptions are registered by onlookers in these texts as individuals acting strange (getting worked up, overwrought, unreasonable, distracted); misread as something nebulously suspicious, yet altogether different from the queer dynamic at issue; understood as the correct, if violent, reaction of a community in fear; admired or derided for their obsessive virtuosity; or, their affective excesses are not registered at all.

This project develops a critical vocabulary and a set of methodological tools for reading such un-categorized affects as queer forms of desiring, even though they are not fully described

---

28 Eve Sedgwick summarizes the perversely heteronormative uses of historical difference to foreclose conversations about sexuality in temporally-distant literary canons thus: that “passionate language of same-sex attraction was extremely common during whatever period is under discussion – and therefore must have been completely meaningless,” or “same-sex genital relations may have been perfectly common during the period under discussion – but since there was no language about them, they must have been completely meaningless,” or “prohibitions against homosexuality didn’t exist back then, unlike now – so if people did anything, it was completely meaningless,” or “the word ‘homosexuality’ wasn’t coined until 1869 – so everyone before then was heterosexual. (Of course, heterosexuality has always existed.)” Epistemology of the Closet (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 52-53.

by any extant early modern sexual/relational categories. This allows me to read for more conventional erotic or sexual tropes, but not to stop there, because my approach blurs the distinction between sexual and non-sexual, marked and un-marked desires in favor of their affective modes. I posit that by limiting what can be said about erotics in early modern literature to the historically-specific terms available in the culture’s own discourses, we risk two things: 1) our readings will miss a great deal of desire that went un-remarked on as desire, and much of what we will miss will be queer; and 2) we limit ourselves in our critical practice, hobbling the senses of eroticized readerly investment and attunement that can lead to new insights about the literary figuration of desire.

The historiography underpinning this project – in the claim that we can call such qualitative effects “queer” in early modern literature – participates in a theoretical and methodological conversation currently taking place at the nexus of medieval and Renaissance studies and queer theory; this shift towards “queering” temporality seeks to dislodge historicism’s focus on the alterity of the past, questioning linear models of historical time and periodization in order to devise new ways of thinking affect and desire through history. One of its imperatives, as I see it, is to get beyond the idea of sexuality as a set of concepts which emerge at successive moments in history – and the concomitant lexicographical anxiety around the “anachronistic” use of terms for non-heterosexual erotic phenomena from other times and places besides the period in question (from scholars who do as well as those who do not). Yet back-formation is obviously not the answer, either: in “Queering History,” Jonathan Goldberg

---

and Madhavi Menon point out that the project of locating anticipations of present sexualities in the past also follows a teleological, positivist model of history which still “proposes to know the definitive difference between the past and the present,” and can only “apprehend the past in the mode of difference.”\(^{31}\) It seems clear that in order to fully problematize the supposed “truth” of sex “today,” much more of the radical epistemological uncertainty called for by Sedgwick, Goldberg and Menon, Fradenburg and Freccero, and others is needed – more of the courage not to presuppose, as Sedgwick puts it, that “We Know What That Means.”\(^{32}\)

Another imperative of the queer critique of historicism, then, is to develop new methodologies, new reading practices, for perceiving affective linkages between our time and others. To me, this means rehabilitating the critical utility – and queer productivity – of identificatory and presentist modes of reading. But by identificatory, I mean something more like the shock of being-identified, being hailed; or Sedgwick’s notion of “camp-recognition,” which asks, “what if the right audience for this were exactly me?” but wonders if others might be committing their own secret acts of “perverse” recognition. (Sedgwick’s camp subject acknowledges, at the same time, that the feeling has everything to do with reader relations and fantasy – though fantasies are sometimes true.)\(^{33}\) And by presentist, I mean not so much a projective recognition but a revenant one: the uncanny recognition of the presence of the past in the present and future.\(^{34}\) Valerie Traub emphasizes that mining the queer eroticism of other time


\(^{32}\) Sedgwick, \textit{Epistemology}, 45.

\(^{33}\) Sedgwick, \textit{Epistemology}, 156.

\(^{34}\) This idea is suggested in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, “Introduction: Caxton, Foucault, and the Pleasures of History,” in \textit{Premodern Sexualities}, ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (London and New York:
periods is not about defining which figurations “were” erotic; it is an ambivalent negotiation between the competing interests of presentist queer recognition, multiple and contingent Foucauldian genealogy, and contradictory discourses in the period. Although Traub’s question is not ultimately the one I am asking, but a historicist one (“how do we know what is erotic?” in the period, and what tools will “crack the code organizing early modern conceptual categories?”), I am indebted to her attention to critical rubrics for perceiving eroticism, so that it comes to function “less as a self-evident category of behavior or identity than as a heuristic tool. Like gender, eroticism becomes a category of analysis rather than a self-contained object.” Whereas Traub is wary of “the pleasures of identification” across periods, balancing it against “the problematic nature of those pleasures,” I see the strategic suspension of historical alterity in the realm of the erotic as a productive methodology for developing new readings of early modern desire: readings which counter, rather than replicate, hetero-normative history’s privileging of virtuous difference over the (suspicious, problematic, seductive) pleasures of identification.

The queer meanings I draw out in these plays and pamphlets are legible by means of an imaginative, affectively- and erotically-invested critical sense in which desire, rather than sexual identity or eros, functions as a category of analysis, allowing me to read for different mechanisms of desire in different ways across definitional regimes, time periods, and types of evidence. It is my contention that when a frisson of erotic energy and interest – in any of its

36 Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 21 (emphasis Traub’s). Traub goes on to emphasize eroticism’s historical dependency on other areas of analysis: “Preeminently a form of negotiation between desire and the gendered body, eroticism also informs, and is informed by race, age, status hierarchies, and nationality. Like a kaleidoscope, it accrues different meanings with each shift in the angle of vision” (21-22).
37 Goldberg and Menon oppose the “privileging of the hetero” in a model of history “based on hetero difference” in “Queering History” (1609); in their 1994 introduction, “Caxton, Foucault, and the Pleasures of History,” Fradenburg and Freccero acknowledge that “struggling against cultural demonizations of certain kinds of sameness” is one of the projects in which queer inquiry can “call into question the historiographical status of concepts of alterity and sameness.” *Premodern Sexualities*, xviii.
forms, including prurient pleasure, shock, humor, horror, pathos, shame, suspicion, and offense – leaps out and hails our libidinal participation in a text as readers or audience members, we can harness that act of cross-historical identification as a queer form of knowledge production which can bring new valences of eroticism to light. My project here is not to discover/invent a new taxonomy of early modern eroticisms, or to argue for the historical existence of heretofore-unacknowledged sexual categories. Rather, I want to de-center causal and genealogical questions altogether; I aim instead to note and tease out the ways in which temporal moments, both in and of literary artifacts, are made porous, lingering, sticky, jarring, and otherwise heterogeneous by the operations of affect and desire – that is, to be alert to what Bruno Latour and Jacques Derrida have articulated as the disjointure always present within historical time, or the “non-self-identity of any historical moment” to itself.38

This openness to what Carolyn Dinshaw calls the “touch” of the past need not lead to identitarian presumptions: it is a basic tenet of reader-response literary theory that there is no reading without reading-for something, and that meaning is generated as much in ourselves as readers as by the text. Reasserting what another scholar contending with these questions calls “the ageless anachronism whose other name is literariness”39 reminds us that representations of erotic feeling in literature are both utterly impossible to identify with or access as they “really were” through reading; and, at the same time, they can only be registered now via empathetic


recognition of some ineffable mark of “desire.” This project attempts to perform an affect-based study of desire in early modern literature – to call feelings desires, and desires queer, for the resonances that conjure and connect them to queer feelings from other times, for the language of their figuration, and for what they do in the erotic and material economies of the text, not for their social status. I find a pithy statement of this task in the words of early gay theorist Guy Hocquenghem:

There is no subdivision of desire into homosexuality and heterosexuality. Properly speaking, desire is no more homosexual than heterosexual. Desire emerges in multiple forms whose components are only divisible a posteriori, according to how we manipulate it. Just like heterosexual desire, homosexual desire is an arbitrarily frozen frame in an unbroken and polyvocal flux.  

Exclusively homosexual desire is a fallacy of the modern-day imaginary, he says, but “homosexuality has a specially manifest imagery, and it is possible to undertake a deconstruction of such images.” The readings in the following chapters can be said to undertake a “deconstruction” of these texts’ well-known images in an effort to make manifest, perhaps for the first time, the flashes and freeze-frames that mean they might, in whatever momentary or incomplete way, traverse their historical situation; appearing – only discernable “a posteriori, according to how we manipulate” them – as components of a multifarious family album called queerness.

The body of the dissertation follows a trajectory from most to least-suspect modes of desire, incrementally expanding the categories of “queer” and “erotic” as they come unmoored from the disciplining of social transgression. It begins with a chapter on paranoid suspicion,

40 And even that perception varies, as Sedgwick explains eloquently and often, along infinitely proliferating axes far beyond gender, anatomy, or sexual orientation, even within a single historical moment. Epistemology of the Closet, 25-26.


42 Ibid., 50.
which uses the witch hunt to demonstrate the erotically-invested construction and expulsion of queerness from which the other three chapters depart, thus laying the groundwork for the rest of the project’s permutations of affect. It then moves on to three-way, cross-dressed erotic transactions – the closest this study comes to an example of queer sexual consummation – which explicitly thematize the problem of their own legibility as queer, falling under suspicion for reasons other than their queer relational mode of instrumentality. Over the course of this progression, the material object-relations that have been central to affective exchanges in the first chapters take on more ideational, autoerotic properties; in the second half of the project, they are increasingly implicated less in literal erotic relations than in the psychic mechanisms of fantasy that structure the texts. The third chapter moves into the realm of free-floating, unmoored “fancy” and bottomless appetite: desires which, though they are distinctly marked with sex and gender suspicion, are nonetheless never disciplined as suspect, perhaps because their queering influence is so pervasive. And the final chapter addresses the queer structure of a melancholic longing that is never remarked upon for its departure from more conventional colonial discourses, but persists into impossible fantasmatic futures in spite of the irremediable loss of its objects.

The first chapter, “‘It Takes One to Know One’: Paranoid Suspicion and the Witch Hunt,” examines the affective dynamics of the early modern witch hunt through two key examples of sensationalistic popular literature from the witchcraft trials and executions that roiled Scotland and England from the 1590s through the 1620s. In Newes from Scotland’s account of the presumptive witches’ torture and fantastic confessions (including a sabbath meeting with the Devil, storm-raising necromancy, and plots against the king’s life), and in The Witch of Edmonton’s dramatization of the framing process leading up to the famous trial and
execution of Elizabeth Sawyer, I describe the violent, erotically-charged, collaborative process that produces a “witch” through the affective machinery of projection, suspicion, torture, and confession. I trace how this process constructs the “witch” as a figure of singularly sexual suspicion, defined by the complex of deviant, blasphemous, seductive, and rebellious desires projected onto her – that is, as a certain kind of queer figure, who must be abjected from the community in death. The question of why and how the witch hunt is so efficacious in producing witchcraft confessions and the names of more implicated witches is of course connected to the history of queer-phobic paranoia, most memorably in the twentieth-century “witch hunts” for Communists – and crucially, inextricably, for homosexuals – staged in the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Senate hearings of Joseph McCarthy. The paranoid suspicion that powers the witch trials in this chapter stands a little apart from the other affective modes (enjoyment of being-instrumentalized; insatiable and unplaced promiscuous appetite; and melancholic, over-identified colonial longing) I am calling qualitatively queer in subsequent chapters: this form of paranoia is not so much a queer mechanism of desire as a queer-producing and queer-persecuting mechanism of violently invested interpretation. My argument here draws on the work of Eve Sedgwick, in dialogue with the psychoanalytic theories of Melanie Klein, to define paranoia as a projective form of erotic investment based in negative affect, which attributes the secret malice it fears in itself to others, discursively bringing about what it suspects. My reading of witchcraft literature uses Klein’s notion of “part-objects” to focus on how paranoid desire is routed through the everyday things – ropes, razors, hairs, musical instruments, cats, dogs, straw, and scraps of soiled linen – that function as uncannily-effective tools, both of witchcraft and of witch-finding (physical examination and torture). I detail how these objects, acting as the internalized persecutory fragments of love objects which Klein calls the basis of
paranoia, materialize the paranoid anxieties of others and project them onto the body of the accused.

I also point out the paranoid mechanism of eroticized, sexual suspicion which produces these “paranoid readings” of everyday things in *The Witch of Edmonton*’s second plot, a violent, seemingly-unrelated tale of bigamy which runs parallel to the witch plot. I argue that the bigamy plot also produces a kind of queer figure – a “bigamist,” rather than a “witch” – in dramatizing the construction and collusive maintenance of a secret, non-normative sexual identity defined by its deviant erotic predilections. Reading the bigamy plot alongside the witchcraft plots illuminates all the more vividly that the basis of the witch hunt’s paranoid erotics is secret sexual deviance: specifically, the communal investment in using projective suspicions of witchcraft to occlude, and then to rectify, all of the other deviant desires (including, between the play and the pamphlet: bigamy, master-servant rape, inheritance fraud, fornication, murder, treason, heresy, bestiality, and sodomitical group sex with the Devil) proliferating like a contagion, constantly threatening to lure others in their snare.

The mechanism of desiring explored in “’Getting Used, and Liking It’: Erotic Instrumentality and the Go-Between” is the desire to be instrumentalized: to be made instrumental to others’ erotic ends. I focus on two comedies in which a heterosexual couple cannot “do it alone,” but need a “third” to bring them together, to help negotiate the social, affective, and sexual demands of their relationship. In both plays, the role of the go-between is filled by an ambiguously-gendered transvestite figure: in Beaumont and Fletcher’s tragicomedy *Philaster, Or Love Lies A-Bleeding*, a beautiful, secretly-cross-dressed message “boy,” called Bellario, is used as a communications device to transmit knowledge, affect, and desire between the hero Philaster and the princess Arethusa. In his-or-her ecstasy at being used, the
instrumentalized “boy” generates pleasure in love scenes with both the man and the woman. His-or-her beautiful body is the instrument, the medium through which their eroticism is enacted. The chapter goes on to juxtapose “Bellario’s” submissive instrumentality against the transgressive, agentive instrumentality of Mary Frith, the real-life transvestite “Moll Cutpurse” embodied onstage in Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*. Moll also accomplishes a betrothed couple’s sexual union – with the woman of the pair dressed in menswear from Moll’s tailor – largely through the phobic disturbances her gender and sexuality incite in the forbidding father of the groom.⁴³ These queer go-betweens get used, with their willing and enthusiastic participation, as technologies of affective and erotic transmission, effectively becoming prosthetic sexual instruments which also have an attraction and agency of their own – and which are all the more potent for their crucial utility as both tools and love objects. I demonstrate that the cross-dressed “instrument” not only fetishistically facilitates the couple’s sexual union, but becomes an integral party to it, transforming an ostensibly-“straight” pairing into a queer triad, and forming a mutual, three-person erotic configuration which complicates more conventional erotic/relational models such as homosocial service or triangulation.

I argue that this dynamic of willing instrumentality is a queer mode of erotic relation: one which expands our understanding of early modern erotic dynamics beyond the binary roles of man and woman, servant and master, lover and beloved; and ultimately calls into question the definition of sex as an act that involves only two people. Considering three-way, instrumentalizing relations as *queer* forms of desiring opens up the possibility of noticing other multi-partner erotic bonds – for example, the vectors of queer identification and desire among

---

⁴³ Mary Frith (or Moll) and Bellario (or Euphrasia) are more accurately described as “gender-queer” or transgendered than as cross-dressed women – their masculine-yet-androgynous gender performance does not line up with their ostensibly-female sex, and, unlike the female heroines who temporarily disguise themselves as boys in *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It*, their genital anatomy is actually unknown or confused in the play, even from the audience's perspective.
ex-suitors, siblings, and new spouses that is preserved as a four-way bond at the end of *Twelfth Night*. Thinking of multi-party erotic groupings like those in *Philaster* and *Twelfth Night* as forms of queer relationality results in a map of early modern erotics that is more gender-inclusive than a schema based on discrete acts or social roles. It allows us to consider lesbian erotics (like the bonds between women, some of whom are straight and/or married, in these triads and quadrilaterals) and male homoerotics (implicit and explicit) as part of the same erotic system; in fact, because this approach moves away from the essentialism of defining queerness by bodily sex, it allows us to notice qualitatively-queer bonds between characters of different sexes (like the handsome prince Philaster and his beautiful “boy,” or Moll Frith and her gentleman friend whose marriage she facilitates), group configurations which include some instances of hetero-eroticism as part of a larger queer erotic mechanism, and collectivities comprised of a mix of taboo and un-censured eroticisms.

The third chapter, “’So Full of Shapes’: Promiscuous Fancy and Carnival Longing,” takes up the indiscriminate desire for too many objects, embodied by the perpetually-dissatisfied Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night* and the insatiable Bartholomew Cokes in *Bartholomew Fair*. Bartholomew Cokes, the gargantuan anti-hero of Jonson’s city comedy, moves through the Bartholomew Fair on what is supposed to be his wedding day, trying to consume gingerbread children, dolls, musicians, pickpockets, puppets and puppeteers, roast pig, and everything else he sees; destroying what he cannot incorporate within himself; and never achieving satiation. I read this hyperbolic appetite as a kind of anti-reproductive, unchecked queer hunger. Expanding the definition of queer erotic drives beyond genitality allows Cokes’ rampage to be considered within Freud’s notion of non-heterosexually-differentiated polymorphously perverse desire, or
even as a form of defiantly anti-social queer desire in the mode articulated by Leo Bersani.\textsuperscript{44}

The un-fulfillable mode of desiring I explore in this chapter is founded in a psychoanalytic model of desire predicated on lack: it grows by feeding on itself, proceeding out of lack and back into lack again. This chapter juxtaposes Cokes to Twelfth Night’s Duke Orsino, comparing the nuances of the bottomless vortices of want in both plays. If they attain something they seek, they instantly desire something else; they do not know what they want, and they want everything – except for marriage with an appropriate woman. Rather than commodities in the market, the goods Orsino desires are courtly service and masculine friendship; but the libidinal orientation figured in his speeches is a similarly proliferative lack. His endlessly-impressionable romantic “fancy” seems to entail an asexual mechanism of fantastical generativity which produces not love objects, but more and more desires. This chapter brings to light an important connection between insatiable, promiscuous erotic appetites and aesthetic or material desires: I trace how the language of “fancy,” which in the 1500s means the ability to conjure imaginary forms in the mind’s eye – particularly objects of one’s erotic or artistic fantasy – shifts in meaning over the next three centuries to characterize the desire for pleasurable and beautiful things as a degraded, effeminate, queer desire for improper, unproductive love objects.

Of the forms of desire I explore in this project, this chapter is the only one that deals at length with an early modern ideology of desire, and connects ideologies of fantastical generation in the period to the affective excesses which I argue should be considered queer. As part of my interest in pursuing figurations of desire beyond the ideological conditions of literary texts’ moments of production, my aim is not to retroactively re-label the early modern notion of

\textsuperscript{44} Bersani elaborates on the solipsistic quality of subjectivity and sexuality themselves in his queer and deconstructive reading of psychoanalytic theories of sexual development, chiefly his de-privileging of the partner relation and reclamation of the queer potential of primal, anti-relational narcissism in “Is the Rectum a Grave?” in AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 197-222. See also Homos.
“fancy” as queer, but to point out how “fancy” and desires that look like it are relevant to how queerness enters the imaginative world of a play. This is also the only chapter that follows the meaning of its key term beyond the early modern period and into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to trace how, within a hundred years after the texts that concern me here, “fancy” connects up with the early discursive construction of homosexuality. I bring up the afterlife of early modern “fancy” not to make any causal claims about the origins of its pejorative meanings, but in the belief that words are thick with constantly-changing valences that lexicographers can only incompletely and belatedly record, and that looking at the circulation of affect around a word can show us things about such surprising convergences that we could not know by empirical means. In tracing the psychic/erotic mechanisms of which these two characters are early exemplars, I uncover and outline a queer economy for the production and reproduction of desires – in which, I ultimately argue, we can see the prodigious desire for consumption functioning as capitalism’s monstrous, queer double of sexual reproduction.

My final chapter moves into the colonial sphere, analyzing the tone of belatedness and thwarted desire, combined with rapturous descriptions and visual representations of the material things and human bodies of America, that suffuses two accounts of failed New World colonial ventures: Jean de Léry’s Histoire d’un voyage (1578) and Thomas Harriot and John White’s A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1590). Parsing the affectively-overwrought narratorial voice in which Léry (favorably) compares the bodies, customs, and ceremonies of the Tupinamba Indian men – his obsession – to the French, I read Léry’s homoerotic and cross-cultural investments as a queer and melancholic mode of desiring predicated on excessive identification rather than difference, and loss rather than possession: the
returned voyager’s longing for transformation into something he could never become, in order to have something he could never have: an American future.

If gender melancholy is, in Judith Butler’s formulation, “the un-mournable loss of the other-gendered self,” here colonial melancholy conjures the un-mournable loss of the European self as Indian “other.”45 My reading of colonial desire here draws on Aimé Césaire’s and Frantz Fanon’s theoretical innovations extending the sphere of coloniality’s after-effects into the realm of the psyche, and reading colonialism in psychoanalytic terms as an erotically-fraught set of conflicts between identification and difference, self and other – for the colonizer as well as the colonized.46 In fact, I contend that these texts from early moments of failed and abandoned colonial ambition can allow us to see how the persistence of identification with the un-mournable “other” in memory (i.e. melancholia) is a part of the construction of heterosexuality here in much the same way as it infuses the construction of whiteness and binary gender difference. A queer reading of this register of colonial writing as a form of queer desire uncovers surprising resonances of interdicted affiliation and impossible love, revealing voyagers’ moments of longing for things to be otherwise: for another role to play; another possible outcome; another time and place in which they could be other than they are, and inhabit modes of relationality that can only be articulated as fantasmatic reveries, whose impossibility cannot even be mourned. I conclude by drawing an analogy between the affective load borne by colonial voyagers’ passionately invested, melancholic ethnography – epitomized in John White’s ornate portraits of ancient Picts, around whom he constructs a surreal, non-linear queer genealogy in his visual coda to the Virginia text – and the fantastical, identificatory investments we bear as modern critics to

the early modern texts and subjects that attract our scholarly fascination. Informed by queer
theory’s imperatives to trouble the difference between sameness and difference and the telos of
historical time, I want to appeal to the possibility that reading practices fueled by critical
identification and desire might complicate what we think we know about historical difference,
sex, feeling, and time, bodying forth queer affinities between readers and the objects of our
critical investment and love.
Chapter 1

It Takes One to Know One: Paranoid Suspicion and the Witch Hunt

1. Newes from Scotland: “a privie marke”

I begin, perversely enough for a study which seeks to circumvent suspicion and punishment as indicators of early modern queerness, with the scene that most straightforwardly deals with deviant desires: the witch trial, into which thousands of people in Scotland and England, mostly women, and tens of thousands more in Continental Europe found themselves interpellated between the late sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries. The mechanism of paranoid suspicion which is the object of my analysis, though, is a function not of the accused witch’s desire, but of the process by which other subjects in the scene construct her as a witch. A “witch” – the output, so to speak, of this mechanism of paranoid desire – is a figure who is transformed into something other than fully human: explicitly characterized in terms of her deviant desires and sexual secrets, participation in depraved erotic acts, and dangerous agenda. In short, her demonization takes a particularly queer shape. But the violent, socially-and affectively-supercharged cycle of paranoid investments by which it happens – a cycle which I would also call erotic – is not, unlike the other affective modes in this project, a queer mechanism of desire. Its principal direction is projective and attributive: it constructs queerness in another; and by implication, of course, it reveals its own secret investments in doing so.

This chapter considers two widely-publicized witch hunts in Scotland and England as affective systems, through their popular literature: a “news” pamphlet about the North Berwick
witch hunt, *Newes from Scotland* (1591), which despite its subtitle ("Declaring the Damnable life and death of Doctor Fian, a notable Sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough at January last") mostly addresses the scandal of the witches’ plot against James VI; and *The Witch of Edmonton* (1622), a fictionalized domestic tragedy based on real events by John Ford, Thomas Dekker, and William Rowley. Plays and pamphlets about true-to-life witch trials constitute a distinct genre, witch hunt literature, with a conventional plot trajectory of suspicion, accusation, investigation, discovery, and, ultimately, confession and execution.¹ The witch hunt and witch trial processes can be considered erotic activities because, like sex acts, they are a convention-bound and goal-directed set of physical and verbal procedures, powered by an unknowable complex of motives and investments on the part of each participant. I see the witch hunt as an episode of erotic affect and appetite which takes a unique form – in this case, a collective striving, whose climax is not a release of energy from bodies but an impacting of communal energies onto the body of the accused. And as an erotic form, it is a wholly perverse and perverted one: its conventional climax is a death.

*Newes from Scotland*’s account of the interrogation of Agnis Sampson, an elderly country wise-woman with a long history of ecclesiastical suspicion² who is called the “eldest witch of

---

¹ Among the most canonical examples of witch hunt pamphlet literature in English are popular trial accounts including: *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys arraigned, convicted, and executed at the last assises at Huntington* (London: Printed by the Widdowe Orwin, for Thomas Man, 1593); *The arraignement & burning of Margaret Ferne-seede for the murther of her late husband Anthony Ferne-seede* (London: Printed [by E. Allde] for Henry Gosson, 1608); Thomas Potts, *The wonderfull discoverie of witches in the countie of Lancastor, With the arraignement and triall of nineteene notorious witches* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for Iohn Barnes, 1613) – the trial that is the source for Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome’s tragicomedy, *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634); *The Wonderful discovery of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Philippa Flower, daughters of Joan Flower neere BeverCastle: executed at Lincolne, March 11th 1618* (London : By G. Eld for I. Barnes, 1619); and the trial pamphlet that is the source for *The Witch of Edmonton* – Henry Goodcole’s *The wonderfull discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a witch late of Edmonton, her conviction and condemnation and death. Together with the relation of the Dives accesce to her, and their conference together* (London : Printed [by A. Mathewes] for William Butler, 1621).

them all,” portrays the witch hunt’s eroticized investments and graphically material procedures.

Sampson is the first accused witch brought before “the Kings Majestie and sundry other of the nobility of Scotland.”3 Subjected to the personal “persuasions” of King and council, she stands “stiffely in the denial of all that was laide to her charge,” and is “conveyed awaye to prison, there to receive such torture as hath been lately provided for witches.”4 She then becomes the object of a ritualized search for a sign of demonic relations, “a privie marke”:

…forasmuch as by due examination of witchcraft and witches in Scotland, it hath latelye beene found that the Devill dooth generallye marke them with a privie marke, by reason the Witches have confessed themselues, that the Devill dooth lick them with his tung in some privy part of their bodye, before he dooth receive them to be his servants, which marke commonly is given them under the haire in some part of their bodye, wherby it may not easily be found out or seene, although they be searched: and generally so long as the marke is not seene to those which search them, so long the parties that hath the marke will never confesse any thing.5

This account makes explicit that the mark is evidence of a sodomitical act of oral sex from the Devil – a mark of her damnation, and also of her sexual identity as the Devil’s intimate property.

And, crucially, this is a sexual status that must remain secret. It is only the invisibility of the Devil’s mark, hidden under the hair on some unmentionable part of the body, which enables the

---

3 Newes from Scotland’s emphasis on James’s personal involvement in the trials reflects authorship by someone close to James, a collaborator in fashioning his public persona. Though the pamphlet was speculatively attributed to James himself in 19th century scholarship, modern research suggests that James Carmichael, the minister of Haddington who was in charge of some of the trials, may have written the original source text for the pamphlet. Normand and Roberts, Witchcraft, 8; cf. Robert Pitcairn, Ancient criminal trials in Scotland, compiled from the original records and Manuscripts, with historical illustrations (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1833); and George Lincoln Burr’s edition of Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, “The Witch Persecutions,” vol. III, no. 4 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania History Department, 1897).


5 Ibid., Biiv.
witch’s silence.⁶ *Newes from Scotland*, in a manner that is also seen in other witch hunt literature, fetishizes the search for the Devil’s mark, dramatically drawing it out to build up to the witch’s “outing”:

> Therefore by special commaundement this Agnis Sampson had all her haire shaven off, in eache parte of her bodie, and her head thraven with a rope according to the custome of that Countrye, being a paine most greevous, which she continued almost an hower, during which time she would not confesse any thing until the Divel’s marke was found upon her privities, then she immediatelye confessed whatsoever was demaunted of her, and justifying those persons aforesaid to be notorious witches.⁷

The precise violence of shaving all the hair off of “each parte” of an old woman’s body mirrors the fetishistic function of the Devil’s mark, in that both body hair and the mark visually inscribe the surfaces of bodies in terms of their sexual status (as a sexually-mature adult woman, or a sexually-deviant witch). Sampson has to lose the epidermal marker of one status to expose the other. Once the Devil’s mark is “found upon her privities,” this woman, who had confessed nothing while having her head thrown with a rope for an hour, immediately confesses “whatsoever was demaunted of her.” Almost anything could be read as a “Devil’s mark,” from a single freckle or pimple to the clitoris, a possibility here for Agnis Sampson.⁸ The knowledge or “truth” of witchcraft produced by whatever fleshly thing is read as the Devil’s mark is inescapably queered by its real material indeterminacy, and by the fantasmatic nature of what it is supposed to record. The definition of what the Devil’s mark is, given here as received Scottish

---

⁶ The idea that the witch’s silence was attributable to demonic assistance, potentially through charms hidden on her body, dates from the *Malleus Maleficarum*, though the Devil’s mark is a later belief which post-dates most witchcraft theory. Dyan Elliott, “The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality,” in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, Peter Biller, ed. Alastair J. Minnis and Eamonn Duffy (Suffolk and Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 1997), 173, n. 142. See also S. W. McDonald, “The Devil’s Mark and the Witch-Prickers of Scotland,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 90.9 (1997): 507–511.

⁷ *Newes from Scotland*, Aiiir.

⁸ The clitoris is posthumously exposed as the Devil’s mark on the hanged body of a witch in the 1593 account of *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys* – the jailer and his wife had intended to keep their discovery made while burying the body to themselves because of its proximity to “so secret a place, which was not decent to be seene,” but in the end they show it (and strain fluids out of it) to vindicate the assembled community (D3v-D4r).
knowledge, does not conform exactly to either the English paradigm of a teat where the witch’s familiar suckles on her body, or the Continental paradigm of a brand or scar commemorating a diabolical pact. Instead, Newes from Scotland’s fantasy of the Devil’s mark is a fantasy of erotic legibility – the mark of the secret lick of the Devil’s tongue. The enormous dramatic energy invested in lusting after its “discovery”/construction is, in part, a reflection of the desire for erotic acts – especially irredeemably deviant ones, like receiving oral sex from the Devil – to be clearly marked on the body. This is produced, of course, out of the problematic illegibility of eros on and in the body: the fact that the real licks of real tongues, belonging to humans of unknown genders, social station, etc., on various parts of bodies do not leave any such marks.

At the climax of the witch hunt’s machinations, the body of the accused person becomes the body of a witch – a body defined by its seductive, antisocial, and rebellious desires – which must necessarily be abjected (expelled) from the community in death.

A huge amount of work exists on witch panics as this kind of abjecting, scape-goating process through lenses of misogyny, or cultural mythology. But neither witchcraft literature as a genre, nor the material

---


10 Laura Levine reads the “mark” discovered on Agnis Sampson as the central sign which belies the anti-representational belief system of Protestant anti-theatrical discourse. The investment in finding it, she says, reveals a deeply repressed paranoid credulity that material signs can have transformative efficacies, which she connects explicitly to anti-theatrical anxiety that sexual difference, gender, and desire could be altered by material accessories, in Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 120-133.


12 Similar kinds of desire have long been described as a cause of witch persecutions, where the witch becomes a figure onto whom a community’s anxious, violent social dynamics are projected (where paranoia goes under names like mass hysteria, scapegoating, expurgation of the “internal other,” or patriarchal violence against the repressed feminine unconscious). I am not making any of these claims about the larger social causes of witch beliefs; my reading brings the focus down to the micro-level at which a paranoid mechanism of discursive production is enacted on the body of a woman by an agent of the state, via a two-way intimate exchange of language. Influential work on the systemic conditions of gender, communal psychology, and the witch hunt includes: Lyndal Roper, Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), and Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe (London: Routledge, 1994); Diane Purkiss,
things that act so suspiciously within it have previously been read through a framework focusing on the witch as a queer figure – in all the untimely and proleptic senses of that word which cluster around associations like criminal, supernatural, duplicitous, performative, and antisocial. I aim to close-read, through what traces and omissions can be detected, the “twisted braid of affects” connecting suspects, torturers, judges, and accused witches, in order to get closer to the inextricable relation between the witch hunt’s ravenously efficient methods for drawing forth confessions and the uniquely socially- and erotically-suspect character of its end. Though, like much of the previous criticism on early modern sexuality and early modern witchcraft (and unlike the other three chapters of the project), this chapter deals with disciplinary force in relation to socially-deviant desires and acts, I am not arguing from the premise that the deviant-desiring figures who populate it correspond to actual early modern desiring subjects; rather, I am examining how these figures are wholly constructed – and compelled to participate in their own construction – in the texts by the violent affective mechanisms of paranoid suspicion, at a moment when witch panic is a predictably-unpredictable, recurring crisis. I am indebted to Lyndal Roper’s work on torture and interrogation, and to Lawrence Normand’s and Gareth Roberts’ work on witch trial records, for their observations that the narratives (both official and popular) of the witch hunt should be seen as archives of a sadomasochistic, collaborative performance, “a collusive construction by examiners and examined.” “Collusive” is a fittingly dense word for the affect involved: collusion entails desire and investment in an object.

Collusion need not be seamlessly cooperative – in fact it can be inimical, even violently

---

Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1. I appreciate Kristeva’s figurative description of the state of being beset by abjection as a “twisted braid of affects” rather than a clean-cut or unitary mechanism.

manipulative – but it does imply some shared object of desire, although this may be unspoken, and some degree of collaborative bonding. And, perhaps most interestingly, “collusive” denotes mutual secrecy in its method, and taboo, illegality, and deceit in its ends, as though the witch-finder and the accused witch are secretly cooperating in an illicit act, a forbidden relation. Collusion can be a hallmark of both queer persecutions and queer conspiracies. It is a double-edged emotion which can serve to bring the agents, and not just the objects, of the witch hunt’s paranoid technologies into my analysis of the witch hunt as a complex erotic network – an idea which will continue to trouble simple distinctions between noticed/disciplined and unnoticed/undisciplined desires, between sexuality and gender, and between sexual and non-sexual desires throughout this project. The “collusive” dynamic that Roper, Normand, and Roberts observe in witch trial documents is not only a condition of historical discourse but an affective mode, which is how I am reading its operations in Newes from Scotland and The Witch of Edmonton. I call it paranoid suspicion, or simply paranoid desire.

I define paranoid suspicion as an affective mode founded in projection, in which one’s suspicions about another correspond to or grow out of the thing that one unconsciously suspects of oneself. It touches off a cycle of reflexive projection, in that the paranoid, suspicious party imagines that the suspected other secretly harbors the same or corresponding suspicions – fantasy-suspicions which, inasmuch as they confirm a secret self-knowledge, are effectively made true. This is one of the central effects of paranoid suspicion: that it makes true, at least discursively, what it suspects/desires. Paranoia, as I will go on to show, has a key function in producing the marks and signs of sexual deviance. Here, it furnishes “a witch” – a figure which, I would argue, is materially, erotically, and epistemologically marked as a queer figure by the paranoid affective mode of his or her (the witch is usually, but not always, a woman) own
production. I say that the witch is queer because she or he is: 1) characterized by secret and
deviant erotic desires and practices; 2) constructed through paranoid representations of material
accessories and objects; 3) brought into being by an interrogation animated by paranoid,
projective identification and desire; 4) climactically inscribed into witch-ness via a performative
self-exposure – the confession – which fulfills the ultimate goal of paranoia, the confirmation
that everyone who suspected was right; and 5) ambiguous in meaning and status: nonexistent
according to some epistemologies, criminal and/or diabolical in others, uncannily loathsome,
hard to pin down precisely in language or social reality, and lacking in essence right up until the
moment she or he is violently essentialized as a body being killed. We saw one iteration of this
queer-producing apparatus in how Agnis Sampson meets with invasive full-body shaving and
intimate scrutiny (with sessions of torture interspersed in between), until she not only produces
herself as a witch, but ratifies more fodder for the witch hunt, “justifying those persons aforesaid
to be notorious witches.” This chapter will now continue to unpack how the affective forces of
suspicion and collusion construct witches (and other, parallel queer-desiring figures) through
paranoid processes of secret knowledge and projective fantasy which are specifically clustered
around sex and erotic desire in witchcraft – and in witch-finding.

2. “In some great suspition”

Though it is neither a play nor a folk ritual, the witch trial is a straightforwardly dramatic
spectacle. The “discovery scene” in which the witch confesses to her crimes constitutes a genre
with recognizable affective dynamics and erotic economies. The transactions it stages between

---

15 Influential studies of the epistemology of “discovery” and the “discovery scene” in early modern witch trials,
arguing for its constitutive significance to early modern ideas of interiority, truth, and subjectivity, have been
presented in relation to religious thought by Katharine Eisaman Maus, Inwardness and Theater in the English
Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 44-46; and in relation to scientific thought and
an accused subject and the objects of her desire (to stay alive, avoid torture, receive salvation, implicate others), other subjects (interrogators, friends, family, lovers, authority figures), and material things (used to do witchcraft in her testimony, and upon her body in the trial) vary widely in content, but retain a basic iterable structure. The discovery scene dramatizes a deviant-desiring subject who, along with his or her array of suspect objects, is represented and spectated-upon in an erotically-invested way – in other words, a specific state of heightened communal affect is played out in a performative, legal forum (and mediatized onstage and in print as popular entertainment).

The 1591 pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*, printed in London and widely circulated throughout Britain, constructs a narrative for the North Berwick witch panics that locates a single woman as an origin point, a “patient zero,” for the outbreak of demonism. In this account, that catalytic figure is “a maide servant called Geillis Duncane,” who lived in the house of her master David Seaton (an officer of the law: the Deputy Bailiff of the town of Trenent, outside of Edinburgh). The story begins with suspicion, and the originary suspicion has an occult sexual valence. Geillis Duncane, the pamphlet says, “used secretly to be absent and to lye foorth of her Maisters house every other night.”¹⁶ But what Geillis Duncane was doing with her days – or with her nights—(the narrative curiously does not specify the connection) is fodder for suspicion of an uncannier sort, not on the basis of what she does, but how well she does it:

This Geillis Duncane took in hand to help all such as were troubled or greeved with any kinde of sickness or informitie: and in short space did perfourme manye matters most miraculous, which thinges forasmuch as she began to doe them upon a sodaine, having never done the like before, made her Maister and others to be in great admiracion, and wondred thereat: by meanes wereof the saide David Seaton had his maide in some great suspition, that she did not those things by naturall and

---

¹⁶ *Newes from Scotland*, Aivv.
lawfull wayes, but rather supposed it to be done by some extraordinary and unlawfull meanes.  

In other words, Geillis Duncane seems to have become an informal healer – a social role with a set of supernatural and reproductive suspicions conventionally attached to it, especially for an unmarried woman. What is suspicious in this case is her success and skill in performing numerous, “miraculously” efficacious healings. Duncane’s new (or newly-public) talent is only tacitly connected to her nighttime comings and goings, in that both habits raise the suspicion of her master, David Seaton – the only other named individual directly connected to her at the witch hunt’s originary moment.

This setup places Duncane and Seaton within the complex system of physical, affective, and juridical relations between servants and masters that exerted a great deal of social power in the period: female servants’ particular vulnerability to sexual violation, sexual suspicion, and rumors of wrongdoing has been well-explicated in the work of such scholars as Frances Dolan and Laura Gowing. Gowing writes that the secrecy of the servant woman’s body in itself could incite communal paranoia:

In its economic position, its sexual vulnerability and its potential for sexual crime and illegitimate pregnancy, the body of the single woman (and especially the single woman in service) was barely her own. To maintain the boundaries of chastity against the intrusive touch of masters, their sons, and their friends could be a constant battle. And to maintain a private body and a personal space, secure from the eyes of mistresses and neighbours, could appear positively threatening.

In light of this social reality, we might well ask: how did David Seaton know that Duncane was “secretly absent” every other night from his house? Was she informed on – or did he go looking

---

17 Newes from Scotland, Br.
19 Gowing, Common Bodies, 73.
for her at night and find her unavailable to him? The mysteriously unelaborated fact of Duncane’s night-journeying habits, listed here as the first item in the backstory of the witch hunt, raises the possibility that the originary secret or crime of the North Berwick witch hunt could in fact be not witchcraft, but illicit sex – and/or the insubordinate refusal of illicit sex – between a master and a single maidservant. Could David Seaton’s “admiration” and “wonder” at his servant’s new-found medical skills be a cover for his jealousy, or his provocation by some more private, unspeakable investment? The narrative makes the causality of his “great suspition” completely inscrutable; we never know whether Geillis Duncane did anything “unlawfull,” or whether her original crime might be her passive resistance to her master’s desires.

Out of this layer of occulted sexual suspicion – out of Duncane’s suspect outings, and her master’s apparent presumption of a proprietary interest in her body, what she does with it, and what he can know of it – grows a set of “truth”-producing procedures in which Geillis Duncane is constructed as a witch by her master, within a dyadic bodily interaction:

Whereupon, her Maister began to growe very inquisitive, and examined her which way and by what meanes she were able to perfourme matters of so great importance: whereat she gave him no answere, neverthelesse, her Maister to the intent that he might the better trye and finde out the trueth of the same, did with the helpe of others, torment her with the torture of the Pilliwinckes upon her fingers, which is a greevous torture, and binding or wrinching her head with a corde or roape, which is a most cruell torment also, yet would she not confesse any thing.20

A relation of suspicion – aggravated, no doubt by Duncane’s subversive refusal to satisfy her master’s appetites and cooperate with his “examination” – slides seamlessly, in an instant, into a relation of torture. The pilliwinks, or thumbscrews, are applied to the healer Duncane’s fingers, and her head is bound with a rope and “wrinched,” as if to try to squeeze a confession of witchcraft out of her mouth. And this is not even public juridical or state torture: “with the help

20 Newes from Scotland, Br
of others” who remain unnamed, Seaton tortures Duncane himself, apparently in private, before ever bringing her in to court. The narrative makes no remark on Seaton’s transformation from suspicious employer into vigilante witchfinder; the torture follows simply and seemingly self-evidently from his “intent” to “better trye and find out the trueth”:

Whereupon they suspecting that she had beene marked by the Divell (as commonly witches are) made dilligent search about her, and found the enemies marke to be in her fore crag or foreparte of her throate: which being found, she confessed that all her doings was done by the wicked allurements and inticements of the Divell, and that she did them by witchcraft.\(^{21}\)

With this sentence, the “Maister,” David Seaton, whose single-minded suspicion regarding Duncane’s night-time whereabouts and activities is the cause of this entire undertaking, drops out of the narrative completely. The potentially jealous, “very inquisitive” employer disappears without explanation, along with whatever frustrations, passions, and prerogatives induced him to torture his servant-woman in his own home. Only a nameless, faceless collective of citizen-interrogators is left, moving like an uncannily-automated machine through the witch hunt’s plot. It is “they” who first make the ghosting suspicion of witchcraft explicit, with their “suspecting” that the maid-servant’s body before them is “marked” in a way that a “dilligent search” of every part of it will uncover. Predictably, they find something on her neck which is determined to be the Devil’s mark; as soon as this point on the surface of her skin is named as such, the pamphlet says, Duncane freely pours out the tale of her secret, “wicked” healings of her sick and infirm neighbors.

Immediately after confessing that her healing talents were from the Devil, and that everyone she healed she healed by witchcraft, Geillis Duncane “was committed to prison, where she continued for a season, where immediately she accused these persons following to be

\(^{21}\) Ibid., Br.
notorious witches, and caused them forthwith to be apprehended one after an other." What is not portrayed, however, is the “discovery” that turns an individual accusation into a witch hunt: Geillis Duncane’s implication of more than a dozen people, a roster of which follows, representing a diverse cross-section of low to upper-middle class society in Edinburgh and the surrounding towns, particularly the waterfront district of Leith. The absence of narrative context naturalizes Duncane’s act of naming, erasing whatever unknowable, multifarious affective and relational histories, with each other and with Duncane, might have determined who was named, and who they named in turn. Omitting the circumstances under which Geillis Duncane uttered or assented to these names also obscures the influence of the witch-finders’ desires in implicating these people – the local interrogators and torturers who, since Duncane “was committed to prison,” have now become not only nameless, but suspiciously evacuated of any grammatical presence or agency vis-à-vis the accused (“she […] caused them forthwith to be apprehended”). The pamphlet hints at, but does not record, an inaccessible dramatic exchange between Duncane and her interrogators in which they, together, produce a witch hunt through a “collusive” process of suggestion, desire, and terror. Newes from Scotland’s production of Geillis Duncane as a witch follows a trajectory of paranoid suspicion, progressing from her arousal of her master’s interest and investment in where she is at night; to his “great admiracion” and then “great suspition” at her healing abilities; to his growing “very inquisitive”; to his putting those suspicions of “extraordinary” and “unlawfull” “meanes” to her to answer for; to Duncane’s passive resistance in refusing to give him an answer, which further inflames his desire to “trye and find out the trueth.” By this point the suspicious energy generated in Seaton is grown so strong that what had been an affective exchange between two people now seems to magnetically

22 Ibid., Br-Bv.
pull in “others,” who make it into a relation of many-on-one physical violence, applying screws and ropes to try to wrench the “trueth” out of the invisible place where Duncane obdurately keeps it. The “dilligent search” which produces/constructs something as a Devil’s mark indexes the takeover of Duncane and Seaton’s dyadic relation into the inexorable paranoid machinery of the witch hunt, where the torture of “a season” in prison then produces, somehow, a list of “notorious witches” – and the cycle of the witch hunt begins again.

3. “How the world works”

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick gives an account of paranoia as a recursive, self- and other-implicating cycle of desire and knowledge production in her essay, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading.” Although she seeks alternatives to it, Sedgwick’s characterization of the structure and mechanism of paranoia attends to its dual nature as both an affect and an interpretive practice. As an affective mode, it is an often-unpleasant emotional state of investment in an other whom it seems strange to call a love object. It is envious and self-conscious, defensive, and infused with anxiety about the other. But paranoia is also, as Sedgwick points out via Paul Ricoeur, a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” in which the “fundamental category of consciousness is the relation hidden-shown, or, if you prefer, simulated-manifested;” and thus a powerful mechanism of knowledge production. Generating knowledge about the other and the self is the mechanism by which it functions – in the example above, for instance, David Seaton’s suspicion works to produce: what he doesn’t know, but wants to know, about Geillis Duncane; what (we can imagine) he may not want others to know about himself and

---


Duncane, and the story he might tell in its place; and finally, what Duncane refuses to say about herself until a mark is found on her throat. Building on Sedgwick’s theorization, I focus on paranoid suspicion as an affective mode with an inextricable structural connection to sexual suspicions, sexual non-normativity, and sexual secrets. As Sedgwick points out, “queer studies,” and, I would add, queer history, “in particular has had a distinctive history of intimacy with the paranoid imperative.”

Guy Hocquenghem, whom Sedgwick cites, argues that the structure of paranoid suspicion is logically, indeed constitutively, connected to the histories of homophobia, and hence of queerness. Re-writing the received psychoanalytic association of paranoia with homosexuality, he argues that Freudian “persecutory paranoia’ is in fact a paranoia that seeks to persecute.”

In Sedgwick’s summation of his intervention:

If paranoia reflects the repression of same-sex desire, Hocquenghem reasoned, then paranoia is a uniquely privileged site for illuminating not homosexuality itself, as in the Freudian tradition, but rather precisely the mechanisms of homophobic and heterosexist enforcement against it. What is illuminated by an understanding of paranoia is not how homosexuality works, but how homophobia and heterosexism work – in short, if one understands these oppressions to be systemic, how the world works.

This imitative reciprocity between stigmatized, repressed, and persecuted queer forms of desire and the paranoid tactics and interpretive techniques that construct the queer as a figure to be stigmatized is what Sedgwick means when she calls paranoia a “reflexive and mimetic” kind of desire:

Simply put, paranoia tends to be contagious; more specifically, paranoia is drawn toward and tends to construct symmetrical relations, in particular, symmetrical epistemologies. [...] It sets a thief (and, if necessary, becomes one) to catch a

---

25 Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 126.
27 Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 126.
28 Ibid., 131.
Paranoid suspicion can thus be used to implicate subjects in secret knowledge (if you know, you are as well). Or it can be levied to name names – to turn an individual confession into a collective one (if I am, I know who else is as well). But it can also turn suspicion back on the accuser (if you know I am, then maybe you are too). Or, as Ricoeur puts it, “Guile will be met by double guile.”

Sedgwick offers Melanie Klein’s notion of a paranoid “position” by way of allowing that paranoia can be flexible and mobile, a “changing and heterogeneous relational stance” (an apt description of paranoia’s shaping force in witch hunt literature). Delving deeper into Klein’s theory of paranoia, though, I find that her notion of “part-objects” is particularly well-suited to reading the erotics of witch hunt literature. Part-objects are unconscious, metonymic literalizations of desire, based on single aspects of larger love objects (i.e. the “good breast” and “bad breast”). Through the fundamental mechanisms of projection and incorporation/introjection, both good and bad part-objects “become installed, not only in the outside world but… also within the ego.” But – and this is the crucial intervention Klein’s model of paranoia offers to witch hunt literature – the fantasized threats and secret desires at the

---

29 Ibid., 127. Sedgwick’s encapsulation of the paranoid/suspicious affective stance, “It takes one to know one,” conjures a whole genealogy of political inquisitions based on covert knowledge of secret statuses and subversive and/or sexual affiliations, practiced against suspect types throughout history which have included Jews, gays and lesbians, heretics, activists and revolutionaries, and all manner of participants in illicit sex (promiscuous women, child abusers, Devil worshippers).

30 Carolyn Dinshaw also uses this phrase to illustrate the paranoid and projective desires animating the complex of shifting, reflexive accusations around Lollardy, murder, simony, sodomy, and leprosy in late medieval England, in “It Takes One to Know One: Lollards, Sodomites, and Their Accusers,” in Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Post-Modern (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 55-99.

31 Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, 34.

32 Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 128.

root of paranoia, in both individual and collective senses, really do come from the dangerous objects residing inside the body.\textsuperscript{34} And, I would add, inside communal bodies. The love-objects of paranoia are not exactly other human beings – just as the erotic objectives of the witch hunt’s paranoia do not really correlate to specific accused individuals – they are partial, “phantastically distorted” approximations of the real things they represent.\textsuperscript{35} Klein herself observes that these processes can be seen at work in adult fantasy and larger symbolic systems. There is actually the suggestion of a theory of demonology in Klein, originating in a community’s or realm’s internal persecutory violence against its internalized bad objects, projected outward and given culturally-significant form: “In the infantile dread of magicians, witches, evil beasts, etc., we detect something of this same anxiety, but here it has already undergone projection and modification.”\textsuperscript{36} She adds, in a footnote which evokes the witch hunt’s confidence in its Providential righteousness, “We have an example of this in the phantastic belief in a God who would assist in the perpetration of every sort of atrocity (as lately as in the recent war) in order to destroy the enemy and his country.”\textsuperscript{37} Witch hunt literature, then, can be read as giving voice to a cultural “paranoid position –understandably marked by hatred, envy, and anxiety”: what Sedgwick calls “a position of terrible alertness to the dangers posed by the hateful and envious part-objects that one defensively projects into, carves out of, and ingests from the world around one.”\textsuperscript{38}

One of the most striking features of the witches’ confessions published in Newes from Scotland is their richly detailed object-worlds. Like The Witch of Edmonton, and like other

\textsuperscript{34} “Since the dread of internalized objects is by no means extinguished with their projection, the ego marshals against the persecutors inside the body the same forces as it employs against those in the outside world. These anxiety-contents and defence-mechanisms form the basis of paranoia” (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 263.


\textsuperscript{38} Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 128.
vibrantly materialist works of witch hunt literature such as the Lancashire witches’ pamphlet and play (Thomas Potts’ 1613 tract, *The wonderfull discoverie of witches in the countie of Lancaster*; and Heywood and Brome’s 1634 tragicomedy, *The Late Lancashire Witches*), and *The Wonderful discovery of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Philippa Flower* (1619), this pamphlet is strewn with an array of everyday things – animals, body parts, scraps of clothing, food and drink, accessories, hairs, pins, ropes, and musical instruments – which are animated with uncanny properties of metonymy, attraction, and invisible entanglement.\(^{39}\) Reading these material things as Kleinian “part-objects” helps to unpack the “phantasmatic beliefs” and symbolic resonances they transmit. Such objects are endowed with supernatural effectiveness as instruments not only of witchcraft but of witch-finding, such as the “pilliwinks” and ropes used on Geillis Duncane; or the razor used on Agnis Sampson, the body hair it shaved, and the Devil’s mark it uncovered. I will ultimately argue that witch hunt literature *reads* these uncanny powers *into* the mundane things that populate it – in fact, that these attributions constitute witchcraft discourse’s “paranoid readings” of the materials (household tools, raw ingredients, waste matter) of everyday life. I call the witch hunt’s representations/interpretations of objects “paranoid readings” because they are projections of communal desires (including negative affects like “terrible alertness to the dangers posed”), onto ordinary things and events, which still belong to the communal whole while also becoming “hateful and envious part-objects” with threatening diabolical, erotic, and symbolic attributes. Witch hunt literature thereby fashions these things into *tools* of witchcraft, inscribing them into witchcraft discourse, charging them with erotic and

\(^{39}\) “Entanglement” is a technical term in quantum mechanics for particles which are ontologically related, such that regardless of their distance from one another over space – or through time – they can instantly coordinate their properties with one another. The information that entangled particles disperse and share through their mysterious communication network is, by its nature, secret and invisible as long as it’s held among entangled particles. Once observed, the particles are no longer in a state of entanglement. “Dream Machine: The Mind-Expanding World of Quantum Computing,” *The New Yorker*, May 2, 2011, 34-43.
supernatural powers, and attaching them to bodies and relationships suspected of using them to wreak real harm in the social world.

4. “The cheefest partes”

Previous scholarship on witch beliefs has suggested the coherent magical cosmologies underpinning some of witches’ most storied tools and techniques, and the connection between English beliefs about efficacy in the performative speech acts and material rituals of witchcraft and anti-Catholic demonization of sacramental practices.40 I propose a different approach to reading witchcraft objects, through the effects of paranoid suspicion as a queer-persecuting and queer-producing mode of desire/knowledge: I read the instruments of witchcraft as deviant things which are on trial in the discovery scene. What do material objects signify, under the specular regime of paranoia, about the suspect desires of those who want or possess them?41

The weird, part-object-laced drama of Newes from Scotland unfolds with unsettling spontaneity, seemingly out of nowhere, in the interrogation of a somewhat-younger woman, Agnis Tompson. The pamphlet has Tompson testify that “upon the night of Allhollon Evenlast,” with not only the “persons aforesaid,” but “a great many other witches, to the number of two hundreth,” she set sail on the sea, “each one in a Riddle or Cive;”42 and that this supernatural horde embarked together, “with flagons of wine making merrie and drinking,” “to the Kerke of

41 Suspicion around material and domestic objects is famously on display as a force of sexual repression in the trials of Oscar Wilde, where the fabrics of drapes, the stains on bedsheets, the lines of furniture, and the dishes ordered on restaurant bills are marshaled as evidence of “gross indecency.” See The Trials of Oscar Wilde, H. Montgomery Hyde, ed., (London: The Stationery Office, 2001).
North Barrick in Lowthian,” to commune with the Devil who waited for them there.\textsuperscript{43} It is not surprising that this moment when the pamphlet’s story of the witches’ doings turns truly fantastical is also the moment it first touches on the political import of the North Berwick witch hunt. The supposed witches’ sabbath at the North Berwick kirk is entangled with another shadowy, suspect, substitute-church ceremony taking place a year earlier, on 20 August 1589, across the North Sea – the marriage-by-proxy of the king, James VI, who sent one of his earls to stand in for him at the wedding, to the fourteen-year-old Princess Anne of Denmark.\textsuperscript{44} That autumn, Anne’s attempts to sail for Scotland were thwarted by storms which struck her husband and shipmen as unnatural, and the result of witchcraft being practiced against her in both Denmark and Scotland. After her ship was driven back once, James joined Anne and spends the winter of 1589-1590 in Norway and Denmark. In 1590 James and Anne set sail together for Scotland on another storm-plagued voyage,\textsuperscript{45} in which (prefiguring the witches’ curse from \textit{Macbeth}) “Though his bark cannot be lost/ Yet it shall be tempest-tost” (I.iii.24-25).\textsuperscript{46} We can never know what relation Agnis Tompson’s story – whatever its origins – bears to public knowledge of these royal tribulations. Nor can we ever know what if any relation David Seaton, or Geillis Duncane herself, might have perceived between her suspicious night-wanderings and healings and the king’s paranoid reading of his troubles at sea – whether Seaton’s suspicions are

\textsuperscript{43} The image of witches sailing in sieves on the sea (like uncanny seafarers, which some of the accused are by occupation) to attend demonic business is thought to originate here, in \textit{Newes from Scotland}, since it does not appear in Jean Bodin, Reginald Scot, or any earlier sources on witchcraft. It is the putative source for the witches’ declaration that they will sail in sieves to do harm to the sailor’s wife in \textit{Macbeth}. For a detailed analysis of \textit{Newes from Scotland}'s afterlives as source material for Shakespeare’s and Jonson’s Jacobean drama, see Edward H. Thompson, “\textit{Macbeth}, King James, and the Witches,” \textit{Witchcraft Trials in Scotland} (conference proceedings from the University of Lancaster, “Lancashire Witches: Law, Literature and 17th century Women,” December 1993), http://homepages.tesco.net/~eandthomp/maebeth.htm, n. 2.

\textsuperscript{44} Normand and Roberts, \textit{Witchcraft}, 20.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 21.

a deliberate framing, a subtle suggestion from current events, or an insinuation from someone else, perhaps one of the nameless “others” helping him torture Geillis Duncane for sport. All we know is that once Duncane names the citizens who form the original core of the “North Berwick witches,” suspicions of a diabolical plot against the King’s life and realm are all too easily mapped onto the affective complex radiating from Seaton and Duncane; and the national momentum of the witch hunt is activated. While the causality of Newes from Scotland’s singularly fabular narrative can never be definitively known, what can be analyzed it is how it represents the affective dynamics at play in witch panics. Normand and Roberts acknowledge the devilish futility of trying to trace this story’s voice upfront: “Does the pamphlet reflect what the writer found in the examinations, which are probably the collusive fantasies of interrogators and interrogated? Or are these passages the invention of the writer of the pamphlet? The issue is further complicated if we suppose that [James] Carmichael [the king’s minister] was present at the questioning of the accused, and also wrote the pamphlet that claims to report their answers.”

But close-reading the miniature dramas staged among actors and objects within the pamphlet shows how the discovery scene functions as a paranoid affective system – a participatory, eros- and violence-saturated network of complex, often collaborative investments which are unrecoverable by any more direct method.

Though descriptions of witches’ Sabbaths are rare in British sources (English witches were generally understood to practice maleficium, or harm to the community, in solitude or in small family groups), the theatrics of the North Berwick kirk gathering recounted in Newes from Scotland are an idiosyncratic pastiche of objects and gestures which cite Continental influences.

47 Normand and Roberts, Witchcraft, 303.
in a perversely, even archly cheery affective register. The food and drink that appear to the sieve-sailing witches is pleasurable and plentiful, unlike the rancid or loathsome food witches are sometimes forced to eat in accounts of Continental witches’ sabbaths. They dance a sociable (possibly even sexual) reel or round, rather than the involuntary, frantic bodily jerking of demonic possession. The whole scene has the atmosphere of a very, very outré secret midnight party presided over by a blaspheming, sadistic yet charismatic nightlife guru.

Figure 1, *Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life and death of Doctor Fian...* (London: for William Wright, 1591), Ciiv and title page verso. BOD 8⁹ Douce F 210. The woodcut evokes a similarly-sociable gathering of ordinary-looking witches, engaged in what look like everyday activities but for the wrecking ship on the horizon – though this is probably due to its being a composite made from preexisting images.

---

48 The queerly transnational, trans-cultural quality of Scottish witchcraft narratives reveals Scotland’s liminal position as a site of anxiety about the penetration of Continental influence, particularly in this instance Northern magic from witches in Scandinavia, into Britain. This paranoia clusters in *Newes from Scotland* around the Edinburgh waterfront, which figures in the North Berwick witch panic as the setting for the witches’ activities, the home and workplace of several of the accused, and the portal through which the king must return home.

The Devil who waits at the North Berwick kirk is not the silhouetted monster depicted in the pamphlet’s woodcut, but “in the habit or likeness of a man,” in a body with human parts which he uses in a human manner as a sodomitical sexual agent: “Seeing that they tarried over long, he at their comming enjoyned them all to a penance, which was, that they should kisse his Buttockes, in signe of duetye to him: which being put over the Pulpit barre, everye one did as he had enjoyned them.” Sexual congress with the Devil, often punitive and painful, is a common marker of the diabolical “pact” whose signing is often the centerpiece of Continental witches’ sabbaths. And here, too, the witches are said to report, almost as an afterthought, that the Devil “would Carnallye use them, albeit to their little pleasure… at sundry other times.” But the sexual sign of apostasy sworn in the kirk scene is of a very different quality from the heterosexual rape of Continental accounts. It is a gesture of forced “penance” – but the affect it plays on is not hellish violation, but a queerer and more ambiguous one of sodomitical, scatological, masochistic shame, in which the kirk and the “Pulpit barre” are just as much the objects of defilement as the two hundred witches. In this collective act and its attendant affects of submission and rebellion, there is the potential for real pleasure – or at least absurd, subversive humor – in transgressive erotic relations.

These tweaked foreign associations reinforce the centrality of deviant sexuality – and not just deviant sexual acts, but deviant desires – to Newes from Scotland’s construction of the witch. The witches participate in these relations and acts because they want to, because they even enjoy it. The North Berwick Devil as a character is a sexualized, comic foil to patriarchal authority:

---

50 Newes from Scotland, Aiiiiv.
51 Briggs, Witches and Neighbors, 25. Briggs also explains the early modern identification of the Devil with a sadistic father-figure in Continental witch beliefs, and the respective Catholic and Protestant psychologies around the Devil’s role in the seduction of witches (385).
52 Newes from Scotland, Cv.
the threat he represents is as much one of social disorder as of supernatural damnation. From the pulpit, the Devil makes “ungodly exhortations, wherein he did greatly enveighe against the King of Scotland,” and specify that “the King is the greatest enemy he hath in the worlde.” These reported words transmit a lasting affective load to James, who takes over some of the interrogation at the 1591 North Berwick witch trials himself. The king’s paranoid self-styling as a central player in this witch hunt calls to mind the vociferous, obviously eroticized investment of a homophobic minister or politician who is passionately interested in the desires of the queer subjects he so passionately persecutes, imagining their agenda as specifically targeted at the structures of national and patriarchal authority he believes himself to embody. James’ delight is specifically at the news that the Devil is equally, passionately interested in him as a cosmic twin, nemesis and ur-object of desire.

Sexual secrets and secret knowledge also function in Newes from Scotland as a definitive marker of witch-ness – and as the linchpin of the collusive affective dynamic between James and the accused witches. In the midst of his “great delight” at hearing confessions, James seems to have a sudden attack of skepticism: “Item, the saide Agnis Sampson confessed before the kings Majestie sundrye thinges which were so miraculous and strange, as that his Majestie saide they were all extreame lyars.” The “eldest witch” is said to have answered that “she would not wishe his Majestie to suppose her words to be false, but rather to beleev[e] them, in that she would discover such matter unto him as his majestie should not any way doubt of.” So, in order to

53 The Devil is suspiciously familiar with the witches and with local social customs; one could almost imagine he lived among them all the time. Normand and Roberts represent one possible reading of the North Berwick gathering as a sort of populist political carnival or rally, “an astonishingly democratic meeting presided over by a devil who can be criticised […] We may even see this moment as an image of political argument and challenge […] The devil berated in North Berwick kirk for late delivery of an image is not the super-subtle and supremely powerful enemy of God of the demonologists. He is, at least in part, the devil of popular belief, ballads and stories, of many proverbs and popular woodcuts, who has close, chatty relationships with clowns in early modern drama” (215).

54 Newes from Scotland, Bivr.

55 Ibid., Bivr
prove the truth of her confession of witchcraft to the king, Sampson turns a public performance of confession into a private exchange of secret knowledge: “thereupon taking his Majestie a little aside, she declared unto him the verye words which passed betweene the kings Majestie and his Queene at Upslo in Norway the first night of their marriage, with their answere each to other.”

This moment is unlike anything else in *Newes from Scotland* in that it is not a confession at all, but rather the kind of token secret a soothsayer might use as proof of her intuition. Sampson turns the truth-producing apparatus of the witch hunt inside out. Rather than being the object of intimate sexual probing in search of a foreknown secret about her (as when she was shaved and searched for the Devil’s mark), here she somehow contrives a foreknown secret of a private, sexual nature about the king, and projects it onto him, through close bodily contact, as a preexisting secret truth.

And, thanks to a completely impenetrable confluence of information, investment, and desire, Sampson’s secret appears to hit its affective mark: “whereat the kinges Majestie wondered greatlye, and swore by the living God, that he believed that all the Divels in hell could not have discovered the same: acknowledging her words to be most true, and therefore gave the more credit to the rest which is before declared.” The “rest which is before declared” of course includes Sampson’s own confession of witchcraft (actually, of “whatsoever was demanded of her”) under torture. The “credit” the king adds to her condemnation seems a large price to pay for his “wonder,” and why an accused witch would do this at all seems a total mystery – until we realize that it is the particular nature of a sexual secret that provides Sampson with an opportunity to reverse the current of paranoid knowledge production and play on the king’s desires, and the king with a performative reinforcement of the “truth” of witches’ supernatural

---

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.
powers. Whatever unknowable, presumably amorous words Sampson whispers, James enthusiastically assents to them – the alternative presumably being to deny them, and then to explain to the assembled trial officers how they differ from what he and his fourteen-year-old proxy-bride, whom he had never met and with whom he had only French as a common language, actually had said to one another on their first night together. As I read it, the palimpsest of sexual secrets layered into this exchange generates a paranoid impetus for the king to be hailed into confirming this highly suspect secret knowledge of his wedding night. James’s preference for men was something of an open secret even before his marriage.\(^{58}\) Here, that secret ghosts behind this one; the king’s unspeakable sexual status, or the specter of sexual deviance threatening the marriage bed, is covered over and surrogated by another transgressive and suspect, but urgently, ubiquitously public and speakable intimacy in the witch trial discovery scene – of an elderly country wise-woman and confessed witch whispering sweet nothings from his own wedding night in the eagerly receptive ear of her king.

This pamphlet is a piece of political propaganda; but I contend that its narrative is also a memorial reconstruction of a desperate, collaborative command performance, solicited according to the fantasies and needs of the power apparatus in which the women are caught – a kind of witch-minstrel show. The discovery scene bears out what Sedgwick names as the imitative, mimetic quality of paranoid suspicion: “Paranoia seems to require being imitated to be understood, and it, in turn, seems to understand only by imitation. Paranoia proposes both Anything you can do (to me) I can do worse, and Anything you can do (to me) I can do first – to

\(^{58}\) See Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: The Life of James VI and I, the First Monarch of a United Great Britain* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003), 100-140. English agent Thomas Fowler reported before the wedding that Anne bore the king a great deal of “affection which his Majestie is apt in no way to requite” (quoted in Ethel Carleton Williams, *Anne of Denmark* [London: Longman, 1970], 14-15).
Thus the accused imitate the cravings of their inquisitors; and the inquisitors get what they crave from the accused witches by demanding re-enactments of their fantasmatic evil powers. Sedgwick’s double-bind sums up the dynamic, on both sides, between James and the witches who are the objects of his obsession. The king preemptively invites diabolical invasion by soliciting displays of witchcraft in the courtroom; and the accused, in turn, shape their performances of self-incrimination to his “delight.”

By the same token as James credits Agnis Sampson’s secret words as “most true,” Newes from Scotland’s paranoid readings of everyday material things are born out of the fear (and desire) that such objects actually work to carry out the witches’ politically- and erotically-suspect “witch agenda.” Agnis Tompson confesses to a plan to bewitch the king to death via a reaction between toad’s venom and scrap of “foule linnen” cloth soiled by the king’s bodily fluids – which only fails because her friend, a gentleman of the king’s chamber, refuses to deliver the piece of linen. Another story put in Agnis Tompson’s mouth tells of a charm is at least partially efficacious:

[...] at the time when his Majestie was in Denmarke, she being accompanied with the parties before specially named, tooke a Cat and christened it, and afterward bound to each parte of that Cat, the cheefest partes of a dead man, and severall joynts of his bodie, and that in the night following the saide Cat was conveied into the midst of the sea by all these witches sayling in their riddles or Cives as is aforesaide, and so left the saide Cat right before the Towne of Lieth in Scotland: this doone, there did arise such a tempest in the Sea, as a greater hath not beene seene: which tempest was the cause of the perrishing of a Boate or vessell comming over from the towne of Brunt Iland to the towne of Lieth, wherein was sundrye Jewelles and riche giftes, which should have been presented to the now Queen of Scotland, at her Majesties comming to Lieth.

59 Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 131.
60 This is where actual accused women become truly fungible in Newes from Scotland, their identities shifting from criminal suspects individually subjected to examination and torture into a conglomerate of interchangeable witches acting in concert. The pamphlet attributes this confession to “Agnis Tompson,” but the cat-christening comes from the record of Agnis Sampson’s trial (Document 20, “The Trial of Agnes Sampson, 27 January 1591,” item 40).
61 Newes from Scotland, Bivv-C.
This cobbled-together fetish charm is, notably, an invention of Newes from Scotland’s fictional narrative voice, thickly embellished with descriptive details not in the trials. The narrative creates a chain of uncanny material objects, each of which has some power or efficacy in relation to the next, all catalyzed by witchcraft: a cat; a christening; a length of twine; “the cheefest partes of a dead man, and several joynts of his bodie”; a fleet of sieves; a tempest; a foundered ship; and the “sundrye Jewelles and riche giftes” which “should have been presented” to Anne on her entry into Scotland. The narrative’s curious lacuna around the woman’s “taking” of a cat (stray or stolen?) contributes to the figuration of the witch as lethally seductive in a twisted, quasi-maternal way. The paranoid imagination can run wild with suspicions as to whether the cat was cradled and baptized like a human baby – given a name which we cannot know – in a mock-sacramental ritual with overtones of bestiality, sadism, and incest. The narrative is also silent as to who the “dead man” is, and what his “cheefest partes” might be. The insinuation, combining necromancy with the sacrilegious use of relics in everyday life, is that the “joynts and members” are old bones obtained by robbing consecrated graves. Unlike in the case of the

---

62 The trial records (including the indictment where sieve-sailing originates) mention throwing a dog overboard and conjuring cats: “Ye and they took the sea, Robert Grierson being your admiral and masterman, passed over the sea in riddles to a ship where ye entered with the devil your master therein, where after ye had eaten and drunken, ye cast over a black dog that skipped under the ship, and thereby ye hewing the devil your master therein, who drowned the ship by tumbling, whereby the queen was put back by storm.” (26) Item, indicted for consulting with the said Annie Sampson, Robert Grierson and divers other witches for the treasonable staying of the queen’s homecoming by storm and wind, and raising of storm to that effect, or else to have drowned her Majesty and her company by conjuring of cats and casting of them in the sea at Leith and the back of Robert Grierson’s house. To stay the queen’s homecoming” (Document 23, “The Trial of Euphame MacCalzean, 9-15 June 1591,” items 25 and 26). The elder witch, Agnis (“Annie”) Sampson, also confesses to baptizing a cat in the chimney hearth of a house (Document 20, “The Trial of Agnes Sampson, 27 January 1591,” item 40).

63 It is possible that the cat may have been christened “James,” or “Anne,” or some other reference to the royal targets of the storm. Or it may have been given a diabolical moniker out of folk tradition, like “Tom” (the name by which the devil-dog in The Witch of Edmonton introduces himself) – or somehow “christened,” a fully perverted version of the sacrament, with no name at all.

64 Their possible provenance is hinted at in the trial dittay of Agnis Sampson (who is after all a long-time healer and midwife), when she is accused of “taking off the pain and sickness” of women in childbirth (including Euphame MacCalzean, the other witch accused of cat-conjuring) by “putting of moulds or powder, made of men’s joints and members in Newton kirk, under Euphame MacCalzean’s bed ten days before her birth” (Document 20, items 42-43).
king’s fouled linen, the salient thing about these body parts seems to be what parts they are – perhaps they include the genitals, fingers, tongue? – and that they are human, rather than whose parts they were. And the thing that results from all of these manipulations is a monstrous hybrid or composite object, a blasphemously-humanized (dead?) cat bound up with an array of appendages protruding all over its body, which are the desiccated or decaying parts of human corpses. This thing effectively wrecks a ship by raising a storm (the only act of maleficium in the pamphlet to cause actual destruction of property), a recurrent motif in the loss-ridden business of sea voyaging. The jewels and gifts, political tokens of the queen’s marriage and rule, are displaced from their legitimating function and enlisted instead in this graphic series of witchcraft procedures, creating a chain of material signification between James’s troubled marriage, Anne’s troubled rulership, and the actions performed by a group of sexually- and socially-suspect common women (i.e. “witches”) with twisted forms of the ordinary substances of domestic life, birth, and death.

As these uncanny materials show, Newes from Scotland is narratively structured by a pattern of metonymic substitution, where an object or fragment stands in for – and has a real effect on – a whole person, figure, or event. This is true at the level of material detail, for example where toad’s venom reacts with trace bodily fluids on a piece of linen to cause debilitating pain and death to the king’s body; it is also true at the structural level of the pamphlet’s rhetoric: parts of a dead man are used to work larger magic against a whole man, just as the fate of the king is connected metonymically to that of the realm. Larger ideological concerns over the joining of countries by marriage, removal of monarchs from their countries, and separation of a married king and queen frame the pamphlet’s thematics of parts, wholes, jointures, and disruptions posed by witchcraft. This mechanism of surrogation is common to
beliefs about how witchcraft works, but its significance to the erotics of paranoid suspicion lies
in how it is deployed in the construction of witches’ deviant desires and the illicit means by
which they carry them out. As Melanie Klein’s readings of introjected part-objects remind us, it
is not only a traditional, father-focused Oedipal anxiety that fuels persecutory fantasies like the
ones elaborated in *Newes from Scotland*; paranoia’s anxiety is fundamentally oriented towards
persecutors produced, as the North Berwick witches are, from within bodies, households, and
realms. The paranoiac’s auto-erotic and self-directed fears, Klein says, are derived from
“sadistic phantasies” of fashioning one’s own excrement into “poisonous and destructive
weapons” to persecute one’s love objects:

In these phantasies [the child] turns his own faeces into things that persecute his
objects; and by a kind of magic (which, in my opinion, is the basis of black
magic) he pushes them secretly and by stealth into the anus and other orifices of
the objects and lodges them inside their bodies.⁶⁵

I see this model of paranoia as explaining both the violent procedures of suspicion that produce
witches, and the suspicious uses of material things represented in witchcraft literature. The kind
of “magic” that Klein sees transmuting a body’s solid excretions into “things that persecute”
one’s objects of love, fear, need, and anxiety is the same mechanism of paranoid interpretive
magic that turns ordinary material objects like sieves, toads, traces of bodily effluvia, linen, cats,
twine, and a dead man’s joints and “cheefest partes,” into “poisonous and destructive” weapons
used to damage the king, country, and community. Agnis Tompson, Agnis Sampson, and the
others are said to use these items to perverse ends, “pushing” them “secretly and by stealth” into
the kirk, the king’s bedchamber, the water of the harbor, and even the space of the witch trial,
“lodging them inside” the body politic of the nation in their (mostly futile) “attacks” upon the

patriarchal body of the king. This is “the basis of black magic”: the primal paranoid fantasy underpinning beliefs about what witches are and do.

It makes sense, then, according to paranoia’s “recursive and mimetic” logic, that the apparatus of the witch hunt uses this same violent “black magic” to “push” the material accessories of witchcraft back into the bodies of its objects – the accused witches. While witch beliefs construct witches’ implements as tools used to transmit maleficent desires from the witch to her victim, I contend that within the affective structure of witch hunt literature they actually transmit desire in the other direction: taking on and carrying paranoid suspicion from other points in the community to the person of the witch. The collusive exchange of the discovery scene discursively binds the accused parties to their demonized accessories as effectively as the dead man’s “joynts” are bound to the cursed cat. And, even more literally, according to the “symmetrical epistemology” of paranoia, the witch hunt’s techniques of interrogation “push,” as well as press, wrench, prick, and crush, the instruments of knowledge production (among them ropes and pilliwinks) into, onto, and against their actual, fleshly body parts.

5. The Witch of Edmonton: “our secret game”

Early modern witchcraft plays are many and various, but for this investigation into the affective and erotic forces at work in the construction of witchcraft, The Witch of Edmonton is particularly apropos. The play makes explicit, to a degree not found in any other example of the genre, the paranoid, “collusive” process of suspicion, projection, and identification by which a community constructs a “witch” in its midst, from the materials of ordinary life. A witchcraft play displays affective dynamics in a different way from print media – for one thing, social fantasies of the demonic in the period are particularly connected to, and expressed through,
theatrical representation. In witchcraft plays, the erotically-suspect part-objects that make up the material means of witchcraft are really, physically present in the theater, as properties of the performance. These anxieties are strongly connected to early modern anti-theatrical suspicions about the space of the theater in general as a site of unnatural conjuration. *The Witch of Edmonton* alone, by way of example, stages boys appearing as women, humans appearing as animals, (boy) actors appearing as (female) ghosts, and a world of suspended social order, onstage and off. The intimate inter-implication of the uncanny objects and events onstage with the lived, material world is made emphatically central in *The Witch of Edmonton*, which bills itself as “A known true Story, Composed into A Tragicomedy,” based on the witch trial and execution of the real Elizabeth Sawyer, at Tyburn in 1621. The Prologue introduces the play’s self-styled documentary realist representation of recent and nearby events as absolutely concomitant with its supernatural subject matter and diabolical plot:

The town of Edmonton hath lent the stage
A Devil and a Witch, both in an age.
To make comparisons it were uncivil
Between so even a pair, a Witch and Devil (Prologue, 1-4).

The Prologue’s allusion to “A Devil and a Witch, both in an age” refers to the earlier anonymous comedy, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (1602); but, in addition to reinforcing the parallel between the stock characters of Witch and Devil as onstage embodiments of dangerous

---


67 The story of Elizabeth Sawyer’s investigation, examination, and execution for witchcraft was already widely publicized in popular media before the play premiered, by Henry Goodcole’s sensationalizing, moralizing pamphlet account of interrogating and confessing Sawyer himself, published in the immediate aftermath of her death.

supernatural agencies, this prologue can also be read as conjuring the even closer proximity between “A Devil and a Witch” (Mother Sawyer and her familiar, the black Dog) at the center of this play. This witch and her devil-dog function as a complementary pair of differently-magnetized objects attracting and focusing the audience’s paranoid desires.

To get at the exact relation the deviant desires staged between the Dog and the Witch bear to the complex of inter-dependent projections and desires that go into the construction of the Witch, my reading of this play begins with the part that is neither Witch nor Devil: the extensive subplot detailing Frank Thorney’s acts of bigamy, deception, and murder to preserve his inheritance. In my reading, the bigamy plot is key to fully understanding the dynamics of the witch hunt narrative. It makes visible the affective content of the witchcraft plot, demonstrating that there is something about specifically sexual secrets which particularly sparks or conjures suspicions of witchcraft, and vice versa. Sexual secrets crop up in all of the previous examples of paranoia around witchcraft technologies – sexual secrets manifested in the content of the paranoid anecdotes, and further, implied and occulted sexual secrets speculated-upon and brought out by a suspicious reading practice of attending to the possible erotic investments of this paranoia. For example, Geillis Duncane’s habits of spending nights out of her master’s house and healing sick neighbors are constructed as suspicions of witchcraft, causing us to suspect the master’s illicit sexual jealousy of playing a role in this interpretation. Agnis Tompson’s need for a scrap of fouled linen for her charm to bewitch the king to death requires her to appeal to bonds of friendship and service, conjuring suspicions that either or both may be illicitly sexual and that John Kers’s affective position may be more complex than we thought. And, in an example of something about witchcraft which particularly pertains to or addresses sexual secrets, Agnis Sampson perversely “proves” her witch-power in a way that exceeds even
the proof of the Devil’s mark on her “privities,” by producing a sexually- and politically-charged secret about the king and communicating it to him in an eroticized, intimate way that allows him to use her deviance, and the exciting danger of the witch trial discovery scene, as a cover for his own deviant erotic desires. I argue that the tandem relationship I point out between sexual secrets and witchcraft in *The Witch of Edmonton* ultimately serves to highlight the community’s paranoid investments in covering over and normativizing its own sexual deviance (including but not limited to master/servant rape, fornication, bigamy, and intimations of bestiality and bisexuality) by means of projective communal fantasies constructing Elizabeth Sawyer as a stereotypical “witch.”

Unlike the ripped-from-the-headlines witch hunt, Frank Thorney and the events of the bigamy plot are all *completely fictional*, concocted by Dekker, Rowley, and (chiefly, according to scholarly conjecture) by Ford for the purposes of the stage play.69 Previous scholarship on *The Witch of Edmonton* has not produced any single strong theory as to why the bigamy plot is there, or what relationship it bears to the Elizabeth Sawyer story.70 And yet this inventive and

---


fraught domestic tragedy is part of the same play, inter-spliced almost scene for scene alongside the witch plot. Considering the mechanisms of paranoia and erotic non-normativity in the two plots requires reading the bigamy scenes with an eye to the structure of a sexual secret, and the effects of suspected sexual deviance on the suspects as well as the objects of suspicion. Such a reading will show that, without any absolute, reductive one-to-one mapping of one onto the other, the affective dynamics of sexual secrecy, suspicion, and knowledge that operate in both plots model how queerness functions as a social and sexual secret in the case of sodomitical or same-sex relations. Analyzing the play this way, placing exactly what it means to be a bigamist in the Frank Thorney plot alongside the exploration of what it means to be a witch, can shed light on the construction of witchcraft, and bring out the resonances between the witch hunt and the production of other sexually-suspect, queer figures.

In the opening lines of the play, Frank tells Winnifride (whose deviant sexual status is marked on her body, as she appears “with child”) that she will be above suspicion now that they are legally married: “Thou needst not/ Fear what the tattling gossips in their cups/ Can speak against thy name” (I.i.2-4). However, though their marriage is technically legal, legality alone does not provide social acceptance or a public married life. Frank immediately relegates their still-problematic marriage to the closet of furtiveness and secrecy, putting Winnifride up in another town, to be visited by him “Once every month at least… Perhaps oftener;/ That’s as occasion serves” (I.i.44-46). Winnifride objects, “Is this to have a husband?” but she cannot actually demand more of Frank, because the mark of their sexual relationship (her pregnancy) makes the coupling still socially suspect. Her status leaves her vulnerable to shame, and powerless to insist on being acknowledged.71 But for Frank and Winnifride’s former employer,

71 The portentous mood of secrecy, stigma, and fear around Winnifride’s bridal pregnancy in The Witch of Edmonton may reflect what Martin Ingraham characterizes as a changing disciplinary norm in which church courts
Sir Arthur Clarington, the marriage is a double-edged piece of secret knowledge: unbeknownst to Frank, Sir Arthur has had a sexual relationship (of suspect consensuality) with Winnifride. When Sir Arthur upbraids Frank for debauching and ruining Winnifride (the crime that he himself had previously committed), Frank protests that they are married – and then asks Sir Arthur to write to his father to assure him of the opposite, that he is not married. The illicit sexual relationship between Frank and Winnifride is not secret; it is known to everyone, including to Old Thorney, who, imposing his own judgment as to whom his son should marry, has threatened to disinherit Frank if he does what would seem to be the right thing and makes it legitimate. The privileged Sir Arthur does not want the burden of knowing about the secret marriage, or lying to another man about it; but he agrees to certify the lie, “Provided/ I never was made privy to it,” invoking one of sexual normativity’s sustaining illusions, the plausible deniability of what one hasn’t seen with one’s own eyes (I.i.147-150). When Frank exits and Winnifride enters, though, Sir Arthur reveals that his lie about Frank’s sexual status vis-à-vis Winnifride is in actuality a cover for his own sexual depravity with her. He will make himself the keeper and facilitator of Frank’s secret (his marriage), because it is in effect a more public, more visible version of the same secret he harbors, and lying about it – hence keeping Winnifride sequestered in secret – allows him a space clear of social opprobrium for the illicit sex he apparently plans to continue having with her. Over her protestations, he calls her complicit in “beguiling” Frank, and exults that the marriage gives them “Free scope enough, without control or fear,/ To interchange our pleasures” (I.i.169-172). He seems aroused by the secrecy, declaring

---

attempted to crack down on premarital fornication and bridal pregnancy (which was extremely common, in as many as one fifth of all marriages by some estimates) after about 1600, in an effort to insist that only church marriage made sexual relations licit. This push for official condemnation (which was especially intense in areas of economic scarcity) stands in dramatic contrast to another preexisting and coexisting social norm in which premarital sex and bridal pregnancy were relatively widespread and accepted as long as marriage took place before the birth. Martin Ingraham, *Church Courts, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 219-237.
that they will “con the lesson of our loves,” and calling their congress “Our secret game” (I.i.172-174).

In light of his lascivious intentions, Sir Arthur’s exchange with Frank is revealed to be an unequal negotiation between two men who agree, one knowingly and one naively, to become the alibis for one another’s sexual and relational secrets so as to preserve their social capital. Frank begs his superior to cover for him, but in fact Sir Arthur is also using his servant’s intimate scandal to cover for himself. Sir Arthur also threatens to extort continuing sexual favors from Winnifride, pointing up another way in which secret sexual deviance exacerbates existing class, gender, and power inequalities. Winnifride’s language of repentance, cure, and conversion also resonates with stigmatized sexual secrecy; disavowing her former appetites, she insists, “I will change my life” (I.i.119). As with queer sexual secrets, those in the most stigmatized sexual positions – which often overlap with positions of the least social power – have the least recourse. As Sir Arthur’s employee Winnifride may technically be the wronged party, but outing herself as a victim could mean more harm to her precarious marriage and social standing.

Frank Thorney’s second marriage, contracted to the daughter of his father’s creditor in order to save (and thus inherit) Old Thorney’s lands, is ostensibly an un-stigmatized, economically productive, socially- and sexually- legitimate, normative coupling. Only the one, single, secret thing the audience already knows about Frank – that he has married Winnifride – transforms this normative, patriarchally-endorsed match into the monstrous crime of bigamy. The secret marriage lingering behind the scene in which Frank’s father orders him to marry Susan Carter makes Frank’s normally-laudable response of filial obedience into an abomination. The words that fathers in early modern drama long to hear, “I humbly yield to be directed by you/ In all commands” (I.ii.152-153), become the setup to a sexual crime. Old Thorney even
suspects the secret marriage, and presses Frank into admitting he loves and has seduced Winnifride – true pieces of sexual knowledge he freely gives up in order to protect the bigger, more transgressive secret. However, when Frank equivocates on the question of his intent to marry her, his father flies into a rage. Old Thorney is notfooled; Frank’s refusal to confirm or deny his relationship status in itself transmits the knowledge.

Old Thorney’s ranting, indignant lamentations are the voice of the paranoid position regarding Frank’s sexual secret: the father’s “terrible alertness to the dangers” posed by this “hateful and envious,” infuriatingly-autonomous part of him – his offspring, successor and heir – who is doing something sexually-untoward that has the power to materially hurt him; combined with his total impotence to transform these paranoid suspicions and fears into any more actionable form of knowledge. Paranoia “places its faith in exposure,” “as though to make something visible as a problem were, if not a mere hop, skip, and jump away from getting it solved, at least self-evidently a step in that direction”; but then, as Sedgwick notes, just bringing paranoid suspicions into speech does not bring about an end to the suspected problem, or give one any purchase for redressing it.\footnote{Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 140-141.} News of sexual scandal apparently travels fast, and Old Thorney has heard about Frank’s marriage to Winnifride, but cannot prove it. Even confronted directly with exposure – “Speak truth and blush, thou monster./ Has thou not married Winnifrede, a maid/ Was fellow-servant with thee?” (I.ii.167-169) – Frank is unfazed, swearing it is only a rumor. Even though Old Thorney’s suspicions are very much correct, they are smothered by a false letter from a more powerful man, Sir Arthur, who knows the same secret but denies it in his own interest. Frank’s sly reminder, “Fathers/ Are privileged to think and talk at pleasure,” hints that there are limits to the knowledge that paranoid suspicion can produce
about the erotic and social relations of others (I.ii.175-176). Old Thorney tearfully asks his son’s forgiveness; and, in an underhanded affective power play, Frank cements his upper hand by magnanimously empathizing with his father’s previous paranoia: “Your rage and grief proceeded from your love/ To me. So I conceived it” (I.ii.205-206). Frank’s performative earnestness in this scene becomes horrifying as it dawns on the audience that Old Thorney’s paranoia will not be able to expose the secret marriage, and that Frank is premeditating to commit bigamy.

Frank effectively disarms his father’s ability to produce knowledge through paranoid suspicion, keeping him from knowing Frank for what he is: a bigamist. “Bigamist” functions as a definite status in this play, one which shakes Frank’s identity even as he lies to conceal it:

On every side I am distracted,  
Am waded deeper into mischief  
Than virtue can avoid. But on I must.  
Fate leads me, I will follow (I.ii.197-200).

Frank says: “No man can hide his shame from heaven that views him” (I.ii.235), but he does not seem to feel that the cause of this “shame” is volitional. I have been calling bigamy a status rather than an act because the play constructs it as the deep, fundamental grounding of Frank’s character, a ubiquitous, unavoidable element in which he is fated to live and move. There is no significant language of decision in Frank’s asides as he proceeds to marry the woman his father has chosen for him, living a lie. Even in a state of shame and acute awareness of his sinfulness, he seems to feel that it was in some sense not a choice: “In vain he flees whose destiny pursues him” (I.ii.236). In that respect, bigamy functions as something more constitutive than an act in the play; it is Frank’s sexual and relational status, something more akin to an orientation – or even, at his execution, an identity.
The witch plot of *The Witch of Edmonton* is a mirror-image of the bigamy plot in its concern with the interplay of choice and compulsion, both erotic and social, at the moment when a subject turns from the normative world and takes up the role of a sexually-deviant, queer figure: a bigamist, or a witch. When the “witch” of the title, Elizabeth Sawyer, first appears (not until the second act; Edmonton without the witch in the first act is all bigamy), her opening speech is a piece of social critique objecting to how she is seen and suspected by others:

And why on me?  Why should the envious world  
Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?  
‘Cause I am poor, deformed, and ignorant,  
And like a bow buckled and bent together  
By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,  
Must I for that be made a common sink  
For all the filth and rubbish of men’s tongues  
To fall and run into? (II.i.1-8).

This speech explicitly describes the affective dynamics of projection on which paranoia relies: others full of envy and “scandalous malice” (eroticized violence and/or violent sexuality) “throw” their malice “upon” an old woman, attributing their own dangerous feelings of envy and persecutory fantasies to her, thus construing her as envious and malicious towards others.

Elizabeth Sawyer answers her own rhetorical question, “why on me?” – she is suspected along a number of social axes: female, poor, uneducated, and physically deformed, “like a bow buckled and bent together/ By some more strong in mischiefs than myself.” It is as though Sawyer’s body is being cast as a persecutory “bad object,” bewitched and manipulated by supernatural malice into an unnatural shape. Sawyer objects to being “made a common sink/ For all the filth and rubbish of men’s tongues”; that is, to being a receptacle for anxious projections about bodies and eroticism, in much the same manner as Agnis Sampson in *Newes from Scotland* is objectified by being tortured, shaved, probed, and demonized with a “privie marke.” But
Sawyer’s misogynistic image of prodigious sexual receptivity is part of a freakish body which functions more as a foil and scapegoat to others’ sexual aberrance than the object of persecutory erotic desire itself.

In what may be the most self-conscious reference in all of early modern drama to how communal desires construct the category of the witch, Elizabeth Sawyer objects:

Some call me witch,
And being ignorant of myself, they go
About to teach me how to be one (II.i.8-10).

What is so unique about these lines is the idea that the construction of a witch goes hand-in-hand with the performance of the role. I argue that the idea that an accused witch must be taught – formed, instructed, and groomed – to be one should be read back into witchcraft narratives like Newes from Scotland as well, in order to emphasize that the production of a witch is often a creeping, paranoid exchange of affective and social pressures, with conventional content which the “witch” must incorporate. In this play, however, this process is enacted on and by Elizabeth Sawyer not in her witch trial, but in her community. The people of Edmonton insist:

That my bad tongue—by their bad usage made so —
Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
Themselves, their servants, and their babes at nurse.
This they enforce upon me, and in part
Make me to credit it (II.i.11-15).

Here it is precisely the tongue which gets made into a bad part-object: used, in others’ delusions, to carry out their sadistic impulses towards their own property, household, servants, and family members; then despised. The persona of a stereotypical English witch, engaging in material practices of maleficium witchcraft, is so consistently “enforced” on her that she “in part” starts to believe it about herself.
In this respect Sawyer’s queerness as a witch is constructed differently from Frank Thorney’s queerness as a bigamist. While Thorney’s queer sexual status is very much a social artifact, produced out of the conflict between his erotic desires and the social system of patriarchal marriage, it is a secret. The audience participates in the affects of bigamy through the dramatic irony of knowing what Thorney knows. Sawyer’s queer role as a witch, on the other hand, attaches to her publicly, through others’ suspicions. From the first line spoken to her onstage – “Out, out upon thee, witch!” – Sawyer’s words are reflexively turned back against her (“Dost call me witch?”/ “I do, witch, I do; and worse I would, knew I a name more hateful”), incriminating but also transforming her (II.i.17-19). After cursing Old Banks and getting beaten by him, Sawyer seems to dare to imagine Banks was right about her:

Abuse me! Beat me! Call me hag and witch!
What is the name? Where and by what art learned?
What spells, what charms, or invocations
May the thing called Familiar be purchased? (II.i.33-36).

Later, her soliloquy gets more specific as to the paranoia she faces, and what her lines and stage properties would be in this new role:

I am shunned
And hated like a sickness, made a scorn
To all degrees and sexes. I have heard old beldams
Talk of familiars in the shape of mice,
Rats, ferrets, weasels and I wot not what
That have appeared and sucked, some say, their blood,
But by what means they came acquainted with them
I’m now ignorant. Would some power, good or bad,
Instruct me which way I might be revenged
Upon this churl, I’d go out of myself
[...] Abjure all goodness, be at hate with prayer,
And study curses, imprecations,
Blasphemous speeches, oaths, detested oaths,

73 In fact, it is debatable whether at the beginning of the play Elizabeth Sawyer identifies herself as a witch in any way. Practically alone among early modern witch hunt literature, The Witch of Edmonton’s representation of demonology starts out skeptically and reaches, at most, ambivalence, a drastic change from Henry Goodcole’s extremely paranoid pamphlet.
Or anything that’s ill, so I might work
Revenge upon this miser, this black cur
That barks and bites, and sucks the very blood
Of me and my credit. ‘Tis all one
To be a witch as to be counted one (II.i.107-126).

This crucial maxim, “‘Tis all one/ To be a witch as to be counted one,” with which Elizabeth Sawyer comes out to herself (so to speak) as a witch, is something of a corollary to paranoid suspicion’s collusive, queer-implicating move “It takes one to know one.” Sawyer’s declaration is more like “If I am known as one, I might as well be one”; but, even though she is referring to what she would know if she were a witch, her comment that being the target of witch-paranoia is the same as being one is what has the performative effect of calling up the Dog. The Dog is an onstage embodiment of paranoia’s mechanism of making true what it suspects: Dog makes her a witch, but Dog is a materialized conjuration of a wicked desire she had, which was aroused in her by the community’s abuse of her as a witch. What is queer about the performativity of “’tis all one” is how it plays into this paranoia. Rejecting any moral distinction between being innocently slandered and actually being that thing is a move for suspects who do not accept that the slander against them is a bad thing to be (as in the conscientious refusal to deny that one is gay, HIV-positive, a communist) – or for suspects who desire initiation into that very category, as seems to be the case for Elizabeth Sawyer. Being the object of paranoia provides an opportunity for hyperbolic self-transformation; it is a queer response to violent, projective demonization that says to a stream of insults, “I wish!” and moreover, “you want a witch? I’ll show you a witch.” This longing, lusting solicitation of “some power, good or bad” that would allow her to be the thing she is counted as anyway – but to really be it, with all its attendant powers and perils – is an alternative way of imagining the queer collusion and desperate forms of participation through which early modern witches are produced.
The little love object produced by this self-conjuring is a black Dog, who walks onstage and claims Elizabeth Sawyer as his own because he has heard her cursing. He tells her he is “He thou has so often/ Importuned to appear to thee, the devil” (II.i.129-130) and that he loves her “much too well/ To hurt or fright thee” (II.i.131-132). The Dog presumes that they already have an intimate relationship of mutual love (he also tells her he came to her out of love and pity to help her, and that all he wants is her soul and body, like a canine, diabolical surrogate-Christ). He is both her servant and her master: he offers to run and do mischief to anyone she commands him to, but threatens “I’ll tear thy body in a thousand pieces” if she refuses him an unequivocal blood-pact (II.i.144). He seals her to himself by suckling blood from her arm, making her a twisted, incestuous, anti-generative, pseudo-maternal figure. One of the play’s most obvious liberties with the real Elizabeth Sawyer’s story is changing her marital status from married to single, in order to better point up the centrality of suspicions of sexual deviance in the witch hunt.

The erotic bond between Elizabeth Sawyer and her Dog is extended, even triangulated, through the queer figure of Cuddy Banks. Old Banks’s son is a fool character who, attracted by Mother Sawyer’s blasphemous Latin chanting, dabbles in witchcraft with her and in sexual relations with Dog, who becomes his “ingle” or boy-lover⁷⁴ – all the while maintaining an affect of receptive, childish innocence in his relations with Dog (and a seeming respect for Sawyer, even in acknowledging her as a witch) which makes him a foil for the paranoid dynamic in the rest of the play. Cuddy Banks is a comically gullible and troublingly malleable desiring subject who bears some resemblance to an infantile, polymorphous “blank slate.” But he also seems to

---

⁷⁴ “Ingle” has connotations of service which are interesting in that they bear out the witch/familiar dynamic – which is itself a reversal of the larger cosmic order enacted by the familiar’s seducing the witch into the Devil’s service. In this relation, Dog appears to take the submissive sexual role, although he obviously wields control over Cuddy. See Mario DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64-67.
be specifically attracted to witchcraft, to Dog, or to the bond between Sawyer and Dog – he asks to become involved with them, enlisting their help in obtaining the object of his unrequited love. They lure him out into a field alone at night with the promise of meeting the object of his unrequited desire. But really it is Dog who meets him there, toys with him by showing him a hallucinatory vision of a spirit in the shape of the girl and ducking him in a pond, and then offers Cuddy himself as an erotic love object and familiar. The tenor of the bond between Cuddy and the devil-dog, who calls himself “Tom,” arouses a form of audience suspicion as dramatic irony: what is suspect about it is Cuddy’s lack of suspicion. Cuddy takes him as his “Ningle” (a corruption of “ingle,” or boy-favorite) and declares his love too easily and too intensely, immediately after being dunked in the pond. His extravagant promises – egged on by Dog’s slavishly enthusiastic vows of service – to steal scraps and delicacies of food for Dog in return for his companionship in the morris dance, show their eroticized power dynamic escalating in intensity. Cuddy believes himself to be master of the Dog, whose difference from an ordinary, non-bewitched dog he never fully seems to register, although they speak to one another – but from the audience’s perspective Dog’s subservient affect appears manipulative, and Cuddy appears suspiciously unguarded. What is interesting about the dynamic represented here, though, is that it is largely the same set of material and affective transactions that constitutes the non-bewitched human/dog bond: the human offers food; the dog enthusiastically gives itself over to the human’s service; the human takes this as love and is gratified by the dog’s excitement. But when this circuit is articulated explicitly, and with such fervor, in the context of what we know is a supernatural trans-species erotic relation, it suddenly appears suspiciously transactional, instrumentalizing, even sadomasochistic.
Cuddy Banks is witch-bait – he exemplifies the seduction of witchcraft, and the queering effects of witch-production on the witch-believer. The warping, destructive desires of Old Banks (his father) and others reflected off Elizabeth Sawyer and Dog (whom they had a part in conjuring into being) at her en-witch-ment can spread to others, generating suspect erotic dynamics where there were none before. But the Cuddy plot also makes apparent how witchcraft paranoia becomes a lens through which even naïve actors appear suspect in this play. From almost the very instant Elizabeth Sawyer becomes a witch, the audience is drawn in – as Cuddy is drawn in – to a voyeuristic fascination with her witch-ness and her bond with Dog. It could be that Cuddy Banks’s bond with the Dog incites the audience’s participation in the suspicious witch-attribution being enacted everywhere else in the plot – and raises the possibility that, like Cuddy, what we see as witchcraft and what we do not is a function of where our desires are invested.

7. “Fitted both to one sheath”

Bigamy is legally and socially a lie, a sin, and a crime. But in *The Witch of Edmonton*, it is also an erotic predilection or appetite, a sexual secret transacted through paranoid suspicion as its affective medium, communicating and generating hidden sexual deviance even as it colludes to cover it up. Besides being felt as more of a “destiny” than a choice, Frank’s status as a bigamist seems to also entail genuine erotic interest and affection for both his wives. When Frank first is first betrothed to Susan, we initially wonder if the romantic energy of this second match is as faked as his earnestness with his father was. But that suspicion quickly gives way to the more-shocking suspicion that it is not, and that they are ardent lovers. Frank and Susan are described suggestively as a “new pair of Sheffield knives fitted both to one sheath” (II.ii.41-42),
a metaphor of twinning which also ominously introduces imagery of the knife (which will become a recurring figure in the play’s part-object-ridden landscape, ultimately effecting a climactic nexus between the two plots). The image of two knives going into one sheath also contains the specter of sexual deviance: bigamy (a marriage with an extra partner in it), adultery, bisexuality (two phalli), and doubled sexual peril.

In a scene rife with both empathetic affection and tacit conflict between the just-married couple, we see a detailed portrayal of the distorting effects of bigamy-paranoia on the suspicious party and the suspect alike. When Susan observes “strange variations” in her new husband, which she takes as a sign of inner “distraction,” “like one at enmity/ With peace” (II.ii.68-71), Frank blithely denies the affective turmoil Susan sees in him. His refusal to acknowledge the discrepancy between his speech and his affect is an act of passive-aggressive violence which drives Susan to increasingly anxious pleas for him to reveal what, in a classic paranoid move, she assumes is some dissatisfaction with her. If, as Susan says, “Thy liking is the glass/ By which I’ll habit my behavior” (II.ii.90-91), her “glass” reflects back an uncannily disturbing image to her, because she is unaware of its hidden warp: the sexual secret Frank is hiding.

Frank erratically attempts to placate Susan with praise, and even with a kind of honesty, almost telling her that he is a bigamist: “‘Twas told me by a woman/ Known and approved in palmistry,/ I should have two wives” (II.ii.118-120). Susan’s craving to know the source of Frank’s angst comes up against the limitations of paranoia’s faith in exposure: the specific form of sexual deviance that is the cause of her suspicion is so bizarre that it sounds like a lie even when spoken outright. Like the unknowable “thinges” that Agnis Sampson confesses before the king “which were so miraculous and strange, as that his Majestie saide they were all extreame lyars,” soliciting her wedding-night secret, the state of bigamy is too unnatural and too queer to
assuage the paranoia of others – even of others who are already erotically invested, and thus primed and hungry to hear precisely this kind of revelation. When Frank calls her the wrong name (“No, no, my Winnifride” [II.i.122]), and actually discloses that Winnifride is the girl he should choose to be a second wife, the revelation functions as further concealment due to Susan’s normative assumption that he means a second successive wife should she die. She replies, “I hope, sir, she may live/ To take my place” (II.i.127-128), being far more generous than she knows about the possibility of two wives or “many/ If they be good, the better” (II.i.133-134). Sedgwick makes the point that paranoia’s faith in exposure, such that it loses all purchase when the truth comes to light and nothing happens, is why counter-hegemonic paranoias are less effectual than those with a dominant consensus behind them (as in the witch hunt). So it is curious, then, that in this exchange, Frank’s barely-equivocated disclosure to Susan of what he really is perversely has no effectual force at all. As his wife, she is in the disenfranchised position even though he is the criminal queer figure, the bigamist, who justifiably arouses her suspicion.

Frank’s predicament is not, as is the case in a number of early modern comedies, a dramatization of women’s sexual interchangeability or objectification. Rather, his behavior – keeping his meeting with Winnifride, guiltily kissing Susan and promising to anger her no more – provokes the suspicion that he not only has two wives, but that he also feels the full measure of sexual and affective investment in both of them which a husband is supposed to bear his one wife. The monstrosity of his secret seems, at least in part, to be a problem of erotic orientation towards a different number of love objects than normative relational structures permit. His erotic bent infects both Frank’s marriages with queering affects of paranoid suspicion: if Susan’s

---

75 Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 141.
probing of Frank at their wedding betrays the schizogenic paranoia that grows out of suspecting a secret queerness in one’s spouse, Winnifride’s simultaneous terror of discovery and impotent, pessimistic suspicion that Frank will never publicly acknowledge their marriage is the aggrieved-yet-paranoid position of a queer spouse whose partner remains closeted.

Frank is next seen attempting to escape with Winnifride, who is disguised as his servant boy. When both wives, horrifyingly, appear together onstage, it is Winnifride who must actively work not to disclose her sexual status: “Oh, gods! Oh, mine eyes!” she yells, “Something hit mine eye; it makes it water still” (III.ii.53-54). The audience laughs in painful empathy at her absurd efforts to explain away her tears, the involuntary bodily sign of her erotic affiliation with Frank. The queer ruse by which Winnifride’s (legal, reproductive) marriage to Frank must disguise itself as a bond between men excites a curious erotic investment in Susan. Construing the “lad” as “much more than a servant” (III.ii.59-60), Susan seeks to insinuate herself into what she perceives as a homosocial/homoerotic friendship:

Your love to him, then, needs no spur from me,
And what for my sake you will ever do,
‘Tis fit it should be bought with something more
Than fair entreats. Look, here’s a jewel for thee
A pretty wanton label for thine ear,
And I would have thee hang it there, still to whisper
These words to thee: ‘Thou hast my jewel with thee’.
[…]
Thou mayst be servant, friend and wife to him.
A good wife is them all. A friend can play
The wife and servant’s part, and shift enough,
No less the servant can the friend and wife.
‘Tis all but sweet society, good counsel,
Interchanged loves, yes, and counsel-keeping (III.ii.62-78).

Susan suspects what Winnifride would like to deny here: that the three of them are in a triangulated erotic relation with one another. Though she says it is not needed, she wants their love to have a “spur” from her: she wants her “jewel” to buy the sexual services the “lad” will
“do” for Frank out of affection and “fair entreats,” making them done “for her sake” instead. She wants her “wanton label” to hang in the lad’s ear, as a material trace of her sexual presence (with connotations of “my jewel” including both the female sex and female chastity). Winnifride slyly rejects these erotic overtures, returning veiled insinuations back to Susan by agreeing to be “servant, friend, wife to him” (III.ii.86), but warning that she will not be a pander to him with other women. The triangulated “interchanged loves” that Susan tries to materialize are a fantasy of a kind of queerness – the homoerotic traffic in women – that has the potential to be totally compatible with her status as Frank’s legitimate wife. The erotic configuration she suspects stands in cruel ironic contrast to what actually exists: the stark, irreconcilable doubled heterosexual dyadism of bigamy, a configuration too violently abnormal to even be suspected.

8. “Would I were!”

Just as Frank is about to substitute a lesser sin of leaving a legitimate wife to run away with a secret, pregnant wife for the monstrous sin he has been committing, the witchcraft plot and the bigamy plot of The Witch of Edmonton come together for the first (and really, the only) time: the festering secret of Frank’s bigamy is suddenly materialized to the audience by the same little part-object that has materialized Elizabeth Sawyer’s witchcraft and seductive, rebellious sexual deviance – the Dog. Dog’s mysterious onstage appearances with Thorney, like his trysts with Cuddy Banks, embody how secret erotic deviance spreads outward – from Elizabeth Sawyer in the witch plot as from Frank Thorney in the bigamy plot – to generate and construct deviance in others, in a self-perpetuating feedback loop of untoward desires and illicit actions. As Frank and Susan bid a lingering farewell, the Dog inexplicably enters: “Now for an early mischief and a sudden./ The mind’s about it now. One touch from me/ Soon sets the body
forward” (III.iii.1-3). When Susan hesitates to leave, the Dog “rubs him,” unseen. This “rub” seems to set in motion an urge to annihilate the love-object that is the occasion of Frank’s secret, to “ease all at once” (III.iii.15). “I must kill you,” he announces openly to Susan – like bigamy, this is one of those secrets too horrifying to be believed even when it is said aloud (III.iii.20). As though its spontaneity makes the crime not “count,” he insists, “I had no purpose… ‘Tis this minute’s decree” (III.iii.22-23). Suddenly, out of nowhere, the stage directions state that “He takes a knife,” almost surprised to find it (III.iii.24). There is no indication of where the knife might come from – presumably, it is one of the witchcraft part-objects/instruments strewn throughout the play, attached to Frank (handed to him, or placed where he will find it) by the Dog’s affectionate “rub.” Just as the Dog declared, Frank’s body is “set forward” by the touch and the knife. Menacing her with the knife, Frank calls Susan a “whore,” constructing her at her death as the thing which, in fact, he is – like the paranoid logic of the witch hunt, Frank projects his own deviant sexual status onto his legitimate wife, claiming that she is making him kill her: “You have dogged your own death” (III.iii.40).

Though his murder of Susan seems to have been initially committed in a sort of fugue of eroticized witch-Dog passion (“Once past our height,/ We scorn the deep’st abyss”), Thorney’s agenda immediately, tellingly, turns toward secrecy (III.iii.65-66). He sets about to avoid detection by “dressing” the knife in his own blood and “dressing” his body in wounds to mimic hers, wounding himself with the same uncanny knife on the “arms, thighs, hands, any place” in a performative externalization of his guilt which is also a performance to conceal it (III.iii.67-68). With the help of Dog, who has presumably been onstage silently helping the murder along with his presence, Frank ties himself to a tree with ropes of mysterious origin. “How prosperous and effectual mischief sometimes is” (III.iii.74), he muses, observing (correctly) that the violent,
projective energy of sexual deviance, embodied in the form of the Dog, works to drive both the
performance of evil deeds and the narratives blaming them on others.

The affective convergence between the bigamy plot and the witchcraft plot comes to a
head in the play’s juridical conclusion, when suspicion around sexual secrets comes out as the
paranoid desire to fix blame on the sexually-suspect figures most available to hand. Frank’s
“dumb-show” of gore and violation mobilizes paranoid affect in Susan’s father and his own,
encouraging them to fill in the names of the suspected murderers from their own desires, and
inciting Old Carter to re-cathect his fatherly affection onto Frank, rejecting his dead daughter as
a “forgetful slut!” for not answering him (III.iii.104). Though the play makes the connection
implicitly, by juxtaposition between the last scene of Act 3 and the first scene of Act 4, the arrest
of Warbeck and Somerton for Susan’s murder seems to touch off a communal flurry of witch-
paranoia powered by larger versions of the same anxiety and masculine vulnerability that besets
the fathers. The countrymen attribute a ready assortment of domestic and sexual disasters to
Elizabeth Sawyer’s machinations: “Our cattle fall, our wives fall, our daughters fall and
maidservants fall; and we ourselves shall not be able to stand if this beast be suffered to graze
amongst us” (IV.i.15-18).

The thatch wielded by a countryman as he runs onstage yelling the long-anticipated lines,
“Burn the witch, the witch, the witch, the witch!” functions as a counterpart to Frank’s demonic,
Dog-implanted knife: it is a part-object fashioned by laymen, from the community, to test and
draw out witchcraft rather than effect it. It is a natural object that takes on supernatural
properties by association with a bewitched body; in this case the thatch is metonymically part of
Elizabeth Sawyer, a piece of her house being taken and used against her: “they say, when ’tis
burning, if she be a witch she’ll come running in” (IV.i.21-23). When the thatch is fired and
Sawyer enters, the men are exultant – in their “reflexive, mimetic” paranoid imaginary, the thatch is a flaming collective phallus which has irresistibly lured the witch, and an embodiment of her deviant sexual appetites: “You hot whore, must we fetch you with fire in your tail?” (IV.i.29-30). Other “proofs” offered by the townspeople similarly inscribe sexual secrets and forbidden sexual desires onto the witch. Old Banks is compelled to perform oral sex acts on his cow: “Let me go thither or but cast mine eye at her, […] I cannot choose, though it be ten times in an hour, but run to the cow and, taking up her tail, kiss, saving your worship’s reverence, my cow behind” (IV.i.62-66). “Is any man such an ass to be such a baby if he were not bewitched?” implying that the degraded, infantile eroticism of the act indicates witchcraft (IV.i.69-70). In fact, the paranoid affective circuit of the witch hunt works to bring such unruly bodily desires out, into the center of the dramatic action. Community members are licensed to attribute what they do to satisfy their own illicit desires, to Elizabeth Sawyer’s illicit desires to make them do such things.

Elizabeth Sawyer attempts to call out the mechanisms of projection motivating the accusation of “witch,” moving from “I am none,” to “Would I were! If every poor old woman be trod on thus by slaves, reviled, kicked, beaten, as I am daily, she, to be revenged, had need turn witch” (IV.i.84-89). This response takes Sawyer’s queer act of self-fashioning in Act 2, where she decides that “‘Tis all one/ To be a witch as to be counted one,” to the next level (II.i.125-126). Beyond making the point that being constructed as a witch not only is the substance of what a witch is, but actually inculcates the desire to be that dangerous, powerful thing, this speech asserts that the women who get constructed as witches actually need to be witches in order to have any means of responding to the constant violence to which they are subjected. She critiques the gender, class, and sexual hypocrisy that constructs the “witch” as the opposing other
to “men in gay clothes, whose backs are laden with titles and honours” but who “are within far more crooked than I am, and if I be a witch, more witch-like” (IV.i.99-102). She also compares the slander of “witch” to women’s erotically-suspect material consumption, indicting “painted things in princes’ courts,” “upon whose naked paps a lecher’s thought/ Acts sin in fouler shapes than can be wrought” (IV.i.118-122); and spendthrift “city-witches” who turn “whole standing shops of wares” into “sumptuous tables, gardens of stol’n sin” (IV.i.128-130). There are shades of a queer politics of reclamation in Sawyer’s use of the term “witch” here, as she laughs at the proclamation that she is “a secret and pernicious witch” (IV.i.109) and counters, “A witch? Who is not?” (IV.i.116). But there is also a radical fantasy of power in her point that poor, old, abused women need the power attributed to witches. It is the same bitter, sarcastic, taboo fantasy often shared in secret by the targets of political paranoia today: the wish that we did have the pervasive powers (from taking revenge on persecutors by killing their cattle, to controlling government and the schools, suppressing all persecutory discourse, and infiltrating the highest echelons of power to advance a subversive agenda) that the paranoid powerful attribute to us.

A pair of sexual secrets, though, finally undoes Elizabeth Sawyer – one that is her own, and one that she may not even know. In the midst of her anti-witch-persecution diatribe, she rails at Sir Arthur Clarington, “Dare any swear I ever tempted maiden,/ With golden hooks flung at her chastity,/ To come and lose her honour, and, being lost,/ To pay not a denier for it?” (IV.i.153-156). This of course is exactly what Sir Arthur did to Winnifride, and he takes this critique as proof of Sawyer’s supernatural knowledge of his sex life: “By one thing she speaks/ I now know she’s a witch, and dare no longer/ Hold conference with the fury” (IV.i.159-161). But there is no indication in the text that anything other than Sir Arthur’s guilty, projective paranoid suspicion makes him so convinced Sawyer has secret sexual knowledge about him. As soon as
she is constructed as having this sexual intuition, Sawyer’s own little sexual secret, the Dog, materializes to her. She offers him “the teat” (her nipple, or the Devil’s teat on her arm) to suckle on her blood, and then asks him to stand on his hind legs to kiss and rub her. “Let’s tickle,” she propositions, and they presumably engage in erotic play as the Dog recounts the acts of maleficium he has committed. Elizabeth Sawyer equates him to other material transmitters of affect and desire, calling him “my dainty, my little pearl!” and exclaiming that “no lady loves her hound, monkey, or parakeet, as I do thee” when he tell her he has “nipped the sucking child” (IV.i.174-177). This is the play’s most explicit display of what had heretofore been clandestine bestiality, demonic sex, and maleficium – what had been a suspected, secret sexual deviance is performed for the audience’s horrified pleasure.

We also get to witness the Dog’s erotic and affective transmission of Elizabeth Sawyer’s desires onstage when Anne Ratcliffe, whom Sawyer has ordered “pinched” to the heart, enters, mad and raving. “Touch her,” Sawyer says to the Dog, who touches Anne Ratcliffe, spurring her into a mad hornpipe dance which cites the type of witch-reel the North Berwick witches were forced to perform for James (IV.i.203-208). Sawyer’s accusers carry Anne Ratcliffe offstage and return almost immediately, bearing the gruesome news that, yelling “the devil, the witch, the witch, the devil,” she has “beat out her own brains, and so died” (IV.i.225-226). Now, with the victim’s fragmented imagery of the Man in the Moon and devils grinding grain in hoppers (a metaphor for sex) fresh in memory – and, in performance, probably covered in stage blood and prosthetic “brains” – the townspeople’s paranoid suspicion becomes fleshed out with more material specificity, targeted at concrete witchcraft part-objects: “You have a spirit, they say, comes to you in the likeness of a dog” (IV.i.234-235).
Cuddy Banks at this point “comes out” to his father and discloses his own queer affections for the Dog, protesting that he loves the Dog, has “given him a bone to gnaw twenty times,” and will hazard himself for the Dog’s bail (IV.i.253-254). Old Banks and the others immediately class Cuddy as another of Elizabeth Sawyer’s victims, assuming he must be bewitched to desire such inappropriate relations. But though the Dog is presumably onstage at the margins of the scene, invisible to all but Elizabeth Sawyer and Cuddy Banks, his spectral voice suddenly materializes a trace of his presence to frighten the disapproving townspeople away. Reunited with his “Ningle,” Cuddy Banks declares his forbidden love – “I am bewitched, little cost-me-nought, to love thee”; he then curses Dog’s mesmerizing seductiveness and repudiates their past sexual relations – “a pox, that morris makes me spit in thy mouth” – before fleeing. It has dawned on Cuddy that there is something about his relationship with Dog that is not like other boy-and-dog bonds – Cuddy’s guilty conscience, Dog observes, is his rival, another dog that bites him. Unlike his ambiguous “rubs” of Frank Thorney, Dog’s “touch” of Anne Ratcliffe enacts the most paranoid suspicions of how witches transmit their deviant desires to their enemies – and Cuddy Bank’s quarrel with his “ningle” confirms the sexually-suspect effects of those desires, and the difficulty of turning away. But for the townspeople, who do not see these intimacies and do not need to see them, Elizabeth Sawyer’s construction as a witch is already sufficient from what has been imputed to her by their own projective desires; no such confirmation is needed.

As if to confirm Sawyer’s transformation into the condemned, queer figure of the witch, her black Dog disappears briefly (his instrumental function in relaying paranoid desires to and from her no longer required). When he returns to her in the final act, he has turned white – as

---

76 “Spit in thy mouth” refers to a gesture of affection which was believed to please dogs (The Witch of Edmonton, 107, n. 286); it is also an explicit sexual metaphor, along with “given him a bone to gnaw twenty times,” both of which allude to oral sex between the Dog and Cuddy Banks.
though to verify her own transformed status – and grave; he no longer plays sexual games, but
warns her that he is a harbinger of her violent, public exposure and death: “the witch must be
beaten out of her cockpit” (V.i.49-50). White Dog will not go and bite people at her command
like black Dog – he no longer serves her desires, but explicitly the Devil’s. Sawyer has no
power, through any medium, to alter her social or supernatural fate, or even to affect her former
familiar and tool: she cannot “sell myself to twenty thousand fiends/ To have thee torn in
pieces,” as she threatens the white Dog. Instead, he tells her, she is “so ripe to fall into hell that
no more of my kennel will so much as bark at him that hangs thee” (V.i.60-64).

The power Sawyer partially harnessed through the black Dog is turned to mockery and
abandonment in the white Dog. He explains to Cuddy Banks, who has also returned to his
former love object for a kind of reckoning, how he brought Sawyer to the gallows: “I served her
to that purpose. ‘Twas part of my wages” (V.i.113-114). In an exchange full of queer
ontological and affective disclosures, Dog explains how he has humiliated him and condemned
Sawyer by shifting his shape, transmuting and translating into assorted material forms in order to
act as object, instrument, and incitement for the socially-unacceptable desires of both of them
(the girl who never returned Cuddy’s affections, or the agency and respect Sawyer could never
command). Transgressive desires and urges materialize the Devil into surrogates like himself,
he says: “thy oaths,/ Curses, and blasphemies pull him to thine elbow” (V.i.137-139), into the
shapes of “coarse creatures” and “vermin” (V.i.125-127), or even “borrowed” bodies: reanimated
cadavers of suicides and strumpets (V.i.148-151). In the form of such suspect part-objects, he
becomes a familiar who can assist in turning illicit desires into the actions of body parts: “As thy
tongue slandering, bearing false witness,/ Thy hand stabbing, stealing, cozening, cheating—/
He’s then within thee. Thou play’st, he bets upon thy part” (V.i.142-145).
Even in his guilty repudiation of the deviant bond, though, Cuddy Banks remains the ultimate unsuspicious, non-paranoid hearer of these revelations. Despite the queer intensity of his own trans-species erotic relations with his “Tom,” Cuddy cannot understand that the Dog’s “base life” of depravity and mayhem constitutes an alternative moral and material economy, in which neither normativity nor good are objects of desire. Dog chastises him, “These are all my delights, my pleasures, fool,” when Cuddy absurdly asks, “Were it not possible for thee to become an honest dog yet?” (V.i.163-168). Still uncomprehending, he tries to sell Dog on the functions of a normal dog – even including the “many pretty offices” he could do as a noble, heterosexual puppy in a lady’s arms – only to have Dog offer to suck “like a great puppy” at his teat: “Shall I serve thee, fool, at the self-same rate?” (V.i.185-190). This is the moment when Cuddy Banks’s obliviousness to the perversity of Dog’s desire changes over from a generative incitement to flirtation (and from Cuddy’s side, what gives license to keep continuing it) and becomes an actual refusal. His declining to decisively become a witch, and thus ending the flirtation, may prove that he was actually oblivious all along – though we have “given him a bone to gnaw twenty times” and “I am bewitched, little cost-me-nought, to love thee” to cast suspicion on that. Or, it may indicate nothing more than that he has taken things as far as he wants to go – for now. Cuddy’s scenes with the Dog (thought to be chiefly Rowley’s work) are the only place where any details of the play’s demonology are presented. I contend that this is because they provide a lull in the paranoia: the escalating cycle of suspicion, attribution, and implication that defines the witch hunt leaves no room, and has no need, for exposition of any concrete mechanism by which an embodied witchcraft instrument like the Dog works. Those

---

details are filled in by the fantasies of the townspeople to whom Cuddy Banks refers when he says, “I have heard beastly things of you, Tom” (V.i.187-188).


The play’s materializations of paranoid desire reach their climax in the scene where Frank lies creepily ensconced in his dead wife’s father’s house, being doted on with quasi-incestuous devotion by her sister, and melodramatically affecting sickness and suicidal ideation as a cover for his murderous secret. Susan’s sister Katherine presents him with a “roasted chicken,” a luxurious token of expenditure, labor, and care – but, having forgotten a knife to cut it with, she goes looking in Frank’s coat for his pocket knife. As in the scene of Susan’s murder, the ontological placement of this knife is utterly ambiguous. “Enter Dog, shrugging as it were for joy, and dances,” reads the stage direction, indicating that the Dog may bring the knife used to stab Susan into the bedchamber, stowing it where it will be found; or the Dog may be dancing for joy that Thorney left it there to incriminate himself. Katherine, discovering the bloody knife, immediately lies to cover over her revelation. Frank knows he is found out, though, when he checks and finds the knife, left in his coat pocket as evidence against him. In a twist on the “two knives to one sheath” figure portentously used at his iniquitous wedding, the discovery of this one knife in one sheath (his coat pocket) seems to conjure two visions of the women Frank has wronged. The “Spirit of Susan” manifests as an apparition in two places at once on both sides of the bed; at the same time Winnifride, apparently in the flesh and still cross-dressed as a boy, appears at the foot. At first Frank confuses the “lost creature” (IV.ii.69) in the room with the
strange, mocking shade that menaced him.\textsuperscript{78} He confesses to Winnifride, describing his crime as a wrongful and violent penetration: that he “dipped my sad pen [penis] in blood” (IV.ii.98). The sexual metaphor is extended by Frank’s discoverers, when Katherine shows Old Carter “A bloody knife in’s pocket” (IV.ii.116).

The knife in this scene becomes a vehicle for the sexual secret itself, and how sexual secrets work as secret knowledge. In a bizarre exchange, Frank and his suspects switch back and forth between admitting to knowledge of the knife and pretending not to know about it, even though all know it is there. Frank flies into a mania, crying out for “the knife, the knife, the knife!” which he supposedly needs “to cut my chicken up, my chicken” (IV.ii.117-118).

Katherine, though, pretends ignorance (“What knife?”) and a perverse little charade ensues in which Winnifride cuts up the roast chicken for Frank with the bloody knife that killed Susan – “A leg or a wing, sir?” (IV.ii.141) – while she, Frank, Old Carter, and Katherine all pretend that nothing has been discovered. One dead bird quickly becomes a metonymic place-holder for another, however, as Susan’s wounded corpse is hauled onstage, her “one broad eye open” staring still at Frank, to “find out the murderer” (IV.ii.150-153). This moment exemplifies paranoia’s “extraordinary stress on the efficacy of knowledge per se – knowledge in the form of exposure”\textsuperscript{79}, but in this sole instance in the play where paranoid exposure actually does produce truth, the truth that it produces is the deviance, the queerness of bigamy. Susan’s corpse is no longer a person but a thing. It is brought out to function as a technology of paranoid knowledge production through negative affect, in that it is supposed to incite precisely the affects of aversion and disavowal that it does. It throws Frank into a state of disturbance in which he can

\textsuperscript{78} The ontological status of the “Spirit of Susan” is as ambiguous as the Dog’s placement of the murder weapon – if not a ghost, it could be construed as the uncanny materialization of Frank’s guilty imagination, or as a demonic apparition in Susan’s shape, sent out by the Dog to torment him.

\textsuperscript{79} Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading,” Touching Feeling, 138.
be confronted with his knife, “enameled with the heart-blood of thy hated wife” (IV.ii.164). It apparently incites Old Carter to re-transfer his affections, this time from Frank; and the suspicion it causes him to cast on Winnifride as Frank’s “boy” causes her to reveal herself as “his first, only wife, his lawful wife” (IV.ii.178).

10. “Is every devil mine?”

That the exposure of Frank’s originary sexual secret occurs through the exposure of Winnifride’s hidden sex highlights how bigamy functions as a queer sexual status in the play. That Frank is “outed” as a bigamist by his cross-dressed wife’s removal of her men’s garments – occasioned by the exposure of his other wife’s bloody, penetrated corpse; over a roast chicken carved with the murder weapon, planted by a dancing devil-dog – highlights how this kind of queerness, like the queerness of witchcraft, is produced through physical and affective transactions with material things. But this is also the moment when the bigamist is produced as a queer figure in the violent, phobic, disciplinary sense, as an essentialized criminal type whose sexual deviance can only be remedied by his death. When Frank’s homosocial “page” is revealed to be not only a far-more-suspect heterosexual companion, but his wife, a monstrous double of the dead woman, the revelation changes the status of both partners in relation to the other characters onstage: the officers of the law have arrived, and both become the objects of discipline. Frank is doubly-condemned; Winnifride’s only hope of escaping the same condemnation as adulterer/whore is to pronounce Frank guilty of both murder and premeditated bigamy (“Has he done it, then?” “Yes, ‘tis confessed to me” [IV.ii.183-184]). Turning Frank in for his more identity-defining crimes serves to re-legitimate Winnifride by contrast as a sexual victim rather than a sexual suspect; so, when we see Frank processing to the gallows in the play’s
final scene, Winnifride is not in chains being hanged with him. In fact, she is the object of love
and sympathy from **both** Frank’s and Susan’s fathers, who offer her comfort, pity, and assurance
that “‘Twas not thy fault” (V.iii.8).

*How is it possible* for Winnifride, for Sir Arthur, who is only “mildly censured” for being
“the instrument that wrought all their misfortunes” (V.ii.1-3), and moreover for Frank – whose
scaffold scene of reconciliation and forgiveness is one of the most dilated, most thoroughly
reparative execution scenes depicted in early modern literature – to be so thoroughly
reincorporated into the community at the resolution of the play after such transgressive sexual
offenses? Old Carter hints at how, in the final moments of the scene, when the two plots of the
play come together again for only the second time. Elizabeth Sawyer is led onstage to execution
alongside Frank, to cries of “Hang her! Witch!”; and Old Carter exclaims: “The witch, that
instrument of mischief! Did not she witch the devil into my son-in-law when he killed my poor
daughter?—Do you hear, Mother Sawyer?” (V.iii.21-23). This is the first moment that Frank’s
crimes, which the play had attributed primarily to his own deviant desires spurred on by the
Dog’s ontologically-ambiguous instrumental role, are pinned on Elizabeth Sawyer as something
**she bewitched** him to do, the way Cuddy Banks’s declarations of love for Dog earlier are taken
as self-evidently the result of witchcraft rather than an organic urge. Sawyer has become the
official repository or “common sink” for all violations of social mores, those she has nothing to
do with as well as those she owns. “Cannot a poor old woman/ Have your leave to die without
vexation?” she answers back to Old Carter, who persists in his rant of paranoid suspicion: “Did
you not bewitch Frank to kill his wife? He could never have done’t without the devil” (V.iii.24-
27). Sawyer does not dispute that the devil has been involved in Frank’s crimes, as well as in the
witch hunt that has turned the community against her. But she objects to the conflation of
diabolical activity with *her identity*: “Who doubts it? But is every devil mine?” (V.iii.28).

However, the piling-on of blame onto Elizabeth Sawyer as she is on her way to die effectively *makes* not only the devil of bigamy but *every* devil hers, now that she is a witch being hanged for witchcraft (the final accusation against her, of bewitching a sow to cast her pigs a day early, even specifies that no economic damage was done).

Frank’s execution, by contrast, is ultimately more mimetic of Christ’s crucifixion or the prodigal son’s confession than of a witch-hanging – grateful *not* to have “dreamed/ Away my many years in lusts, in surfeits,/ Murders of reputation, gallant sins,” he registers happiness that the law has foreclosed his licentiousness and disciplined his desires more strictly than he ever could have forced himself to do (V.iii.76-87). He also specifically *disavows* his desire for Susan and characterizes his patriarchally-ordered marriage as wholly mercenary, as “rather choos[ing] to marry/ A goodly portion than a dower of virtues” – utterly eliding that his actual crime was *not choosing* at all, but *marrying both* (V.iii.110-111). Frank’s failing, which has, for the entire play, been construed as a romantic and sexual indulgence in too many objects at once – a refusal to choose *one* wife – is re-signified at the last moment as a mistaken value judgment, the vastly easier-to-forgive crime of marrying for money (on his father’s orders). A bigamist, it turns out, can be reconstituted as a social subject in a way that a witch cannot, if the bigamist’s crimes are first attributed to the witch – and if *bigamy* is essentially erased as one of his crimes in the final reckoning. Frank’s gallows conversion to affective and romantic monogamy is further enabled by the fact that there are no longer two wronged wives present, but only one, Winnifride, the sole object of his death-bound love. Which would imply, ironically, that *murder* plays an indirect role in purging sexual sin, allowing Frank’s rehabilitation from bigamy, and Winnifride’s from whoredom. The discovery of Frank’s bigamy would have substantially trickier affective
consequences were Susan not “in heaven,” where she cannot react to Frank’s disavowal, but a potentially “hateful and envious” presence at the scaffold. But because the embodied remnant of Frank’s bigamy has been (stabbed and) purged, and now posthumously rejected as an object of affection and erotic love, the play can spend the last lines lingering ecstatically over Frank’s repentance and his blessing of everyone he has wronged (who effusively bless him and one another in turn, in a copious outpouring of positive affect amounting to an orgy of reparation).

By the same token, once she is saddled with the blame for Frank Thorney’s bigamy, the witch’s work is done, and Elizabeth Sawyer drops out of the play’s resolution. She is led offstage for the last time refusing to satisfy her audience’s craving for affect from her: “Have I scarce breath enough to say my prayers,/ And would you force me to spend that in bawling?” (V.iii.49-50). Her refusal to confess means that she is to be burned alive, but the text does not dramatize her death. The disturbing effect, at the end of a play about witchcraft and bigamy, seems to be that in order for sexual normativity to be reinstituted (as it is in Winnifride’s Epilogue, with her “modest hopes” of attaining “good report”), it is not primarily the bigamist and the witch, but the supernumerary wife and the witch who must be exposed to furnish proof of their own doom, and then removed, made invisible – abjected – as the embodiments of impermissible desire.

11. “Yet did hee utterly deny”

*Newes from Scotland* also does not dramatize the executions of the women whose accusations and torture make up the account of the North Berwick witches’ sabbath in the

---

80 The Red Bull Theater’s recent production included a silent, stylized tableau of Elizabeth Sawyer burning alive alongside Winnifride’s Epilogue, with the two women lit by twin spotlights as the only visible points on a pitch-black stage, providing a convicting reminder of the cost at which Winnifride’s redemption is bought. *The Witch of Edmonton*, by Thomas Dekker, John Ford, William Rowley, etc., directed by Jesse Berger, The Red Bull Theater, New York, NY, February 8, 2011.
pamphlet. On the last page, we find out why: “The rest of the witches which are not yet
executed, remayne in prison till farther triall, and knowledge of his majesties pleasure.”\textsuperscript{81} This
pamphlet, then, unlike \textit{The Witch of Edmonton}, circulates as popular media even before the witch
hunt is brought to its grand climax. \textit{Newes from Scotland} does, however, dramatize a single
execution in gory detail: that of a man, allegedly named “Doctor Fian” but using the “alias John
Cunningham”; and the circumstances of that case and the erotic networks brought into being in
the pamphlet’s representation of his trial ultimately re-connect the North Berwick witch hunt to
\textit{The Witch of Edmonton} and its pairing of female witch and male bigamist. Like many others in
this pamphlet, Fian is first accused by Geillis Duncane – he is said to be the \textit{only man} at the
North Berwick witches’ sabbath (though there are numerous other men accused in the \textit{dittays},
and Duncane’s accusation that “not one man suffered to come to the Divel’s readinges but onlye
he” sounds more like a complaint that others were expected but derelict); and what’s more,
Duncane “confessed he was their Regester,” the scribe at the desk depicted in the woodcut (see
Figure 1), who would have managed the signing of the diabolical “pact” sealed by kissing the
Devil’s buttocks on the pulpit.\textsuperscript{82} Juxaposing the narrative of Fian’s confessions and tortures
against the staging of Frank Thorney’s crimes and (revisionist) confession creates another axis
for comparing crimes of deviant desiring and their attribution, introducing a different kind of
erotic circuit into the paranoid system of the witch hunt and making visible some of its limits.

Unlike the confessions of any of the female witches in the pamphlet, Doctor Fian’s
confession recounts him bewitching and doing harm to other people, not only to the king. There
are mentions of similar crimes, with no ventriloquized confessional narrative: one of the higher-
born gentlewomen is said to have killed her godfather and “used her art upon” a man who “bore

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Newes from Scotland}, D3r.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Newes from Scotland}, Cv.
good will to her Daughter.” But the witchcraft Fian confesses, perpetrated on men and on women, is reliably organized around his own erotic appetites. He bewitches a gentleman neighbor into “a lunacie and madness” every twenty-four hours, “only for being enamoured of a Gentlewoman whome he loved himselfe.” He “used many meanes sundry times to obtain his purpose and wicked intent of the same Gentlewoman, and seeing himselfe disapointed of his intention, he determined by all waies he might to obtaine the same, trusting by conjuring, witchcraft and Sorcery to obtaine it in this manner.” As he is the schoolmaster and the teacher of this young woman’s brother he calls his student to him and “demaunded if he did lye with his sister.” The answer being yes, he “secretly promised the boy to teach him without stripes, so he would obtaine for him three haires of his sisters privities, at such time as he should spye best occasion for it.” The boy vows to do exactly that, “taking a peece of conjured paper from his maister to lappe them in when he had gotten them”; he then “practiced nightlye to obtaine his maister’s purpose, especially when his sister was asleepe.”

This is obviously the most rapacious sort of sexual witchcraft. It uses bits of bodily detritus, secretly obtained, to get at the victim; but the relationship the request intrudes upon is that between a sister and a brother who are still young enough to share a bed. Fian also leverages his power to exchange the “stripes” he inflicts on the back of the brother for three hairs of his sister’s privities – a substitution which metonymically enacts the boy’s initiation as a violator rather than an object of violence. But, in a surreal twist of fortune, the children’s mother is a witch herself, “well practised in witchcrafte”; and her daughter’s complaint that “her Brother would not suffer her to sleepe” immediately makes her “vehemently suspect Doctor Fians

83 Ibid., Biir.
84 Newes from Scotland, Ciir.
85 Ibid., Ciir.
86 Ibid., Ciiv.
entention.”\(^{87}\) Once she extracts Fian’s plan from the boy with a beating, giving him “sundry stripes” for his collusion, she “did thinke it most convenient to meet with the Doctor in his own Arte.” She takes the “conjured paper” from her son, goes to “a young Heyfer which never had borne Calfe nor gone to the Bull, and “with a paire of sheeres, cliupped off three haires from the udder of the Cow, and wrapt them in the same paper, which she againe delivered to the boy.”\(^{88}\) The boy takes them to the schoolmaster, who, “thinking them indeede to bee the Maides haires, went straight and wrought his arte upon them”:

> But the Doctor had no sooner doone his intent to them, but presentlye the Hayfer Cow whose haires they were indeed, came into the doore of the Church wherein the Schoolemaister was,” and “made towards the Schoolemaister, leaping and dauncing upon him, and following him fourth of the church and to what place so ever he went, to the great admiration of all the townes men of Saltpans, and many other who did beholde the same.\(^{89}\)

Fian’s crime in this amazing anecdote bears a structural relation to Frank Thorne’s crime of bigamy: both are cases of middling men who will not take no for an answer, who use criminal and exploitative means to attempt to circumvent social constraints on their sexual behavior.

Both men seek heterosexual relations, but those they pursue fall very much outside of patriarchal norms: Frank takes a second wife; Fian suborns sibling molestation in order to practice witchcraft. Both also transgress by continuing to insist on options that are normatively foreclosed to them. Even if it means he must lose his father’s fortune, Frank has already impregnated and married Winnifride. From the comment that he had “used many meanes sundry times to obtain his purpose and wicked intent,” it is obvious that the girl has already refused Fian, and his intentions are not marriage. The machinations they both employ partake in the structure of sexual secrecy which is the hallmark of witchcraft and illicit sex (and witchcraft in

\(^{87}\) Ibid.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., Civr.

\(^{89}\) Ibid.
pursuit of illicit sex) in both texts. Both enact scenes of intimate violence committed via part-objects: incestuously stolen pubic hairs and enchanted paper; a pocket knife put to sudden use as a murder weapon (and rediscovered in a quasi-gothic moment with a roast chicken); and strangely animated animals, an enamoured heifer and a mysterious telekinetic Dog, dancing up to the offender and rubbing their bodies on him.

The two texts deal with these men’s forbidden sexual agendas in very different ways, however. The domestic tragedy stages Frank’s bigamy as a grave fall followed by a smoldering secret, which twists his behavior – and, by paranoia’s contagious logic of implication, that of everyone around him – until he is driven to a deception that gets found out in a paroxysm of horrific exposure, bereavement, and a somber juridical solution. But then, at his execution, Frank begs for forgiveness and dies praying for his sins to be purged. I have argued that this level of reconciliation is facilitated by Elizabeth Sawyer’s wholesale denunciation (including for Frank’s crimes) and exclusion from the scaffold scene (as well as Susan’s erasure) – that reparation for a bigamist, in short, requires the redoubled condemnation and purgation of a witch (and, suspiciously, a wife). The narrative in Newes from Scotland, on the other hand, shifts at the moment of discovery into a mode of full-on punitive farce. Another witch, the children’s mother, mysteriously appears as the discoverer of the crime. Far from being sacrificed or incriminated to apprehend him, she bests Fian “at his own Arte,” shaming him for his predation of her daughter (and son); and, by turning the love object from a heterosexual, human one to a cow, she makes his erotic appetites as well as his diabolism the target of public suspicion, getting him “secretlye nominated for a notable Cunjurer.”

But this tale of notoriety is produced and/or sworn to by Fian under multiple waves of heinous torture, which is where Newes from Scotland’s resolution of this problematic mode of
suspect male sexuality diverges completely from any analogy to Frank Thorney’s rehabilitated bigamy. Why Fian meets such an exceptionally violent fate may be in part that he is a man, and causes somewhat of a gender crisis by being implicated at the witches’ sabbath; or that he is more obdurate under torture than the rest, and thus produces more gruesome results. I argue, though, that the self-serving sexual character of his witchcraft, combined with his refusal to play out the penitence narrative as Thorney does, creates a new, male facet of “the witch” as a queer, sexually suspect figure – and that the persecutory paranoia it arouses is brought out in the narrative’s violent, participatory narrative of what happens to his body. When at first, like Agnis Sampson, Fian refuses to confess, he is singled out for the boots, “the most severe and cruell paine in the worlde”; still, though, he only confesses after “the rest of the witches” discover two “charmed Pinnes” stuck into his tongue. Fian appears penitent after recounting all of his diabolical seduction attempts, performatively renouncing the Devil – but then, the next night, he steals the key to the prison door and chamber and escapes. Upon being swiftly apprehended again, and taken before James himself, “nonwithstanding that his owne confession appeareth remaining in recorde under his owne hande writing,” “yet did hee utterly denye the same.”

Fian’s retraction throws the physical, affective, and epistemological workings of the witch hunt into overdrive; James hypothesizes that he has made a new pact with the Devil and received a new Devil’s mark, which is searched for but never found, because the paranoid logic of the witch hunt can furnish no other explanation for his “stubborne willfullnesse” in refusing to re-agree to his previously sworn narrative. The torture reserved for the re-unrepentant seducer

---

90 Newes from Scotland, Ciir.
91 Ibid., Diir.
92 Ibid..
is hyperbolic, beyond protocol, “a most strange torment”: his fingernails are “riven and pulled off,” and needles thrust in. He continues so long in the boots that, the pamphlet says:

    his legges were crusht and beaten together as small as might be, and the bones and flesh so bruised, that the blood and marrow spouted forth in great abundance, whereby they were made unserviceable for ever. Yet no confession is driven out: “notwithstanding al these greevous and cruell torments hee would not confesse anie thing, so deepely had the Devill entered into his heart, that hee utterly denied all that which he had before avouched, and would saie nothing thereunto but this, that what hee had done and sayde before, was onely done and sayde for feare of paynes which he had endured."

In his death, Fian is nothing like Frank Thorney – whether the request for three of his sister’s pubic hairs was ever made to a student or not, which is impossible to know, “Doctor Fian” in Newes from Scotland is a character who confesses to doing covert and transgressive things in the interest of obtaining sex, and then, once his wits are about him, refuses to repent for them, even to being tortured to death. Though his witchcraft resonates with Thorney’s anti-social sexual selfishness, his ultimate performance of bodily recalcitrance may be seen instead as a more extreme, more defiant variant of Elizabeth Sawyer’s passive-aggressive affects upon being labeled a witch, “‘Tis all one,/ To be a witch as to be counted one,” and “Would I were!”

    The paranoid mechanism of the witch hunt reads this brutal torture scene as a total mystery: neither the tale of illicit love-magic Fian told before he escaped from prison, what was being done to his body as he said it, its truth status, nor its moral status if true are in any way in question. The machinery the witch-finders (and the state, embodied in James) have enchanted with their paranoid investments is refusing to work. I suggest that it is possible to read it, though, as a scene that pits not only the pincers and needles and boots, but the material endurance of human flesh, against the account that a person is willing to give about his erotic life: what he desired, what he did, and why. This is the only example I have found in early

93 Ibid., Diiv.
modern witchcraft literature in English where the pain of torture is attributed as causing a false witchcraft confession (a silence which, to me, indicates a larger anxiety around the issue). Fian’s refusal, in the last instance, to satisfy the witch hunt’s desire to produce a confession out of him – he is burned alive “for example sake, to remayne a terrour to all others heereafter,” without ever providing one – causes such an outpouring of affect in the narrative’s baffled rage because, I argue, it shows the production of the “truth” of witchcraft to be driven not by logic but by eros; and its success or failure to depend as much on temperamental quirks, inter-personal affective dynamics, and trauma, as on any notion of virtue, let alone truth.
Chapter 2

Getting Used, and Liking It: Erotic Instrumentality and the Go-Between

In two very different cross-dressing comedies from the first decade of the seventeenth century – Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker’s city comedy, *The Roaring Girl* (1608), and Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher’s tragicomedy, *Philaster, Or Love Lies A-Bleeding* (1609) – a “straight” couple cannot do it alone. Two lovers need, commission, and use an androgynous third party to negotiate the social, affective, and sexual demands of their prohibited love match. In both plays, the messenger who serves as a conduit for their love is an ambiguously-gendered transvestite: the notorious real-life cross-dresser and cutpurse Mary Frith, a.k.a. “Moll Cutpurse,” or “The Roaring Girl”; and, in *Philaster*, the beautiful servant “boy” who is secretly a girl, “Bellario” (or, as he/she is ultimately re-named, “Euphrasia”). Both of these queerly-gendered characters are positioned, with their enthusiastic participation, as go-betweens: acting as *instruments* to facilitate the couple’s sexual union, but also becoming an integral part of it, transforming the ostensibly-heterosexual marriages that are the supposed ends of comedy into three-way intimate relationships routed through the transvestite “third.”

The particular pleasures of getting used in this way, and liking it – the erotic energies generated by these go-betweens’ distinct, and distinctly material, ways of becoming instrumental to others’ sexual ends – constitute a form of desire that this project identifies and describes as a queer mode or style of desiring. By analyzing how the cross-dressed go-between’s “getting used” transmits and generates affect, knowledge, and desire – and how it definitively alters, and
ultimately queers, the erotic configurations in which it participates\(^1\) – I will demonstrate that being-made-instrumental is a queer mode of erotic relation and participation which opens up several new ways of thinking about sexuality in early modern plays. The instrumentalized servant “boy,” Bellario, confounds the binary, gendered power dynamics that are usually assumed to structure both same- and opposite-sex erotic encounters in the period: user/used, subject/object, agent/recipient, active/passive, master/servant, giver/taker, and dominant/submissive. My close-readings of Bellario’s erotic functioning in *Philaster* against the more performative, agentive erotic functioning of Moll Frith in *The Roaring Girl* will illuminate an expanded framework for describing early modern sex and desire, one that extends beyond the logics of sex, gender, acts, and identities by which we have tended to classify homo- and hetero-erotic bonds in early modern literature. Articulating an erotics of “getting used” or being-made-instrumental points out the moments in these two plays where erotic dynamics pull away from social categories; where hetero-erotic and queer desires come into unexpected contact; and where desire operates athwart of gender in ways that disturb our previous assumptions about what “queer” desire looks like.

1. “*A pretty, sad-talking boy*”

Beaumont and Fletcher (who lived together in a relation of social and probably sexual intimacy, as what might even be called boyfriends),\(^2\) make the erotics of being-instrumentalized

---

\(^1\) I am indebted to my colleague at Columbia, Abigail Joseph, for first pointing out the transvestite’s function as a technology for the communication of affect in a seminar paper in Fall, 2005.

\(^2\) “‘They lived together on the Banke side [i.e., Southwark], not far from the Play-house, both batchelors; lay together – from Sir John Hales, etc.; had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same cloathes and cloake, &c., betwenee them.’” *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898), I, 96, quoted in Andrew Gurr, “Introduction,” in *Philaster, or Love Lies A-Bleeding*, ed. Andrew Gurr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), xx. On the overdetermined function of homoeroticism within their collaborative relationship – and early modern literary collaboration as a whole – see Jeffrey Masten, “My Two
the hinge of Philaster’s dilated love triangle plot. The Princess Arethusa loves Philaster, the beautiful and beloved Prince of a neighboring kingdom. Philaster loves her as well, but his rightful throne has been usurped by Arethusa's tyrannical father, who has promised her in marriage to a boorish foreign prince, forcing the lovers to conduct their secret love under the watchful eyes of the court. Arethusa asks Philaster how they will communicate:

   How shall we devise
   To hold intelligence, that our true loves
   On any new occasion may agree
   What path is best to tread?  

Philaster suggests, as a solution, the use of his servant “boy” as a message-bearer:

   I have a boy,
   Sent by the gods, I hope, to this intent,
   Not yet seen in the court (I.ii.111-113).

But, unbeknownst to Philaster, or to any of the other characters in the play, and presumably to the audience as well – the text gives absolutely no hint – Philaster’s “boy” is actually a girl, named Euphrasia, who disguised herself as a boy in hopes of being taken up as Philaster’s servant. In getting used as an instrument of communication, this secretly cross-dressed servant boy, Bellario, becomes erotically instrumental, the central object and carrier of desire, in the play’s love triangle plot. The two lovers’ exchange of “intelligence” cannot occur naturally – they must “devise” to use Bellario as a means of “holding” meaning, a mediating technology to transmit feeling for one another across the space between them.

   From Philaster's first description of him, this boy, whom Philaster has kept hidden from the court, seems not quite natural or human, unmarked by any social context or conventions

---


except for his unabashed devotion to being used for Philaster’s ends. Philaster explains that while out hunting, he found this “pretty, sad-talking boy” (II.iii.7), as Arethusa dubs him when she first sees him, weeping by a fountain. He is accompanied by an intriguing object: an elaborately braided flower garland, which he gazes at, weeps over, and fondles in a semi-private ritual as he tells his story to Philaster (who reminisces about this meeting to the Princess):

A garland lay by him, made by himself
Of many several flowers bred in the bay,
Stuck in that mystic order that the rareness
Delighted me; but ever when he turned
His tender eyes upon ’em, he would weep,
As if he meant to make ’em grow again (I.ii.118-122).

Bellario’s garland is more than a piece of handiwork – it has a language, a “mystic order”; its “rare” form represents specific content. The garland materializes affect by encoding it in an abstract symbolic language, which in Philaster’s accounting, the boy then interprets to him:

Then took he up his garland, and did show
What every flower, as country people hold,
Did signify, and how all, ordered thus,
Expressed his grief; and, to my thoughts, did read
The prettiest lecture of his country art
That could be wished, so that methought I could
Have studied it (I.ii.130-136).

The boy’s sole feature, besides his beauty and his blankness, is his uncanny ability to create and interpret symbolic meanings through aesthetic forms. This is his “art”: he can translate inarticulable, extra-linguistic affective states like grief and love into systems of signification, and then out again, bringing feelings into speech. The flower garland’s intricate aesthetic “order,” which implicates it in a folk tradition of artistic and social meanings, makes it an index through which the boy can represent and decode his interior grief, love, and pleasure – and, through which he can, vitally, communicate those emotions to Philaster. He materializes feelings in an object, and then interprets it in a seductive act of art criticism (“the prettiest lecture… that could
be wished”) – or, possibly, invents a sprezzatura narrative of artistic meaning on the spur of the moment, for Philaster’s pleasure.

The garland described in this speech enacts the function that the “boy” will fulfill for Philaster and Arethusa: it is a purpose-made “device” that can communicate emotion and desire in a highly stylized form, making them legible – and generating mutual, complementary emotions and desires in others. The boy’s performance of grief incites intense pleasure in Philaster, engendering a dynamic of shared, mirror-image affects in master and boy:

I gladly entertained him,
Who was glad to follow; and have got
The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy
That ever master kept. Him will I send
To wait on you, and bear our hidden love (I.ii.136-140).

The complementary pleasures they take in their respective roles – the distinct senses in which they are glad to “entertain” the other and to be entertained; the bond that makes this “boy” the logical vessel “to bear” Philaster’s “hidden love” – seem to grow out of their mutual wonder and intellectual/aesthetic curiosity, as audience/pupil and artist/teacher, at the feelings written in the flower garland. And what is crucial here is that this affective exchange is generated in, and mediated through, the garland and the boy’s acts of creation, interpretation, and expression with it, metonymically illustrating how the boy will be used as an instrument by Philaster and Arethusa. His function will be “to bear” their love, which carries a triple meaning: to carry, as a messenger bears a message; to gestate and birth, as a woman bears a child; and to accommodate receptively, as a passive sexual partner – or any passive subject – bears being acted upon. These overlapping processes of transmitting and generating desire are folded here into a single instrument, the body of the boy.

In an important sense, the boy becomes, like his flower garland, a thing used in the
service of Philaster’s erotic pursuits; but being made instrumental in this way does not entail the absence of erotic activity or agency, nor does it suggest a lack of investment in the intimate configurations in which he gets used. It is significant to Bellario’s function as the erotic catalyst of the play that before we see “him” onstage, we hear his desire, ventriloquized by his closest intimate: his disquisition on his feelings, and his gladness “to follow.”⁴ Thanks to the “boy’s” virtuosic ability to bring emotion into speech, Philaster’s reading of his affect is perfect; in being taken up into Philaster’s service the “boy” is attaining what makes him “glad to follow” — “to bear” Philaster’s “hidden love.” This is far from an inert or subordinated position. The word “instrumental” describes a thing used to effect a desired end,⁵ a thing fashioned or made to fit a specific purpose (a meaning it shares with “performance”),⁶ and a necessary, integral component without which the whole desired end could not come about.⁷ In both *Philaster* and *The Roaring Girl*, the cross-dressed “third” exemplifies instrumentality as a specifically queer mode of erotic relation in all three of these co-existing senses.

The instrumentalized transvestite go-betweens at the centers of *Philaster* and *The Roaring Girl* are marked by another multivalence: undecided sex. Bellario, the servant boy who was once a girl, functions as a boy right up until the moment at the end of the play when he

---


⁵ “Of the nature of an instrument (material or subservient); serving as an instrument or means; contributing to the accomplishment of a purpose or result.” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, June 2011, Oxford University Press, s.v. “instrumental, a. and n.,” A. adj. 1.a., http://oed.com/.

⁶ “Serving well for the purpose; serviceable, useful; effective, efficient.” Ibid., “instrumental, a. and n.,” A. adj., 1.c.

⁷ The sense of the word in meaning 1.a., “a means to an end,” takes on a connotation of more causal force when construed with *to* or *in*, or rarely of or for, followed by the noun form of a verb; whereas the purely adjectival form means ‘secondary,’ this adverbial usage posits an instrumental *agent* as an essential catalyst for action. These connotations of specificity and indispensability are also present in the “Old Physiological” meaning, “Having a special vital function; that is a bodily organ; organic.” Ibid., “instrumental, a. and n.,” A. adj., 1.b. and 4.
dramatically re-genders himself and becomes Euphrasia, a transformation which furnishes the
play’s last-minute swerve from incipient tragedy to absurd comedy: “he” is actually “she,” and
cannot have committed the sexual transgression he is accused of with Arethusa at all. The girl
Euphrasia’s cross-dressing – in fact, her trans-gendered “passing” and social functioning as a boy
– then becomes the crucial fact which, in hindsight, alters the overarching erotic economy of the
play. Yet I want to argue for the productivity of reading Bellario/Euphrasia’s gender and erotic
functioning as the play presents him/her – at face value, as a boy, for virtually the entire play; but
as a boy whose gender will be, or has retroactively been, super-charged by the revelation of
transvestitism that will come at the end. Reading Bellario’s transvestitism back through the play
gives every scene in which he functions the potential for a skewed, doubled erotic significance:
the one the play presents, with Bellario as a servant boy; and the one that an audience or reader
cannot know in advance (at least not without some supplemental information, which she or he
might nonetheless have had access to), with Bellario as a cross-dressed girl.

The “boy” who becomes a girl in Philaster differs in a crucial way from the heroines of
comedies where female-to-male cross-dressing is used as a plot device, most famously William
Shakespeare’s As You Like It (1599) and Twelfth Night (1602). More permanently gender-
ambiguous than the girls who temporarily disguise themselves as boys in Shakespeare,
“Bellario” – and in a different respect, as I will argue shortly, Moll Frith in The Roaring Girl – is
a character whose masculine-yet-androgynous gender performance does not line up exactly with
his ostensibly-female bodily sex. Unlike Rosalind or Viola, who put on men’s clothing with the
audience’s full awareness, as a disguise which is part of the play’s dramatic action,
Bellario/Euphrasia is dressed as a man for the entire play, including the final scene (where the
play ends minutes after the gender revelation). For this reason he/she is more precisely described
as transgendered, or at least gender-queer, than as merely cross-dressed. He/she confesses to being a woman *not* to save his/her own life, but only at the point when not doing so is about to cost Philaster’s life, and probably Arethusa’s life as well: under suspicion of having sex with the Princess, Bellario is sentenced to be tortured by Philaster, who must be restrained repeatedly from stabbing himself rather than carry out the sentence. Bellario only “outs” himself to prevent his master’s suicide and his mistress’s condemnation – and then only in a secret revelation to his/her courtier father, the completely amazed Dion. When Dion brings him/her back to the group and reveals “it is a woman,” what-is-now-Euphrasia explains to Philaster that her male persona was assumed with the transformative seriousness and permanency of a religious vocation:

…for I knew  
My birth no match for you I was past hope  
Of having you; and understanding well  
That when I made discovery of my sex  
I could not stay with you, I made a vow,  
By all the most religious things a maid  
Could call together, never to be known  
Whilst there was hope to hide me from men’s eyes  
For other than I seemed, that I might ever  
Abide with you (V.v.182-190).

Euphrasia, from birth, is already excluded as a possible heterosexual marriage partner for Philaster. So her transformation into Bellario is undertaken for the furtherance of her own ends, to effect the most erotically and domestically desirable configuration socially possible. What Euphrasia felt for Philaster as a young girl was “love,/ Yet far from lust, for could I but have lived/ In presence of you I had had my end” (V.v.176-178); and here, at the end of the play, Bellario still does not desire marriage. The desired outcome to his performance of cross-dressing was precisely “*never* to be known” as female-bodied. Revealing his sex seemed certain to deprive him of his sole affective bonds and social/erotic roles: first as servant to Philaster, then
the doubled one he conducts with Philaster and Arethusa, in which he functions as a “boy,” a “passing” masculine androgyne with a bi-directional erotic orientation.

The only other example of such a complete gender-surprise as a plot device, in which the audience is shocked by the gender-unmasking of a character not previously suggested in any way to be cross-dressed, is Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*, from the same year (1609). In that play, the genders of the ruse are reversed. The “silent woman” of the title, who has been married to the old man Morose, is revealed in the last scene to be a beardless boy, and an instrumentalized boy at that – although not in the same queer, erotically-participatory sense in which Bellario is instrumentalized. The boy, a “gentleman’s son,” has been wholly owned and co-opted by a city wit, brought up to masquerade as a woman and marry his miser uncle, as a plot to thwart his plan to disinherit his nephew by having a child of his own. “Epicoene” is the polar opposite to Bellario: performatively stupid, shrewish, anti-erotic; her/his unveiling plunges several men who claim to have slept with her into sodomitical suspicion, and mocks the gender performances of every caricatured type in the play’s sweaty, annoying milieu. The last-minute gender change structuring both plays invites a kind of doubled reading practice, where the audience’s memory of the play they have just seen is re-written at the climactic instant. But the re-signification performed by Bellario’s gender-unmasking in *Philaster* is not about derision or gender satire – rather, it is about erotic desire, and the audience is implicated in the queer erotic frisson which retrospectively makes visible moments of sexual ambiguity, contradiction, and reversal. Putatively opposite-sex pairs are revealed to have been secretly same-sex pairs, and vice versa, raising questions of what the characters erotically implicated with the cross-dressed figure knew and when they knew it. It is as though two versions of the play’s go-between plot, one featuring Bellario-as-boy and the other featuring Bellario-as-girl-in-disguise, are brought
into being and coexist in a dialectical relation, with neither eclipsing the other and the constant oscillation between them generating a particularly queer version of female cross-dressing comedy.

I want to set Bellario’s submissive erotic instrumentality against the swashbuckling, agentive instrumentality of Mary Frith/“Moll Cutpurse” of The Roaring Girl, with which it would seem at first to have little in common. Moll, “The Roaring Girl,” is to an even more flamboyant degree gender-queer. Though she appears mostly in men’s clothing as her default costume, in some scenes she wears women’s clothing on one part of her body and men’s clothing on the rest, for example “a frieze jerkin” (a man’s short coat), “and a black safeguard” (a woman’s riding skirt) (II.i.175). As with Bellario/Euphrasia, Moll’s wearing of men’s clothing is not a transient dramatic device, with the audience in on the trick; instead it is the default clothing of the character, the structuring precondition to her engagement in erotic relations.

Neither Bellario/Euphrasia nor Moll is a “woman” in the same sense as Shakespeare’s Rosalind and Viola are. In fact, in both cases, these characters’ genital sex is actually unknown, or at least confused and open to debate – even from the audience’s perspective. Juxtaposing the dynamics of what I am calling “erotic instrumentality” in a tragicomedy and a city comedy, in which three-way erotic relations take very different forms and in which cross-dressing seems to function in opposite ways, emphasizes how instrumentality works as a mode of erotic relation. Far from equating the erotic economies of these two plays, I am highlighting two disparate instantiations of the instrumental erotic mode to elaborate on its variety and flexibility. It is my hope that, by comparing the three-way erotic configurations effected by cross-dressed, instrumental “thirds” in two plays that are not usually compared, this analysis will create the conditions of possibility for recognizing dynamics of erotic instrumentality elsewhere.
Much of the influential historical, dramatic, and gender criticism of the past few decades has focused on the erotics of boy actors in women’s parts; and on the self-referential theatricality with which that practice infuses the comic resolution of cross-dressing plays, especially in the moment of provisional, imaginary “revelation” where the boy actor playing the heroine removes his men’s clothing to reveal his “real” female identity. But the queer twists on cross-dressing explored in this chapter – a boy who is not known to be “really” a girl in disguise until the end of the play, and who never appears in women’s clothing; and a female cutpurse who dresses as a man from start to (almost) finish, though her men’s clothes are in no sense a disguise – require a different kind of attention to the masculine garments and the prosthetic accessories, tangible or imaginary, surrounding the boy actor in these more sexually-ambiguous “female” roles. With their male garments and masculine accessories, Bellario and Moll cast doubt on the substance of gender to an even further degree than other cross-dressed characters on the early modern stage, calling into question the sartorial construction of sex. These figures’ constitutive, full-time practice of cross-dressing installs them, in distinctly different ways, into a different order of body that is outside of the organizing binaries of gender or sexuality. In this respect, they may correspond more productively across time to gender-queer butches, transgender “bois,” or “drag

---

8 See Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, “Transvestism and the ‘body beneath’: speculating on the boy actor,” in Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Marjorie Garber, Vested Interests (New York: Routledge, 1997); Jean Howard, The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Stephen Orgel, “Nobody’s Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?” South Atlantic Quarterly 88:1 (1989); and Stephen Greenblatt, “Fiction and Friction,” in Shakespearean Negotiations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 66-93. This project is indebted in particular to the work of Marjorie Garber, Ann Rosalind Jones, and Peter Stallybrass, for attending to the surprising cathexes that can erupt between desiring subjects and their objects, both people and material things; and for illuminating how fully cross-dressing comedy depends on audiences’ libidinal investments in gender illusion.
kings” who live in drag full-time than to the femme heroines which have been the focus of much early modern cross-dressing criticism.9

I read the scenes of cross-dressed eroticism in both Philaster and The Roaring Girl – which, as I will show, include scenes where it is possible to imagine, without very great strain to dramatic convention, that there is cross-dressed, gender-queer sex – as instances of queer relationality: erotic exchanges that are not contained within the model of the unmediated, inter-subjective sexual dyad. What is queer about these potential instances of sex is not (just) the genders or the genital configurations of the participants, but the specific kinds of erotic dynamics in play: the mediated, surrogated, even performative, stylized, and artificed pleasures generated by the cross-dressed/gender-queer “third.” Making such trans-historical erotic and affective connections visible, and mining their significance, requires what Judith "Jack" Halberstam calls a “perversely presentist” method of historical analysis: a methodology that acknowledges the relevance of “what we do not know in the present to what we cannot know about the past.”10 This means that I am not undertaking a teleological project of mining texts from the past for examples of sexual categories that exist today – as if to confirm the “truth” or inevitability of today’s classificatory regimes; as if today’s sexual identities had some essence that would allow us to discover them in other times. Instead, a “perversely presentist” approach means that I will not shrink from pointing out resonances between the kinds of queerness at issue in these early

---

9 This also makes Bellario and Moll interesting cases in light of the butch-femme dynamic that Valerie Traub traces through the early modern discourses of the tribade and the chaste femme lesbian in The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): it is the femme, she argues, who, “defined primarily as lack, the blank space made intelligible only by the implied presence of the tribade or the butch,” “has operated, both historically and in contemporary culture as an erotic cipher” (230). Yet Bellario serves as an erotic cipher within/by means of a sartorially tribade-like presentation, which Traub argues “has more in common with current discourses of transgender and intersexuality than with butch affect and style” (436 n.106); Moll too, as I shall argue, has properties of an erotic cipher in her thoroughly tribade body. Whereas Traub’s project is to recover the desire and agency of the historically silenced “chaste femme,” my inverse aim is to locate and make legible the erotic significations of these strangely-potent staged ciphers at the margins of the early modern category of the tribade.

modern plays and other moments of erotic polysemy, crisis, artifice, and undecidability from that
time and from others – without presuming to define all that eroticism means and doesn’t mean at
the moment of these texts’ historical production, and also without pretending that queerness is
clearly definable from our critical perspective in the present.

Among the things “we do not know in the present,” which Bellario’s and Moll’s distinct
ways of being-made-instrumental call into question, is the precise role of cross-gendered
clothing in shaping erotic dynamics. In The Roaring Girl, Moll’s menswear is figured as a
central object, in its own right, of Moll’s own as well as others’ queer investment and fixation.
But, though it is usually unnoticed, this investment in men's clothes and how they constitute an
artificial sex is also operative in Philaster: in Bellario’s fidelity, figured in the language of
religious devotion, to wearing men’s clothing. Bellario (revealed as Euphrasia) explains how “I
did delude my noble father/With a feigned pilgrimage, and dressed myself/ In the habit of a boy” –
the masculine clothing is the “habit” that must be maintained, the “feigned pilgrimage” that
must be continued, as long as she/he wishes to abide with Philaster (V.v.179-181). This identity
is taken on as “a vow./ By all the most religious things a maid/ Could call together, never to be
known/ Whilst there was hope to hide me from men’s eyes/ For other than I seemed” (V.v.185-
189). Concealment – the pieces of clothing that make it possible “never to be known” – provide
the sole condition of his/her access to the instrumental erotic and social role he/she desires.

Because the play only discloses that “Bellario” is artificial at all at the last instant,
reading back retrospectively from his gender transformation allows us to notice how his passing,
trans-gendered body merges with the constituting materiality of his clothing and accessories.
“Bellario” is a purpose-built, artificial thing, a persona fashioned by Euphrasia as a vehicle to
facilitate the fulfillment of her desire: being near Philaster, and serving him. Then, when the
“boy” is commissioned as the instrumental “bearer” of Philaster’s love to Arethusa, that persona becomes a vehicle to effect the transmission of others’ desire. Yet, at the same time, it is important not to over-enunciate the difference the revelation of gender-disguise makes: in his ardent functioning as an instrumental erotic technology, Bellario is Euphrasia and Euphrasia is Bellario. Bellario is a body, a mask, a shell or exoskeleton, a persona; but Bellario is not an “act” – it is Euphrasia’s desire that drives him, and it is Bellario’s masculine-yet-androgynous body through which that desire is enacted.

2. “This boy... would outdo story”

The erotics of instrumentality in Philaster and The Roaring Girl differ from other forms of comic triangulation in the mutuality of the pleasure that is generated over a three-way erotic connection. For example, in the case of Twelfth Night, perhaps the canonical example of a cross-dressed boy being deputized as a go-between in a heterosexual courtship, the erotics circulating among Orsino, Viola, and Olivia are not best described as queer triadic erotic instrumentality. First, Viola’s cross-dressing is not a permanently assumed way of life or a purposeful erotic persona, but a provisional, tactical disguise assumed to survive the crisis of being shipwrecked in a strange land. Like Philaster’s boy, Viola obtains employment as a servant boy in the service of a man, and is sent by that man, Duke Orsino, to woo a woman, Olivia, on his behalf. However, Viola’s cross-dressed flirtations with her master and his unwilling target are not structured by a mutual erotics of “being-used” where Viola is the instrument and generator of three-way passion. Viola declares that her singular erotic object choice is Orsino in an aside to the audience even as she agrees to serve as his romantic go-between: “Yet a barful strife!/ Whoe’er I woo, myself
would be his wife.”¹¹ This aside predicts the outcome of the plot, even as it anticipates the roundabout, polymorphous wooing of its comic dilation. It sets up conditions in which, as Jean Howard puts it, “there is no doubt in the audience’s mind of her heterosexual sexual orientation or her properly ‘feminine’ subjectivity”—at least by the end, at least as far as the official story goes.¹² For my purposes, what differentiates the dynamics of desire in Twelfth Night from Philaster’s erotics of instrumentality is that Viola wants her time of being-used as a go-between to come to an end, to be superseded by dyadic sexual consummation and marriage; this agenda is not voiced in Philaster until the very end, when it is voiced as a foundational impossibility of the play. In The Roaring Girl, meanwhile, it is explicitly disavowed.

Though the amorous scenes between Viola and Olivia are loaded with homoerotic tension, which several critics have explored as lesbian desire,¹³ their exchanges are marked by affects of “barful strife” on both sides, with Viola’s ends diverted by wooing – and then being wooed by – Olivia, and Olivia’s ends obstructed by Viola’s evasion and equivocation. This is not to ignore the queer pleasures generated by the additional erotic dimension of their interaction; but Viola’s wooing of Olivia does not in itself serve the ends of her investment in Orsino, as Bellario’s service to Arethusa does for his drive to serve Philaster. Though Olivia’s singular desire for Cesario has been read both as unnatural, quasi-lesbian desire which threatens the norms of a patriarchal gender system, and as “homonormative” same-sex desire which


¹² Jean Howard, “Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England,” Shakespeare Quarterly 39.4 (1988): 431. A major strain of cross-dressing criticism centers on Twelfth Night, using the ending’s reassignment of ostensibly-natural sex/gender roles to offer varying verdicts as to how and whether comedy’s marriage plot re-inscribes sexual and gender normativity, naturalizes a binary gender system, or neutralizes the homoerotics and gender confusion of the cross-dressing plot.

signifies as more natural than desire for a bio-male suitor,\textsuperscript{14} what differentiates it from Arethusa’s desire in Philaster is not the proportions of homo- and hetero-erotics, or transgressiveness and normativity, that it contains, but its undivided aim. When Viola asks Olivia, “You’ll nothing, madam, to my lord by me?” she zeroes in on Cesario instead: “Stay./ I prithee tell me what thou think’st of me” (III.i.135-137). Unlike Arethusa, Olivia does not love the prince who sends her this “boy”; instead she is intent on prying the boy apart from his master, re-casting Cesario not as a messenger but as a sexual subject in his own right, and re-orienting his desire towards her. Moreover, Olivia’s desire is not fulfilled or gratified by the status quo; she constantly seeks to move the relation with Cesario forward towards a dyadic intersubjective exchange that Viola must constantly refuse.

Orsino and Viola, too, are erotically at odds in their exchanges while he knows her as the boy Cesario; though each desires the other, they harbor disparate knowledges of what that desire is. Orsino melancholically predicts that a telos of straight romance will lead the “boy” away from him, into the less-intense passions of woman’s love. When the Duke inquires “What kind of woman is’t?” that Cesario desires, Viola equivocates, “Of your complexion,” hinting at her desire for Orsino without contradicting the inevitability of his heteronormative plot (hoping, perhaps, that he might stop counting himself as one who remains outside of it?). The Duke manages to denigrate both himself and heterosexuality in response: “She is not worth thee then” (II.iv.26-27). This scene crackles with queer erotic energy, but it is not the mutual pleasure in being-used of erotic instrumentality. In Twelfth Night’s “go-between” scenes, the parties’ desires are in conflict, at odds, concealed from each other, and obstructed by each other’s utterances. The erotic longings of all three are decidedly not being fulfilled by and through Viola’s

instrumental use as Orsino’s surrogate suitor to Olivia. The queerness of *Twelfth Night*’s group erotic dynamics inheres instead in perpetually unsatisfied, polymorphously confused and thwarted desire; this mechanism of desiring, which is exemplified in Orsino’s renunciation of women and marriage, will be the focus of my third chapter.

Until the very last moment of *Philaster*, we see no indication whatsoever of that Bellario is functioning with any interior, dyadically-directed object choice like Viola’s or Olivia’s. Even at “his” revelation as a girl, “his” desire is neither dyadic nor heterosexual – he only asks to be permitted to be with, and be of service to, Philaster and Arethusa:

Never, sir, will I  
Marry: it is a thing within my vow;  
But if I may have leave to serve the Princess,  
To see the virtues of her lord and her,  
I shall have hope to live” (V.v.194-198).

What sets *Philaster*’s erotic configuration apart from disguise and triangulation plots like *Twelfth Night*, then, is the complete absence of any conflict between the desires of the instrumentalized boy, and the desires he is being used to facilitate. Philaster fashions Bellario as the link that can “hold intelligence” (I.ii.109) between himself and Arethusa; but as a self-fashioned, embodied technology of erotic communication, the desires Bellario transmits so volubly are also immanently his own. “Being used” is Bellario’s decidedly not-secret inward desire, his queer relational mode, which, as I will show in the concluding section to this chapter, is all-too-easily interpreted as something far less queer, and far more dangerous.

Bellario’s doubled capacity to be at once a desiring subject and a completely surrendered, appropriated cipher for others makes him the perfect erotic instrument. In his transactions with the Prince and Princess he is thoroughly acted-upon and used; in his words, he is “nothing,” a
completely given-over subject whose entire substance and meaning derives from Philaster: “Sir, you did take me up when I was nothing/And only yet am something by being yours” (II.i.5-7).

And yet, to say that he is completely given-over to Philaster’s desires is – and this is the crux of erotic instrumentality – not to say that Bellario is not an erotic agent. Bellario obviously desires; his desire is the originary cause of his relation to Philaster. At first he is inconsolable at being sent away to conduct Philaster's “hidden love.” He pleads to be used more strictly in order to stay:

If I have done
A willful fault, think me not past all hope
For once. What master holds so strict a hand
Over his boy that he will part with him
Without one warning? Let me be corrected
To break my stubbornness if it be so,
Rather than turn me off; and I shall mend (II.i.33-39)

Philaster’s commissioning of Bellario as his and Arethusa’s go-between complicates what had looked like a homosocial/homoerotic master/servant relationship, revealing the queer erotic investment flowing both ways between them, and extending it into a new, triangulated shape:

Thy love doth plead so prettily to stay
That, trust me, I could weep to part with thee.
Alas, I do not turn thee off; thou knowest
It is my business that doth call thee hence,
And when thou art with her, thou dwellest with me.
Think so, and ‘tis so; and when time is full,
That thou hast well discharged this heavy trust,
Laid on so weak a one, I will again
With joy receive thee; as I live, I will;
Nay, weep not, gentle boy. ‘Tis more than time
Thou didst attend the Princess (II.i.40-49).

Philaster answers Bellario’s plea with his own admission of desire for the boy; moreover, he appeals to Bellario’s desire for him, articulating the mutual erotic payoff of Bellario’s instrumentality – and the mutual pain of a physical separation that extends their intimacy into the
virtual, imaginary realm. Philaster reassures him that this does not diminish his erotic investment in their bond: “I do not turn thee off” literally means that Bellario is not dismissed; but it can also be read as containing the implication that Bellario remains activated for Philaster – and that Philaster is not attempting to cancel Bellario’s state of attunement towards him. Bellario’s consolation is that he is being used in the service of Philaster’s own erotic ends. Note that Philaster says, “when thou art with her, thou dwellest with me,” and not “when thou art with her, I am with her.” He does not, that is, make his “boy” his agent or surrogate, emptying out Bellario’s subjectivity and inhabiting Bellario’s body with his own spectral subjectivity in order to act by proxy upon Arethusa. Rather, Philaster posits his instrument, Bellario, as being in the same intersubjective relation to both Arethusa and himself. The love seems to have a transitive property according to which Arethusa will love Bellario in Philaster’s place.

Bellario’s doubled, non-gender-differentiated role in the triad demonstrates the structural queerness, beyond the polar positions of dominance and submission, of the configuration that his instrumentality brings into being. This queerness is not apparent in the same way in the early modern erotic economies of “service” that the play alludes to here – a relation predicated on permanently different roles of dominance and submission.15 Mario DiGangi details the workings of a “homoerotics of mastery” within the power structure of service (and concomitantly within

---

comic plots of mastery and humiliation), describing how early modern discourses of service are used to signify “disorderly” homoerotic sexual practices that cannot be represented onstage; these sodomitical erotics, which can be manipulated by masters or servants, both inhere within and threaten the master/servant power differential. As Philaster sends him out to Arethusa, Bellario’s role is explicitly contrasted to this received discourse of boys’ service and “sauciness” to masters within a larger, homosocial power structure. Fearing that he is being transferred to a different master, Bellario protests, “My father would prefer the boys he kept/ To greater men than he, but did it not/ Till they were grown too saucy for himself” (II.ii.25-27), before he understands that, unlike his father’s boys, he will still continue to serve Philaster even while being “preferred” to Arethusa as well.

Bellario’s paradoxically active erotic functioning – that is, the role he plays in the triad through his powers of transmission – sets the relational mode of erotic instrumentality apart from other relations of service and triangulation. Much more than a servant or messenger, Bellario is the affective stylist of the relationship between Philaster and Arethusa, the communicator of its tenor and its content. When Arethusa asks him if his master loves her, he responds with an elaborate recital of love’s affects:

If it be love
To forget all respect to his own friends
With thinking of your face; if it be love
To sit cross-armed and think away the day,
Mingled with starts, crying your name as loud
As loud as men i’ the streets do ‘fire’;
If it be love to weep himself away
When he but hears of any lady dead
Or killed, because it might have been your chance…
Then, madam, I dare swear he loves you (II.iii.53-64).

This picture of Philaster’s supposed distraction, startling, weeping, obsession, and compulsion

---

appears, like the flower garland, to be entirely Bellario’s invention. It is a performance purpose-made to please Arethusa, who enjoys Bellario’s “cunning” for its own sake without worrying about its truth-value – “thou knowest a lie/ That bears this sound is welcome to me/ Than any truth that says he loves me not” (II.iii.65-68). But at the same time this recital is saturated with the truth of Bellario’s own identification with, and lovesickness for, Philaster. Bellario’s performance walks a fine line between a dead-serious rehearsal of the received affects of Petrarchan love, and a subtle send-up of the extremity of those affects, combining earnestness and exaggeration in a highly aestheticized, melodramatic register. In other words, Bellario’s style of wooing displays many of the hallmarks of camp style, in its theatrical fusion of elements of “the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate, and the naïve.”\(^\text{17}\) The hyperbolic images casting romantic love as self-annihilating pain and/or inordinate sympathetic investment (“to weep himself away/ When he but hears of any lady dead/ Or killed, because it might have been your chance…”) hearken back to the death-bound language in which Arethusa and Philaster first declare their love. Bellario’s tone here enlists Beaumont and Fletcher’s trademark excessive, self-referential tragicomic language as the queer triad’s signature affective dynamic. It corresponds to what Sontag calls “the epicene style,” that is, high artifice; it effects “the convertibility of ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ ‘person’ and ‘thing.’”\(^\text{18}\) Deputized to communicate Philaster’s love to Arethusa (and vice versa), what Bellario actually does instead is communicate his love for Philaster to Arethusa (after pleading it to Philaster), receive Arethusa’s love for himself, and return it back to her. He becomes the medium, the material substance in which the couple’s romantic connection lives, through his virtuosic ability to engage in erotic relations


\(^\text{18}\) Sontag, “Notes on Camp” #11, p. 56.
across gender difference and outside of social convention.

Philaster remarks that Bellario’s peculiar affective intensity reads as even stranger than the familiar discourse, of which Philaster has read, of boys’ homoerotic devotion to their masters:

The love of boys unto their lords is strange;  
I have read wonders of it, yet this boy  
For my sake (if a man may judge by looks  
And speech) would outdo story.  I may see  
A day to pay him for his loyalty (II.i.57-61).

Bellario’s excessive, passionate performances (and fabrications) of affection linguistically over-reach and outdo the pre-existing discourses of love and fame that they cite. But it is also the animated, instrumental way in which Bellario effects connection between Arethusa, Philaster, and himself that exceeds “story.” His “looks and speech” apparently communicate a passion for being instrumentalized that exceeds even the “normal” “strangeness” of other boys' homoerotic love and submission to their masters. In its distinctiveness from more “storied” contemporary forms of same-sex eros like service or self-sacrifice, Bellario’s erotic instrumentality is non-normative in how it departs from sexual norms. This supererogative excess of affect with which Bellario “outdoes story” is a queer quality which, I argue, is not dependent on a normative sexual order or the constitutive threat of disorder, inhering instead in the fluid, multi-directional assemblages of erotic energy that structure this three-way relation.

3. “In counterfeit passion”

If Philaster dramatizes a queer instrumentality founded in malleability, pathos, and surrender, The Roaring Girl depicts a go-between with a powerful agency who actively shapes and dominates the relationships she facilitates. Of all the queer feelings and erotic modes in this
project, those I describe in *The Roaring Girl* in particular are most manifestly connected to a
genealogy of non-normative sexuality stretching between the early modern period and the
present. Its protagonist is an openly masculine-identified woman who wears mostly men’s
clothes. She is unapologetically queer, and absolutely, historically real. A notorious thief,
entertainer, and scandalous City character, Moll Frith was at the peak of her celebrity when this
play was produced: unlike any other play of the period, *The Roaring Girl* dramatizes a living
personality who moves in the same spheres of the Bankside theater industry and the City
underworld as the audience might have. In fact, as the epilogue of the play advertises, “The
Roaring Girl herself” is a physical presence *in* the Fortune theater at the time of the play’s
production there. On at least one occasion she appeared on the stage (in men’s apparel, of
course) and sang a song, accompanying herself on a viol; she may have made other cameo
appearances or ad-libbed comic turns *as herself* in the play.\(^{19}\) I want my readings of the erotics
and power dynamics in both of these plays to keep sight of the fact that one of my prototypes for
erotic instrumentality, Moll Cutpurse, is recognizable outside of the play as a sexually non-
normative subject; although that historical non-normativity is only one of the ways in which the
figures of “Moll Cutpurse,” and, by comparison, Bellario/Euphrasia, resonate through queer
history. In the spirit of Carolyn Dinshaw’s instructive contention that “queer histories are made
of affective relations,” and that the work of premodern sexuality studies is “to make such
histories manifest by juxtaposition, by making entities past and present touch,” I am more
interested in looking forward from these two queer figures, to future reverberations of the

---

\(^{19}\) The definitive treatment of the historical evidence for Moll Frith’s performance is P.A. Mulholland’s “The Date of
context on Mary Frith the historical figure are: Natasha Korda, “The Case of Moll Frith: Women’s Work and the
All-Male Stage,” in *Women Players in England, 1500-1600: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot and Burlington,
VT: Ashgate, 2005), 71-88; and Bryan Reynolds and Janna Segal, “The Reckoning of Moll Cutpurse: A Transversal
Enterprise,” in *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, ed. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor:
language of erotic instrumentality which might be brought to bear on the analysis of both of
them. A differently-historicized reading of these plays can then reveal a new “deep structure”
of desire that we had not noticed before: a queer shape of desire, centered on the willing
instrumentality of the gender-queer “third.”

The premise of Middleton and Dekker’s madly successful city comedy features a
gentleman’s son, Sebastian, in a dilemma more stereotypically associated with early modern
daughters: his father, Sir Alex, has reneged on the engagement agreement he made with the
father of Sebastian’s chosen love, Mary Fitzallard, deeming her dowry insufficient and
promising to disinherit his son if he weds her. The dis-engaged fiancée, Mary, opens the play
before the first line is spoken, by entering “disguised like a sempster,” or accessory-maker, “with
a case for bands” as a prop. She is cross-dressed in class-drag – disguised, that is, not as a
different gender, but as a woman of another class and economic position. Her appearance in
class-drag here emphasizes the problem with her economic status that is the central, causal
conflict of the play. Her “sempster” costume also carries a hint of transgressive sexuality, in the
association of London ruff-makers, starchers, and seamstresses with prostitution, due to their
stigmatized ornamental labor, their marked class degradation, and their possible foreignness.
Mary’s pretense of delivering custom-made ruffled collars gains her admission to her fiancé’s
house, although he has ordered no bands, introducing an air of excessive, extra-marital sexual

20 Carolyn Dinshaw, Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Post-Modern (Durham: Duke
University Press, 1999), 12.
21 All citations from The Roaring Girl are by act, scene, and line number from The Revels Plays edition, by Thomas
22 See Jones and Stallybrass, “Yellow starch: fabrications of the Jacobean court,” in Renaissance Clothing, 58-85;
and Natasha Korda’s work, including Shakespeare’s Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern
England (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), and Labors Lost: Women’s Work and the Early Modern
English Stage (forthcoming).
license, particularly as housed and transmitted in the material objects of fashion and dress, that persists throughout the play.

Once alone with her ex-fiancé, however, Mary turns the fictional “falling bands” into a metaphor with which to accuse Sebastian of reneging on his “bond fast sealed with solemn oaths” (I.i.56) to marry her. Sebastian explains his father’s dissatisfaction with Mary’s dowry, and his idea of a solution – a performance of gender and sexual monstrosity so extreme and scandalous that it will change his father’s mind.

There’s a wench  
Call’d Moll, mad Moll or merry Moll, a creature  
So strange in quality a whole city takes  
Note of her name and person (I.i.101-104).

Sebastian proposes turning to this “creature,” the notorious cross-dresser known as “Moll Cutpurse,” who is also his friend and compatriot in debauched London city life, to pose as a grotesque and unacceptable decoy fiancée. His plan – for which he does not solicit Mary’s opinion or permission – leverages Moll’s notoriety as a “roaring girl” who needs no description more specific than that she is notorious. From Sebastian’s first use of her name in his exposition of his scheme, Moll functions as an instrumental ”third” whose sexual meanings are filled in indirectly, and can shift as needed according to context. While the intermediary in Philaster fulfills his function by appearing completely innocent, his class status (and cross-dressing) submerged, the plot of The Roaring Girl explicitly traffics in social opprobrium and the violation of taboo. Whereas Bellario’s virtuosic performances of affect are the private currency of his function as an erotic instrument for Philaster and Arethusa, here the public quality of Moll’s gender-queerness is the grounds upon which she can function as an erotic instrument for the couple.
Sebastian casts his performance of romantic coupling with Moll as wayward swerving from the "straight" course:

Tho’ wildly in a labyrinth I go,
My end is to meet thee; with a side wind
Must I now sail, else I no haven can find
But both must sink forever (I.i.98-101)

[...] Yet I’ll go on
This crooked way, sigh still for her, feign dreams
In which I’ll talk only of her: these streams
Shall, I hope, force my father to consent
That here I anchor rather than be rent
Upon a rock so dangerous. Art thou pleas’d,
Because thou seest we are waylaid, that I take
A path that’s safe, tho’ it be far about? (I.i.109-116).

As Sebastian figures their predicament in this speech, he and Mary are so embattled in their quest to marry that this “wild” foray into the “labyrinth” of Moll, this “side wind” with which they must sail, is their only hope of achieving a marital union. Moll’s social and sexual connotations are spatialized in all of these figures: she is a maze in which to get lost; a forced detour; an erring path; and the threat of a potentially lethal wreck. Citing Stephen Greenblatt, Laurie Shannon has unpacked the discourse of a “course” or “path” to the forward motion of nature which is “straight” or “swerving” in terms of gendered likeness and difference, but what Sebastian puts forward here is not the “bias” that Shannon and Greenblatt interrogate at the resolution of *Twelfth Night*.23 There, another Sebastian declares (by way of declaring it to be negated) the possibility that *The Roaring Girl’s* Sebastian performatively threatens here – a same-sex marriage:

So comes it, lady, you have been mistook.
But nature to her bias drew in that.
You would have been contracted to a maid,
Nor are you, therein, by my life, deceived.

You are betrothed both to a maid and a man (V.i.259-263).

Whereas swerving or bias in Twelfth Night is inherent in nature, and tends to resolve, to homo- as well as to hetero-normative ends, the “crooked way” that Sebastian describes is a perilous wandering – represented in metaphors of the natural world, but as a crisis of navigation rather than an organic tropism. His language of travel and motion highlights the fact that Moll’s instrumentality to the couple inheres in the interruption and diversion of the social trajectory that she represents. Moll is characterized here as queering his marriage trajectory, in Eve Sedgwick’s sense of queer as a “movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, troublant,” implicated with motions of crossing and twisting (torque, athwart). Moll-as-decoy-fiancée is just such a twisting, erring step, one which enacts “resistance to regimes of the normal” despite originally being undertaken in the service of marriage.

Moreover, the couple is forced into this “crooked way” of trafficking in – indeed, impersonating – queerness explicitly because they have lost their privileged status as a patriarchally legitimate marriage. While Philaster and Arethusa’s love is illicit from the start due to Arethusa’s father’s dynastic concerns of usurpation and succession, Sebastian and Mary’s engagement was formerly public and then publicly cancelled, thanks to Sebastian’s father’s mercenary greed. As in Philaster, the couple must conduct their love in secret; only through triangulation with a “third” can they hope to eventually bring about a public match. They are forced, as a survival tactic, to participate in an economy of performance and scandal that connects them to Moll’s queer notoriety. Their economic and social disempowerment has so stripped them of agency that this “side wind” is the only available path to rehabilitating their

---


status. This is why Moll’s queerness, in the structure of the plot, is *instrumental*: her non-normative social and sexual meaning is originally marshaled to effect a marriage, though it does much more besides in altering and queering the putatively-heterosexual pair.

“A story of Moll shall make our mirth more sweet” (I.i.121), Sebastian tells Mary; but the queer “story of Moll” that will sweeten Sebastian and Mary’s love depends on its audience's impulse to prevent less normatively-gendered couplings than theirs. Sebastian’s plan leverages what other people think of Moll’s deviance, and the sexual associations that attach to her, against prevailing social norms. As he says to Mary:

All that affection  
I owe to thee on her in counterfeit passion  
I spend to mad my father: he believes  
I dote upon the roaring girl, and grieves  
As it becomes a father for a son  
That could be so bewitch’d (I.i.104-109).

Sebastian counts on the assumption that in his father’s eyes, Moll’s mutable and androgynous notoriety will boil down to only one salient meaning: revulsion at a taboo sexuality. She represents a father’s worst fears for his son, a sexual transgression so enormous and unacceptable that Sebastian’s class transgression in marrying Mary will look mild by comparison and his father will consent to the original match.

Sebastian’s plot works spectacularly. We first see Sir Alex engaged in an elaborate hospitality ritual of visiting with his gentlemen friends in his parlor. Within the highly mannered homosocial choreography of the gentlemen’s visit, he tells a stylized tale of an “aged man” tormented by his son’s strange desire for the wrong sort of romantic partner. He fumes:

A scurvy woman  
On whom the passionate old man swore he doted;  
A creature, saith he, nature hath brought forth  
To mock the sex of woman. It is a thing  
One knows not how to name; her birth began
Ere she was all made. ‘Tis woman more than man,
Man more than woman, and, which to none can hap,
The sun gives her two shadows to one shape;
Nay, more, let this strange thing walk, stand or sit,
No blazing star draws more eyes after it.
SIR DAVY: A monster, ‘tis some monster.
SIR ALEX: She’s a varlet. [...] A naughty pack (I.ii.125-137).

Like the queer charade he describes, Sir Alex’s performance uses a fictitious substitution to marshal others’ revulsion at the spectacular image of an (as yet unidentified) double-sexed yet supposedly female body. Her men’s attire, which gives her “two shadows to one shape,” also makes her a “blazing star” that draws the eyes of the multitudes. Not only before Moll has appeared onstage, but before her notorious name has been revealed to the gentlemen, the monstrous silhouette of her gender excess and gender enormity can cause social conflagration.

As a supposedly female-bodied person (though the play repeatedly raises the question, and the audience is given no evidence of her anatomy) who wears men’s clothing in daily life, Moll Frith is the exemplar of a notorious London type: the “man-woman” or “masculine-feminine,” a target of widely circulated polemic, including the 1620 pamphlet, “Hic Mulier or, The Man-Woman,” which offers “a Medicine to Cure the Coltish Disease of the Staggers in the Masculine-Feminines of our Times.”26 Thus before Moll appears onstage her contours are already drawn by an existing, paranoid discourse; her deferred entrance and the extensively dilated buildup of dialogue anticipating her appearance mirrors the rapidly-proliferating body of anti-transvestite polemic. A wealth of scholarship on The Roaring Girl and other plays examines the political, social, and sexual meanings of cross-dressing hysteria in the context of the early

26“Hic Mulier, or The man-woman: being a medicine to cure the coltish disease of the staggers in the masculine-feminines of our times.” (London: printed [at Eliot’s Court Press] for I. T[undle] and are to be sold at Christ Church gate, 1620).
Building on that work, I want to propose a shift from seeing the transvestite “Masculine-Feminine” as an object – of gazes, of polemic, of conflicted and competing desires in the period, and of modern critics’ objectifying interests and analyses – in order to ask instead what the figure of the cross-dressed body *does* to and within erotic economies. My notion of the transvestite’s erotic instrumentality moves towards re-framing the embodiment and the agency of cross-dressing in terms of the transvestite’s *effect* on erotic dynamics and intimate bonds. How does the cross-dressed “third” alter the erotic structure of a play? What different kinds of erotic connection does he/she produce onstage – or offstage, for that matter?

Analyses of the erotic economy of this play necessarily start, as this one does, from the triad formed by Moll, Sebastian, and Mary. It is the obvious sexual center of the play: Moll is enlisted to make Sebastian’s engagement and marriage to Mary legitimate again. But Moll does not appear onstage in her instrumental capacity with Sebastian and Mary until well into the second half of the play, in Act IV. Far more stage-time is devoted to another, tangential triad in which Moll must alter and queer the investments and feelings at stake between two other characters: Sebastian and his father, Sir Alex Wengrave. Studies of gender, sexuality, and desire in *The Roaring Girl* have understandably not focused on the father/son pairing, but I contend that in many ways it is the central affective dynamic of the plot (it is, for one thing, the relation on whose restoration the comic resolution depends); moreover, the affects incited in Sebastian’s father are, I will argue, a vital part of the constellation of queer investments that Moll brings

---

about, and makes visible. I suggest that we read the effect Moll has on this filial bond before she appears onstage trans-historically and across gender lines, asking what is revealed about the structures of desire – and not just alloerotic desire – underpinning the play if we regard that effect for what it is, on its face: a father’s emotional breakdown over a son’s announcement of his intention to marry an unacceptably-gendered partner.

Sebastian’s performance of “counterfeit passion” sparks a frenzy of not-at-all counterfeit passion aimed back at Sebastian, and at Moll, from Sir Alex. Sebastian is there in the parlor scene, among his father’s gentlemen friends, and Sir Alex’s elaborate performance of affliction is very much for his benefit. By displacing his torment onto a fictional stranger, a “passionate old man” whose son persists in this erotic object choice, Sir Alex discloses the shameful truth by hiding it in plain sight, creating an economy of secret knowledge, substitution, and introjection around Sebastian’s transgressive cathexis. Sir Alex’s affective responses in this scene (and throughout the rest of the play) can be read as indexing the dangers and consequences for the parent-child bond in the aftermath of a “coming out” moment: a revelation of gay object choice, identity, or affiliation.

The monstrous man-woman exerts a literally self-alienating, annihilating, “fantastical” effect on Sir Alex – his incoherent derangement cannot even be represented as his own. His surrogate's sighs “seem’d to brake his heartstrings”; his eyes “have spent so many tears they have no more”; he has “but one cause to curse [his] stars” (I.ii.68-77). It is the father’s body and mind which are tormented by the son's wayward desire, the unspoken thought of which sends the fictive old man into “fits”; Sir Alex says, “you might see his gall/ Flow even in's eyes./ Then grew he fantastical... and talked oddly,” and “left his wild fit to read o’er his cards” (I.ii.88-93). He has the “passionate old man” articulate his son’s desire for the man-woman as direct violence
to the core of his being: as a wedge that “doth cleave/ My very heart-root” (I.ii.104-105), and “a whirlwind/ Shaking the firm foundation” of his existence (I.ii.115-116). His reactions, all-too-recognizable in today’s discourses of sexual and familial love as the crazed lamentations of a homophobic parent, resonate within the framework that Eve Sedgwick outlines for the dramatic effects of such disclosures on the figures of patriarchal power who receive them. Sedgwick describes how the eruption of queerness within the bonds of the family threatens this specifically murderous kind of danger, to the recipient as well as the announcing subject of the news: “in fantasy, though not in fantasy only, against the fear of being killed or wished dead by (say) one’s parents in such a revelation there is apt to recoil the often more intensely imagined possibility of its killing them.”

In Sebastian’s perverse performance of a wrong-gendered object choice, this violence to his father is precisely the intended purpose. Sir Alex renders in performatively literal terms a fantasy much like the one Sedgwick describes, as the scene nears its climax:

Oh, thou cruel boy,
Thou wouldst with lust an old man’s life destroy;
Because thou seest I’m half-way in my grave,
Thou shovel’st dust upon me: would thou mightest have
Thy wish, most wicked, most unnatural! (I.ii.157-161).

Sebastian’s match with Moll is “dust” – but dust that turns the father to dust as well, through the “most wicked, most unnatural” wish not to continue the legitimate familial line, but to annihilate it. We never see Sebastian worry that Sir Alex will kill or harm him for the ruse – he has already been threatened with an extreme form of harm, disinheritance, as a consequence of his actual choice of a mate, Mary. Under patriarchal social structure, the violent consequences of Sebastian’s disobedient attraction are one-sided: his father can – and will – disown him. His

---

28 Sedgwick, Epistemology, 80.
substitution of a gender-queer decoy fiancée for his opposite-gendered, yet-patriarchally-unacceptable one does not remove that threat; it does, however, add to it the inverse possibility, to which Sir Alex returns again and again, that Sebastian’s choice of mate will inflict harm on him. Moll’s instrumental function in Sebastian’s queer charade here catapults a parent/child conflict from the social and economic realm into what, even in a 1611 city comedy, can be called the realm of sexuality, where children’s wayward erotic choices have affective and social consequences that cut both ways, in excess of their material consequences under patrilineage.

Sebastian’s contested status in this play is not a gay identity, but his squandered legitimacy as an heir; as a disinherited subject, he occupies an analogous position to Sedgwick’s “gay subject”: one who has lost the authority over his own social definition, through his problematic choice of mates. Sir Alex’s performance is calculated to set up the unanimous approbation that will descend on Sebastian when his father “outs” him – and, likewise, himself – to his appalled friends:

Is your blood heated? Boils it? Are you stung?  
I’ll pierce you deeper yet.—Oh, my dear friends,  
I am that wretched father, this that son  
That sees his ruin yet headlong doth run!  
SIR ADAM: Will you love such a poison?  
SIR DAVY: Fie, fie! (I.ii.144-148).

He calls Sebastian self-destructive, ill, and delusional for persisting in a desire which Sir Alex figures as a disease that no one should want to have, and he launches a campaign to talk him out of it:

Th’art sick at heart, yet feel’st it not. Of all these,  
What gentleman but thou, knowing his disease  
Mortal, would shun the cure? (I.ii.149-151).

These lines not only accuse Sebastian of not knowing he is “sick” and shunning his own best interests. They also contain a truth claim about the permanency of the attraction Sebastian is
expressing: "what gentleman but thou, knowing that his disease is mortal, would shun the cure?" Sir Alex appeals here to the “questions of authority and evidence” which Sedgwick notes are often first to arise when queerness appears (“‘How do you know you’re really gay? […] Hadn’t you better talk to a therapist and find out?’”\(^{29}\) Any proper, homosocially masculine man would realize, Sir Alex contends, that his deviant attraction to Moll will be lethal if not eradicated, and through force of will would agree to be “cured” of it – presumably by the censure of other gentlemen.

To efface his own role in his son’s deviancy, Sir Alex swears to the assembled gentlemen that he has “upon my knees woo’d this fond boy/ To take that virtuous maiden [Mary Fitzallard]” (I.ii.164-165). This protestation (which is a lie) places the father and son in postures that echo a romantic dyad; rather than Sebastian wooing a woman, his father must woo him, *upon his knees*, to enter into a sexually-normative pairing with a “virtuous maiden.” In fact, Sir Alex has insinuated himself into his son’s sexual trajectory by authoritarian force rather than by erotic supplication, and the triangulation of their father/son bond through Mary Fitzallard is the very route he has foreclosed. Even after “outing” his son and himself, Sir Alex is still closeted as to the extent of his *greed* in canceling his son's engagement to Mary.

Sebastian stokes his father’s revulsion with imagery of sexual congress with Moll:

> SEBASTIAN: Well, then you know
> What dish I mean to feed upon.
> SIR ALEX: Hark, gentlemen, he swears
> To have this cutpurse drab to spite my gall (I.ii.170-172).

Moll becomes more identifiable as a specific cross-dressing “cutpurse drab” at this point. Her identity apparently needs no explanation, as all the horrified gentlemen react with a horror that suggests they all know who she is:

---

\(^{29}\) Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 79.
OMNES: Master Sebastian! &c.
SEBASTIAN: I am deaf to you all.
I’m so bewitch’d, so bound to my desires,
Tears, prayers, threats, nothing can quench out those fires
That burn within me.
Exit Sebastian.
SIR ALEX: {Aside} Her blood shall quench it then. –
Lose him not, oh, dissuade him gentlemen!
SIR DAVY: He shall be wean’d, I warrant you.
SIR ALEX: Before his eyes
Lay down his shame, my grief, his miseries.
OMNES: No more, no more, away! (I.i.172-180).

Though Sir Alex sends the mob of gentlemen after Sebastian, bent on converting him somehow from his deviant object-choice, he reveals in an aside too quick to be heard in the stampede his resolve to murder the queer object of his son’s desire. This potential for violence occasioned by a wrong-gendered object-choice – to the child, to the parent, and back to the child (and here, as can also happen in cases of gay identity, to the child’s love object) again – arises, according to Sedgwick, “partly from the fact that the erotic identity of the person who receives the disclosure [in this case, Sir Alex] is apt also to be implicated in, hence perturbed by, it”: the ultimate disturbance, perhaps, being the unspoken, ghosting suggestion that something like the son’s queer predilection might be present in the father.  

As a sexually-inappropriate match, this performative faux-engagement between a gentleman’s son and a gender-queer, transvestite woman functions dramatically like an engagement between two men. However, it is undertaken not for its own sake, but as a substitution for another, economically-inappropriate one, in order to break down the father’s authority by turning his patriarchal rage against itself. Moll’s ultimate participation in Sebastian and Mary’s sexual relation actually depends on her prior instrumental function here, in

---

30 Sedgwick, Epistemology, 80-81. This must hold particularly true under “the literal patriarchism that makes coming out to parents the best emotional analogy to Esther’s self-disclosure to her husband” (King Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther, the story on which Sedgwick builds her case for the distinctive dynamics that set gay coming-out apart from other kinds of disclosure) (82).
Sebastian's fictional coming-out ruse. The mechanism of her instrumentality to the father/son relation is unexpectedly similar to Bellario's function for Philaster: that is, she functions as a cipher, a vessel for carrying affective content not her own between father and son. Furthermore, as is also true of Bellario, that same affective content would not exist, or at least would never be spoken, without her. She is the object, agent, and occasion – the instrument – of those affects, which are relayed through her erotic persona. However, instead of queering a heterosexual coupling, Moll here functions as an indicator of a more profound and problematic power dynamic of identification and rivalry between father and son. Sir Alex’s anxiety calls on the Oedipal plot, which links the unruly appetites of sons for the wrong sorts of erotic objects with the deaths of fathers and the problem of succession, highlighting a father’s life-or-death interest, under patrilineage, in his son’s appropriate, reproductively-directed sexual desire.

Alone onstage after sending his friends in pursuit of Sebastian, Sir Alex vows revenge on his son, in a chilling twist on the Petrarchan figure of love as an amorous hunt:

I’ll be most near thee when I’m least in sight.
Wild buck, I’ll hunt thee breathless; thou shalt run on,
But I will turn thee when I’m not thought upon (I.ii.182-184).

In a Faustian instant after this vow is spoken, a new instrument – this one for Sir Alex’s use – walks onstage: an out of work soldier, Ralph Trapdoor, whose captain is preferring him into Sir Alex’s service. Sir Alex immediately enlists him to gull Moll by becoming her servant:

SIR ALEX: …they say sometimes
She goes in breeches – follow her as her man.
TRAPDOOR: And when her breeches are off, she shall follow me.
SIR ALEX: Beat all thy brains to serve her.
TRAPDOOR: Zounds, sir, as country wenches beat cream till butter comes.
SIR ALEXANDER: Play thou the subtle spider, weave fine nets
To ensnare her very life.
TRAPDOOR: Her life?
SIR ALEX: Yes, suck
Her heart-blood if thou canst; twist thou but cords
To catch her, I’ll find law to hang her up (I.ii.228-238).

This sexually-loaded exchange appears to culminate in a plot to rape and/or murder Moll (or, failing that, to frame her in a crime for which she would be executed). Sir Alex’s enlistment of this new servant, who appears as though “sent by the gods” (as Philaster says of Bellario), in his plot to murder a gender-queer woman for being sexually linked to his son turns the economy of “service” into a dark, nefarious force in this play. That Sir Alex tells Trapdoor, too, to get himself hired as Moll’s “man” in order to ensnare her – and that this plan is the object of a shared, violent erotic cathexis for the newly-formed master/servant pair – casts servants in a doubly-suspicious light.

That Sir Alex’s ploy does not ultimately succeed, while Sebastian’s succeeds wildly, is due to Moll’s specific queer ability, even in absentia, to implicate other, not explicitly sexual bonds. The queerness she generates is relational: visible at the level of the “counterfeit passions” she attracts, the familial bonds she warps, the demonic bonds of service she occasions, and the dramatic effects that are bodied forth from them in the play. Queer desire’s potential to alter other relations in an orbit of proximity to itself derives, as Sedgwick observes, from its ability to make visible the contingent, relational condition of all desire. Looking at Moll’s effect on Sir Alex and his social bonds this way, alongside her effect on the relation between Sebastian and Mary, allows us to see homosocial bonds like kinship and service, within a wider affective economy of the play, as equal in weight – and in the case of the father/son bond, as dramatically prior – to that of the ostensibly-central, heterosexual couple.

31 “Because erotic identity, of all things, is never to be circumscribed simply as itself, can never not be relational, is never to be perceived or known by anyone outside of a structure of transference and countertransference” (Epistemology, 81). This idea – that the force of the erotic is not a hermetically contained, organic, interior “truth” which bears only on conjugal sexual relations, but a magnetic force that exists in and through all relationalities – is particularly literalized in early modern drama, where discourses of love, identification, and affiliation are not just placed in objects, but frequently spread out to imply the whole set of staged affective relations in the play.
4. “*Both with standing collars!*”

When we finally see Moll in action, we see her cultivating and exerting her relational power in acts of shopping for, and purchasing, clothing and accessories. Well into the city-shopkeepers scene that opens the second act, Moll finally makes her long-anticipated first entrance, onto a stage crowded with citizens and gallants, set to represent a feather shop, a sempster’s shop, and a tobacco shop:

*Enter Moll, in a frieze jerkin and a black safeguard.*

GOSHAWK: Life, yonder’s Moll! (II.i.175).

Moll moves briefly in and out of each of the three shops shopping for accessories. In each space, she is hailed by name as she enters, and again as she leaves. Her character consists of a series of acts of hyper-performative appearances, as befits a comic staging of a present (perhaps literally, physically present), notorious local celebrity. Wearing a soldier’s short jerkin coat and a black “safeguard” (long women’s riding petticoat), Moll appears to be a man from the waist up and a woman from the waist down. She is outfitted as that “half man/half woman” being that Sir Alex references and the “Hic Mulier” pamphlet condemns. The shop-goers comment and speculate on her physical and social excess:

GOSHAWK: ’Tis the maddest, most fantastical’st girl: I never knew so much flesh and so much nimbleness put together.

LAXTON: She slips from one company to another, like a fat eel between a Dutchman’s fingers. [*Aside*] I’ll watch my time for her (II.i.211-214).

Moll’s bodily sex and sexual role are openly debated and gossiped about in the shops, among citizens who know her on a familiar basis:

MISTRESS GALLIPOT: Some will not stick to say she’s a man
And some both man and woman.

LAXTON: That were excellent: she might first cuckold the husband and then make him do as much for the wife (II.i.216-220).
The question of interest, it seems, is what Moll’s ambiguous sex or sexuality might allow her to do in erotic configurations. Though he crucially mistakes her for a sexually-receptive woman and a prostitute, Laxton does hit upon the basis of Moll’s erotic instrumentality in Sebastian and Mary’s relations: at the root of her prodigious sexual potency and inexhaustible sexual desirability is her potential as a bisexual facilitator of sex with male/female couples.

When Moll makes her way to Openwork’s sempster’s shop, we see the play’s first evidence of Moll’s implication in the erotic dynamic between a man and a woman: the exchange in which Mistress Openwork lashes out at her husband – and/or at Moll, who is ambiguously guilty as well – for her bad business and/or lack of sexual satisfaction. “How now! Greetings?” she screams when Moll enters the shop and asks to see a shag ruff:

Love-terms with a pox between you! Have I found out one of your haunts? I send you for hollands, and you’re i’ th’ low countries with a mischief. I’m serv’d with good ware by th’ shift, that makes it lie dead so long upon my hands: I were as good shut up shop, for when I open it I take in nothing (II.i.225-239).

This tirade is usually read as accusing her husband of carousing with Moll, caring less for the business or for her satisfaction than for socializing. \(^{32}\) Yet if we read this speech instead as upbraiding Moll, for staying away so long without enjoying her wares, it suggests that Mistress Openwork may have enjoyed more than strictly commercial relations with Moll. Her accusations and complaints about “good ware” that no one buys might be a bit of wounded self-mockery directed at Moll for neglecting her. This possibility is bolstered by Mistress Openwork’s revelation, when expressing dissatisfaction with her marriage in the next scene, that she was “a gentlewoman born,” whom Openwork took “from a lady’s service, where I was well

---

\(^{32}\) In this reading, Moll negatively triangulates the shopkeepers’ marriage and threatens their business by distracting the man of the shop (we know that Mistress Openwork has far more serious cuckolding worries besides Moll: she is convinced her husband keeps a whore in the suburbs). See in particular Valerie Forman, “Marked Angels: Counterfeits, Commodities, and The Roaring Girl,” in Renaissance Quarterly 54.4, part 2 (2001), 1532.
beloved of the steward; I had my Latin tongue and a spice of the French before I came to him” (II.i.348-350). This sempster-wife is marked as coming from a world closer to that depicted in Philaster: she served as a lady’s “Lady,” and was a favorite of the steward as well. Thus, on top of whatever socially-conditioned erotic frisson can be presumed between a sexually-frustrated married woman vending men’s ruffs and a celebrated full-time transvestite with a taste for the latest fashions, the play also explicitly introduces the bisexual pleasures of being-instrumentalized in a courtly, queer context of triadic affiliation and service; and it does so in connection with the woman, and the marriage, on which Moll exerts a strangely powerful affective pull.

A key component of Moll’s instrumentality to Sebastian and Mary’s coupling involves purchasing clothing: Moll brings Mary to Sebastian in secret, for an assignation in his father's chamber – with Mary cross-dressed, “like a page,” in clothes from Moll's own (men's) tailor. We first see the tailor’s role in dressing Moll (and Mary) when he chases Moll down in the street (where Sir Alex is also lurking, hidden, to spy on her and his son):

TAILOR: I forgot to take measure on you for your new breeches.
SIR ALEX: [Aside] Hoyda! Breeches! What will he marry a monster with two trinkets? What age is this? If the wife go in breeches, the man must wear long coats like a fool!
[…]
TAILOR: It shall stand round and full, I warrant you.
MOLL: Pray make ’em easy enough.
TAILOR: I know my fault now: t’other was somewhat stiff between the legs; I’ll make these open enough, I warrant you.
SIR ALEX: [Aside] Here’s good gear towards! I have brought up my son to marry a Dutch slop and a French doublet, a codpiece-daughter! (II.ii.78-98).

This performative exchange about the legs of Moll’s new Dutch breeches (“And make sure you leave enough room in the crotch!” “Oh yes, I didn’t leave nearly enough room in the crotch last time! I’ll leave more!”) establishes the tailor as a co-constructor of Moll’s prosthetic phallic
body and public persona. The tailor is legible here as a comically prurient City type: a long tradition of sexual suspicion – notably bisexual suspicion, of both lechery with women and effeminacy and homosexual conduct with men – attached to male tailors due to the physical intimacy, undress, and small, sharp phallic instruments involved in their trade. Moll’s transactions with the tailor are literally dramatically instrumental here – this street scene brings Sir Alex in sight, for the first time, of the object of his obsession. He well understands the parts being gestured at in the tailor’s dialogue, calling Moll “a monster with two trinkets,” a reference to the legs or points of her breeches that is more immediately readable as a fantasy of Moll’s having two testicles. His lament, “I have brought my son up to marry a Dutch slop and a French doublet, a codpiece-daughter!” repeats this doubling of foreign men’s phallic garments, and adds on top of it Moll’s male-and-female status as a “codpiece-daughter.”

Moll picks up on the language of excessive, repeated doubling in this scene, turning it into a queer refusal of marriage. Acting the part – for Sir Alex’s benefit – of an infatuated apologist for the freedom to love whom he will, Sebastian bluntly proposes to Moll in the middle of the street. She turns him down:

I have no humor to marry: I love to lie a’ both sides a’ th’ bed myself; and again a’ th’ other side, a wife, you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey, therefore I’ll ne’er go about it. I love you so well, sir, for your good will I’d be loath you should repent your bargain after, and therefore we’ll ne’er come together at first. I have the head now of myself and am man enough for a woman; marriage is but a chopping and a changing, where a maiden loses one head and has a worse one i’ th’ place (II.i.36-47).

For a comprehensive exploration of the gay sexual resonances attached to women’s tailors, and a useful historiographical argument for the validity of tracing gay sexual stereotypes in the Renaissance, see Simon Shepherd, “What’s So Funny about Ladies’ Tailors? A Survey of Some Male (Homo)Sexual Types in the Renaissance,” in Textual Practice 6.1 (Spring 1992): 17-30. Shepherd does, however, mistake one crucial fact about The Roaring Girl: judging by the clothing Moll’s tailor makes for her and for Mary, he is not a ladies’ tailor but a men’s tailor (21). The same kind of ribald, homoerotic insinuation is operative around men’s tailors in other early modern plays as well – c.f. Ben Jonson’s Every Man Out of His Humor (1599). I am also indebted to Aaron Santesso’s helpful précis of the discourse extending back to the early modern period in “William Hogarth and the Tradition of Sexual Scissors,” in SEL: Studies in English Literature 39.3 (1999) 499-521.
Like Moll’s overlapping, doubly-masculine assemblage of garments, this is not a straightforward image of bisexuality or hermaphroditism. The line, “I love to lie a’ both sides a’ th’ bed myself; and again a’ th’ other side,” sounds as though Moll is inserting into her joke (and into her bed) a third position, in excess of the usual two, which she also can fill. Not only, she seems to assert, can she move between the man’s and the woman’s part in bed: she can do something more, ending up back on the side of the bed where she began, but this time in a new sexual position and role in addition to the first two. The third side of the bed is literally, grammatically in excess of the sexual binary (hetero- or otherwise); what is the “other side” to “both sides”? “I am man enough for a woman” implies a multivalently queer orientation as well: Moll is man enough for herself; man enough to satisfy and master women sexually; and man enough that any man she would take as a partner would become the woman, and she the man. As is also true of the body brought into being as “Bellario” in *Philaster*, Moll augments and adds to heterosexual pairings – she can take and transmit, amplify, and obtain gratification from the erotic possibilities squeezed in between, added on beside, and slipped underneath heteronormative structures. This is why, alone at the end of the scene, Sebastian ponders asking Moll for even more agentive mediation between Mary and himself, on top of what she is already doing simply by reputation; his father’s disposition can only be changed, Sebastian says, by performance:

> By opposite policies, courses indirect:<br>Plain dealing in this world takes no effect.<br>This mad girl I’ll acquaint with my intent,<br>Get her assistance, make my fortunes known:<br>‘Twixt lovers’ hearts, she’s a fit instrument<br>And has the art to help them to their own<br>By her advice, for in that craft she’s wise:<br>My love and I may meet, spite of all spies (II.ii.199-206).

Moll is a “fit instrument” “‘twixt lovers’ hearts” in the precise way Sebastian asserts because of her preference for lying three different ways on a two-sided bed. Like Bellario’s “country art” of
encoding and expressing feelings, which wins him a position in Philaster’s service, Moll’s “art to help [lovers] to their own/ By her advice” is the art of relationality, which can be deployed in the service of others’ erotic ends. Her “craft” of functioning as a “fit instrument” to lovers inheres in her supererogatory erotic versatility and prowess. The sexual excess which so maddens Sir Alexander is obviously not just about her wearing men’s clothing: it is the fantasy of a doubly-penetrative sexual role, a double penis – or, where Sebastian is involved, two penises in homosexual contact.

Having successfully enlisted himself as Moll’s servant, Sir Alex’s henchman, Trapdoor, regales Sir Alex with some of the play’s most graphic imagery of what Moll’s cross-gendered dress does when he brings him the news of Moll’s planned meeting with Sebastian, to take place in Sir Alex’s chamber:

TRAPDOOR: Mad Moll […] Must be let in without knocking at your back gate.
SIR ALEX: So.
TRAPDOOR: Your chamber will be made bawdy.
SIR ALEX: Good.
TRAPDOOR: She comes in a shirt of mail.
SIR ALEX: How shirt of mail?
TRAPDOOR: Yes, sir, or a male shirt, that’s to say, in man’s apparel.
SIR ALEX: To my son?
TRAPDOOR: Close to your son: your son and her moon will be in conjunction, if all almanacs lie not. Her black safeguard is turn’d into a deep slop, the holes of her upper body to button holes, her waistcoat to a doublet, her placket to the ancient seat of a codpiece, and you shall take ’em both with standing collars.
SIR ALEX: Art sure of this? (III.iii.16-30).

Trapdoor uses Moll’s garments here to inflame Sir Alex’s obsessive, homophobic/homoerotic passions; he describes Moll entering Sir Alex’s “bawdy” chamber, “without knocking,” through the back gate, as a male, and how her body will be de-formed by – or into – men's clothing. Her "black safeguard" will turn into an exposed “deep slop” (a grotesque allusion to exposed female sexual organs as well as to Moll’s extravagant Dutch breeches). Her bodice will be full of
“button holes,” and the placket vent on her skirt (which is a slang term for the vagina)\(^{34}\) will conversely transform into “the ancient seat of a codpiece.” Not only will her body be sexually conjoined with Sebastian’s, it will morph from a female body into something else – a monstrous, hermaphroditic body whose substance seems to exceed natural human materiality. The disorienting mixture of anatomical and artificial objects that populates Trapdoor’s rant opens up remarkable ambiguity as to which pieces are body parts and which are garments, as well as what sexed body they might belong to. As I read this image, the queer erotics set in motion by and around the figure of Moll work through, and are legible in, the ambiguities of this part-artificial, erotically-instrumental body constructed for her by her men’s clothing and accessories.

The un-answerable question insistently raised by the entire play – the question of what Moll’s codpiece covers up – cannot be un-asked; Trapdoor’s rant conjuring the “ancient seat of a codpiece” over the thing itself makes us think it. This line does not have to refer to Moll’s fleshly genital – but it could be referencing precisely that. This secret possibility of homosexual similarity, articulated here to appeal to the father’s homophobia, is central to the play’s figuration of Moll’s erotic energy. The pair of “standing collars” Trapdoor evokes, the coup de grace in his nightmare portrait to Sir Alex of Moll having sex with his son, fetishistically echoes the undecidable, inarticulable absent-presence of Moll’s penis. Sebastian’s and Moll’s matching ruffs of starched cloth – “standing” because they are held erect from the inside by wire frames – are represented as twin erect phalli, signifying to Sir Alex’s paranoid imagination that his son’s sexual congress with Moll is gay sex. Trapdoor plays this anxiety with language suggesting that Moll’s and Sebastian’s bodies will be not complementary but the same, of the same masculine,

\(^{34}\) “An opening or slit in a garment which enables the wearer to put it on or which gives access to a pocket; spec. (now hist.) an opening in a woman’s skirt or underskirt, esp. as offering a man the opportunity for sexual activity; (hence, in extended use) the vagina.” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, June 2011, Oxford University Press, s.v. “placket, n.1,” I. 2., http://oed.com/.
phallic shape; and that the sexual contact between them will be not reproductive but anal ("your son and her moon will be in conjunction"). The confluence of sexual similarity and sodomitical intercourse in this fantasy coupling results directly from the coexistence, in Moll, of a sexually functional prosthetic masculinity – her "standing collar" – and a carnal body that is even more suspect for being sexually unspecified – her "moon," the "ancient seat of a codpiece."

Trapdoor’s language of sexual transmogrification in this scene does not really have the principal effect of covering over and rendering imaginary the distinction between male and female; in fact, it re-animates the possibility of sexual difference across categories where it is not usually thought to reside. Moll’s bodily-sartorial self may be doubly-gendered or undecidable – but it is also very decidedly, linguistically phallic. In the homophobic/homoerotic fantasy/nightmare conjured to torment Sir Alex, the specific kind of sexual congress Sebastian and Moll are imagined to have will render Sebastian’s body, too, like Moll’s: two bodies of the same polluted yet sexually-potent, abject yet masculine substance. In other words, two gay bodies.

5. “Methinks a woman’s lip tastes well in a doublet”

The queer erotic energies that Moll provokes outside of her friendship with Sebastian make her the target of violence – but they are also part of what enables her instrumental role in his coupling with Mary. Her erotic efficacy reaches its climax when she brings Mary to meet Sebastian in his father's room. Presenting her protégée, cross-dressed “like a page,” to Sebastian, she asks, “My tailor fitted her: How like you his work?” (IV.i.71). Seeing the finished product of their visit to the tailor, but not the visit itself, heightens the audience’s erotic speculation as to what else Moll might have done with Mary besides take her to the tailor (as well as what the tailor did with Mary, and what Moll and the tailor did with Mary...). It is apparent that, in the
sartorial and sexual senses, Moll has “turned” or “pimped” Mary out. She has undressed her, potentially initiated her into sex, and transformed her into a transvestite like herself. “Turned out,” in colloquial expression, means both “stylishly dressed” and “sexually initiated” – especially where a loss of innocence is involved, as in a first experience of sex, pleasurable sex, homosexual sex, or prostitution. To turn someone out, then, is to have with them (and/or coerce them into, in the case of pimping out a prostitute) a kind of sex that irreversibly alters their sexual or social status – or, to outfit them in fabulous, fashionable clothes. Or both: describing what Moll does to Mary as “turning her out” makes visible the link between clothing and sexual non-normativity, as well as highlighting the complicated relations of agency, consent, and pleasure involved in Moll’s instrumentality to the couple.

Sebastian and Mary have not yet been able to have sex; here in the father's chamber is where Moll does the “kind office” of facilitating that event:

Exeunt. Enter Sebastian, with Mary Fitzallard like a page, and Moll [in man's clothing].

SEBASTIAN: Thou hast done me a kind office, without touch
Either of sin or shame; our loves are honest.
MOLL: I'd scorn to make such shift to bring you together else.
SEBASTIAN: Now have I time and opportunity
Without all fear to bid thee welcome, love (IV.i.41-45).

The mutual pleasure generated among the three parties sets this turning-out apart, changing the valence of the erotic initiative Moll takes with Mary. Unlike the conventional figures of one person being turned out by another, Moll does not transform Mary for her own gratification, but in order to effect Mary's and Sebastian's sexual interests. The cross-dressing and deception necessary to effect this rendez-vous become a “kind office,” because they facilitate sex which is “honest.” Moll “makes such shift” (which frequently implies a “shift” in normative social rules,

---

35 Though the origins of these words are unknown, it is not unlikely that “pimp” derives from the Middle French word pimper, “to adorn, attire (a person, oneself) (1578).” Ibid., s.v. “pimp, n.,” Etym.
particularly the rules of gender) to bring the two a transgressive measure of privacy, with the “time and opportunity” to consummate their union, out of her desire for their sexual initiation with one another.

However, fitting Mary out in a tailored “page” boy outfit at her tailor’s shop and escorting her to sexual initiation is hardly a purely altruistic act with no libidinal return for Moll, either. It is also a personal “shift,” as Moll’s affectionate brokering and narration of the transaction betrays:

Kiss.
MARY: Never with more desire and harder venture.
MOLL: How strange this shows, one man to kiss another.
SEBASTIAN: I’d kiss such men to choose, Moll;
Methinks a woman's lip tastes well in a doublet (IV.i.46-49).

This is the climactic moment of Moll’s mediating function; she transmits affection, desire, erotic knowledge, privacy, and, literally, cross-gendered clothing. Previous critical approaches to this play have tended to consider each of its elements – discourses of the erotic, characters/subjects, stage properties and commodities – separately, in terms of its specific social meanings.36 I think a different, more inclusive account of how queer desires circulate in early modern drama can be developed by considering this play – like Philaster – instead as a staged network of desire.

Moll’s erotic efficacy, for instance, does not stop when she effects Sebastian and Mary’s meeting – she remains there, with them, intimately involved in their interaction, overseeing their climactic onstage kiss. Mary kisses back so forcefully, “never with more desire and harder venture,” not only because it has been “hard” and dangerous to venture this opportunity, but

---
because in this kiss she accesses a “hard,” masculine role, kissing as “one man [kissing] another.” Moll winkingly comments on the doubled masculine passion of the kiss as well, commenting “How strange this shows, one man to kiss another.” Sebastian jokes with Moll, while still kissing Mary, that he'd voluntarily kiss “such men” as Mary – and Moll – are; that is, cross-dressed women, because “a woman's lip tastes well in a doublet” (IV.i.49). What Moll effects, then, is a three-way erotic circuit in which she is an instrumental component. Her presence and her contributions do not only facilitate this scene; they alter it, shaping it into a queer – as well as a fully sexual – union.

The three-way network of erotic exchange in this scene differs in important ways from stagings of explicitly lesbian erotic instrumentality with a married woman, such as that in Richard Brome’s *The Antipodes*. The predicament of the couple in *The Antipodes* is at the outset an erotic, and not a social, blockage: the protagonist, Peregrine, has been too crazed for travel and travelogue-reading to have sex with his wife of three years. They are legally married, but “yet ignorant of the marriage bed,” and Peregrine’s queer obsession is causing his wife Martha’s passion to wander into neurotic excess. Martha “cannot guess/ What a man does in child-getting” (I.i.91), and implores the herald-painter’s wife, Barbara, one of the co-orchestrators of the fantasy travel cure for Peregrine’s wanderlust, for hands-on instruction:

... he does not
Lie with me and use me as he should, I fear;
Nor do I know how to teach him; will you tell me?
I’ll lie with you and practise, if you please.
Pray take me for a night or two, or take
My husband and instruct him – but one night (I.i.93).

---

Citations from *The Antipodes* are from Richard Brome, *The Antipodes*, Modern Text, ed. Richard Cave, *Richard Brome Online* (http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome, 7 April 2010), cited by act, scene, and line number within the play as a whole.
The sexually-active married woman takes on the absurdly-innocent married woman as a sexual protégée: “Come, I’ll take charge and care of you… and wage my skill against my doctor’s art/ Sooner to ease you of these dangerous fits/ Than he will rectify your husband’s wits” (I.i.96-98). Barbara’s sexual instrumentality here has a very different quality of queerness than Moll’s – she is not an androgynous or gender-queer “third” who functions erotically outside of the normative structure of sexuality. Both these characters are women whose social orientation is to participate in marriage, reproductive sex with their husbands, and childbearing. Though, as Martha suggests (out of a rather overdetermined ignorance that that sex is prescriptively heterosexual, private, or monogamous at all), Barbara’s queer erotic “skill” is equally applicable to women as to men, it is *used* in this configuration in the interest of effecting a heterosexual erotic dynamic where there was *none* before; Barbara reports at the end that the couple are heartily cured: “Up! Up and ready to lie down again:/ There is no ho with them!” (V.i.1063-1064). But her role in effecting marital sex is one of authority, instruction, and surveillance, not queer sociability and participation. She insists on the *social* normativity of her erotic instrumentality: that “she is no bawd that sees and helps,/ If need require, an ignorant lawful pair/ To do their best” (V.i.934). Though the erotic economy of *The Antipodes* is arguably queerer in a more psychoanalytic vein, especially around Peregrine’s refusal of heterosexual sex, and its sex is actually more explicit than the sex Moll may effect here, Barbara’s lesbian sexual instrumentality does not queer the *relation* between Peregrine and Martha. She does not re-shape the erotic dynamic of the couple into something more expansive and less dyadic than it was before, as Moll’s involvement with Sebastian and Mary does.

In fact, Moll’s presence, her turning-out of Mary, and the novel freedom afforded by her arrangement, makes Mary’s kisses twice as pleasurable for Sebastian:
As some have a conceit their drink tastes better
In an outlandish cup than in our own,
So methinks every kiss she gives me now
In this strange form is worth a pair of two (IV.i.55-58).

Mary’s “page” drag here differs from her “sempster” drag in the opening scene of the play in more respects than just its gender-crossing. As Jean Howard has pointed out, Mary’s “page” costume thickens and intensifies Sebastian’s transgressive and homo-erotic investment, even as it renders the status of that queer eroticism ambiguous in light of the fact that two of these three male-appareled figures are boy actors playing ostensibly-female roles. Howard observes that, since Mary’s performance as a “page” does not involve any acts of temporary masculinity in the manner of Shakespeare’s articulate, adventurous cross-dressed heroines, “it is not altogether clear why this disguise is necessary”; she concludes that while Mary’s dress “makes her more fully the object of Sebastian’s erotic fancies,” in all their homoerotic complication, it is “far from giving her the upper hand.”

I regard the confusion that Howard points out around gender and sexuality as a sign drawing attention to erotic dynamics that circulate outside of social norms – that is, to where the queer desires that are the focus of this project are found. Mary’s “page” costume is not really about gender, in the sense of a patriarchal social divide that restricts or allows agency; its meaning is not in evaluating the extent of its gender transgression next to other instances of female cross-dressing. Instead, the crucial point of Mary’s cross-dressing is that it is effected through, with, and by Moll – whose own men’s clothing, as I’ve noted, is hers, and not a temporary dramatic device. Mary’s “page” outfit, in turn, is not just a disguise, but the structuring condition of her erotic participation in an encounter involving more than just herself and Sebastian. Her cross-dressing is produced out of – and in turn productive of – a tri-directional, queer circuit of erotic energy among herself, Sebastian, and Moll. Like Bellario’s

---

“glad to follow” enthusiasm for being-used, Mary’s costume confounds zero-sum oppositions between silence, stillness, or passivity and erotic agency, and between objectification and power.

An erotics of instrumentality works every which way in this scene – every link is fully triangulated through dynamics of being-used. Mary is simultaneously, enthusiastically re-gendered, objectified, queered, and instrumentalized: she takes on some of the qualities of a queer go-between in being “turned out” by Moll. She connects Moll and Sebastian in homosocial and quasi-homo-erotic friendship; and she is the occasion of Sebastian’s Oedipal glee at engaging in queer erotic acts in his father’s chamber. Sebastian, in turn, is the mediating term through which the homosocial bond between the pair of cross-dressed Marys’ is constituted. Everyone in turn gets used, and likes it.

But even this three-part network is not a closed erotic system unto itself – it is inescapably interlinked to the relations of kinship and service that press upon it. Sebastian is heavily invested in the fact that the encounter happens in his father’s chamber:

Here we are safe and furthest from the eye  
Of all suspicion: this is my father’s chamber.  
Upon which floor he never steps till night;  
Here he mistrusts me not, nor I his coming.  
At mine own chamber he still pries unto me;  
My freedom is not there at mine own finding.  
Still check’d and curb’d: here he shall miss his purpose (IV.i.59-65).

But the lovers are not “safe” and unseen in the chamber; Sir Alex is lying in wait for them. Moreover, at the beginning of the scene, Sir Alex and Trapdoor have baited the entire chamber in preparation for Moll’s coming, laying out all of Sir Alex’s clocks, watches, chains, diamonds, ruffs, and stones on every visible surface, while rhapsodizing to each other about how irresistible Moll will find – and how it will excite her to steal – each treasure. Trapdoor even remarks that Sir Alex’s obsession with Moll has become excessive: “It’s well for her that she must have her
choice; he thinks nothing too good for her” (IV.i.31-32). Sir Alex’s exclamation that “all hangs well, would she hung so too,” with its triple-fixation on Sir Alex’s family jewels, Moll’s fantasy phallus, and Moll’s death, immediately reinforces Trapdoor’s point about how much like a crush obsessive homophobic hate can look. One of the main objectives of paying so much attention to Sir Alex’s homophobic obsession with Moll in earlier scenes is to allow us to notice how central the father’s desire is here, at the scene of queer three-way consummation. But in the climactic moment, Moll’s cross-dressed presence, watching, commenting, and engaging Sebastian in playful sexual rivalry, effectively queers the space away from the possible Oedipal triangulation of father, son, and intended wife, creating a different kind of transgression in the patriarchal inner sanctum.

Sebastian literalizes Moll’s role as an erotic “instrument” when he offers her his father’s viol to play on, and he and Mary flatter her and beg her to play on it. She assents: “I'll play my part as well as I can; it shall ne'er be said I came into a gentleman's chamber and let his instrument hang by the walls” (IV.i.89-90). Moll has appropriated and used the instrument – the viol's phallic significance is explicit here – of every man whose chamber she has entered; and every time, she asserts, men eagerly, proactively offer their viols for her use: “I ne'er came into that chamber yet where I took down the instrument myself” (IV.i.95). In Moll’s practice of borrowing men’s instruments at their behest, it is not only she who performs as a willing instrument, on command – the men are also willingly instrumentalized, used for their viols, out of their queer desire for Moll to temporarily appropriate and wield their instruments. As with Bellario’s flower garland, Moll’s borrowed viol makes her body into an instrument, a technology of intimacy that engenders a group erotic dynamic with multiple nodes: the three participants; the material things that contain and communicate their erotic feeling; and the others – voiced
through the father who is spying on them – who interpret the triad through outside assumptions and anxieties.

The song Moll plays and sings – a bawdy ballad of female economic and sexual agency, about a mistress, her money, her lovers, and her sisters – is situated in the scene to suggest that it serves as a dramatic accompaniment or substitution for a three-person sex act centered on Moll. Sebastian acknowledges what they are about to do as a socially-transgressive, intimate activity, albeit one that Moll does better than those who would condemn her: “Pish, let 'em prate abroad; th' art here where thou art known and lov'd. There be a thousand close dames that will call the viol an unmannerly instrument for a woman and therefore talk broadly of thee, when you shall have them sit wider to a worse quality” (IV.i.96-99). The song is construed as a “dream” (IV.i.103) – a dream Moll dreams with her legs spread apart, playing on the (temporarily appropriated) instrument between them; when she sings one verse, Sebastian and Mary want her to “dream again” (IV.i.113). At the end of the song Moll comments that they must reassemble their bodies and minds into socially acceptable states: “Hang up the viol now, sir: all this while I was in a dream; one shall lie rudely then, but being awake, I keep my legs together” (IV.i.128-131). Sir Alex enters the chamber as a spectral presence during the act, unnoticed, hidden where he can hear (but perhaps not see) it. Overhearing Sebastian’s enthusiastic interjections during the song — “That’s a free mistress, faith” (IV.i.111) — he grows increasingly furious at Moll’s sexual license with his son. As with the women’s visit to the tailor, the song invites the audience to imagine what occurs offstage before and after the scene. Though it is part of my critical imperative to argue for the possibility of off-stage sex at unlikely points in early modern plays, this scene requires very little intimation; in fact, it directly admits the possibility of three-way, queer sex. The grouping of three costumed bodies kissing in the chamber – with the father
fuming in hiding behind them – is a particularly literal staging of Sedgwick’s notion of a “never not relational” erotics, a tableau which makes the ineffable phenomenon of relationality visible onstage. Sebastian and Mary are satisfied, afterwards, with the relational connection Moll has effected for them: “This is the roaring wench must do us good”; “No poison, sir, but serves us for some use,/ Which is confirm’d in her” (IV.i.150-152). In the afterglow of the song, Moll first notices Sir Alex’s valuables strewn all about; rather than a lethal trap, the glistening objects then become another exciting sensory effect among the array of instrumental objects and accessories – along with Moll’s breeches, ruff, doublet, and hose, Mary’s breeches, doublet, and hose, Moll’s sword, and Sir Alex’s viol – conditioning the queer trajectory of this scene’s erotic energy. Detached from natural bodies, these things can be taken up, put down, borrowed, and switched for the playing of different erotic “parts.”

The final instrument in Moll’s assemblage of tools, ironically, ends up being Sir Alex himself. When the father reveals himself, Sebastian and Moll launch seamlessly into a further ruse – that she is a male musician giving him a music lesson – which Sir Alex pretends to believe. He gives Moll some marked coins, intending to frame her. She takes them, flattered that she has successfully “passed” for a man:

He that can take me for a male musician,
I cannot choose but make him my instrument
And play upon him (IV.i.213-216).

In Moll’s economy of power and pleasure, Sir Alex has just made himself – and his money – as available to her use and pleasure as his viol. She seems to regard him not as a threat, but as

---

39 Sedgwick, Epistemology, 81.
40 Moll remarks that if men were punished for their “secret youthful faults,” the appearance of such an array of beautiful decorative objects and accessories as this would cripple the arts – “There would be but few left to sing the ballets,” because most of the theater would be executed (it would cripple commerce, too, because “most of our brokers/ Would be chosen for hangmen,” IV.i.143-148). For more on the connection between “secret youthful faults,” beautiful and ornamental things, and who would sing the ballets, see Chapter 3, “Everything That Moves: Promiscuous Fancy and Carnival Longing.”
another detachable part to wield.

We can better understand how Moll’s queer sexual prowess is structured by an erotics of “being-used” if we think of her functioning as a sexual tool or supplement in this scene, performing an instrumental role akin to that of a sex toy or dildo. She is an instrument that transmits sexual pleasure between Sebastian and Mary (and also generates it with each of them separately), but remains detached from their – or any – romantic dyad. And she effects erotic connection not only in the plot, but in the structural mechanisms of desire in the play, functioning as a willing instrument of sexual satisfaction and initiatory knowledge. As Valerie Traub observes, the dildo “pries female erotic pleasure apart” from the penis – from the “apparatus of reproduction (and the body of man) that confers upon women's desire its social legitimacy.” Looking at Moll as such an erotic instrument, I would say that her function is to disconnect erotic pleasure not only from the penis and from the male body, but also from the normative sexual dyad. Like a dildo, Moll signifies sex that is specifically other than marital, “natural,” reproductive: her gender-queer body is the telltale object, discovered by Sir Alex in his chamber, which betrays his son’s participation in illicit sex. Moll also disconnects erotic pleasure and sexual performance from the natural body, period. Her multiple, phallic garments and accessories (rendered in detail in the play’s title page illustration) – her sword, her pipe, her hat, her ruff, the viol she wields so expertly – add up to a body which, in the manner of a dildo, is not quite natural: it is sexually prodigious, non-reproductive, and outside of heteronormative social categories. Like “Bellario,” Moll’s body becomes a thing used within the play, by Sebastian,

41 Traub, Renaissance of Lesbianism, 98.
42 Thomas Nashe’s 1592 poem, “The Choice of Valentines,” exemplifies these associations: a dildo takes the place of a man's fatigued, dysfunctional penis to satisfy his female lover's voracious, receptive desire. Traub discusses how the dildo in Nashe’s poem (and the poem itself, which embodies the “choice” and substitution of the artificial tool) function anxiously, and literally, in the manner of the Freudian fetish, unintentionally confirming the substitutability of the penis (98). But I would suggest we consider Moll as a dildo in a less paranoid light as well,
Sir Alex, Trapdoor, and Mary, towards their differing ends; and also a thing used by the play, as its locus of aesthetic and erotic energy.

6. “I’d a forefinger in’t.”

In both *Philaster* and *The Roaring Girl*, the cross-dressed intermediary – the instrument – has moments of functioning this way, as a perfect generator and communicator of pleasure and desire. Embodying this role permanently, however, is impossible. Both Moll and Bellario/Euphrasia slip in and out of their mediating positions. Though *Philaster* is the tragicomedy, *The Roaring Girl* swerves in the direction of tragedy as well. Sir Alex hears rumors from several sources that Sebastian has married “that bold masculine ramp” and fled town (V.ii.15). One of his friends tries to reassure him:

```
No priest will marry her, sir, for a woman
While that shape’s on, and it was never known
Two men were married and conjoin’d in one.
Your son hath made some shift to love another…? (V.ii.104-108).
```

This position is another telling indicator of the trans-historical gay resonances attached to Sebastian’s match with Moll: if Sebastian is married, it cannot be to Moll, because that simply could not be; “there’s no such matter” as that kind of marriage. Goshawk posits here that Sebastian and Moll’s marriage would be illegal – legal marriage requires more “heterosexuality effects” than they can muster. Thus any alleged marriage between them must instead be the same curious mix of null and abomination, of “no such matter” (nothing, impossible) and “never known” (a monstrosity, not a marriage), that we see today behind protestations that “it was never known/ Two men were married.” Also predictably, Sebastian and his father have already had this fight once before, earlier in the play. Sir Alex’s immediate objection when he hears the

as a materialization of a “lost object of desire” (196) which never was: the pre-Oedipal, undifferentiated, universally functional imaginary phallus, which can be found on a body of any sex.
news of Sebastian's engagement is that it's illegal: “What, sayst thou marriage? In what place, the sessions-house? And who shall give the bride, prithee, an indictment?” (II.ii.136-138) He goes on to ask Sebastian, “Why, wouldst thou fain marry to be pointed at?” and to warn him, “if thou long’st/ To have the story of thy infamous fortunes,/ Serve for discourse in ordinaries and taverns,/ Th’art in the way; or to confound thy name,/ Keep on, thou canst not miss it” (II.ii.145-149). This language levies both inconsequential and direly consequential threats of social approbation against an improperly-gendered marriage in a register that, like Sir Alex’s self-murdering histrionics at the beginning of the play, is still familiar.

Desperate to prevent his son’s queer marriage, Sir Alex accepts a dare from Mary Fitzallard’s father (who is in on the scheme) to re-inherit Sebastian if only he rejects Moll as a mate. Finally, the prodigal son enters with Sir Guy Fitzallard and his “fair bride,” who appears “mask’d, in Sebastian’s hand.” The gentlemen promptly deem the bride “a proper, lusty presence.” Sir Alex himself assesses her “a goodly, personable creature; Just of her pitch was my first wife his mother” (V.ii.132-136). But Sebastian never identifies this woman as his new wife; instead he kneels and makes certain his father pardons him before his consort is unmasked to reveal – Moll, the Roaring Girl. Moll’s costume as the “fair bride” in this scene consists, we might assume, not only of a mask but of borrowed clothes, because her own would be instantly recognizable; so Moll, for this disguise, is in drag (for her) – a gown. Much of the criticism on *The Roaring Girl* tends to glance off of this fact, or to read it as evidence of Moll’s “rehabilitation” into proper patriarchal gender roles – because it is depressing, from a feminist perspective, to see Moll’s final appearance onstage in a dress; it can feel like a compulsory
normalization even though it is a ruse. The last scene of the play spectacularly fails the Bechdel Test, in a play with some scenes that almost pass – both Mary and Moll speak almost exclusively to Sir Alex. In this mute moment, Moll would seem to be what I am adamantly arguing that the instrumental go-between is not – the invisible, inconsequential facilitator of patriarchal marriage and inheritance. However, thinking of Moll as embodying an erotic instrumentality akin to that of a dildo – a purpose-made, functional fetish object that stands in for an imaginary, un-sexually-differentiated phallic body – reveals more interesting dynamics in this moment which point to how Moll’s queerness is sustained at the end of the play.

Most importantly: Moll does not appear as herself in this bit of heterosexual choreography. As the masked “bride,” she (it?) is closer to a fetish for patriarchal marriage – an artificial materialization that points to an unreal fantasy. It is not really even a compulsory gender performance, so much as the most cursory pantomime of femininity (faceless, motionless, silent). Only because of the blocking of the bodies onstage does everyone assume the “mask’d” woman “in Sebastian’s hand” is the “fair bride.” The bite of the joke, now that Sebastian is re-instated as heir, derives from how readily the joke bride is – again – believed as the real thing, even though Moll’s bulky figure probably looks like an unlikely “woman” – otherwise it would not be so funny for Sir Alex to exclaim how proper she looks, and how “just of her pitch was my first wife his mother.” Like the ideal phallus imagined on a female body, or a nonrepresentational dildo (which, in this period, is the only kind), the figure fulfills its affective meaning and purpose solely through where it is located and what it appears to be doing. When,

43 Two of the only articles which briefly mention the mask and dress as signs of political containment are Valerie Forman, “Marked Angels: Counterfeits, Commodities, and The Roaring Girl,” in Renaissance Quarterly 54.4, part 2 (2001): 1531-1560; and Jane Batson, “Rehabilitating Moll’s Subversion,” in SEL 1500-1900 37.2 (1997): 317-335.

44 A metric for assessing the misogyny of media objects, introduced in Alison Bechdel’s comic strip Dykes To Watch Out For in 1985, and popularized recently in feminist pop culture criticism. To pass, a play, film, or show must: 1) have at least two women in it; 2) who talk to each other; 3) about something besides a man (reprint of the original comic strip at http://alisonbechdel.blogspot.com/2005/08/rule.html).
just in time, Mary is escorted in, this time in women’s clothing and surrounded by the trappings of patriarchal community (two lords, citizens and their wives), Moll reminds Sir Alex, “Now are you gull’d as you would be, thank me for’t;/ “I’d a forefinger in’t” (V.ii.173). Taking credit for both the prank and the happy ending, Moll also more subtly takes the opportunity to remind Sir Alex of her sexual stake in his son and in Mary.

Even with Moll in drag in a dress, the play’s comic resolution directly contravenes the conventional ending of the cross-dressing play, where the transvestite’s “real” femininity is climactically revealed. If anyone is revealed as a “real” woman, it’s (the boy actor playing) Mary, who emerges out of her class- and gender-cross-dressing into her “natural” status as a gentlewoman (still triangulated between two men – the two “lords” who escort her). There is no such insistence on femininity, or marriage, or heterosexuality, for Moll – just on her instrumental centrality to the plot. By removing her transgressive body from the “bride” position, and substituting Mary’s in, she effects not only Sebastian’s union with Mary, but his reconciliation with his father – and his re-inheritance. Sir Alex announces that his land will be ceremonially merged – in a three-way bond – with Sir Guy Fitzallard’s nobleness, and Mary’s virtue. Rather than rings, he exchanges keys, with Sebastian:

Here, honest son, receive into they hands
The keys of wealth, possession of those lands
Which my first care provided: they’re thine own;
Heaven give thee a blessing with 'em. The best joys
That can in worldly shapes to man betide
Are fertile lands and a fair fruitful bride,
Of which I hope thour’t sped (V.ii.201-207).

The climactic inheritance ceremony between father and son at the end of the play brings into

---

45 Traub has argued, along with Jonathan Goldberg, that because the cross-dressing play’s resolution usually upholds binary gender and compulsory heterosexual marriage, the female transvestite should not serve as the primary example of early modern lesbianism (Renaissance of Lesbianism, 170). I think this is true of female cross-dressing plays in general, but not in the case of The Roaring Girl in particular.
speech some of the incestuous father/son erotic language that had been ghosting Sir Alex’s homophobic disgust: Sebastian gets the keys which exclusively entitle him to the “best joys” of his father’s “fertile lands.” As in many comedies, there is no actual marriage represented onstage in the resolution – this marriage-like performance between father and son is the structural and affective stand-in.

In summation of her instrumental role, Moll delivers a line – “Father and son, I ha’ done you simple service here” – that would not have been out of place said to Sebastian and Mary in the triad scene in Sir Alex’s study. She has brought father and son together, facilitating and queering the relation between them, as surely as she has for the two lovers. Yet it is significant that at the close of the play, Moll remains defiantly alone. She ridicules Sir Alex for his assumption that she would marry a man, if one wanted her: "He was in fear his son would marry me, / But never dreamt that I would ne'er agree" (V.ii.216-217). When asked if she will ever marry, she answers, when “gallants void from sergeants’ fear,/ Honesty and truth unsland’red,/ Woman manned but never pand’red” – in effect, at doomsday (V.ii.220-223). In fact, I would say that Moll comes closer than any other figure in early modern drama to being a gay character.

Her uses of masculine tools and accessories as instruments of butch self-styling and of erotic prowess with women, combined with her self-aware refusal of patriarchal marriage, create a synergistic effect that renders her socially non-normative for her refusal of a heteronormative fate. Moreover, she is a subject who is recognized as non-normative for these reasons, as part of a regime of recognizing such subjects which extends into the present. I place the character of Moll Cutpurse within, though near the nebulous beginnings of, a visible and communally-experienced gay genealogy that can be traced through the Stonewall riots, to the current arguments about marriage which echo with painful precision those staged in the play. Like an
instrument of some durable, magnetized substance, Moll alters the network of erotic relations in
the play by drawing others into her orbit with the force of her queerness, while she herself
remains unaltered by heteronormativity.

7. “How brave she keeps him!”

A contrasting story of cross-dressing and same-sex marriage, from Montaigne's travel
journal (1581), is more instructive about the stakes of Bellario’s erotic instrumentality in
Philaster – the famous tale from Vitry-le-François of a girl, originally called Mary, who, like
Bellario/Euphrasia, put on men’s clothes and left her village to live as a man. “A well-
conditioned young man and a friend to everyone,”46 he married a woman (after a brief
engagement to another woman), and lived with her for four or five months, “to her
satisfaction.”47 But when he is recognized by someone from his old village, his “true” bodily sex
is "brought before the court" and he is condemned to hang – not for falsifying identity, or
committing same-sex marriage, but specifically for "using illicit devices to supplement the defect
of her sex."48 That is, she hangs for using a dildo while female. Her "illicit invention" is
artificially supplementing her natural body, counterfeiting the physical sign of manhood in
sexual relations. She prefers to be hanged rather than "to be returned to a girl's estate."49
However, in her trial and death – as in Montaigne’s narrative – she is forcibly returned to a
girl’s estate, her gender re-aligned with her anatomy in an act of state violence. This much-

46 The original reads: “jeune homme bien conditionné et qui se rendoit à un chacun amy.” Michel de Montaigne,
47 “avec son contentement” (Ibid.).
48 “[...] mais ayant esté reconnu par quelqu'un dudit Chaumont et la chose mise en avant à la justice, elle avoit esté
condamnée à estre pendue: ce qu'elle disoit aymer mieux souffrir que de se remettre en estat de fille. Et fut pendue
pour des inventions illicites à suppléer au defaut de son sexe” (Ibid.).
49 “ce qu'elle disoit aymer mieux souffrir que de se remettre en estat de fille” (Ibid.).
discussed anecdote from Montaigne is usually referenced to illustrate contemporary classifications of social gender and bodily sex; however, I am using it as a tragic mirror to Philaster’s tragicomic plot. The two stories share the same premise – a “passing” young man who is “really” a woman, living in intimate relation to another woman – although Montaigne’s story involves not a three-way relation but a dyadic marriage bond; yet in Beaumont and Fletcher’s story, Bellario’s voluntary revelation that he is a girl is the fortunate stroke that narrowly averts his torture and execution. The tragic resolution of the Montaigne story ghosts Philaster’s last-minute happy ending, signaling the problems with reading and interpreting the instrumentalized go-between. In The Roaring Girl, the social threat posed by Moll’s gender-queer masculinity is all homoerotic/homosocial – she is the target of violence for suspected sexual relations with Sebastian, never with Mary (despite her quite open boasts regarding women’s sexuality). In Philaster, however, the social threat posed by Bellario falls on Arethusa. For all the mutual, queer erotic energy that animates Bellario’s relations with Philaster and with Arethusa alike, the fact remains that there is no heteronormatively-permissible sexual role for the instrumentalized go-between. To be suspected of having sex with him/her is to be suspected of criminality at best. Philaster’s extended flirtation with tragedy, then, is a problem of signifying desire: of lovers whose intimacy is both all too visible and totally misunderstood.

It is Bellario’s hold over the erotic imagination of the play, and its characters, that drives the plot forward into its mess of misapprehended erotic relations. Bellario’s preternatural blankness and beauty are the topics of avid speculation by the court gossips:

MEGRA: …Look you, my lord,

The Princess has a Hylas, an Adonis.\textsuperscript{51}

PHARAMOND: His form is angel-like.

[...]

DION: Serves he the Princess?
THRASILENE: Yes.
DION: ‘Tis a sweet boy; how brave she keeps him! (IV.ii.18-28).

To women and men alike, Bellario’s submissive and demure affect, and his intimate presence in the bedchamber where Arethusa clothes him in finery, cannot be read as anything but an overtly sexual bond. Rumors are spread, and given credence, that Arethusa is a “lascivious lady/That lives in lust with a smooth boy” (III.i.10-11), a “whore.” The vindictive Megra asserts:

\begin{verbatim}
I know her and her haunts,
Her lays, leaps, and outlays, and will discover all;
Nay, will dishonor her. I know the boy
She keeps, a handsome boy, about eighteen;
Know what she does with him, and where, and when.
[...]What I have known
Shall be as public as a print all tongues
Shall speak it as they do the language they
Are born in…” (II.iv.155-170).
\end{verbatim}

The implication of this libel is that Arethusa’s indecent “lays, leaps, and outlays” are unambivalently knowable and readable – in fact, publishable – because of the unmistakable, universally-irresistible erotic significance of a “handsome,” “smooth” young boy. The question at issue is Arethusa’s virginity and thus her value: under suspicion of having been deflowered, she is ordered to banish Bellario.

This is where Bellario’s role as a transmitter of erotic meaning, so confidently accorded to him by Philaster, becomes complicated; Philaster, having been informed that Arethusa is “known a whore” (III.i.63), believes the rumor. He confronts Bellario in an interrogation laden with double meanings since the audience knows, while Bellario does not, that Philaster thinks he has been betrayed: “O Bellario/Now I perceive she loves me; she does show it/In loving thee, my

\textsuperscript{51} In comparing Bellario to Hylas and Adonis, Megra cites two pervasive mythological paradigms of the androgynously, omnisexually alluring young man.
boy; she has made thee brave” (III.i.57). The problem here, which Beaumont and Fletcher gleefully exploit for tragicomic pathos, is that the relationship between Bellario and Arethusa can be read in two ways: that they are sleeping together and thus betraying Philaster; or that he is serving as a romantic conduit, a go-between, and thus remaining faithful to them both. But those two possibilities look very much alike, since both in fact depend upon the existence of an erotic charge between the Princess and the “brave” young boy. Philaster pries Bellario for knowledge of erotic acts to guess at the nature of their bond: “Tell me, my boy, how doth the Princess use thee?/ For I shall guess her love to me by that” (III.i.172-173). He asks about each of her endearing touches: “What kind of language does she feed thee with?” (III.i.181); “And she strokes thy head?” (194); “And she does clap thy cheeks?” (196). But then he asks, “And she does kiss thee, boy? Ha?” with kissing marked as a sort of border between acceptable and unacceptable erotic contact for the go-between (198). When Bellario denies that Arethusa kisses him, Philaster, in a haze, appeals to a logic of surrogacy to trick a disclosure out of him, saying that he ordered her, if she loved him, to give herself to Bellario:

Why then she does not love me. Come, she does.
I bad her do it; I charged her by all charms
Of love between us, by the hope of peace
We should enjoy, to yield to thee all delights
Naked, as to her bed; I took her oath
Thou shouldst enjoy her. Tell me, gentle boy,
Is she not parallelless? (III.i.210-213).

If these were the terms of the three-way arrangement – which they are not – it would be the kind of triangulation described by Eve Sedgwick in *Between Men*, where a central homosocial and homoerotic bond is enabled by the erotic exchange of a woman.52 The three-way erotic dynamic of their relationship is not this kind of surrogation, though anxiety about this competing

---

relational mode comes through in Philaster’s question, “Is she not parallelless?” “Parallelless” (with its three pairs of parallel letters, two phallic and one curlicue) is the precarious state of all three lovers – lord, lady, and boy – in the perfectly mutual triad of erotic instrumentality. The three-way bond is allergic to pairs and parallels; they throw it off-balance, though in another sense it is paradoxically made up of three of them (like Moll’s preference for lying “a’ both sides a’ th’ bed myself; and again a’ th’ other side,” it would seem to exceed mathematical possibility, and yet it exists). If Arethusa is “not parallelless” – if there has been a single other lying parallel to her in bed – then she and Bellario are parallel traitors, Bellario and Philaster are parallel traffickers in women, and Arethusa is parallel to every common whore. This fragmented, degraded scenario is the only one readable to the conventionally- and lasciviously-minded courtiers (Megra, Pharamond, and Dion – who has no idea that this beautiful boy is his long-lost daughter).

Philaster’s jealous rage dramatizes just how tenuous the boundary is between the erotics of queer instrumentality and a far less delicate kind of heterosexual – and homosocial – tragedy. The line between what Philaster wants and what he fears (or, perhaps, fantasizes) – between Arethusa’s love for Bellario affirming her love for Philaster and effacing it – is razor-thin. The dynamic of erotic instrumentality that actually animates the triad, which depends on the erotic and affective bonds between Philaster and Bellario, Bellario and Arethusa, is too indeterminate, too subtle, too queer, to be legible to outsiders. It slips underneath the dominant, homosocial and hetero-erotic, interpretation. Even Philaster, who brought the delicately balanced configuration into being, loses faith in its sustainability. Failing to wring from Bellario any trace of a physical act which (we think) did not literally occur, Philaster rejects him. Philaster draws his sword and Bellario kneels to submit to death, begging:
Hew me asunder, and whilst I can think
I’ll love those pieces you have cut away
Better than those that grow, and kiss those limbs
Because you made ‘em so (III.i.255-258).

But, though he remains unconvinced, Philaster cannot kill the boy he loves. This wrenching exchange of love, pain, self-abnegation, and deferred violence is an overwrought, tragicomic “camp” version of an early modern trial discovery scene, where the court attempts to extract invisible, interior “truth” from the accused by means of interrogation and threatened violence.\(^53\)

Arethusa innocently mourns to Philaster over the loss of “your boy, and you put him to me” (III.i.96), not knowing that, in his mind, her intimate connection with Bellario has broken away from the group erotics of their queer triad and been re-signified as unforgivable, two-person heterosexual sex. The medium of their communication, Bellario, is the occasion for their falling-out; without him Arethusa is powerless to access Philaster’s desire or transmit her own. She wishes for a transparency that would remove the need for Bellario’s signifying powers:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Make my breast} \\
\text{Transparent as pure crystal, that the world,} \\
\text{Jealous of me, may see the foulest thought} \\
\text{My heart holds (III.ii.144-147).}
\end{align*}
\]

Arethusa and Bellario flood Philaster with attempts to convince him to believe them through affect – much of it involving fabulously gruesome, hyperbolic fantasies (like those quoted above) of piercing, rending, opening, and sectioning their bodies, as though to reveal their desire there. The play’s obsession with the illegibility of interior feelings builds to a crisis around the opacity of both bodies and language, and their insufficiency to signify – or to be believed when they do communicate – intimate bonds of love, loyalty, and desire.\(^54\) The touch of queer pathos in this

---

\(^{53}\) See Elizabeth Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

\(^{54}\) *Philaster* dramatizes many of the same anxieties that Katharine Eisaman Maus works through in *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) – early modern worries about the
miscommunication is that in a sense, Philaster is reading Bellario and Arethusa correctly: they
are in love. But Philaster seems to have become blind to the originary, instrumentalized quality
of that love: Bellario’s delight in “following,” his eager submission to being used, and his central
role in engendering the relationship. It is cruelly ironic that the indirect, outward appearances of
intimacy between the Princess and her chamber boy were more than adequate to attract scandal
and ruin – but a barrage of tour-de-force Beaumont and Fletcher tragicomic affect aimed at
Philaster cannot get through to him that their intimacy includes him. He has forgotten how to
read them; it is as though he has fallen back into strictly normative ways of interpreting erotic
relations, forgetting the beautiful, queer sign system into which he was initiated when he first
saw Bellario weaving feelings into flowers (or flowers into feelings) by the fountain.

With the network of intimacy routed through Bellario broken, the three are powerless to
transmit their love and pain to one another. When they all encounter one another wandering in
the woods, each of them begs to be stabbed by the others in a desperate attempt to signify
something of their old intimacy with one another, even if through annihilation. Philaster asks
them both to stab him; Bellario refuses – the first time he seriously resists his instrumental role.
Philaster then stabs Arethusa, who seems willing to reciprocate, at her request; but he is
immediately attacked and stabbed by an intruding avatar of heteronormative masculinity, a
“Cuntrie Gentellman” (who then tries to kiss the bleeding Arethusa). The bleeding Philaster
comes across Bellario asleep in the woods, and stabs him in his sleep. Waking, ecstatic, to being
stabbed (“O, death I hope is come. Blessed be that hand,/ It meant me well. Again, for pity’s
sake,” IV.vi.26-27), Bellario takes the blame for stabbing Arethusa, offering his life in place of
Philaster’s. Finally convinced of Bellario’s purely instrumental love, Philaster creeps out from

potential for political, sexual, and philosophical deception created by the phenomenon of interiority – transposed
into a tragicomic register of heightened, melodramatic feeling.
under the bush where he’s hiding and embraces him, forming the homoerotic “love lies a-
bleeding” tableau of the play’s subtitle.

After surviving their wounds, imprisonment, being sentenced to death (twice), and a
political coup, the three lovers are nearly undone again at the end of the play by the persistent
rumor of heterosexual sex between Arethusa and Bellario. Bellario is condemned to be tortured
– and Philaster is condemned to do the torturing – to clear Arethusa’s name; Philaster’s move to
stab himself finally induces Bellario to confess to being Euphrasia.

“Her” sudden re-gendering puts the sexual accusations to rest, preventing tragedy; but it
also casts the protracted cycle of doubts, rejections, and stabbings in a new (exasperating,
ridiculous) light. Philaster condemns it as “a fault” that Bellario/Euphrasia declined to
“discover” “what we now know” (V.v.155-158) when they were first accused; but it is more
interesting to me to think of the play’s entire overwrought drama of erotic relationality as
predicated on (indeed only possible because of) a fiction – and to think that from the perspective
of the integral, instrumental “third,” it was a fiction worth maintaining almost to the death,
“understanding well,” as Bellario/Euphrasia explains, “that when I made discovery of my sex/ I
could not stay with you” (V.v.183-185). The homosocial and homoerotic role of household boy,
and the gender required to play it, were instrumental to her aim of serving and being near
Philaster.

Philaster does not end in tragedy, like Montaigne’s story of the French weaver, in part
because there is no "illicit device" or dildo. In one sense, this revelation of Bellario/Euphrasia’s
“true” sex is a re-inscription of a "natural" sex and gender binary that arguably contains the
erotic energy generated by the cross-dressing plot. Despite its recuperation of the “truth” of
bodily sex, however, the resolution of Philaster preserves the queer intimacy of the three-person
relationship, which, crucially, does not depend on binary sex in any way. Arethusa says she’s no
more jealous now, knowing that Philaster had a lady as a page, than she was jealous of a boy:

Come, live with me;
Live free as I do. She that loves my lord,
Cursed be the wife that hates her (V.v.201-203).

Bellario/Euphrasia remains with Philaster and Arethusa, permanently integrated into their home;
the change in her putative sex hardly seems to matter. The inclusive domesticity of this
resolution is distinctly different from Moll Frith’s defiant solitude at the end of The Roaring
Girl; but both plays turn looming tragedy into comedy by removing an imaginary penis from the
sexual equation. With the substitution of another woman for another man in Philaster and
Arethusa’s household, all anxieties about women's virtue ironically evaporate, and
Bellario/Euphrasia’s bonds with both of his/her partners are declared to be “free” and
virtuous. The particular kind of instrumentality that Bellario embodies is, in the end, no less
socially acceptable than Moll’s playing the viol and singing onstage – the “boy’s” whole body is
an instrument, being used as a surrogated sexual organ to the pleasure of all parties. This is
certainly part of the genre’s tendency to efface female-female erotic relations outside of the
carnivalesque time of cross-dressing. But, it is also a wry turn away from misogynistic
suspicion, which leaves room for the rehabilitation of some of those lost, mis-directed, and
bleeding signifiers through which the three tried to communicate their love when Bellario was a
boy. What is even queerer about Philaster's resolution is how thoroughly the "third" is
integrated into a permanent three-partner relationship. Far from being an erotic device that
fulfills her function while remaining detached and unaltered, Bellario/Euphrasia is a mediating
tool so thoroughly instrumental that she has become a vital, even "natural" part of the erotic
configuration; like a metamorphic Galathea of dildoes, he/she is an artificial device which,
transformed by queer polyamorous love, miraculously becomes the flesh of the relationship.

Instrumentality here is a mode of queer group intimacy whose form exceeds the critical notion of the early modern subject, resonating more with artificial and technological forms of being. Triadic intimacy highlights the insufficiency of a subjectivity model to describe these kinds of erotic networks, inviting us to look for new metaphors for how desire works in multi-nodal erotic configurations. Erotic instruments function in their intimate networks as tools: they are used by others to multiply and transmit erotic desire between subjects; and in being used, can also generate desire themselves. They relay erotic energy, convert it into different forms, and send it in different directions, between two people of different genders – and not along a heterosexually-reproductive trajectory, but through queer transactions of feeling that exceed notions of gender transgression or gender discipline. Reading these two plays through a multi-directional erotics of "being made instrumental" can offer, as per Sedgwick’s suggestion, “some ways of understanding human desire that might be quite to the side of prohibition and repression,” making visible a myriad of liminal affective states that do not even deviate from the norms of gender, sex, courtship, social status, or marriage in expected or predictable ways.

Erotic instrumentality is not a coherent social phenomenon, but a certain affective mode that appears largely to have flown under the discursive radar in the period, being called by a variety of different names and inter-implicated with a variety of different contemporary categories. Thinking about the seemingly disparate examples of it staged in *Philaster* and *The Roaring Girl* draws attention to groupings and collectivities that include instances of hetero-eroticism as well as homo-eroticism, acknowledging that heteronormative social positions (like betrothal or marriage) and subjection to patriarchal authority do not preclude participation in

---

queerness. According to a logic of queer instrumentality, we can reverse the usual framework for studying sexuality, and ask how “straight” erotic bonds, like the one between Sebastian and Mary in *The Roaring Girl*, function as part of a larger queer affective structure. Thinking of erotic networks constituted by instrumentality also allows us to notice qualitatively-homoerotic valences between characters who are in some sense of different sexes – as between Philaster and his cross-dressed ‘boy’-who-is-not-really-a-boy, and between Moll Frith and her friend Sebastian, whose marriage she facilitates. Defining “queer” as a mode of desire allows the lesbian desires in these plays’ three-ways – a full-time transvestite turning out her protégée at her tailor’s, and a “passing” messenger boy’s performative declarations of love for her mistress – to be considered as part of the same system as the masculine homoerotic and homosocial desires, like the love at first sight between a weeping shepherd boy and a handsome Prince. In other words, it puts women’s desires on the same map of sexuality as those of men. It offers a useful corrective to female queer invisibility by naming queer impulses which escape censure – like the resolution of *Philaster* – as erotic and queer, preventing them from being effaced, compartmentalized, or folded into something else, like “friendship.”

The go-between’s erotic instrumentality is an insistently materialized relational mode, but not one predicated on the natural body as the deciding factor in its erotic affiliations or roles. The notion of instrumentality emphasizes a qualitatively different body than the social body implicated in most studies of early modern homosexual acts and identities, offering a different way to think the relation between early modern embodied “subjects” and material “objects”: the body being used becomes neither; it becomes a differently organ-ized, mechanical body that makes use of prosthetic objects, and also becomes prosthetic in itself. We see this in the scene of metonymic resonance between Bellario and *his* communications device: the newly-fashioned,
newly-deracinated, newly-male “Bellario,” sitting by the fountain and crying with his flower garland – an artfully made object which at first appears to be merely beautiful, but upon interpretation encodes a story of inordinate subjective feeling (but not one so detailed that anyone who sees the beautiful cipher won’t read their own feelings into it). Objects like Bellario’s garland, and Moll’s viol, carry queer desire through these plays, among heterosexual pairings and gay pairings and queer triads. Attending to the erotic activities of these things problematizes the location of sexuality within the boundaries of the “natural” human body: erotic energy lodges in prostheses, mediating technologies, and instruments, figuring them, rather than human genitalia, as the salient organs of erotic transaction, and calling into question whether relationality and desire are necessarily moored to the human body at all. The go-between’s queer relations with material things offer a way for us to perceive queer feelings that are not contained by genital notions of sexuality. In that sense, the instrumentalized transvestite body is an erotic technology that re-defines where we do and don’t perceive desire to be, de-coupling intimacy from a prescribed sex, gender role, or number of partners.
Chapter 3

Everything That Moves: Promiscuous Fancy and Carnival Longing

1. “The food of love”

 Whereas in the last chapter I focused on an erotic mode which exceeds and queers heterosexual relations, the desires that are the focus of this chapter are more speculative, more free-floating than those intensely-triangulated affective bonds of getting-used, serving, mediating, taking turns, and being-made-instrumental. The mode of desiring to which I now turn is not a craving that finds satisfaction in a specific queer erotic configuration (such as the desire to be made instrumental to others’ erotic ends); instead, it is a promiscuous “fancy”: a lack that is not satisfied, and that knows not what, if anything, would give satisfaction.

 The chapter traces the vagaries of bottomless desire – forms of insatiable and indiscriminate appetite which do not culminate in any apparent fulfillment or reproduction – through two very different early modern comedies: the highly stylized, mercurial, courtly world of shifting shapes, alliances, and symbolic meanings in William Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night (1601); and the earthy, material world of market pleasures and desiring mobs in Ben Jonson’s voluminous city comedy, Bartholomew Fair (1614). This juxtaposition may seem strange; but by reading this pair of plays alongside each other and comparing the erotic forces animating each, I argue that both plays are structured by a queer erotic economy in which excessively proliferating desire – for too many objects at once, too many objects in rapid succession, or every possible object without differentiation – feeds on itself, generating more lack, more longing, and
more unfulfilled hunger. Un-anchored and diffused across so many different objects, it lacks purchase on any at all. This fundamental mechanism by which desire operates in these two plays is centrally embodied in particular characters’ affects of wanting and consumption: the perpetually-dissatisfied Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*; the voracious, insatiable Bartholomew Cokes in *Bartholomew Fair*; and Cokes’ negative foil, the abstemious Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, who is no less motivated by an un-satisfiable hunger, although his orientation towards the objects of his desire is one of eroticized disavowal and annihilation. Bartholomew Cokes and Duke Orsino are bottomless vortices of lack. The moment they attain anything they desire, their interest instantly detaches from it and re-directs to something else. Though satisfied by nothing, they persist in desiring everything – everything, that is, except for what each claims, in their respective comic plots, to want: heterosexual marriage to an appropriate woman. Insatiable desire governs other characters and plots of these plays as well: it's evident in Malvolio’s failed, deluded desire for cross-gartered stockings as an instrument of erotic gratification in *Twelfth Night*; and in the range of ambivalent negotiations of appetite staged among Jonson's various fairgoers, their all-consuming cravings for the products and pleasures of the Fair, and the canny vendors who supply them. These affects of fancy and longing are chiefly noticeable in what might be called scenes of consumption: that is, in transactions of desire where made things, services, and commodities – affective, material, or both – are exchanged and consumed. What I am calling queer in these scenes is not a specific act or a category of subject, but a *mechanism* for the production and reproduction of desire. This analysis will directly connect the circuits of desire I locate in these two plays to the history of sexuality, by pointing out their subsequent ramifications in the aesthetic and commercial realms: namely, how the term
“fancy” shifts to characterize the desire for pleasurable and beautiful things as a degraded, promiscuous, *queer* desire for improper, unproductive love objects.

Orsino both begins and ends *Twelfth Night* (subtitle: *or What You Will*) by obliquely referring to the strange shapes and capacities of his own desire. He begins the play with a soliloquy on the prodigious swiftness with which he loses interest, and the apparently constant necessity of doing so again and again:

> If music be the food of love, play on,  
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,  
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.  
> That strain again, it had a dying fall;  
> O, it came o’er my ear like the sweet sound  
> That breathes upon a bank of violets  
> Stealing and giving odor. Enough, no more;  
> ‘Tis not so sweet now as it was before.¹

Right away, erotic love and desire is figured as a cycle of excess, surfeit, and aversion: *if* music is the “food” of love, it is not the victual that satiates appetite, but the *fuel* that stokes and inflames it. Orsino calls for more music to pique his desire in order to kill it: by inflaming his appetite he hopes to move through a sickening point of surfeit to aversion, a state before or without the hunger of desire. The import of these opening lines is that they betray the chronically unfixed, even non-alloerotic (non-partner-oriented) quality of Orsino’s desire, which is directed everywhere except where Orsino avows that it is directed. The conceit of *Twelfth Night*’s comedic plot is that Orsino desires Olivia; but the erotic cathexis figured in this opening speech has nothing to do with her, or with any beloved at all. Because thinking of early modern

---

¹ If this speech is delivered without musical breaks between each of Orsino’s lines, it is difficult for us to believe that Orsino has really heard “enough” of the passion-inflaming music to surfeit his appetite for love to the point that it has already self-sickened and died. (Furthermore, a directorial choice to insert musical breaks between these lines would change the availability of this speech to this reading, making Orsino’s desire less fickle, and reducing the tension created by the instability of desire in the play.) Citations from *Twelfth Night*, hereafter cited parenthetically in the text, are by act, scene, and line number from William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., Stephen Greenblatt, gen. ed., Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus, eds. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2008), i.i.1-8.
erotic desire as promiscuous fancy tends to reveal the excessive, fickle, and unsatisfying
dynamics underlying most (if not all) desire, the language of proliferating appetite that I’m
drawing out here is often conflated with similar themes of un-requited, non-reproductive,
impossibly removed, and tormented desire under the rubric of Petrarchanism. While there is
definitely some affective overlap, I am not describing something that is constitutive of all
expressions of erotic interest outside of reproductive heterosexuality; the mechanisms I discuss
in these two plays partake in an erotic economy and a structure of object relations (or the lack
thereof) which are quite distinct. This speech, for instance, does not voice the fixated, avowedly
sadomasochistic desire of Petrarchan discourse, despite the strangely truncated Petrarchan
language figuring love as appetite. To the contrary, this image of “love” cannot be said to be
object-oriented at all. “If music be the food of love,” then the putative beloved is, necessarily,
not. Orsino does not want her to materialize; it is not the disillusionment of comparing
embodied presence to idealized absence that he desires, or even the inevitable repulsion that is
delayed by, and follows from, sexual consummation. In fact, the only desire voiced in a
sustained way here is the craving for a negative feedback loop whereby “surfeiting,/ The
appetite” self-annihilates without satiation. The sensuous pleasure of the music Orsino solicits –
affective and artistic labor performed by other humans onstage, it must be remembered:
musicians of his household, who work for him – is abruptly reversed when it begins “stealing
and giving odor,” set off on a line by itself (I.i.7): robbing his desire from him and making it
distasteful before any fulfillment takes place.

This is only the first of many moments in Twelfth Night where erotic desire appears to
autoerotically – or at least autophagically – feed on itself, rather than proceeding forward and

---

2 For an excellent study of how the power dynamics of Petrarchan discourses of desire – including queer desire – are
implicated in intimate and political object-relations, see Melissa E. Sanchez, Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of
outward towards fulfillment in external objects. Orsino’s desire has been understood as confused and un-self-aware in other criticism on Twelfth Night; for example, René Girard observes, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, that the dynamics of desire connecting Orsino, Viola/Cesario, and Olivia are conflicted and at odds, fraught with humiliation, concealment, and ulterior motives. In describing Orsino’s disillusioned, renunciatory yet pathologically-persistent lovesickness for a strangely absent object, Girard draws out many of the same fruitless, unsatisfied erotic affects that I do in the play, but in different terms: as a pathological oscillation between gluttonous and dyspeptic relations to food, which “suggests a human nature ruined by original sin”; or a “sophistic abuse of methodical doubt” by which he reasons, “since all objects that can be possessed prove valueless, I will renounce them once and for all in favor of those objects that cannot be possessed.” Although Girard’s vocabularies of intemperance, secret guilt, sophistry and self-abuse, anxious misogyny, and performative renunciation have tacit, probably unintended queer connotations, he does not connect Orsino’s mercurial and promiscuous qualities to historical or critical registers of eros or sexuality in any direct way. Yet, this is the closest that previous scholarship has come to touching on what I call the queerness of Orsino’s erotic bent. I want to re-signify these affects, instead, as the dramatic manifestations of a queer mode of desiring:

O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou, That notwithstanding thy capacity Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there, Of what validity and pitch so’er, But falls into abatement and low price Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy

---

4 Girard, Theatre of Envy, 113.
5 Ibid., 118.
That it alone is high fantastical (I.i.9-15).

The “spirit of love” Orsino hails is not bound to any ultimate climax; rather, it is ceaselessly motile in producing and reproducing itself. Its “quickness” and “freshness” seem to give it a prodigious “capacity” for new objects of desire. It takes them in as indiscriminately as the sea – and negates their value and specificity just as quickly, moving on “even in a minute” to receive the next object, in an endless succession of canceled loves. What strikes me as queer about the structure of this desire – besides how falling out of love appears to be its repetition-compulsion – is how it behaves like an impressively capacious, promiscuously receptive organ. Its receptivity is not entirely passive, either: it undoes the world’s privileging of certain objects of desire with more “validity and pitch” than others. In its prodigious receptivity, all things – and people – end up at the same “low price” once love is done with them. But it is important to note that at the passage’s ending, the love objects that fall in and out of favor so fast do not disappear completely as they “fall.” Rather, they pile onto one another in what Orsino calls the “fancy,” packing it “full of shapes.” These lines figure “fancy” – the capacity for desiring – in spatial, even bodily, terms: as a densely populated internal reservoir of past, present, and future love objects, coexisting in a jumble which defies any linear, heteronormative model of supersession or progress.

Desire, specifically same-sex desire, has been a central focus of much of the criticism on Twelfth Night, but the scholarship has not taken account of the specific mechanism of desire that is my focus here. In fact, the unmoored, un-satisfiable hunger I describe in this chapter has not previously been articulated in either of these plays (but particularly not in Bartholomew Fair) – or previously explicated in criticism as a specifically queer mechanism of desire operating in early modern drama. I propose that we can locate the play’s queerness in its articulation of a
bottomless erotic hunger: a promiscuous form of desiring that feeds on its own lack. In focusing
on the structural, or symbolic, economy of the play, I am also diverging from the previous queer
scholarship on *Twelfth Night*, which has offered varying verdicts on the re-inscription of
normative gender and heterosexuality in the play's resolution, or focused on specific relational
bonds, like the homosocial friendship between Sebastian and Antonio, or the homoerotic
flirtation between Olivia and Cesario/Viola. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter's
discussion of erotic networks, currents of queer attraction run every which-way throughout the
cast of characters: Orsino to himself; Orsino to Cesario/Viola; Olivia to Cesario/Viola; Malvolio
to Olivia; Olivia to her dead brother; Viola to Sebastian; Sebastian to Viola; and Antonio to
Sebastian. But I argue that the queerness of *Twelfth Night* goes beyond its cross-dressing
intrigues or even its same-sex erotic interactions, to a more pervasive structural queerness at the
level of the play's underlying erotic economy – in the mechanism by which desires, and their
objects, are generated. In this reading, what is “queer” about Orsino is not just the intimacy he
shares with his “manservant” Viola, but his account of what desiring is and how it feels – which,
by virtue of its protagonistic centrality, stands as the play’s model of eros itself. I see this queer

6 See especially Jean Howard, “Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England,”
Already Heterosexual?” in *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of William Shakespeare*
*A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume III: The Comedies*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Malden,
MA: Blackwell, 2003), 137–58; Dympna Callaghan, “And all is semblative a woman’s part’: Body politics and
Twelfth Night” in *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (New
York: Routledge, 2000), 26-48; and Laurie Shannon, “Nature’s Bias: Renaissance Homonormativity and

7 Joseph Pequigney, “The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and The Merchant of Venice,”
*English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 201-221; and Janet Adelman, “Male Bonding in Shakespeare’s Comedies,”
in Shakespeare’s “Rough Magic”: Essays in Honor of C. L. Barber, ed. Peter Erickson and Coppelia Kahn.
(Newark: University of Delaware, 1985), 73-103. In addition to the sources on lesbian eroticism in *Twelfth Night*
cited in Chapter 2, see Brian D. Sweeney, “Call Me Cesario: Metonymy, Desire, and Transgressive Sexualities in
Twelfth Night,” in *Theatron* (2003): 6-15; and Lisa Jardine, “Twins and Travesties: Gender, Dependency, and
Sexual Availability in *Twelfth Night*,” in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan
Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1992), 27-38, and *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of
erotic force embodied in the opening speech's notion of “fancy”: an early modern concept of imagination, desire, and erotic love which I will unpack in both its historically-situated and trans-historical significances. I will ultimately argue that “fancy” functions as a queer, asexual double of heterosexual reproduction, generating not offspring, but fantastical, artificial, and aesthetic objects of desire.

“Fancy” is a word which pertains to the other or the negative of heterosexual reproduction: to the real, material products – from high art to a monstrous baby – fashioned by appetites other than those that resolve in procreative sex. Over the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, “fancy” develops from an older definition synonymous with “fantasy” or “phantasy,”8 into a complex explanatory ideology for how images and fantasies formed in the mind are bodied forth in material forms. The term originally refers to “the process, and the faculty, of forming mental representations of things not present to the senses.”9 Yet around the same time, an erotic definition develops in which “fancy” can mean desire itself, “amorous inclination,”10 or the cathexis linking desire to the conjured object of libidinal fantasy: “to be or to fall in love with.”11 It concurrently begins to differentiate from “imagination” into a meaning emphasizing aesthetic prowess – “aptitude for the invention of illustrative or decorative imagery;” that is, the ability to fashion images for purposes of pleasure.12 Its simultaneous connotations of illusion,13 delusion,14 invention,15 and improvisation16 are all subtly contiguous

---

8 “A mental apprehension of an object of perception; the faculty by which this is performed.” Oxford English Dictionary Online, June 2011, Oxford University Press, s.v. “fantasy, phantasy, n.” 1. a., http://oed.com/.
9 OED Online, s.v. “fancy, n. and a.,” A. 4. a., first qtd. 1581.
10 Ibid., 8. b., first qtd. 1559.
11 OED Online, s.v. “fancy, v.,” 8., first qtd. 1545.
12 OED Online, s.v. “fancy, n. and a.,” A. 4. a.
13 Ibid., 2., first qtd. 1609.
14 Ibid., 3., first qtd. 1597.
15 Ibid., 5. a., first qtd. 1665.
with these mental processes. When considered under this cluster of emergent meanings, the closing lines of Orsino’s speech carry a new implication: that fancy can make and desire any object it wants. In fact, the soliloquy appears in this light to be far more an autoerotic valorization of Orsino’s own capacity for imaginative fantasy and desire than to have anything to do with Olivia, or any other extant love object. If “fancy” is “the process, and the faculty, of forming mental representations of things not present to the senses,” it must include the ability to dream up objects of desire out of one’s own fantasy – to imagine an erotic object that could exist, but doesn’t. In this sense, “fancy” can be construed as an eroticism founded in and shaped by the absence of its objects, which feeds on desire. It can take the impression of a lack and reproduce it as a fantasy, shaped by the mind’s own not-necessarily-virtuous predilections. The range of possible fantasy objects, then, is by no means limited to real, “natural,” hetero-erotic, or socially-acceptable object-choices.

Alongside its self-negating, abortive orientation towards external love objects, the “fancy” Orsino describes seems to possess hints of queer generativity as well; if it can be “full of shapes,” it may be imagined not only as a receptive orifice but a receptive matrix, which conceives and holds mental forms inside itself. Early modern figurations of “fancy” are used to account for all kinds of generative processes that exhibit some uncanny spark: poetry, art, science – and human reproduction, when it goes awry. Even an artificial object, such as a picture of a “blacke-a-more,” had the potential to become unnaturally naturalized in the body of a child by the telekinetic force of a woman’s transgressive desire. This sense of “fancy” is useful for

---

16 Ibid., 5.b., first qtd. 1577.
17 The term is most often used in criticism today to refer to the “mother’s fancy;” detailed by Montaigne, among others, the idea was a popular explanation for how a woman’s erotic fantasy about another man – an image in her mind’s eye – could impress her unborn child with the appearance of someone other than its “natural” or legitimate father. Florio’s 1603 translation of Montaigne’s Essais famously reads: “So it is, that by experience wee see women to transferre divers markes of their fantasies, unto children they beare in their wombes: witnes she that brought forth
queer analysis because it introduces imagination into the mechanism of reproduction: as for the pregnant Win Littlewit in Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*, whose performative longing to eat roast pig gets her into the Fair because others believe she might miscarry if her craving is not satisfied, the theory of the “mother’s fancy” allows fantasy and fiction to become part of how sex, birth, and kinship work. It also re-emphasizes the unpredictability and insistent physicality with which unruly erotic drives can work on the body, and the power of uncontained imagination to bear disruptive, surprising shapes into the world. In my analysis, however, I want to move away from the primary association of “fancy” with female sexuality gone wrong, in order to draw out the other, queerer kinds of generativity embedded in its mechanism. In fact, the gendered meaning of “fancy,” in which heterosexual reproduction is subverted by women’s deviant imagination, appears nowhere in *Twelfth Night* or in *Bartholomew Fair*; it is one permutation of wayward desire that does not even really threaten. Decoupled from heterosexual reproduction, we can notice “fancy” doing more varied and interesting work as a shaping force that shadows or queers generation, emphasizing the centrality of artifice, and displacing the focus of erotic energy from objects and their attainment to longing and lack.

2. **“So full of shapes”**

Orsino’s fancy seems to be replete with forms; fancy’s queer fullness of shapes resonates strongly with Freud’s term for the wide-ranging capacities of infantile desire, polymorphous perversity. 18 *Polymorphous* literally means many shapes: “full of shapes.” Imagining desire in

---

Twelfth Night as fundamentally polymorphously-perverse – that is, as encyclopedically flexible, infantile, and unable to differentiate among proper and improper objects – is interesting in light of the cycle of lack, surfeit, and aversion represented here: this is an erotics of undifferentiated non-fulfillment, which is only incompletely re-connected to heterosexual objects even in the comic resolution. Freud’s central point in asserting that humans are primally, originally “polymorphously perverse” is that sexual norms – including, crucially, the taboos “against members of one's own sex” and against “the transferring of the part played by the genitals to other organs and areas of the body” – must be taught and enforced by disciplining children into (hetero)normative human sexual subjects; taking note of this emphasizes just now much the marriage plot’s telos inescapably depends on auto- and homoerotic energies to make even its performance possible.19 Desire can feel polymorphously perverse at any age, however: when subjects, even just for a moment, revisit the erotic state in which they can “attach no special importance to the distinction between the sexes, but attribute the same conformation of the genitals to both;” when they “direct their first sexual lusts and their curiosity to those who are nearest and for other reasons dearest to them—parents, brothers and sisters, or nurses;” or even when they “expect to derive pleasure not only from their sexual organs, but that many other parts of the body lay claim to the same sensitivity, afford them analogous feelings of pleasure and can accordingly play the part of genitals.”20 While being careful not to overlap the two too much, I would venture that what Orsino describes as “fancy” in Twelfth Night could be called an affective mode of polymorphous perversity. The opening speech does away with any language of a developmental trajectory or timeline for love; it also confounds clear-cut distinctions

between natural and unnatural processes of desiring. It traces the expected sequence of object-oriented desire in the negative, as an absent presence full of artifice and caprice – not to say deviance – and shadows non-reproductive homo- and auto-erotic interactions with hints of generation.

Though the last phrase of Orsino’s opening speech might appear to be a tautology (if “fancy” corresponds to “fantastical”), I contend that instead we can read it as a suggestive pun which plays with the multiple valences of “fancy” to gesture towards the stakes of the queer mode of desire it is figuring. In my reading, the phrase, “so full of shapes is fancy/ That it alone is high fantastical,” links the “high fantastical” virtuosity of the inventive, creative fancy in generating new ideas and images, never before seen, and materializing them in visual or poetic form, to the indiscriminate, surfeiting/sickening/dying erotic “appetite” that causes Orsino’s libidinal fancy to be “so full of shapes” in this speech. There is a suggestion in these lines that art and poetry, the material forms by which aesthetic innovation enters the world, are attributable in some sense to the endlessly-promiscuous yet endlessly-surfeiting, unappeasable force called “fancy” in the play. Unsatisfied, wandering lust, proliferating in a crowded pile of fantasmatic “shapes” filling one’s “fancy,” may be where artistic production comes from.

Of course, the figuration of desire in the rest of the play does not remain as simple – or as rich in queer erotic imagery – as in this single speech. But the groundwork is laid for the play’s subsequent explorations of loss, obstruction, and doubt: sexual difference will be erased, confused, or insignificant; available love objects will be substituted for inaccessible ones; prosthetic garments will become the objects of disproportionate investment, speculation, and thwarted hope; and desire will fail to follow any of the predictable paths.
3. “Pray thee long”

The bottomless appetite that goes by the name of “fancy” in *Twelfth Night* – the capacious, capricious fantasy that refuses to settle on one, socially-acceptable object – looks very different in Jonson’s teeming, tactile, odiferous London setting. I see the all-consuming *longings* of *Bartholomew Fair*’s assorted fair-goers as different instantiations, with different dramatic effects, of an underlying queer mode of erotic cathexis which drives both plays. Desire in *Bartholomew Fair* is promiscuous in a more straightforward, material way; it works as a free-floating force which can, and does, animate many different body parts and material objects apart from, and other than the genitals. The play dramatizes the carnivalesque urban space of the notorious two-week market festival beginning on St. Bartholomew’s Day (24 August) in the Smithfield environs of the Priory Church of St. Bartholomew the Great – an annual tradition of almost 500 years’ standing in 1614, when the play was written. As a city comedy, the play is centrally concerned with the circulations of sex and erotic desire: where desire goes awry, what it threatens, and how it is, or isn’t, re-contained. The particular plot structure of *Bartholomew Fair*, however, with its peripatetic shifts from stall to stall and subplot to subplot inside the Fair, creates a sprawling, diverse array of desires and investments which might seem on the surface to be unrelated. However, as I read this play, it does not merely stage an eclectic piling-on of brief desires; instead, its scenes of market desire are knit together with an underlying through-line of promiscuous fancy, transmuted into a frenetic mode of carnival longing that circulates everywhere and is never sated.

The overlapping comic plots all insistently foreground heterosexual marriage, sex, and reproduction: John and Win Littlewit’s physical, companionate love and the question of Win’s pregnancy; Win’s mother and her two competing suitors; the pig-woman, Ursula, who rules over
prostitution, generation, and other bodily appetites at the fair; two gentlemen friends competing to steal a young gentlewoman from her betrothed; and, most absurdly, the gargantuan, infantile protagonist Bartholomew Cokes, who is contracted to marry that young gentlewoman, Grace Wellborn, on that very day (he never makes it). But the central joke of the play, in my reading, is that over the course of the action, the libidinal energies of its interlocking comic plots take every conceivable kind of twist and turn besides the completion of any act of heterosexual intercourse or marriage. Not only do this play’s twists and turns of desire refuse and de-emphasize the heterosexual dyad to an even greater degree than most city comedies; the various characters’ erotic appetites are not even reliably fixed on single objects of desire, setting up a queer economy of roving, insatiable desire.

The existing scholarship on *Bartholomew Fair* largely focuses on isolated material and historical phenomena, unpacking the ideological valences of specific wares and characters, such as Jonson’s satirical godly Puritan. Because of its voluminous and seemingly-chaotic scope, other critics have not previously considered the structure of the play as a whole, especially not in terms of its erotics. This study is one of the first to offer an over-arching reading of how desire works in the play. Moreover, the particular modality of desire that I argue governs the play – the polymorphously perverse and un-satisfiable longing of the Fair – makes *Bartholomew Fair*, for the first time, a subject of queer literary criticism. Though not to the same extent as *Twelfth Night*, this play has generated a good deal of criticism concerned with gender and sexual difference; however, the self-perpetuating mechanism of lacking, longing desire which I describe has not been articulated before as a distinct, queer *structure* of desire operating in early modern
drama. In fact, unlike *Twelfth Night*, no other critics seem to have seen anything specifically
*queer* about *Bartholomew Fair* at all.21

*Bartholomew Fair* is fundamentally a play about *wanting* -- the Fair is a space where
desires of all valences are constantly excited, the fair-goers enticed from every direction, by
every kind of object. They obtain and lustily enjoy the temporal pleasures of roast pig, beer, toys
and trinkets, pastries, musical ballads, purses, and puppet shows; but these moments of
satisfaction and consumption do not, in themselves, provide ends or resolution for the roaming,
mobile, auto-erotically-fueled desires that range through the play as though taking on a life of
their own. In Scene 6 of Act I, for example, the Littlewit extended family is preparing to go to
the Fair: John Littlewit, a proctor, has the license for Bartholomew Cokes’ unlikely marriage, but
he also has his own “affair i’ the Fair,” “a puppet-play of mine own making,” which he is
producing in collaboration with Lantern Leatherhead, the hobby-horse maker.22 With him travel
his wife, Win, her passionate and loopy mother, Dame Purecraft, and one of the mother’s two
suitors, the hot Puritan named Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. The Littlewit husband and wife long to
go to the Fair, he to preside over his puppet-play and she to watch it, but Win’s mother “will
never consent to such a – ‘profane motion,’ she will call it” (I.v.131-132). To get them to the
Fair, John Littlewit proposes “a device, a dainty one”23 that marshals the performance of one

---

21 The only existing criticism on the play to make use of a theoretical analytic tangentially connected to queer
studies in Elena Levy-Navarro’s “fat studies” reading in her chapter on Jonson, “Weigh Me as a Friend: Jonson’s
Multiple Constructions of the Fat Body,” in *The Culture of Obesity in Early and Late Modernity: Body Image in
Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Skelton* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 147-192. In theorizing the
need for a “fat history” which (like a queer history) recovers the subjugated bodies and pleasures of a different time
and critiques the assumptions of a progressivist, modernizing telos for the category of “fat,” Levy-Navarro treats the
fat bodies of Ursula the pig-woman and Bartholomew Cokes as sites of bodily resistance and revolt against the
“civilizing” bourgeois norms of aesthetics, embodiment, consumption, and behavior which are operative at the Fair.

22 All citations from *Bartholomew Fair*, hereafter cited parenthetically, are by act, scene, and line number from Ben

23 Like the desire to be made erotically instrumental which is the focus of Chapter 2, “Getting Used, and Liking It,”
this acute, all-consuming longing frequently has at its beginnings some kind of “device” or ruse, such as Philaster’s
desire in the service of indulging another, more consuming desire: to be at the Fair, in the presence of its temptations. He instructs his wife to *long*:

> Win, long to eat of a pig, sweet Win, in the Fair; do you see? in the heart of the Fair; not at Pie-Corner. Your mother will do anything, Win, to satisfy your longing, you know; pray thee long, presently, and be sick on the sudden, good Win. I will go in and tell her, cut thy lace in the mean time, and play the hypocrite, sweet Win (I.v.135-140).

The reason this performative longing from Win can have such an effect is that Win Littlewit is pregnant – or, at least, all acknowledge her to be possibly pregnant. In criticism and in stage productions of the play, Win is virtually always assumed to be far enough along in her pregnancy that her condition is publicly apparent. However, there is nothing in the text to contravene the reading that her pregnancy is still in the early stages of invisibility – or even potentiality. In my reading, Win’s “longing” contains a more ambivalent note of genuine, unsatisfied longing if she is *not* visibly pregnant. As a young married woman who has not yet borne children, Win’s reproductive status would be an object of sustained investment, projection, desire, and anxiety from her mother and relatives.24 If she is regarded as “pre-pregnant,” in a state of pregnancy-watch, then even without this ruse on the part of Win and her husband, her cravings – like a sudden, all-consuming “longing” to eat of a pig in the Fair – are already social signs telegraphing the possibility of a bodily state which, in an age before pregnancy tests, remains for quite some time more of a fictive, social wish than a knowable fact.

Win’s assiduous moaning is interpreted as she intends: as a physical pang of longing for the roast pig sold at the fair. Her mother pleads with her to name the person who first mentioned question, “How shall we devise/ To hold intelligence?” (*Philaster*, I.ii.108-109). The constitutive element of artifice in both structures of erotic investment is key to what makes them *queer* mechanisms of desire: what started out as performative or artificed desire often gradually becomes – and is revealed to have already been – real erotic attraction.

24 See Gowing, *Common Bodies*, for more on the complicated interplay of bodily surveillance, power, truth production, and social fiction involved in pregnancy detection.
the roast pig to her, inseminating her with the taint of this knowledge, and therefore this longing (which is presumed to follow directly from the first mention she heard of pig):

**PURECRAFT:** [...] What polluted one was it that named first the unclean beast, pig, to you, child?

**WIN:** Uh, uh.

**LITTLEWIT:** Not I, o’ my sincerity, mother: she longed above three hours, ere she would let me know it. Who was it, Win?

**WIN:** A profane black thing with a beard, John.

**PURECRAFT:** O! resist it, Win-the-Fight, it is the Tempter, the wicked Tempter, you may know it by the fleshly motion of Pig, be strong against it, and its foul temptations, in these assaults, whereby it broacheth flesh and blood, as it were, on the weaker side, and pray against its carnal provocations, good child, sweet child, pray (I.vi.7-17).

While her mother construes Win’s longing as the Devil working to implant insatiable desires in the godly (unwittingly implicating herself as well, as the person “that named first the unclean beast of pig” to Win as a baby is likely her own mother), Littlewit appeals to the damage longing can do: he argues that, after the mechanism of the “mother’s fancy,” too much untoward longing from Win, without getting what she longs for, could imperil her health and the health of her potential unborn child:

**LITTLEWIT:** Good mother, I pray you; that she may eat some pig, and her belly full, too; and do not you cast away your own child, and perhaps one of mine, with your tale of the Tempter: how do you, Win? Are you not sick?

**WIN:** Yes, a great deal, John. Uh, uh.

**PURECRAFT:** What shall we do? call our zealous brother Busy hither, for his faithful fortification in this charge of the Adversary; child, my dear child, you shall eat pig, be comforted, my sweet child.

**WIN:** Aye, but in the Fair, mother.

**PURECRAFT:** I mean in the Fair, if it can be any way made, or found lawful (I.vi.18-28).

Win’s longing for pig, though in substance a performance, is a symptomatic manifestation of her liminal bodily status as a “little bit pregnant,” and of her “secret” desire – known to the audience but not to her mother – to go to the Fair. That this particular longing is the inaugural one in a play full of hilariously fraught longings illustrates a crucial aspect of the kind of desire I am
explicating as “fancy” or “longing”: the queer admixture of real and imaginary, natural and deviant urges that goes into the production and reproduction – fantasmatic as well as material – of longings and their objects.

If “fancy” is an erotic mechanism principally driven by feelings of lack, we see it particularly acutely in the subplots of *Bartholomew Fair* where lack becomes the object of desire itself: scenes where the fairgoers’ interactions with the roast pig, for instance, are powered, over and above the attractions of the commodities themselves, by eroticized investments in not doing, buying, or enjoying things – investments which, themselves, are sometimes *not fulfilled* as the desirer yields to temptation. This negative “anti-fancy” – desire based in self-denial and refusal – is centrally staged through Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, the Puritan suitor called in by Dame Purecraft to rule as the moral arbiter of her daughter’s dangerous desire. When her mother calls her longing “a natural disease of women, called ‘a longing to eat pig,’” Win is forced to insist that this is a very *particular* longing to eat not just any pig, but the pig *in the Fair* (“Aye sir,” Littlewit re-asserts, “a Bartholomew pig: and in the Fair”) (I.vi.37-39). Zeal-of-the-Land Busy’s legalistic dithering on whether this would be godly hilariously caricatures certain forms of social-control Protestantism, like the overwrought “Banburyism” to which Jonson assigns Busy, for their passionate investment in the ascetic denial and disavowal of desire.ُ

He allows:

> Verily, for the disease of longing, it is a disease, a carnal disease, or appetite, incident to women; and as it is carnal, and incident, it is natural, very natural. Now pig, it is a meat, and a meat that is nourishing, and may be longed for, and so consequently eaten; it may be eaten; very exceeding well eaten. But in the Fair, and as a Bartholomew pig, it cannot be eaten, for the very calling it a Bartholomew pig, and to eat it so, is a spice of Idolatry (I.vi.43-49).

---

The others easily argue him down, however; Littlewit outflanks him, taking canny advantage of the iconoclastic double-bind that holds symbolic meanings, like the date and place of the Fair, to be both evil and not to be regarded: “Aye, but in state of necessity, place should give place, Master Busy (I have a conceit left, yet)” (I.vi.52-53). Soon they have him conceding that:

[...] it may be eaten, and in the Fair, I take it, in a booth, the tents of the wicked: the place is not much, not very much, we may be religious in midst of the profane, so it be eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety, and humbleness; not gorged in with gluttony, or greediness; there is the fear: for, should she go there, as taking pride in the place, or delight in the unclean dressing, to feed the vanity of the eye, or the lust of the palate, it were not well, it were not fit, it were abominable, and not good (I.vi.63-70).

The whole family enthusiastically agrees to go to the Fair, and to eat pig: so long as they neither want it too badly, nor enjoy it too much. Win can eat her pig in the Fair, so long as she takes no pride or delight in the place or its people, to prevent any further longings of vanity and lust from being stoked. No fear, Littlewit crows, they will “seek out the homeliest booth i’ the Fair,” or “eat it o’ the ground” (I.vi.72-74). Dame Purecraft volunteers herself and Busy to go (strictly as moral support), to which Win moans in agony; Busy predictably decides that, “In the way of comfort to the weak, I will go, and eat. I will eat exceedingly” (I.vi.83-84).

The Littlewits’ “device,” and the dueling anxieties and barely-concealed desires evident in Zeal-of-the-Land Busy’s reaction to it, make it apparent at the outset that fantasizing and longing are more central ends of desire in this play than satiation. As the play goes on to show, the cessation of want in fulfillment is not the libidinal orientation of Bartholomew Fair; rather, the cravings it generates are cravings that feed on themselves to produce more, and more various, desires in turn. A clandestine desire to go to a puppet-play – and a collusive bond between husband and wife which clearly generates mutual erotic pleasure in imaginative play – gives rise to Win’s performative “longing” for pig. Her pain and moaning generate real pleasure for her
religiously re-galvanized mother at the thrill of a conflict with the Devil, her daughter’s possible pregnancy, and her suitor’s authoritative religious pronouncements. Busy and Purecraft are intensely gratified by the torturous pleasure of the religious prohibition’s incremental alleviation.

By the end of the scene, Win’s artificed longing for the roast pig at the Fair has effectively been transmitted, as a palpable, salivating longing, to everyone else, in a contagion of consuming appetite that overpowers caution and morality. But this craving is sustained all the while by the parental negative energies mixed in with it: by Busy and Purecraft’s masochistic pleasures in danger and condemnation – and the frisson of tension between their pleasure in yielding to the lure of the roast pig and their disavowal of that yielding, denunciation of the Fair, refusal of its pleasures, and denial that pleasure is their motive at all.

4. “What do you lack?”

The play cuts rapidly back and forth between the longing, dithering Littlewit party and the accidental title character, Bartholomew Cokes (whose abortive marriage plot is connected to theirs via his man, Wasp, who comes to John Littlewit to obtain Cokes’ marriage license). The reluctant groom, as described by his man, is “but nineteen year old, and yet he is taller than either of you, by the head” (I.iv.79-80), and completely helpless: a giant, spoiled man-child of unbridled and obscene appetites. Cokes stands out from the Puritanical fair-goers and vendors who feed on longing in the Fair, in that his erotic orientation is towards the total indulgence of his desire for indiscriminate and unending consumption. The defining drive of the character is towards obtaining as much of every pleasure and commodity as possible – though he remains no less a bottomless morass of longing than the play’s figures of self-denial. In his first appearance, in scene 5 of Act 1, he pleads wheedlingly to Wasp (whom he calls by the overly-familiar pet
name “Numps”) to be allowed to see his own marriage license – “Is this the license, Numps?
For love’s sake, let me see’t. I never saw a license” – which Wasp withholds from him for his
own good:

COKES: An’ you love me, good Numps.
WASP: Sir, I love you, and yet I do not love you, i’ these fooleries; set your heart
at rest; there’s nothing in’t but hard words; and what would you see’t for?
COKES: I would see the length and the breadth on’t, that’s all; and I will see’t
now, so I will.
WASP: You sha’ not see it here.
COKES: Then I’ll see’t at home, and I’ll look upo’ the case here.
WASP: Why do so. [Shows him the box.] A man must give way to him a little in
trifles, gentlemen (I.v.27-39).

Bartholomew Cokes is situated, from this first appearance, in a queer, infantile position of
unrestrained appetites and utter bodily dependence, which completely overshadows the plot point
of his supposed impending marriage to Mistress Grace Wellborn (who is none too pleased about
it) scheduled for later the same day. The Fair is the first, last, and central “end” for Cokes, far
surpassing his wedding:

COKES: Well, Numps, I am now for another piece of business more, the Fair,
Numps, and then –
WASP: Bless me! Deliver me, help, hold me! The Fair!
COKES: Nay, never fidge up and down, Numps, and vex itself. I am resolute
Bartholomew, in this; I’ll make no suit on’t to you; ’twas all the end of my
journey, indeed, to show Mistress Grace my Fair. I call’t my Fair, because of
Bartholomew; you know my name is Bartholomew, and Bartholomew Fair
(I.v.52-59).

Cokes’ relation to the Fair is one of autoerotic identification and incorporation; it is “my Fair”
through the sign of their shared name (the same ceremonial sign that initially wards Zeal-of-the-
Land Busy off of eating “Bartholomew pig”). The reluctant Grace Wellborn disavows the
“fancy” pleasures of the Fair and disparages it in an attempt to get out of accompanying him:
“Truly I have no such fancy to the Fair, nor ambition to see it; there’s none goes thither of any
quality or fashion.” To which Cokes replies, with typically sexually-undifferentiated, autoerotic
glee: “O Lord, sir! You shall pardon me, Mistress Grace, we are enow of ourselves to make it a fashion” (I.v.115-118).

Wasp characterizes his charge’s overweening desire for the Fair as stemming from Cokes’ embodiment of the Fair’s trinkets and material objects within himself: “Would the Fair and all the drums and rattles in’t were i’ your belly for me; they are already i’ your brain. He that had the means to travel your head, now, should meet finer sights than any are i’ the Fair, and make a finer voyage on’t to see it all hung with cockleshells, pebbles, fine wheat-straws, and here and there a chicken’s feather and a cobweb” (I.v.81-86). Moreover, these “finer sights” that Cokes is metaphorically made of are “already i’ [his] brain” – they are literalized “fancy” objects that are generated in Cokes’ “fancy”: the inner space of his psyche is “all hung with” the excess, worthless materials that make up the festival landscape – the shells, pebbles, straw, feathers, and cobwebs that are strewn on the ground at the Fair. Bartholomew Cokes seems to be a walking empty Fair, a walking Fair-space that, like a vacuum, attempts to suck all of the commodities of the Fair into himself. Wasp complains, “If he go to the Fair, he will buy of everything to a baby there; and household-stuff for that too. If a leg or an arm on him did not grow on, he would lose it i’ the press. Pray heaven I bring him off with one stone! And then he is such a ravener after fruit! You will not believe what a coil I had t’other day to compound a business between a Catherine-pear woman and him about snatching! ‘Tis intolerable, gentlemen” (I.v.100-107). Cokes’ body is figured here as dis-assemblable and exchangeable with the Fair – though he can be counted on to leave the Fair with a prodigious haul of goods, he would lose his legs or arms (or potentially an even more important body part, the “stone” of Wasp’s ambiguous lament) if they were not attached.
Cokes’ ravenousness, from fruit to babies and baby-furniture, knows no limits; by Act III he is driving Wasp ahead of him through the Fair, laden down with goods but at every instant hailed into fancying more by the vendors’ crying:

**LEATHERHEAD:** What do you lack, gentlemen? Fine purses, pouches, pin-cases, pipes? What is’t you lack? A pair o’smiths to wake you i’ the morning? Or a fine whistling bird?

**COKES:** Numps, here be finer things than any we ha’ bought, by odds! And more delicate horses, a great deal! (III.iv.15-19).

The hobby-horse maker’s cry – the incantatory question cried by all the Fair’s vendors, “What do you lack?” – encapsulates what I am calling the queer mechanism of desire at work in *Bartholomew Fair*: the market-goers’ “fancy,” which proceeds from the incitement of lack, feeds on that lack to generate new lacks and more desires for an endless cascade of new objects, so that eventually the consumer is consumed with a surfeit of want and longing. This cycle has more commonly been articulated in Marxist or materialist terms, as the way in which capitalism manufactures commodity desires in order to consume its surplus and fuel its expansion. However, following on Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “desiring-production,” which conceives of both desires and their objects as machines within a larger complex of machines generating social affects and relations, I would describe the process in *Bartholomew Fair* as primarily a cycle for the production and reproduction of desire itself.26

Wasp, exasperated, sarcastically reminds Cokes that all of his desiring is productive of nothing but more desiring; there is no proper, socially-reproductive place in the domestic economy of his aristocratic household (which Wasp entirely administers) for all of these objects

---

26 The mechanisms of fancy and longing I’m describing in early modern drama are the product of mental artifice – and founded in an essential condition of lack – in a way that Deleuze and Guattari’s thoroughly materially-produced and -productive version of desire is not; but, like their model, my notion of queer fancy/longing also conceives of desire as a queerly, asexually generative, self-replicating force. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley and Helen Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
of fancy to go: “Why the measles should you stand here with your train, cheaping of dogs, birds, and babies? You ha’ no children to bestow ‘em on, ha’ you?” (III.iv.25-27). These are literally toys that Cokes cannot stop purchasing, and he is untroubled by the distance between his infantile, autoerotic ends and marital, heterosexually-reproductive ones: “No, but again’ I ha’ children, Numps, that’s all one” (III.iv.28). Whereas the specter of Win Littlewit’s potential reproductivity could be appealed to as a semi-respectable pretext for her longing to eat of the Bartholomew pig, here Bartholomew Cokes’ appetite for the material goods of the Fair makes him a defective and unaccountable sort of man. Wasp likens him to an Indian, or one of his land-tenants: “a kind of civil savages that will part with their children for rattles, pipes, and knives. You were best buy a hatchet or two, and truck with ‘em” (III.iv.30-32). What Cokes buys instead is an exuberantly prodigious load of trinkets to add to the bundle Wasp already carries, which must already be huge and sprawling enough to be played for laughs (“You may know whose beast I am by my burden,” III.iv.59-60). Wasp’s pile contains no fewer than six hobby-horses; three Jew’s trumps; half a dozen birds; a drum (“I have one drum already”); the alarm clock featuring “a pair of smiths” or hammers (“I like that device o’ your smiths very pretty well”); four halberds or swords; a “fine painted great lady,” with “her three women for state,” presumably a set of mannequins or dolls (III.iv.65-71); and a set of violins (III.iv.78-79), to go with the “treble fiddle” that was already nearly lost (III.iv.10). Cokes’ satisfaction at any of these purchases, however, is negligible; any satiation to be found in buying recedes instantly into craving for the next object to catch his fancy. “I would fain have a fine young masque at my marriage, now I think on’t,” Cokes suddenly decides, then remarks, without a hint of self-awareness, “I do want such a number o’ things” (III.iv.81-82). Like Duke Orsino’s ceaselessly ebbing, abating “fancy” in Twelfth Night, Bartholomew Cokes’ mechanism of desiring here
echoes a Freudian notion of polymorphous perversity, in which libidinal energies are not focused on one single love object, or even on genital drives. Instead, like Orsino’s fancy, Cokes’ longing is directed everywhere except towards the socially-appropriate heterosexual marriage-object, and it is newly re-directed by each new object that enters his sphere of vision. Though Cokes’ insatiable, polymorphously perverse brand of object-relations is predicated on the utter opposite of refusal, it is still, like Orsino’s fancy, a form of negative desire – desire based on lack – because it is never abated or lessened by any object he obtains. Though his erotic investment in the Fair is not overtly structured around the generation and proliferation of lack, lack is everywhere in it, as an unintentional by-product that inevitably follows from each act of consumption.

The godly Littlewit contingent’s investment in pleasures not consumed constitutes the affective inverse to Cokes’ gargantuan hunger. Zeal-of-the-Land Busy marches his party into the Bartholomew Fair in Act 3, calling out to the others to walk straight ahead, and not to look at any of the booths: “walk on in the middle way, fore-right; turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. Let not your eyes be drawn aside with vanity, nor your ear with noises” (III.ii.27-29). The Fair vendors immediately bombard them all, attempting to hail them into looking – and, by looking, into wanting (by the same logic that makes Dame Purecraft blame Win’s “longing” for roast pig on the first time she heard it named). The hobby-horse-maker and puppeteer, Leatherhead, works on Win:

What do you lack? What do you buy, pretty mistress? A fine hobby-horse, to make your son a tilter? A drum to make him a soldier? A fiddle, to make him a reveller? What is’t you lack? Little dogs for your daughters! Or babies, male, or female?

The objects that Leatherhead insinuates the godly fairgoers “lack” here make visible how promiscuous fancy based on “lack” functions as a ghost or shade of heterosexual reproduction.
The hobby-horse maker hawks toys – miniature versions of the accoutrements of arms, sport, pleasure, and domesticity – which are a kind of simulacra of adult tools, used to form children into miniatures of economically productive adults. Win’s potential, incipient reproductivity is the public subject for Leatherhead’s spiel, as it was for her going to the Fair in the first place; but neither the heterosexual, reproductive kind of desire – the kind that would put one in the family way – nor the natural sort of baby that it generates, is what is on offer at the Fair. Instead, the “babies, male, or female” conjured as objects of desire here are fictive and imaginary – the physical baby-dolls for children’s domestic play that Leatherhead suggests she “lacks;” but also the actual son or daughter whose ghostly potentiality makes it a particularly defined lack. In the non-heterosexually-reproductive economy of the Fair, it is precisely these kinds of material things – toys, simulacra, miniatures, musical instruments, imitation weapons, small pets, and uncanny artificial “babies” – through which consumers’ longings are stoked and solicited. The erotic energy of the Fair is generated and transmitted in this plethora of ornaments and knicknacks, the instruments and objects of fetishistic market desire.

Busy characterizes the way these suspiciously “fancy,” icon-like items work on fairgoers’ desires as diabolical:

Look not toward them; hearken not! The place is Smithfield, or the field of Smiths, the grove of hobby-horses and trinkets. The wares are the wares of devils. And the whole Fair is the shop of Satan! They are hooks, and baits, very baits, that are hung out on every side, to catch you, and to hold you as it were, by the gills; and by the nostrils, as the fisher doth: therefore, you must not look, nor turn toward them. The heathen man could stop his ears with wax, against the harlot o’ the sea; do you the like, with your fingers, against the bells of the Beast (III.ii.35-43).

The “hobby-horses and trinkets” are both the “baits” that solicit the senses, and the “hooks” that “catch” and “hold” the fairgoer into a seductive cycle of lacking, longing, and wanting. His anxiety is concentrated on the risks of being “caught” up in desire by looking and listening – a
position which makes reference not only to the contemporary Puritan ideas that Satan offers bait to appeal to sinners’ their existing weaknesses (in Thomas Adams’ famous formulation: “Satan like the Fisher baits his hooke according to the appetite of the fish”), but also to conventional understanding of the types of erotic desires that hail the mental fancy, which were thought to enter the body chiefly through the eyes. 27 The peril of “fascination,” theorized in the Neo-Platonist writings of Marsilio Ficino, among others, is conceived of as a pathological state of bodily depletion caused by gazing on the object of one’s desire, in which the lover is infected by rays that enter through the eyes and penetrate to the heart and liver. 28

5. Bartholomew Pig

But the queer forces of fancy and longing within the Fair are more polymorphously insidious than fascination, in that they work on all the senses to fuel desire. Knockem, the horse-corser, offers the Littlewits “a sweet delicate booth, with boughs here i’ the way” to escape from the heat and dust, and “cool yourselves i’ the shade” (III.ii.50-52). When he sees John Littlewit gazing at the sign of the Pig’s Head, he and Whit, “a bawd,” begin to talk up the gustatory delights of Ursula the pig-woman’s roast pig: “A delicate show-pig, little mistress, with sweet sauce, and crackling, like the bay-leaf in the fire, la!” (III.ii.57-58); and “Excellent, excellent, mistress, with fire o’ juniper and rosemary branches! The oracle of the pigs head, that, sir” (III.ii.63-65). Dame Purecraft, blaming these temptations on Littlewit’s looking at the pig sign, scolds him, “Son, were you not warn’d of the vanity of the eye? Have you forgot the wholesome

27 Thomas Adams, A commentary or, exposition vpon the diuine second epistle generall, written by the blessed apostle St. Peter (London : Printed by Richard Badger [and Felix Kyngston] for Iacob Bloome, 1633), 424.
28 My notion of the imaginative “fancy” is rooted in the less-studied non-humoral, Neo-Platonist Aristotelian model of how erotic affects enter into the body/mind, which is based on Avicenna’s idea of materialized “mental faculties”: images drawn from matter that travel through the ventricles of the brain. This alternative genealogy is partially treated in Lesel Dawson’s Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21-26.
Littlewit points out the absurdity of this pursuit of pig that disavows it is a pursuit: “Good mother, how shall we find a pig, if we do not look about for’t? Will it run off o’ the spit into our mouths, think you? As in Lubberland? And cry, wee, wee?” (III.ii.67-69). Busy, in response, makes the theological case that while looking for the pig is a sin, smelling for it is absolutely fine:

> No, but your mother, religiously wise, conceiveth it may offer itself, by other means to the sense, as by way of steam, which I think it doth, here in this place. *Busy scents after it like a hound.*

Huh, huh – yes, it doth. And it were a sin of obstinacy, great obstinacy, high and horrible obstinacy, to decline, or resist the good titillation of the famelic sense, which is the smell. Therefore be bold – huh, huh, huh – follow the scent. Enter the tents of the unclean, for once, and satisfy your wife’s frailty. Let your frail wife be satisfied; your zealous mother, and my suffering self, will also be satisfied. (III.ii.70-79)

The pleasure Zeal-of-the-Land Busy takes in the Fair is the pleasure of denouncing everything he sees – “We ‘scape so much of the other vanities, by our early entering,” he remarks, when they decide to go in and eat pig at Ursula’s (III.ii.82) – while concocting religious arguments like this one, for why he can in fact do what his senses bid him. This comical justification actually says a great deal about the queer pathways of both sense and reason through which carnival longing works in the Fair. He characterizes the desires he allows to be “satisfied” as frailty, weakness, and suffering – including the suffering he and Dame Purecraft undergo for their excessive religious zeal.

Moreover, Busy argues that finding the pig by smell, the more passive sensory pleasure, is not sinful: he is not seeking the pig, the pig is “offer[ing] itself, by other means to the sense.” Closing one’s eyes while standing still to be penetrated as the smells of the Fair offer themselves to the senses – and sniffing after the smell he seeks “like a hound” – is deemed less risky than looking upon the sights of the Fair in the course of trying to find it. As Joseph Litvak explains,
the place of smell and smelling is particularly central and overdetermined in phobic/erotic investments – of the kind that Busy displays here – in seeking out marked, dirty, and dangerous bodies and identities.\footnote{Joseph Litvak, “Glad to be Unhappy,” \textit{South Atlantic Quarterly} 106.3 (2007): 523-531.} Pointing out the queerness of the McCarthy era’s paranoid, persecutory discourses of “sniffing out” Jews and homosexuals, Litvak quotes Adorno and Horkheimer:

> Anyone who sniffs out ‘bad’ smells in order to extirpate them may imitate to his heart’s content the snuffling which takes its unrrationalized pleasure in the smell itself. Disinfected by the civilized sniffer’s absolute identification with the prohibiting agency, the forbidden impulse eludes the prohibition. If it crosses the threshold, the response is laughter. That is the schema of the anti-Semitic reaction.\footnote{Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, \textit{Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments}, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 151–52; qtd in Litvak, 525.}

This is also the schema of a Puritan (a cultural identity heavily associated with religious Hebraism) who, when called “Rabbi Busy,” proclaims that he will go and “eat exceedingly” of swine’s flesh in public “to profess our hate, and loathing of Judaism, whereof the brethren stand taxed” (I.vi.85-87); and who urges John Littlewit, just as he urges him to sniff out the pig, to concur, “I will eat heartily too, because I will be no Jew; I could never away with that stiff-necked generation. And truly, I hope my little one will be like me, that cries for pig so, i’ the mother’s belly” (I.vi.88-91). Busy reacts to the desires incited by the Fair by vociferously abjuring them and their suspect associations. “Disinfected” by his “absolute identification with the prohibiting agency,” he sniffs out pig in order to disapprove of it (but in order to eat it).\footnote{For more on the interplay between Puritans’ Hebraism and anti-Semitism, including an analysis of \textit{Bartholomew Fair}, see Nicholas McDowell, “The Stigmatizing of Puritans as Jews in Jacobean England: Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, and the \textit{Book of Sports} Controversy,” in \textit{Renaissance Studies} 19.3 (2005): 348-363.} Litvak goes on to trace the queer cycle of imitation, resentment and desire by which a phobic, anti-Semitic investment in Jewish bodies, appetites, and stereotypes is connected to a homophobic investment in markers of gay and otherwise non- or not-quite-heteronormative eroticism – a dynamic which, read into this scene, reveals Busy’s “unrationalized” (despite his
best efforts to rationalize it) “pleasure” in scenting after the pig “like a hound” to be explicitly part of a homophobic/homoerotic schema of passionate, paranoid investment in threatening, potentially self-implicating, bodily appetites.

In addition to a paranoid defense against forbidden objects of desire, Busy’s argument for smelling out the pig also draws on queer tropes of passivity to mount an apology for yielding to all-consuming longing: because pleasurable smells cannot as easily be shut out, this logic goes, their libidinal urgings may be followed with more impunity. It would be a sin, he says, “to decline, or resist the good titillation of the famelic sense,” that is, the sense of being famished or starving. The sense of smell, then, seems to indicate – and incite – physical cravings that feel more like needs (more like the “good titillation” of hunger, which is righteous to follow), as opposed to the more suspect wants (things that the body does not need, picked out and seized upon by sight). Smells entails desires for absent objects, just out of sight, which it feels like “high and horrible obstinacy” to resist. And, crucially, cravings for things smelled are desires for which the smeller can deny any agency – central to how Busy can only allow himself to be at the Fair as long as he hates and disavows what he experiences there. His protestation of absolute passivity – that the object of his dangerous, disavowed desire “may offer itself, by other means to the sense,” making it permissible to partake – resonates with later, closeted discourses of gay eroticism that also disavow seeking.32 Busy’s pleasure resides in these flamboyant, public performances combining disavowal and desire: in being at the Fair while denouncing it; in being identified as “Banbury-bloods, o’the sincere stud, come a pig-hunting” (III.ii.88-89); in not looking at the wares, but smelling for the pig; in warning against the perils of the Fair, and performatively hazarding them anyway (“[within] A pig prepare presently; let a pig be prepared

to us” [III.ii.90]). His position in the erotic economy is fueled simultaneously by being solicited, and by his own horror at being solicited by the vendors’ “What do you lack?”

Furthermore, the satirical staging of Busy’s dithering – and his eventual crackup – vicariously hails the audience into an economy of pleasure in lack as well. The audience’s pleasure in looking at the staged array of booths and vendors, and admiring the set’s mimicry of the Fair, is predicated on the fact that the production itself is a simulacrum of a real event, removed across the river from its real location to the equally ludic space of the Hope Theatre. As the “Induction on the Stage” before the play makes explicit, the Hope is “as dirty as Smithfield, and as stinking in every whit” (142). The Fair and the play are conflated, in name and in mood, to the purpose of fueling the desire for entertainment. The actors playing stage hands and a scrivener in the “Induction” connect the wares, characters, performances, and pleasures represented in the play to the crowded, generative space of the theater, where plays rather than material goods are made and sold to audiences. This self-referential conjuration of one space of collective spectatorship within another is intercut, at the same time, with the audience’s perverse enjoyment of watching Busy trying not to look, and with judging Busy’s judgments on the Fair (even as some audience members may have shared Busy’s stance of anxious Puritanical trepidation towards the Fair).

Busy’s resort to the pleasures of “the famelic sense” engages the audience’s capacities of fancy and longing even more intensely. Watching the players snuffle after the roast pig conjures, for the audience, not only the mental image of roast pig as an object of craving, but potentially the actual smell of roast pig itself: within the context of the play’s production in a theater also used for bear-baiting and other animal sports, it is possible to imagine that real roast pork was used as a stage property at the Hope. Though the text of the play gives no indication
that the audience ever sees the pig (all of the ordering and eating seems to take place within Ursula’s stall), Jonson’s foregrounding of smells, pleasant and offensive, throughout the play makes it at least thinkable that real roast pig could have been used as a kind of olfactory prop or scenic feature. The smell of roast pig would have effectively penetrated the audience’s bodies – and their mental “fancies” – through the senses, inciting an involuntary, bodily reaction of desire. Even if the scent of roast pig is not phenomenally present in the theater, the imaginary smell of the imaginary pig being scented after onstage would raise the spectral sense-memory of what that embodied craving feels like; a desire which, like “fancy” or “longing,” is predicated on a specific lack, a specific absence. The substance of roast pork in the play serves as a vehicle which leads, propels, and entraps the fairgoers – and the audience – through a succession of “longings” that oscillate from lack to surfeit and back to lack again. As a transmitter of all-consuming cravings – and of proliferating, promiscuous desires not only for itself, but for other things at the Fair – it is a key material element of the play’s queer erotic economy and its production and reproduction of non-heterosexually-directed appetites.

Some of these appetites are embodied in Ursula the pig-woman, a central locus of an explicitly sexed kind of carnality in the play, who metonymically stands in for the Fair’s extreme, copious sensual materiality. Her physical body is figured as consubstantial with the entire cycle of copious consumption and excess at the Fair – the roast pig and ale the fairgoers take in, and the sweat and urine they excrete. “I am all fire and fat,” she announces at her first entrance, scolding her tapster, Mooncalf, for not having her chair widened “so that my hips might play”; “…I shall e’en melt away to the first woman, a rib again, I am afraid. I do water the ground in knots as I go, like a great garden-pot; you may follow me by the S’s I make” (II.ii.49-33)

Jonathan Gil Harris asks similar questions about the historical phenomenology of smell and the audience’s experience of the stink of gunpowder on the Shakespearean stage, with reference to the “stink” mentioned in Bartholomew Fair, in “The Smell of Macbeth,” Shakespeare Quarterly 58.4 (2007) 465-486.
52). The gamesters around her stall call her “Body o’ the Fair,” “Mother o’ the bawds,” and “Mother o’ the pigs,” imagining Ursula’s body as an originary matrix giving birth to the entire fair and everything in it. “Art thou alive yet, with thy litter of pigs, to grunt out another Bartholomew Fair?” Knockem greets her affectionately (II.iii.1-2). While much of the existing criticism on Ursula emphasizes these gendered descriptions of her body as prodigiously, promiscuously generative and reproductive – and seeks to account for the proto-feminist power of those forces – I see Ursula as occupying a queerer role in the play’s erotic economy desire than a strictly gendered reading of her body might suggest. In my reading, Ursula’s body is so hyper-sexed as to be excessive and deviant: the men hanging around her stall compare her sex to a bog and a quagmire, as deep and dangerous as an unknown quicksand, where “he that would venture for’t, I assure him, might sink into her and be drowned a week ere any friend he had could find where he were,” “and then he would be a fortnight weighing up again.” Quarlous goes even further, adding that sex with Ursula would be “like falling into a whole shire of butter,” and a man would need “a team of Dutchmen should draw him out” (II.v.85-90). His twist plays the grotesque sexual jibe into a sensual, fairy-tale-like image of mythic-scale plentitude and fantastical, self-indulgent pleasure, in addition to danger. While this is a common enough misogynistic image, founded in a fear of the vagina as an uncanny abyss in which a man could get lost, I argue that this scene takes it to a hyperbolic level at which it actually becomes queer: there is no language of penile penetration in the rendering of Ursula’s vagina/body as vast as a “shire of butter”. The excess signified by the female sex is not possessed or mastered in

---

these fantasies; it swallows men whole – so that they can be rescued in feats of homosocial/homoerotic heroism by their loyal friends, or a brawny team of Dutchmen.

Conventional sexual agency does not reside with the phallus, or even really with the man. In fact, these jokes resonate a great deal with the fetish imagery of *macrophilia*, a kink in which men fantasize about sexual contact with giantesses, which heavily features images of full-body insertion into the giantess’s enormous vagina.\(^{35}\)

Furthermore, the mechanism by which Ursula’s giant body generates the Fair is *not* sexual reproduction, but something else: a kind of insistently material dissemination or diffusion. Her flesh is construed as a universal lubricant greasing the moving parts of the whole world; it is the grease used by “the coach-makers here in Smithfield to anoint wheels and axle-trees with” (II.v.73-74), as whale-oil (II.v.116), and, everywhere, as the grease that bastes and roasts the pigs. And, crucially, this body seems to draw sustenance in turn from the economy of desire and consumption at the Fair – she constantly frets that she will “dwindle away” and “can but hold life and soul together” with beer (II.ii.75-78). However, her sustenance is not merely material; rather, it is but derived from the Fair’s energies of *lacking* and *longing*, its tastes, its appetites, and its fancies. In a perfectly self-perpetuating system of desire, Ursula feeds (literally, she makes a profit) from her customers’ cravings for roast pig and beer; her food and drink in turn engender more, and more various, desires for other material pleasures on offer at the Fair. The same customers then linger at the Fair, and keep coming back to her stall, their endlessly-regenerating desires feeding her endlessly-generative fleshly presence. Her strategy for profiting from her beer is to feed the consumers’ *lack* of beer, the basis of their craving, by filling the cans with foam and shaking the bottles. As she tells her tapster:

---

Froth your cans well i’ the filling, at length, rogue, and jog your bottles o’ the buttock, sirrah, then skink out the first glass, ever, and drink with all companies, though you be sure to be drunk; you’ll misreckon the better, and be less ashamed on’t.

Ursula also reveals that her method combines withholding and scarcity with a protocol of purposeful loss and waste:

But your true trick, rascal, must be to be ever busy, and mis-take away the bottles and cans in haste before they be half drunk off, and never hear anybody call (if they should chance to mark you) till you ha’ brought fresh, and be able to forswear ‘em” (II.i.92-95).

In the interest of maximizing the fairgoers’ expenditure, Ursula tells her tapster to take their beers away, pretending not to hear them calling to get back their unfinished bottles; and to bring them new beers that they did not want, only to take those away as soon as they begin to be drunk in earnest. Ursula’s carnival economy of pint-pulling is doubly, queerly productive: it makes her a profit, and creates a queer circuit of object-relations oscillating from lack to surfeit and back to lack again. In fact, the effect the beer-drinkers would experience under this regime – of the capricious and arbitrary giving and withdrawing of beer, which keeps them constantly dissatisfied, but simultaneously gets them extremely drunk very quickly – recapitulates both the hunger that first drives the customers into the beer-stall, and the logic that governs the consumption of pleasure at the entire Fair. “Fancy” comes together with “longing” here, shaping customers’ desires in the sense in which “fancy” can mean “caprice, changeful mood,” “a whim,” and “an arbitrary preference.”36 Ursula can play up the chaotic effect of her method, though she sets it up very deliberately, under cover of the carnivalesque setting in which she dispenses food and drink that might seem strictly “fancy” (“for ornament or extraordinary use,” not for sustenance or necessity); however, even beer functions as a food providing substantial

36 OED Online, s.v. “fancy, n. and a.,” 7.a. and 8.a., http://oed.com/
nutrition in an early modern diet. In her practice of taking away the beer half-full, then, there is real hunger – a physical craving for the calories in the beer – in the desire she stokes.

In my reading, Ursula’s body figures the centrality of gratuitous, excessive pleasure in food, as well as in sensory experience and consumption more generally, within the queer erotic economy of the play. The excessive consumption that feeds her stall is predicated on sustained lacks and longings – beginning with customers’ desires, she makes more desires, out of the “famelic” allure of roasting pig and the frustration of beer taken away before it’s finished. The connection between generativity and the consuming fancy for roast pig literally figures into her price-setting calculus: “Five shillings a pig is my price, at least; if it be a sow-pig, sixpence more; if she be a great-bellied wife, and long for’t, sixpence more for that” (II.ii.103-105). As with the beer, Ursula institutes an economy of pleasure which might create a disorienting, carnival feel of arbitrariness for the consumer, but the chaos is a ruse. Her economy actually factors desire into its calculations, acknowledging that the fancy – the “inclination,” the “capricious or arbitrary preference” – of a certain, sexually-marked kind of consumer (a “great-bellied wife”) has real sensory and material consequences. Ursula cannot see too much longing for her liking; she has to be reassured that although “a body may read… i’ their small printed ruffis” that Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, Dame Purecraft, and the Littlewits are “sippers o’ the city” with a small appetite for ale (III.ii.99-101), a perverse reading of them as “right hypocrites” who will prove “good-mouthed gluttons, two to a pig” will prove more accurate (III.ii.104-109). And as an object of consuming desire that Zeal-of-the-Land Busy and his family not only want, but get and eat, Ursula’s roast pig embodies the confluence of longing and hate that a godly Puritan fairgoer such as Busy feels toward the Fair. A powerful, potentially-suspect erotic charge is

37 Ibid., 2.a.
transmitted through the consuming, communal sensory experience of yielding to the craving for pig, and then eating it – the erotic and material consequences of that longing, and of having it satisfied, reverberate through the rest of the play.

6. “That a man should have such a desire to a thing, and want it!”

Bartholomew Cokes’ appetite also contains a strong undercurrent of annihilation, albeit of a consumptive kind, which situates it as a counterpart to Zeal-of-the-Land Busy’s posture of self-denial and disavowal. While Busy denounces the fancy goods on sale at the Fair as Satan’s “hooks” and “baits,” and would cancel the whole thing if he could, Cokes finds it equally hard to bear that the things which draw his eye remain on sale, available to be bought by others. He seeks to destroy the Fair by a different means, attempting to buying it up whole for himself. He takes Wasp’s sarcastic suggestion that he buy Leatherhead’s entire shop and ask him to “keep it during the Fair” (III.iv.75) and runs away with it: when instantly distracted by the gingerbread-seller, the fabulously-named Joan Trash, who then bickers with Leatherhead for Cokes’ attention, his solution is to “content you both: I’ll buy up his shop and thy basket” (III.iv.93-94). Leaving behind any pretense of discriminating among – or even really wanting – any specific objects, he seeks only to buy up as much as he can. When Leatherhead defends Cokes’ right to indulge his urge to consume the entire Fair (“Why should you put him from it, friend?” [III.iv.96]), Wasp voices outrage at such a spectacular act of acquisition by alluding to the next degree of transgressive purchasing, the looming specters of slavery, prostitution, or even cannibalism: “Cry you mercy! You’d be sold too, would you? What’s the price on you? Jerkin and all, as you stand? Ha’ you any qualities?” And again, Cokes acts positively on Wasp’s negative sarcasm – in response to an indignant rehearsal from Joan Trash of Leatherhead’s
prowess as a playbook, puppeteer, and all-around entertainer (“the first, sir, that ever baited the fellow i’ the bear’s skin,” III.iv.116-117), Cokes buys the man: “Speak no more, but shut up shop presently, friend. I’ll buy both it and thee, too, to carry down with me, and her hamper beside. Thy shop shall furnish out the masque, and hers the banquet” (III.iv.129).

In keeping with the insatiable demand for the production of pleasures in the play, Cokes purchases a human being not merely for the economic value of his manual labor-power, but for his aesthetic prowess: his “fine motions,” and his engrossing stage “inventions” (III.iv.118-121). Cokes wants the hobby-horse maker as a puppeteer, for a “fancy,” and not a utilitarian, purpose: to realize his sudden artistic vision and undeniable craving for a wedding masque. Cokes rhapsodizes to Wasp and Mistress Overdo on his fanciful vision for the masque:

What a masque shall I furnish out for forty shillings (twenty pounds Scotch)! And a banquet of gingerbread! There’s a stately thing! Numps! Sister! And my wedding gloves too! (That I never thought on afore). All my wedding gloves, gingerbread! O me! What a device will there be to make ‘em eat their fingers’ ends! And delicate brooches for the bride-men and all! And then I’ll ha’ this posy put to ‘em: For the best grace, meaning Mistress Grace, my wedding posy (III.iv.138-145).

Bartholomew Cokes here sounds strikingly like a bourgeois-capitalist bride, excited for the fabulous desserts, accessories, gimmicky favors, entertainments, flowers, and witty, poetic toasts at her wedding – which she expects the sometime-actor-director/self-employed artisan/designer/emcee she has just hired on retainer to provide.38 Or, like a Jacobean lady aspiring to emulate the ostentation and pageantry of one of Jonson’s own royal masques, but on a low budget which transforms her aesthetic pretension into camp tragicomedy. Here is where we

---

38 If Cokes’ orientation to this queer economy of consumption seems to re-gender him as a stereotypically acquisitive woman in his wedding-commodity fetishism, Leatherhead is being cast as the archetype of the under-compensated gay wedding planner, whose labor and aesthetic prowess are exploited at the bride’s pleasure. What this trans-historical resonance makes visible is that not only is the consumer privileged over the producer within this consumption-based, lack-based economy of desire – which is arguably akin to the erotics underpinning a postmodern-capitalist service economy – there is also (hetero)sexual privilege attached to the status of getting married which heightens the power differential.
start to see, in the figure of Bartholomew Cokes, not only his signature appetite of infantile polymorphous perversity, but a trace of another kind of queerness – one that is more implicated in the social history of gender and sexuality than the other modes of feeling discussed in this project. As might be expected of Cokes, his wedding fantasy includes an entire meal consisting only of sweets, and a bizarrely auto-erotic, autophagic game: edible gloves with which his guests will mime eating their own fingers as part of the entertainment. But on top of these quirks, he is ecstatically invested in all the other ornamental touches he wants – his wedding-gloves (“that I never thought on afore”); the “delicate brooches for the bride-men” (he notably says nothing of the bride) – to a degree that he immediately usurps Leatherhead’s creative control, ostensibly the reason he hired him. “Mistress Grace” in this vision is not Cokes’ wedded wife, but his “wedding posy” – an empty name which furnishes the occasion of a poem to dazzle his friends. This wedding “fancy” – in the old sense of an imaginative vision – becomes implicated, through Cokes’ excessive investment in ornamental, luxury objects, with the emergent definition of “fancy” as a descriptor for a non-economically-productive man – from “a man who lives off the earnings of a prostitute”\(^39\) to “a dandy, a showy but ineffective worker or sportsman,”\(^40\) which Bartholomew Cokes inarguably is.

Leatherhead is also disturbingly implicated in this incipient confluence of economic and sexual pejoratives around “fancy” objects. When Cokes buys out both Leatherhead and Joan Trash, he asks them the sum they have invested in their shops. Leatherhead says, “it stands me in six and twenty shillings seven-pence halfpenny, beside three shillings for my ground,” to which Cokes replies, “Well, thirty shillings will do all, then!” (III.iv.131-133). He pays Leatherhead for only his goods and stall rental fee (rounded slightly upward), with no additional

\(^{39}\) *OED Online*, s.v. “fancy man,” c.

\(^{40}\) *OED Online*, s.v. “fancy, n. and a.,” B. 2. “fancy Dan.”
compensation for his *being bought* to come to Cokes’ house and put on a wedding masque. Despite Cokes’ giddy excitement about it, Leatherhead’s theatrical crafting of his wedding celebration will apparently be counted as the kind of “economically unproductive” activity done by a “fancy” man; though Leatherhead is in actuality actively employed, not only on the margins of the theater industry, but as a toymaker who runs his own shop, he will apparently be expected to mount this wedding masque *gratis*.

As Bartholomew Cokes progresses through the Fair and the play, something *really* perverse takes place. When he meets the ballad-seller, Nightingale, Cokes’ hungry receptivity leads him into a risky, homoerotic obsession with cutpurses, an omnipresent scourge of the Fair. Nightingale and Edgworth, the cutpurse, whom he calls “my secretary” (II.iv.22), set out to seduce Cokes “before he part with too much on his money” (III.v.10). He instantly “flutters,” as Wasp puts it (III.v.16), to Nightingale at the first line the ballad-singer sings, a simple line of greeting. Cokes rifles through the ballads, stopping at one entitled “A Caveat against cutpurses”:

> ‘A Caveat against cutpurses’? A good jest, i’faith; I would fain see that demon, your cutpurse you talk of, that delicate-handed devil. They say he walks hereabout; I would see him walk now. (*He shows his purse boastingly.*) Look you, sister, here, here, let him come, sister, and welcome. Ballad-man, does any cutpurses haunt hereabout? Pray thee raise me one or two; begin and show me one (III.v.30-36).

Though Nightingale counters that “this is a spell against ‘em,” Cokes does not seem to perceive any distinction between a spell to ward cutpurses off and one to lure them into sight. “No matter for the price. Thou dost not know me, I see; I am an odd Bartholomew,” he explains by way of asking Nightingale to sing it (III.v.41-42). “It is a gentle admonition, you must know, sir, both to

---

the purse-cutter and the purse-bearer,” Nightingale warns, but Cokes’ pleading cuts him off: “Not a word more, out o’ the tune, an thou lov’st me. Fa, la la la, la la la, fa la la la. Come, when?” (III.v.58-61). Though it is a very “odd” craving, as well as “odd” logic, Cokes’ undifferentiated sense that what looks like righteous anti-cutpurse polemic will really work to conjure one is more intuitively accurate than Nightingale’s warnings: Nightingale is singing in order to give Edgworth a chance to work his way to Cokes in the crowd.

The ballad itself – along with the ballad-singer it metonymically stands for – becomes another ornamental, “fancy” commodity that Cokes attempts to incorporate wholesale into his person. It conjures all manner of cravings for Cokes, including the urge to “buy the whole bundle” of ballads (III.v.161) and the ballad-maker, to “be poet to my masque” (III.v.92). The comic trope of a gargantuan, defective, childlike squire buying up artisans and singers from the Bartholomew Fair in order to assemble an ostentatious wedding masque also glances at a bit of political satire. Bartholomew’s masque is obviously shaping up to be a grotesque, low-comic imitation of the court masques Jonson was commissioned to stage at the Jacobean court. Cokes’ voracious purchasing of both artistic commodities and the artists themselves could be a pointed comment on James’s court theatricals – on the problem of an aristocrat (who is none too discriminating, and non-heterosexually-interested in a very obvious way) with a craving to incorporate the creative products generated in a public, carnivalesque aesthetic marketplace (i.e. the Fair, or the commercial theater) into his private household. Jonson makes clear that this incorporation implies a certain consuming – or, at best, indifferent – violence to the public theatrical sphere. Who will sing the ballads or mount the puppet-plays at the Fair, after all, if Leatherhead and Nightingale are taken into a private retinue? In my analysis of Cokes’ voracious consumption as a specifically queer form of desire, however, the excessive desire to
take in and own the ballad-singer and the puppet-maker as well as their entire stocks of goods figures a capacious erotic appetite which flouts conventional social boundaries governing relations and transactions between fairgoers and artisans, even up to breaking the taboo on the purchasing of people. The array of objects Bartholomew Cokes takes in to himself is queer in its sheer hyperbolic size and variety, and in its absence of any principle of necessity or preference; now it also includes entire real people as well as gingerbread-children and painted lady dolls.

But Nightingale’s performance does not only function as a “fancy” aesthetic commodity for Cokes to long for and consume – it also operates on his desire, engendering his nostalgia, in the distant memory of the (possibly obscene) “brave pictures! Other manner of pictures than these” (III.v.45-46) from ballads he pasted on the nursery-chimney as a child. It stokes him into a state of childlike, narcissistic abandon as he interjects his own singing and dancing into the song. The ballad, with which Nightingale identifies himself, “made as ‘twere in mine own person” (III.v.38), works as a transmitter and generator of “fancy.” It is a poetic execution of an internal, creative urge, which in turn works upon its audience, Bartholomew Cokes, to transmit those urges to him – though with a perverse twist, the longing to see a cutpurse, which originates with the hearer’s desire. Cokes joins in with Nightingale on the chorus: “Youth, youth, thou hadst better been starved by thy nurse,/ Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse” (III.v.88-89). Each time the balladeer repeats it at his pleading, Cokes becomes more and more ecstatically invested in the song and in the cutpurse he hopes to conjure. He is seized with conflicting autoerotic desires to touch himself and his purse, in anticipation of being touched by the “youth” to whom he sings: “O rare! I would fain rub mine elbow now, but I dare not pull out my hand” (III.v.90-91).
On the third chorus, he cries out in frustration: “Where’s this youth, now? A man must call upon him, for his own good, and yet he will not appear. Look here, here’s for him (he shows his purse); handy-dandy, which hand will he have? On, I pray thee, with the rest, I do hear of him, but I cannot see him, this Master Youth, the cutpurse” (III.v.112-116). He has moved from excitedly holding his purse inside his clothes to taking it out and dangling it in front of him to attract the cutpurse; a staging of this scene to suggest the connection between his purse and his genitals is easy to envision. His interjections of longing become more intense with each chorus: “That was a fine fellow! I would have him now” (III.v.124); and finally, in an exclamation that sums up Bartholomew Cokes’ entire position vis-à-vis desire, “A pox on ‘em, that they will not come! That a man should have such a desire to a thing, and want it” (III.v.130-131). For all his purse-teasing, though, he does not know what the onlookers watching the scene can see: that the cutpurse, Edgworth, is already upon him. Rather than grabbing the dangled bait, Edgworth “tickles him in the ear with a straw twice to draw his hand out of his pocket” (III.v.152). At the crucial instant, Cokes’ absolute inability not to satisfy a physical urge – to rub his tickled ear – gets his purse stolen by Edgworth, who immediately passes it off to Nightingale before he notices that it is gone. The one thing Cokes does not want at the Fair – getting purse-cut, which would foreclose his consumption of every other thing and experience – is the thing he compulsively solicits and allows, through his queer attractions to Nightingale’s song, to the elusive cutpurse “youth,” and to the autoerotic touching and exposure he is unable to resist.

In fact, I read the entire set of comic exchanges centered on using a ballad against cutpurses as cutpurse-bait as representative of how attraction and repulsion work in the queer economy of *Bartholomew Fair*: Cokes’ craving to see a cutpurse walking about must be voiced through a ballad condemning him; and his latent desire to be touched by a cutpurse must be
expressed as a need to fondle one’s own purse and tease him with it. Moreover, his attraction to
the ballad-singer must be enacted by taking him out of business. Cokes’ obsession with the
cutpurse must resolve in a total anticlimax, when he gets in a tiff over who is first in line to buy
ballads with Edgworth, the very “youth” to whom he has been frantically calling even as he was
sneaking up to tickle his ear, and does not know him: “Sir, I take you for an honest gentleman, if
that be mistaking; I met you today afore” (III.v.169-170). The pathetic irony is heightened when
Edgworth asks mock-sympathetically, “Are you sure you ha’ lost it, sir?” and Cokes answers
“Oh God! Yes; as I am an honest man, I had it but e’en now, at ‘Youth, youth’” (III.v.183-184).

Bartholomew Cokes’ and Zeal-of-the-Land Busy’s erotic orientations towards the things
of the Fair are not as diametrically opposed as they first appear, even though one explicitly seeks
pleasure and the other explicitly disavows it. Both characters’ stances are founded in a negative
structure of desire, in which attraction is voiced as repulsion. The repulsive can be attractive if
accessed obliquely, by a circuitous route (smelling for the pig, or singing a ballad about how you
hope no cutpurses are near). Stated attractions remain unfulfilled (seeing the cutpurse, not
looking at anything), while repulsions can be resolved by getting and consuming – and
submitting to – the repellent thing (pig-eating, purse-cutting), which feeds the tacit attraction
underneath. Cravings for specific things can also move back and forth from one to the other,
always circulating back through the state of lack in which “fancy” originates: attraction can
become repulsion as soon as it is acted upon, or a new object presents itself; or, repulsion can
spontaneously convert into attraction once the want of the object becomes acute enough.

7. “So you hate ‘em”
Further illustrating the coherent perversity of this play’s queer erotic economy, Zeal-of-the-Land Busy also has his own consumption-crazed, erotically-invested run-ins with the puppet-maker and the gingerbread woman. Full of pig and beer from Ursula’s stall, Busy emerges into the Fair again, and the first “what do you lack, gentlemen?” he hears sends him on a tirade against Leatherhead’s goods: “Peace, with thy apocryphal wares, thou profane publican: thy bells, they dragons, and thy Toby’s dogs. Thy hobby-horse is an idol, a very idol, a fierce and rank idol; and thou the Nebuchadnezzar, the proud Nebuchadnezzar of the Fair, that set’st it up for children to fall down and worship” (III.vi.49-55). Busy’s impassioned investment is in lacking all of these things; his condemnation gives them another kind of erotic charge rooted in their religious valence. All of the things in Leatherhead’s stall are in some sense ceremonial objects, if children’s play is considered to be ceremonial. His toys acquire heightened energy as transmitters of eros when read through Busy’s Puritanical lens – here they are not just commodities but talismans or fetish objects, to be inappropriately loved and used for participating in morally-suspect pleasures, rather than for any materially or spiritually productive work.

The toys’ “fancy” allure is precisely why such a fine distinction must be made and policed between acceptable and unacceptable gazes, affects, and desires toward them. John and Win Littlewit must plot to remain in the Fair to see the sights after Win’s longing for pig has been satiated:

\textit{LITTLEWIT: [...] we shall never see any sights i’ the Fair, Win except you long still, Win, good Win, sweet Win, long to see some hobby-horses and some drums and rattles and dogs and fine devices, Win. The bull with the five legs, Win, and the great hog. Now you ha’ begun with pig, you may long for anything, Win, and so for my motion, Win.}

\footnote{Early evangelical Protestants generally did not, as a rule, formally make or buy toys for children. See Bruce C. Daniels, \textit{Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), especially 186-189, on Puritans’ opposition to childhood play as potentially corrupting.}
Win: But we sha’ not eat o’ the bull; and the hog, John; how shall I long then?
Littlewit: O yes, Win! You may long to see as well as to taste, Win. How did the ‘pothecary’s wife, Win, that longed to see the anatomy, Win? Or the lady, Win, that desired to spit i’ the great lawyer’s mouth after an eloquent pleading? I assure you they longed, Win; good Win, go in, and long (III.vi.4-16).

The couple reckons that the potentially-pregnant exception that was made for Win’s longing to eat roast pig will also be extended to the “fine devices” and wonders on display at the Fair, including her husband’s puppet-play, on the grounds that wives have been known to long for strange, transgressive things besides food. Longings to see and to do are a riskier proposition, however, than longings to taste: as Win intuits, and as John’s examples would seem to demonstrate, when her longings depart from food, they break with any natural benefit to her unborn child, and enter the territory of pure “fancy” – superfluous, unproductive, potentially abnormal ideas originating in the mind. When they happen upon Leatherhead’s stall, the Littlewits argue that his goods can gratify Win’s “longing”: “Look Win; do look o’ God’s name, and save your longing. Here be fine sights,” John points out to her. “Aye child,” her mother interjects, “so you hate ‘em, as our brother Zeal does, you may look on ‘em” (III.vi.58-61).

Looking and longing for the “fancy” things of the Fair is a transgressive desire, as Busy has made clear; but – and this is crucial to my argument that this is a queer form of desire – it is not indifferent or unmoved looking that is commanded of Win here. Under Dame Purecraft and Busy’s rules, fervently invested, prurient, passionate looking, attended by affects so inflamed as to be barely controllable, is totally permissible – as long as it’s negative affect, inflected with denunciation and hate. As long, in other words, as lack – the disavowal of the desire to obtain such things – is the locus of erotic investment in the act of looking. “If,” as Juliet says to her
parents in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, “looking liking move,” the godly Protestant imperative seems to be to replace that “liking” with *loathing*, in order to look all you like.\(^{43}\)

Busy’s screeds in this scene address the “fancy,” aesthetic/ornamental status of the toys and gingerbread through a paranoid flood of objections to bodily images – to simulacra of bodies, or anything that can be metaphorized as a body – which hilariously satirizes the florid carnal language of the Puritans’ iconoclastic discourse. A drum is not just an instrument of pagan ritual and profane music-making – it is “the broken belly of the Beast, and thy bellows there are his lungs, and these pipes are his throat, those feathers are of his tail, and thy rattles the gnashing of his teeth” (III.vi.63-65). A doll is not just a frivolous luxury or a temptation to idleness, but is singled out for her flamboyant dress as though she were a real girl – “See you not Goldilocks, the purple strumpet, there? In her yellow gown and green sleeves?” – or a finely dressed saint statue among “the profane pipes, the tinkling timbrels? A shop of relics!” (III.vi.84-87). The gingerbread is a “basket of popery,” a “nest of images, and whole legend of gingerwork,” because the gingerbread people being sold are made in the image of Saint Bartholomew for the Fair;\(^{44}\) they are also wafers endowed with some human attributes, recalling the Catholic Eucharist. Like Bartholomew Cokes hoping for the cutpurse to appear, Zeal-of-the-Land Busy becomes more and more passionately and physically excited over the evil fancies of the Fair, once he has looked: “The sin of the Fair provokes me; I cannot be silent” (III.vi.71). Leatherhead threatens him with arrest if he does not quiet down, and bets John Littlewit a shilling against the entire shop (which has already been bought, of course, by Bartholomew Cokes) that he will silence him, which only inflames Busy with a greater feeling of mission: “I

---


\(^{44}\) Campbell, ed., *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, 510 n. 68.
was moved in spirit to be here this day in this Fair, this wicked and most foul Fair, and fitter may it be called a foul than a Fair – to protest against the abuses of it, the foul abuses of it, in regard of the afflicted saints that are troubled, very much troubled, exceedingly troubled, with the opening of the merchandise of Babylon again, and the peeping of popery upon the stalls, here, here, in the high places…” (III.vi.78-84). The audience might connect this frenetic, repetitive rant to the witches’ ecstatic incantation in *Macbeth* that “fair is foul and foul is fair.” That Busy echoes the discourse of witchcraft in his paranoid ranting that fair and foul often go together (and can look a lot like one another) signals that the queerly reproductive witch-generating language of the witch hunt – which marshals the slippage between pleasure and disgust to the end of producing socially-transgressive, potentially-corrupting desires – is also at home in the space of the Fair and in Busy’s annihilating mode of consumption. In his frenzy, before Littlewit can restrain him, Busy attacks the Fair, dumping the gingerbread basket on the ground:

**BUSY:** And this idolatrous grove of images, this flasket of idols, which I will pull down—

*Overthrows the gingerbread.*

**TRASH:** O my ware, my ware, God bless it!

**BUSY:** In my zeal, and glory, to be thus exercised (III.vi.89-92).

This display has the structural form of an orgiastic, eroticized climax of destruction. If the group consumption of despised pig that Busy orchestrates on first arriving serves as foreplay, the tension inherent in his looking/longing/hating relation to the objects of the Fair then gradually builds as he moves through the stalls, culminating in an orgasmic moment of abandon in which the taboos of legality and social decorum are finally breached and Busy wreaks his desire upon the bodies of the gingerbread men. In this scene’s political and religious satire of literalist

---

iconoclasm, the joke is that Busy’s icono-phobic fantasies and passions run away with themselves: in fancying the painted dolls and gingerbread-men to be spiritually threatening, Busy is participating in the fetishistic process of imaginative desire, or “fancy,” on which the Fair runs. He is claiming these “fancy” things as objects of passionate desire and investment, even as he thinks he’s purely denouncing them. Afterwards, he is exhilarated by his affective expenditure: it was his “glory” to be so “exercised” as to physically do the destruction he desired. As the officers show up, he claims to be ready for more masochistic surrender to the destructive affects consuming him (“’Tis a sanctified noise, I will make a loud and most strong noise” [III.vi.95-96]), to be ready to “thrust myself into the stocks, upon the pikes of the land” (III.vi.100). Like Bartholomew Cokes, Busy seems determined to end the proliferation of desires in the Fair before he leaves, and he is willing to be swallowed up into the state’s disciplinary apparatus along with it, losing his freedom and negating the value of his own person in the process.

8. “I shall not know which to love best else”

The spectacle that brings all of the Fair’s desirers together in an orgy of polymorphous longing is Leatherhead and Littlewit’s “puppet play,” which has functioned as an alluring ideation, just out of sight, for John and Win. All of the subplots culminate there, where Leatherhead’s puppets function as the ultimate materialized metaphor for the play’s queer reproduction of objects of desire. The scene plays on puppets as a liminal category, operating by turns as commodities, characters in the puppet-play, and erotic objects. I argue that in bringing together aspects of human bodies and made things, the puppets actually cinch the play’s multifarious instantiations of fancying, lacking, and longing together into a unified system – they demonstrate that the erotic economy of Bartholomew Fair is a monistic one, in which humans
and artificial commodities are the same order of substance. Both can be animate, active
transmitters of affect, both can be love objects, both can engage in social relations; but both can
also be bought, sold, eaten, transformed, dislocated, and annihilated. The play parallels
Leatherhead’s basket of puppets and the crowd of young boys – the “boys o’ the Fair,” whose
services are the object of lascivious suspicion for the disguised (and deranged) slumming
magistrate, Justice Overdo, who watches the entire puppet-show scene in an anti-theatrical lather
that crosses over into actual madness. Bartholomew Cokes, confusing the puppet-theater with a
live theater, demands to see and drink with the actors; when shown the array of little bodies in
the basket, he is of course consumed with liking for them. He at once observes that they would
all fit in his mouth, and regards them as all the better actors because “there goes not so much
charge to the feasting of ’em, or making ’em drunk as to the other, by reason of their littleness”
(V.iii.86-87). The theatrical joke about the problems solved by getting rid of actors’ consuming,
desiring, unruly bodies can also be read as a meta-comment on how the play materializes erotic
objects: if a play gets rid of actors (individuated, autonomously-motivated agents) as a category,
it solves the problem of differentiating between subjects and objects of desire by making
everyone a potential object in a field of objects, afloat in a network of their own and others’
roving desires. If everyone and everything is powered by the same consuming carnival longing,
there is always the possibility of being consumed: consumed by one’s own looking and longing,
or forcibly consumed by some organ of the Fair that hungers for bodies to buy and sell. The
puppet-play is the space where that risk of consumption is borne out, with comic flair, for the
women fair-goers: rather than attending as the treasured dedicatee of her husband’s play (that is,
as the object of a specifically-directed heterosexual affection), Win Littlewit, who went to the
bathroom and was taken into prostitution, comes as an anonymous, prospective object for sale in
the sexual market of the playhouse. Her companion (and fellow prostitute) Mistress Overdo is helplessly drunk, her agency undone from the inside by her own appetite. As the women’s flirtation with commodification and Bartholomew Cokes’ attempt to buy up artisans both show, *human bodies* are a crucial material in the Fair’s economy of consumption. When Leatherhead and the other vendors lament that the fair is “pestilence dead,” what they mean is that the Fair lacks the *bodies* that bring its queer reproductivity to life (II.ii.1). Only with enough bodies can the Fair sustain the constant transmutation of longing into consumption – and that calculus depends on the likelihood that some proportion of the bodies brought into the system will be not just consumers, but objects of consumption.

The puppet show itself, a bawdy low-comedy version of *Hero and Leander*, dramatizes in miniature what the play’s mechanisms of queer lack and longing bring about: the fashioning and uncanny animation of material forms, born out of imaginative desire and produced for the purpose of generating more desire and pleasure, through the theatrical (aesthetic, collective, carnivalesque) energy of the Fair – *not* through any heterosexual reproduction or exchange. Bartholomew Cokes predictably takes the puppets’ theatrical status as surrogate thing-humans to its most erotically-deviant extreme; “handling” them in their basket, he swears, “I am in love with the actors already” (V.iii.116). He attempts to give the real musical instruments and hobby-horse he has just bought to his latest love objects, seemingly unaware that not all his objects (puppets, for instance) are able to make any use of all of his other objects. If the men in Ursula’s stall evidenced a fetishistic fantasy orientation towards being wholly subsumed into the gigantic sex of a supernaturally huge woman, Cokes’ obsessive petting and fussing over the puppets recalls the opposite fetish, an erotic desire for miniature people. Cokes seems to enjoy them narcissistically, as part-objects that can be decked out with his other objects, or incorporated into
himself. Believing the puppets to be animate somehow, and to exist for his sole pleasure, he talks to them onstage, attempting to give them gifts, intervene in their fights, and direct the one he likes to stay in his view more, peeved that “my fiddle-stick does fiddle in and out too much” (V.iii.180-181). During the show, he dithers over choosing which puppet is his particular favorite, to whom he is “allied” – differentiating among objects of desire is so far outside of his erotic bent that he becomes agitated at the merest possibility of doing so.

The climax of the puppet show – which is also the climax of the play – piles on layer after layer of artificial, uncanny, queerly-generated shapes of fancy into the object-drama playing out before the fairgoers/playgoers, until the stage is filled with such a variety of libidinal investments in the proceedings that there must be something to hail every viewer. There is puppet kissing, puppet violence, puppet battery (Damon and Pythias on Hero), a puppet ghost; and an angry revenant of flesh and blood in the person of Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, who stands up and condemns the immorality of the theatrical/representational enterprise (“I have long opened my mouth wide and gaped, I have gaped as the oyster for the tide, after thy destruction, but cannot compass it by suit or dispute,” V.v.19-22). He engages the puppet ghost – whose form is that of the ancient tyrant Dionysius, but dressed as a school-master – in a debate over the theater, as to whether “the idol” (the puppet ghost) has a “lawful calling” (V.v.45). But what Zeal-of-the-Land Busy thinks is going to be his iconoclastic, anti-materialist, anti-erotic trump card – the stock anti-theatrical outcry that “you are an abomination; for the male of you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male” (V.v.86-88) – is turned back by the puppet ghost into a final, irrefutable lesson about just how queer, how far removed from the conventional imperatives of sexual difference or gender identity, this theatrical economy of desire is. Saying that this “old stale argument” “will not hold against the puppets, for we have
neither male nor female amongst us. And that thou may’st see, if thou wilt, like a malicious purblind zeal as thou art!” the puppet ghost “takes up his garment,” and flashes his absent genitals to Busy and the whole audience. A flashing by a puppet – a puppet of a ghost, no less – could hardly be a purer product of the queerly generative capabilities of “fancy” that I explored in the opening speech of *Twelfth Night*, or a more fitting conclusion to *Bartholomew Fair*’s profusion of commodities produced as preemptive answers to “What’d ye lack?”: as an idea, it is an idiosyncratic artifact which began life as a mental image (somewhere, if not in Jonson’s head); as a material form, it is multiply, fantastically removed from any natural, let alone normatively sexual, object of desire. And as a dramatic event, its function in the play is to show a “thing not present to the senses” – to reveal what Busy might have envisioned in his own prurient “fancy” as a sexed body to be a wholly un-natural, aesthetic product, with no natural body beneath. The sight of it – presumably the sight of nothing under the puppet ghost’s clothes; or perhaps, even more hilariously, the sight of a human hand – is prodigious enough to perform a genuine wonder: it converts Zeal-of-the-Land Busy to a lover of the theater. He says only, “I am confuted, the cause hath failed me” (V.v.101), and sits down to watch the play. Even the end of the puppet show and the end of the play is not the end of the theatrical festivities – the authority who shuts down the puppets and doles out some (fairly light) discipline, Justice Overdo, hospitably invites everyone to his house for dinner; Bartholomew Cokes demands that the “actors” (by which he means the puppets, who still hold his fancy, though in practice they cannot be delivered without Leatherhead and Littlewit) come along, to have “the rest o’ the play at home” (V.vi.109-110)

9. “It should be one of my complexion”
This chapter has traced a queer mechanism of erotic desire predicated on self-replicating, insatiable lack and longing, from the idea of “fancy” in *Twelfth Night*’s opening lines through *Bartholomew Fair*’s consumption-crazed libidinal universe. Now, drawing on the asexual proliferation of objects and longings I have explicated in *Bartholomew Fair*, I will revisit *Twelfth Night*, to show how its modes of producing and reproducing desire through diffuse, insatiable “fancy” can at times be just as queerly, non-heterosexually generative. In *Bartholomew Fair*, circuits of desire so voraciously oriented towards consumption mean that in the middle of the crowded carnival/market world of material goods available to desire, some of the most compelling objects of longing are fantasmatic and imaginative: Win’s *longing* for pig, the epic wedding masque Bartholomew Cokes plans (but which never takes place). *Twelfth Night*, on the other hand, ostensibly ends with a marriage between Orsino and Viola, but in fact we see no more of the wedding than we do of Bartholomew Cokes’. And the play never mentions reproduction; even in the resolution, it projects no future offspring for any of the couples. It seems insistent to thematize allo-erotic relations; but on closer examination, none actually occur.

In stark contrast to Orsino’s love-rhapsody with himself, Malvolio’s failed use of yellow cross-gartered stockings to fulfill his erotic ends represents how a seemingly more object-oriented, even heterosexually-oriented manifestation of fancy can end up bolstering the overarching queer structure of desire in the play. Pondering a prank letter from Maria which implants in *his* fancy a full-scale delusion that Olivia is in love with him, Malvolio muses, “’Tis but fortune; all is fortune. Maria once told me she did affect me; and I have heard herself come thus near, that, should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion” (II.v.21-24). Malvolio’s infatuation with Olivia is perhaps the least problematic, most straightforwardly *hetero*-erotic cathexis in the play, and even it can only be articulated, even to himself, in negative terms. It is
founded on a lie and absolutely unrequited. Malvolio’s only relation to Olivia’s fancy is a not-
very-near, utterly hypothetical, future-subjunctive one. In truth, there is hardly any more direct
representation of Olivia in Malvolio’s love-reverie than in Orsino’s, although unlike Orsino’s,
Malvolio’s desire is fixed on one object; any possibility of dyadic erotic congress in this play –
hetero- or homo-erotic, cross-dressed or merely ridiculously costumed – can only be spoken as
disavowal, hearsay, and equivocation.46 Even so, Malvolio’s dancing, indirect expressions of his
singular investment in Olivia come to a bad end. The play subtly disallows goal-oriented,
possessive erotic dynamics; proactive efforts to attain a partner are usually met with some form
of humiliation (see Olivia’s gifts and entreaties to Viola before she is disclosed to be a woman) –
but none more than Malvolio’s.

What does become an erotic object for Malvolio, in lieu of Olivia, are the stockings. They pretend to offer some access to Olivia’s fancy – her falsely-attributed request to see him in yellow cross-gartered stockings is as close as he will ever get to being an object of her desire. In a cruel irony, “the ornamental tags, appended to the ribbons by which the hose were secured to the doublet” were called “fancy”47; at the false Olivia’s behest Malvolio buys the yellow stockings and pays specific, ritualistic attention to making a cross with the “fancy” as he dresses. Clearly Malvolio’s stockings have something in common with Freud’s notion of the fetish: an intimate garment which becomes an erotic object in its own right, though it actually signals the opposite, the denial, of hetero-erotic desire or heterosexual sex. The stockings also arguably become a talismanic substitute for Olivia, diverting and holding in themselves desire which

46 This is true in the central cross-dressed/homoerotic bonds as well, c.f. all Viola’s exchanges with Olivia.
47 “fancy, n. and a.,” A. 5. c. (1652).
“should,” normatively, be directed towards heterosexual, genital ends. However, looking at the stockings through the play’s drive to produce and reproduce desire reveals that, though they may be a commodity fetish, erotically they are much more of an anti-fetish. They fail to work their erotically conductive magic, which was to engender, in Olivia, a sensation of lack — for Malvolio. It doesn’t work; Olivia “detests” the fashion (II.v.191). Whereas the stockings are so unpleasant to wear that, when Malvolio appears in them, his only pleasure is in the masochistic pain of wearing them for her pleasure: “This does make some obstruction in the blood, this cross-gartering; but what of that? If it please the eye of one, it is with me as the very true sonnet is, ‘Please one, and please all’” (III.iv.18-21). Unlike the erotic objects in Orsino’s polymorphous sea, Malvolio’s social “pitch” remains significant. His attempt to use a prosthetic adornment to raise it backfires, plummeting both him and his fancy stockings “into abatement and low price,/ Even in a minute” (I.i.13-14).

Widening the frame to consider the afterlife of this play and this word can help to make visible the ramifications of queer “fancy” in the material, commercial, and aesthetic realms — and, sooner than one might think, in the history of sexuality. Following Eve Sedgwick’s suggestion that “nonce taxonomies” can hone and transmit “skills for making, testing, and using unrationalized and provisional hypotheses,” I want to offer a “nonce etymology” of “fancy”: an un-falsifiable queer genealogy of the concept’s associations with artistic production, commodity desire, and various forms of gender and sexual transgression through the centuries in between Twelfth Night and today. The richly proliferating meanings of fancy at the beginning of the seventeenth century congeal over the next three centuries into a long list of connotations pointing

---

49 Sedgwick, Epistemology, 23.
away from the shifting valuations of hetero-normativity and a patriarchal social order. “Fancy” as desire becomes an adverbial that can work on one (fancy-baffled, fancy-caught, fancy-guided) in the early- to mid-seventeenth century, making its erotic efficacy slightly more threatening.50

By the early- to mid-nineteenth century, the early definition of “amorous inclination” becomes an adjective, “fancy-woman” or “fancy-man,” which derives its literal meaning from being loved (“a person who is fancied,” or “a sweetheart”)51 – but which actually means “a kept mistress” (also a “fancy-girl” or “fancy-piece”), one who lives outside the bonds of heterosexual domesticity, improperly consuming resources.52 “Fancy-man,” however, refers by 1811 to “a man kept by a lady for secret services,” or “a man who lives off the earnings of a prostitute.”53 What starts out as an economic slur and a sex-work pejorative then seems to show how homosexual masculine identifiers gradually come to stand as shorthand for all non-normative sexual positions and roles: it passes through “fancy Dan: a dandy, a non-economically-productive man,”54 and thus into the lineage of “dandyism,” a key subcultural term in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century’s incipient discourses of homosexuality.

But this process is part of a larger re-ordering of meaning around “fancy” taking place in areas that “intersect with, touch, or list in the direction of sex – the catchall word that here refers to gender, desire, sexuality, and perhaps anatomy” to varying degrees.55 I would suggest that this particular assortment of usages is very much clustered around early fragmentary and informal suspicions about non-normative erotic inclinations, what the people who have them are like, and what effects they have in the world. By tracing the word across sexual, non-sexual, and

---

50 “fancy, n. and a.,” B. 1. c.
51 “fancy, n. and a.,” B. 5; “fancy man,” a.
52 “fancy, n. and a.,” C2.
53 “fancy man,” c.
54 “fancy, n. and a.,” B. 2. “fancy Dan.”
55 Carla Freccero’s qualifier in “Queer Times” for what kinds of disturbances she calls “queer” (490).
quasi-sexual meanings, we can see the outlines of the qualitative queerness to which it refers: desires that are excessive in a free-floating and superfluous way. After the old use’s connotations of delusion and demonism, it is used to pejoratively describe caprice, irrationality, and folly as early as the late sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{56} In the mid-eighteenth century, it begins to describe objects of intricate or ornamental design – the noun that had meant the inventive skill of the mental imagination was applied to the \textit{variation} in the design.\textsuperscript{57} Then, later in the eighteenth century, it becomes a common adjective delineating a category of things that are “fancy” – which of course includes many of the ornamental accessories and decorative objects associated with women’s economic consumption. It is this category that appears to have drawn together the earlier connotations of resource-consuming, extra-domestic sexuality (“fancy-woman,” “fancy-man”) with a new denigration of the inventive, elaborate \textit{shapes} of material goods as frivolous and non-productive. In this descriptor (the one still in use today), we can see the same dual suspicions of insatiable appetite for consumption and capricious motions of desire that I describe in \textit{Twelfth Night} and \textit{Bartholomew Fair}, combined with a layer of gender and sexuality anxiety about people who have too much sex and/or do too little work. I would even take this nonce-etymology one step further, and ask what terms or affiliations from current gay and queer cultures can be linked back with their shadowy, possible connections to “fancy” – for example, in an “obsolete” meaning from 1712 with intriguing never-to-be-recovered associations, “fancy” is defined as “an alleged name for the pansy.”\textsuperscript{58} “The fancy” also serves as a somewhat cryptic

\textsuperscript{56} “fancy, \textit{n.} and \textit{a.},” B. 3. \textit{a.} and A. 7. \textit{a.}

\textsuperscript{57} “fancy, \textit{n.} and \textit{a.},” adj., 1. \textit{a.}

\textsuperscript{58} “fancy, \textit{n.} and \textit{a.},” A. 11.
shorthand for the collectivity of devotees (“fanciers”) of some subcultural pursuit – especially boxing and the breeding of animals or plants for ornamental purposes.60

10. “His fancy’s queen”

Thinking about the Malvolio plot in the space marked out by these associations – where erotic imagination and social categories collide, and where manufacture and style operate on sexual desire – clarifies how “fancy” manages to queer hetero-eroticism, by preventing it from being exchanged or affirmatively expressed. As Malvolio’s failed fetishistic fancy virtually cuts him off from any ability to effect a causal relationship between word and action, Orsino’s desire reverses and redirects itself, floating, disconnected from the heteronormative hierarchy of object choices. All of the play’s queered desires are resolved at the play’s end, with our focus on Viola as she is being described by Orsino – but it is not exactly Viola being described. With characteristic indirection, the Duke projects himself into the future, into a “golden time” when he and Viola will be married. The Viola who is next to him in bodily form, though, is not Viola – she is still Cesario, he says, “for so you shall be while you are a man.” “But,” he tells her, “when in other habits [she is] seen,” she will take on a different sex and a different status: “Orsino’s mistress and his fancy’s queen” (V.i.379-381). This last line raises doubt as to whether Orsino will be able to corporeally apprehend the presence of that future-Viola who will be by his side. She will change back into women’s clothes so that she can “be seen” as Viola by others, but even then she does not seem to be able to be seen by Orsino. She will be “Orsino’s mistress” – not


“my mistress;” Orsino refers to himself in the third person here – and “his fancy’s queen.”

Callaghan calls this phrase “genitally undecipherable”61 in respect of the strangeness of seeing two words associated with the pudendum juxtaposed in this triply proprietary grouping – presumably, Orsino has a “fancy,” and Viola will be “queen” of it?

The lines simultaneously body forth a new status for Viola and efface her agency, even her presence. The physical and linguistic incoherency of these final lines recalls the incoherent structure and seemingly random causal sequences of a dream. Therefore my final gesture will be to unpack some of the irresolvable, almost inarticulable implications of this reading of desire in the final lines. If fancy is the intangible generative organ that receives the impressions of words and images, and conceives and holds the imaginary forms of erotic love objects (or ideas for poems to be written), then the Duke’s fancy will construct and make an image of Viola inside itself. If Viola is queen in Orsino’s fancy, as his strange syntax intimates, she will be a mere apparition inside his imagination. This model precludes any possibility of Viola’s being fully embodied in her own right. Orsino would either keep her enclosed inside him forever as an inert, un-relinquished object of sexual love (probably unconsummated, since the fulfillment and abatement of desire would remove her from his fancy); or, he would have to somehow give birth to Viola, in the role of a fancying mother. Even then, irrespective of the extreme twists and turns of the queering of body and gender that would be required to locate some metaphor or mechanism by which this could take place, the Viola to whom Orsino would give birth would not be the unique, embodied Cesario/Viola standing before him onstage. It would be his constructed fantasy of Cesario/Viola made flesh, like the woman who “brought forth a blacke-a-more.” We would love to see Orsino’s ideal form of Cesario/Viola – we wonder whether she/he

61 Callaghan, “And all is semblative,” 37.
would then possess the “little thing” that would cement their homoerotic bond – but we must recognize it would be a different being from an autonomous, agentive Viola.

If Orsino gets his own, auto-erotically conjured version of Viola at the end of the play – which he arguably does here, since these lines make it so difficult for her to become differentiated – it would be a piece of evidence that the play is actually “the Duke’s fancy,” that Orsino is the dreamer whose wish-fulfillment structures the whole play. We can trace a narrative thread through the play that looks like something Orsino might dream into being, beginning with his impetuous discourse on his fickle erotic desires. The push-and-pull of submerged (homo)erotic tension he enjoys with Cesario/Viola gives way to the boy’s transformation into a perfect, juridically-acceptable wife – yet he still stands at a remove, speaking of himself in the third person, as in the oblique proposal of marriage where Orsino reverses both his gender and Viola’s (“Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times/ Thou never shouldst love woman like to me,” V.i.262-263). Alternately, the dream may easily transmute into a nightmare: if, as in the play’s first figurations of “fancy,” fancy is a polymorphous sea of shapes that de-hierarchizes the objects of desire it receives, then it shouldn’t – and arguably can’t – have a “queen.” Viola’s value and attraction to Orsino will fall “into abatement, and low price,/ Even in a minute” (I.i.13-14), as swiftly as so many differently-shaped objects and substitute-objects of his desire have “surfeited” before. Heterosexual marriage – especially as defined by changes in one’s name and status that result from entering into economic and political bonds – looks surprisingly unstable from this angle. (Viola’s abortive lesbian marriage to Olivia goes further in the play – all the way to the moment of sacramental solemnization – than we see the heterosexual unions progress.) When Viola is spoken of as “Orsino’s mistress and his fancy’s queen,” even indirectly, she is in peril of entering into the discourse that was Malvolio’s downfall when he
murmured “Count Malvolio,” in a daydream. However hypothetical this discourse, the peril involved in linking one’s identity to a specific dominion – materially, Viola’s new status as the Duke’s wife; metaphorically, her “queenship” of “his fancy” – is part of the play’s suspicion that reproductive heteronormativity, though inevitable, is neither natural nor safe; and that Viola may be being offered a dominion that she will never be able to rule. Viola is arguably queen of nothing substantial at the end of this play – appropriately, as “nothing” fits with the “undecipherable” piling on of pudenda in the Duke’s final line. She has nothing but her sex, which, since it has been revealed, has arguably just fallen into “abatement and low price.”

Is there no way out for Viola? The insertion of a “queen” here at the end of the play may undo some of the queering of categories of desire worked by the unpredictable, non-reproductive play of “fancy.” It may re-hierarchize the objects of erotic fantasy in Orsino’s world, placing his wife at the top. It may even re-assign to Viola a unitary female sex and feminine gender. However, even if pronouncing Viola “fancy’s queen” represents an effort to those intended ends, the attempt feels hollow, or at least incomplete. The phrase is too bizarrely redundant – “fancy’s queen” conflates, splits, reverses, and otherwise confuses sexual roles in every possible way. It even seems to turn the ostensibly heterosexual pairing of Orsino and Viola into a residually lesbian – or somehow homoerotic – pairing of two “un-decipherable” fancy queens who, even as the play ends, have in no way gotten their desires straight. The gender roles are moving towards resolution, but have not arrived: Orsino reverses the existing master/servant power dynamic, telling Viola “you shall from this time be/ Your master’s mistress” (V.i.319-320), but she has not been “seen” in her “other habits” in order to give her any identifiable bodily form in the new gender.
The end of *Twelfth Night* reinstates gender roles as it must, but that does not mean that capacious, consuming fancy is resolved out of existence. In fact, as was the case at the end of *Philaster*, a major source of the resolution’s pleasure is that Olivia, Viola, Sebastian, and Orsino get to remain together. The projected marriages do not seem to require them to differentiate too much among their love objects; they get to hold on to spouses, former loves, ex-suitors, and siblings in a double-crossed quadrilateral of queer incestuous sibling love. As Laurie Shannon observes, the bonds of love and desire between siblings here are equal, even primary, to those between lovers; and the bonds based on likeness are still present among, not subordinated to, those based on sexual difference.\(^62\) But I would add to Shannon’s point that the queer mechanisms of generativity – fancying, doubling, transformation – I have outlined, in this play and *Bartholomew Fair*, allow us to notice other axes on which the resolution is queer in the structural sense I am discussing: taking in new erotic objects does not entail releasing or demoting old ones. The household configuration of multiple, interlaced conjugal and familial bonds is propagated not by any sort of sexual reproduction, but by a chance materialization that looks more like budding or cloning, supplying Sebastian’s body to stimulate erotic cathexes that neither Olivia nor Orsino could have foreseen. New love objects can look like slightly-different (or not at all different) imprints of the same bodily form and shape as old ones; in fact, especially if the old love is still there too, it is almost as though they were stamped from the same mold in Orsino’s capacious fancy. As the play ends, Viola’s major gender metamorphosis is still to be performed, and no consummation or sexual reproduction has actually taken place: in a spirit of unsated queer perversity, I think it is important to note (particularly at the ends of comedies, when it is the last thing anyone wants to hear) that this is in some sense not an outcome which

---

\(^{62}\) Shannon calls the pair of couples at the resolution “an expanded group of siblings based on the axis of the twins” (“Nature’s Bias,” 208).
promises or delivers erotic satisfaction of any kind, for anyone except the audience and the readers who are the recipients of these “high fantastical” shapes.
Chapter 4  

Lost Worlds, Lost Selves: Queer Identification and Colonial Melancholia

1. “If it had not been”

The queer side of colonial desire is less about possession than about its failures, less about the causes or origins of colonial contact than about its fraught affective consequences, its persistent echoes in memory and representation. Which is why, rather than starting (as is the norm for studies of the New World encounter scene) from a first contact – an initiatory moment of encounter between European voyagers and native American “others” – this reading will focus instead on the ambivalent endings and complicated afterlives of colonial contact in two texts which, for me, exemplify a queer turn in the eroticized discursive forces that constitute the colonial encounter scene. I begin with a protracted, troubled leave-taking: the defeated petering-out, in 1558, of Jean de Léry’s mission to minister in the Reformed Protestant faith to the French Huguenot colony in Brazil. Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (not published until 1578, more than twenty years after the voyage) is a novelistic account of how his twenty-two-year-old self, along with “fifteen or sixteen” (as he puts it) other young Calvinist clergymen, undertook – and aborted – the first Protestant mission to the Americas. The text recounts a drama of multiple disidentifications and exiles: the ministers’ drastic falling-out with the French colonial governor of the *France antarctique* colony, Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon; their theological disillusionment with the colony; their quasi-consensual expulsion from the tiny
island fort and two months’ sojourn on the mainland (where the city of Rio de Janeiro now
sprawls), among the Tupinamba Indians; and, finally, their harrowing return voyage.

By January of 1558, not quite one year after arriving in Brazil, Jean de Léry and the
fifteen or sixteen ministers had secured, in precarious negotiations with Villegagnon, provisions
and permission to board a ship bound for France which stood anchored in the Bay of Guanabara:

The same day, the fourth of January, we weighed anchor, and committing
ourselves to the protection of God, we set forth on that great and tempestuous
Ocean Sea of the West. Not, however, without great fear and apprehension: in
view of the hardships we had endured going over, if it had not been for the ill turn
done us by Villegagnon, several of us, who had not only found over there the
means of serving God as we wished, but had also tasted the goodness and fertility
of the country, might well have stayed on instead of returning to France, where
the difficulties were then – and are still – incomparably greater, with respect to
both religion and to things concerning this life.  

Léry immediately qualifies the act of setting sail with the negative affects that attend it, like an
intangible (but heavy) load of cargo: the ministers are “not without” fear and apprehension,
regret for what might have been, and desire for what never could have been. This is the moment
when the young clerics’ colonial and evangelistic mission is definitively, irreversibly aborted;
and the narrative loops from defensive explanations of why they left the colony (which would
fall to the Portuguese within two years of the ministers’ departure) into backward-looking
digressions pondering the loss of America and the hypothetical futures permanently foreclosed
by their return to Europe. Léry’s insistence that they were forced to leave by Governor
Villegagnon’s treachery is voiced in an archaic past-subjunctive mood which overlays doubt

---


onto negation: *if only* things had been otherwise in the colony, *if* Villegagnon had *not* been *even* more cruel and more wanting of good faith than they could endure, *even* by comparison to “the hardships we had endured going over,” *even* in comparison to the state of things in France, “where the difficulties were then – and are still – incomparably greater,” *then* “several of us… might well have stayed on.”\(^3\) But things were not, as it happened, otherwise, and so they did not stay on. Throughout the *Histoire d’un voyage*, Léry uses this kind of negative conditional phrasing to express regret over what might have been – or, rather, over what never could have been, because the conditions of possibility for the longed-for, impossible future are, themselves, impossible.

Léry and the ministers whose desires he voices, those certain “several of us” who felt an affinity with Brazil, are triply-displaced – in the initial voyage from Europe, in their exile from the colony, and again at this moment of defeat and departure from the New World. During their time on the mainland, unmoored from the social and political structure of the French colony (though they have wandered “only about half a league from the fort”), the ministers have been realigned into a queer position within the colonial scene, *athwart\(^4\)* the apparatus of state power and implicated in unorthodox relationships with the Tupinamba Indians and the French Catholic sailors who populate the landscape. The categories of being – nationality, tribe, religion – which shaped his identity before knowing the Americans (and which still bear on him while writing this travel account) have been redrawn. Having “tasted the goodness” of America, Léry says, many of the ministers had “found” something that felt right, that felt to them like a desired and

\(^3\) The original reads: “n’eust esté le mauvais tour que nous joua Villegagnon, plusieurs d’entre nous… n’avoient pas deliberé de retourner en France.” *Histoire d’un voyage* (1994), 507.

\(^4\) The word “*athwart*,” an adverb meaning “across from side to side, transversely; usually, but not necessarily, in an oblique direction,” derives from the Old Norse word *þvert*, meaning across or transverse. It shares an Indo-European root, *twerkwO*, with the Latin *torquere*, to twist, and is postulated as the likely root word for “*queer*.” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, June 2011, Oxford University Press, s.v. “*athwart, adv. and prep.*, “*thwart, adv., prep., and a.*, “*queer, adj.*, 1., http://oed.com/.
purposeful self-identity: “the means of serving God as we wished.” In an experience that Léry consistently figures as a moment of sensory intake and sensual pleasure – “tasting the goodness and fertility of the country” – some, but not all, of the ministers (Léry says “several of us”) glimpse, in their extreme geographic, cultural, and religious dislocation, a fleeting, unexpected, and yet undeniable consonance between something in the alien land of Brazil and something about their own inner desires – something that addresses their desired identities, their desired selves. Paradoxically, “the means of serving God as we wished” is figured here as a mutable or contingent identity, an affective niche that can be “found,” by surprise, in an alien setting far removed from the geographical and cultural body of Christendom – but which, even once found, remains elusive, impossible to sustain. The brief “taste” of identification with Brazil must remain an anomalous taste, a singular and non-normative experience for those “several” who once felt it. “The means of serving God as we wished” becomes, for Léry, one of the longed-for, impossible American objects of desire that he leaves behind on the shore of Brazil.

These impossible longings – for things to have been otherwise; for impossible transformation into that which they can never be; for possession of something they will never have; for a role to play besides the one in which they have been cast by the material finitudes of history – constitute the mode of colonial desire which, I will argue, characterizes Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage*, Thomas Harriot’s 1588 description of Roanoke Island, “A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia,” and expedition leader John White’s 1590 coda to it, “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in That Part of America Now Called Virginia.” Harriot and White first encountered the “New Found Land” and its people when they traveled to Virginia as part of the first English expedition to Roanoke Island, led by Richard Grenville in 1585; the company had to be rescued and transported back to England by Francis Drake on his
return voyage from the Caribbean. Harriot published a quarto edition of his “Briefe and True Report” three years later, after a second colonial expedition to Virginia, this time led by John White and without Harriot, unexpectedly landed again on Roanoke Island due to a near-mutiny at sea in 1587. White returned almost immediately to England to attempt to raise money for a relief voyage to deliver supplies to the colony, but the plans were suspended by the political threat of the Spanish Armada, and White remained in England for three years before finally departing with the relief voyage, in 1590. There was no colony to relieve, however: John White arrived on Roanoke to find the settlement empty and razed, and all the settlers gone.  

Loss, dislocation, alienation, privation, and failure are written into the material conditions of long-distance colonial voyaging that produce all early modern travel writing. Colonial travel enacts a doubled displacement, through the long, time-warping incarceration of the sea voyage: first, into the presence of a human society and object-world incredibly far-removed and different from the voyager’s own – and then back, into a de-familiarized European world in which the voyager is irreversibly altered. This recursive narrative arc confounds teleological plot trajectories and obscures categories of identity and difference, opening up questions of what (and whom) to desire to possess, what (or whom) to desire to be, what role to inhabit, and how sameness and difference should properly figure in to those relations. Even within a generic structure that problematizes identification, however, the impossible identifications and fantasies of Léry’s Histoire and the Virginia texts emerge as markedly queer affects out of their shared condition: failed colonial ambition. Both works are published after the fact of the voyages they chronicle; both are also intensely invested in tacit interpersonal and political agendas which they aim – and, usually, fail – to accomplish by their publication. Their discursive projects are far

---

more ulterior and convoluted than a simple narrative rehearsal of a colonial voyage or a
description of the New World. The colonial ventures these texts recount are aborted and lost,
ever to continue as viable settler colonies. This means— and this is central to my argument—
that the encounters between Europeans and native Americans narrated in these texts have ceased:
the encounter with the New World “other” is already foreclosed, before the time of the
narrative’s writing, by the return voyage to Europe. These travel narratives, then, are memorial
reconstructions of the colonial sojourn in the New World. They are produced not out of
functioning colonial projects, but out of colonial dysfunction. These are texts which embody
failure and defeat in the circumstance of their production. And, most significantly to my reading
of them as documents of queer colonial desire, they are produced out of experiences of
identification and loss so affecting that they bend the structures of historical time: construing lost
pasts, in the loss of the native American “others” as problematic but gripping love objects; and
lost futures, in the lost fantasy of an American self.

The moment with which I began, Léry’s dilated re-telling of his departure from Brazil,
dramatizes the hallmarks of the particular queer temporality that I am tracing out. It proceeds
out of a liminal, suspended moment in which the voyager’s failure is particularly conflicted and
unresolved. Although their affective stances towards that moment and their structuring of time
around it differ dramatically, Léry’s moment of suspended failure resonates with the futile,
insistent hope for the Roanoke venture embodied in the 1590 edition of Harriot’s and White’s
texts. Both works are anchored by the pivotal moment of dispossession at which the colonial
project fails—though for Léry that moment is behind him in memory, while the Virginia authors
do not yet know it has already happened—and, in both works, European voyagers must renounce
the American land they had attempted to transform.
In comparing how Léry, Harriot, and White represent the affective shockwaves that radiate from their respective experiences of colonial loss, two distinct ways of structuring the transmission of unrealizable longings across historical time will emerge, both of which are non-heterosexually-reproductive, non-linear, trans-temporal mechanisms of desire. The shape of colonial desire in the *Histoire d’un voyage* is insistently past-focused, the narratorial voice shot through with the affects of unremitting nostalgia, irremediable belatedness, regret, thwarted longing, reversal, and self-negation which constitute Léry’s subject position as a bereft and melancholic returned colonial voyager/history-writer. Léry’s mode of colonial desire is, therefore, essentially *melancholic* in structure – in fact, I would call the *Histoire d’un voyage* an example of melancholic writing. I use the term “melancholic” in the Freudian sense, connecting my readings of failed colonial desire to the set of affects that make up “melancholia” in Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” (“Trauer und Melancholie,” 1917): a response to a loss that takes the form of painful, protracted identification with the love object, which, rather than running its course as the process of mourning does, endures excessively in time and intensity.\(^6\) Melancholia is a structurally queer erotic mode, implicated in a genealogy of queer desires by its hidden and inappropriate objects, its overly-identificatory orientation, its excessive affective style, and its deviant temporal trajectory.\(^7\) It thus provides a language for drawing out the constitutively erotic

---


\(^7\) Michael Warner treats the history of often-reductive associations in psychoanalytic thought between homosexuality and narcissistic over-identification in “Homo-Narcissism; or, Heterosexuality,” in *Engendering Men*, ed. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 190-206. Earl Jackson, Jr. offers a critique in *Strategies of Deviance: Studies in Gay Male Representation* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995) of psychoanalytic theory’s construction of the gay subject within a heteronormative, “gender-hierarchized value system” which has evacuated narcissism of its *intersubjective* operations in the name of “Oedipal male heterosexuality and its radical separation of desire and identification;” and yet Jackson also seeks to rehabilitate one nuance of Freud’s notion of narcissism: “a range of identificatory operations… a potentially compelling descriptive model of the dynamic interchanges constituting psychosocial subject formation (and the economic fluctuations of external or internal libidinal investments)” (21-26).
– and, specifically, queerly erotic – qualities of the failed colonial desire I’m discussing: the trans-temporal reach of its identificatory longings for impossible love objects.

In contrast to Léry’s backward-looking longing for the Tupinamba Indians in his past, the colonial longings that power Thomas Harriot’s and John White’s accounts of Roanoke are focused on an imagined future, which they attempt to conjure into being in their written and visual representations of the Virginian land and people. The Freudian structure of melancholia may apply more straightforwardly to the past-obsessed erotics of *Histoire d’un voyage* than to this wishfully projective futurity; but loss, especially in the colonial sphere, is not limited to the past, and excessive identification and queer temporality can be found in relations besides those with literal beloved “others.” In fact, one of the first moves of “Mourning and Melancholia” is to expand what is considered a loss to include indirect, non-intersubjective, even delusional attachments: losses “of a more ideal kind” in which a relation with the other has been foreclosed – much like what happens at the moment of colonial failure. The 1590 publication, in a splendid folio edition, of Harriot’s “Briefe and True Report” and White’s “True Pictures” embodies this kind of anxious desire. Titled *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, the volume was dedicated to Raleigh as the patron of the Virginia venture, in hopes of raising money and support for another voyage so that the settlers on Roanoke Island might be saved and the colony sustained. But it was too late for the book to do any good. By the time the edition appeared, John White had already embarked on the long-delayed “relief voyage,” on which he found Roanoke deserted and reluctantly returned to England, abandoning the search for the English colonists (among them his own daughter, son-in-law, and baby granddaughter, Virginia Dare). “A Briefe and True Report” is an object brought into being to deny – and, by its

---

8 Freud says that melancholia can also be a reaction to “a loss of a more ideal kind,” one where “the object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love” (245).
denial, to ward off – what Léry’s narrative, from its post-hoc temporal vantage point, already knows to be the case: the colony does not continue; the dreamed-of future settlement never comes to be. The 1590 folio, then, contains material from two writers and at least two artists, collected on two successive, failed ventures, and published at a third moment, by a third party with his own motives, in a poignant attempt to materialize an array of familial, political, and national desires. The affects of melancholic investment – its insistence, impossibility, identification, and at once belated and premature non-linear time – can be seen beneath the optimistic surface of its colonial propaganda. Its often-bizarre strain of desire is not technically Freudian melancholia; but reading it alongside Jean de Léry’s melancholia will illuminate a new form of queer, melancholic colonial desire – this one with a trans-temporal, future-oriented bent – which shapes identities and relations in “A Briefe and True Report” into queer affective genealogies that confound colonialist tropes of difference, appropriation, and reproduction, and disrupt linear models of historical time.

2. “I want him to love me”

History-of-a-voyage narratives are particularly rich objects for a study of desire because they are produced out of a subject’s experience of displacement. They dramatize an encounter with the “other” that is always a negotiation of identification and disidentification, self and other, attraction and repulsion. Over the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the history-of-a-voyage narrative coalesces as a distinct genre marked by first-person descriptive accounts of long-distance travel for exploration and trade, and meditations on extreme cultural difference occasioned by encounters with foreign lands and people. From its first delineation as a category in English, by Richard Hakluyt, who compiled merchants’ travel accounts into famous
compendia – *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America and the Ilands Adjacent unto the Same, Made First of All by Our Englishmen and Afterwards by the Frenchmen and Britons: With Two Mappes Annexed Hereunto* (1582); and *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation: Made by Sea or Over Land to the Most Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time within the Compasse of These 1500 Years* (1589, 1598-1600) – the early modern travel account blends a number of discursive forms (letter, diary, news bulletin, record, persuasion, polemic, memoir, gift or tribute or supplication, and scientific description or ‘natural history’) into a discrete genre of narrative writing. Voyage-history narratives frequently have long afterlives of circulating widely in print: Jean de Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage* was enormously successful, enjoying re-printings in 1580, 1585, 1594, 1599-1600, and 1611 after the initial publication in 1578.9 Travel narratives also have a long history of being collected and taxonomized for readers’ – and writers’ – consumption. Harriot’s “Briefe and True Report,” without the pictures, was included at the inception of the genre in all of Hakluyt’s editions of *The Principall Navigations*....10 The 1590 folio edition including Harriot’s “A Briefe and True Report” and White’s “True Pictures” becomes the inaugural volume of Theodor de Bry’s monumental thirteen-volume series *Les Grands Voyages*, or *America*, which is published widely in lavish editions throughout Europe in the 1590s and 1600s in the interest of promoting specifically Protestant colonial ambitions.11 Translated into Latin and German, Jean de Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage* becomes part of De Bry’s collection as well, in the third volume of *America* in 1592. Léry’s text is also anthologized, as “Extracts out of the Historie of John

---

Lerius a Frenchman, Who Lived in Brasill with Mons. Villagagnon, Ann. 1557, and 58,” in the 1625 edition of Samuel Purchas’s English compendium of travel writing, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (first published in 1613). Thus, these travel accounts are read, at the time of their dissemination and afterwards, as fragments and as wholes, for their practical and entertainment value, by (mostly learned) readers with widely varying investments. Like the exotic foreign objects they describe, they are objects of delectation and edification, enjoyed for the strange pleasures they deliver. The early colonial travel narrative, then, is a manifold, composite genre in which characteristics of fiction and non-fiction, business and pleasure, and private and public writing overlap and double back on one another.

The affective charge of the history-of-a-voyage narrative is better understood if we recognize it as a fictive and fantasmatically-motivated genre, which shares a generic lineage and a basic structure of adventure and return with prose romance. Like the romance, it solicits the reader’s identification with its colonizing voyager/history-writer protagonist. Its presentation of exotic lands and people is never dispassionate; the success of its description depends on the affective states, from sympathy to awe to horror, that it is able to incite in the reader. Like the romance, then, the travel narrative is a performative genre born out of desire, which thematizes desire and is intended to provoke more desire – but unlike the romance, what is at issue is specifically *colonial* desire. The *encounter* itself is narrated – indeed, comes into being – as a

narrative form in and through allegorical connections to pre-existing tropes of European fantasy, which are full of repressed, “unspeakable” content that the genre never explicitly articulates. In using the term “colonial desire,” I do not intend to make the reductive (and not very interesting) claim that sexual desire is the causal force behind colonization; instead I am proposing that we see the colonial drive – and the genres of writing it generates – as a set of erotic activities. By this I mean that in addition to the economic and political conditions that fed European colonial aspirations, its processes of producing knowledge about, inscribing European fantasies onto, and co-opting non-European places, people, and materials, are also erotic processes: that is, they are structured by a dynamic of wanting some objective (for its own allure and for how it reflects and augments the self in equal, ambivalent measure), pursuing it, possessing it, and then negotiating the messy reality of its similarity and difference from its projected form in fantasy. These drives and their attendant affects are what I am calling colonial desire; but early modern voyage accounts do not all dramatize them in the same way.

A form of colonial desire that might almost be called “straight” is easily apparent when some canonical early texts – Columbus’ correspondence and log-books; Cortés’ Cartas de relación; and, though it is not a first-person travel narrative, Spenser’s 1596 pamphlet A View of the Present State of Ireland – are read for their erotics of difference and possession. Colonial


16 This claim is fundamentally indebted to the school of postcolonial theory informed by psychoanalysis, which emphasizes the role of desire in colonial violence, and the perverse and pathological erotic effects of colonial encounter. See Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (New York: Grove Press, 1991); see also Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

desire in these texts is appropriating and reproductive; their hetero-erotic sensibilities are predicated on a self-fashioning by the European subject as wholly different from, and wholly superior to, the colonized people. They deploy representations of native ignorance to authorize conquest of the other, and representations of native sexual monstrosity to eroticize it. Upon closer examination, however, even this so-called “straight” form of colonial desire is revealed to be founded in identification of a violently projective kind: a falling in love with the image of the self as a god or conqueror, as the colonist imagines he is seen in the eyes of the conquered native people. This autoerotic fantasy can be seen as a narcissistic version of the mechanism of paranoid suspicion I drew out in the erotic structure of the witch hunt, where the investment is in wishful ideations of love, rather than suspicions of malice. Homi Bhabha cites a psychoanalytic mode of paranoid desire as a constitutive affect of the colonial encounter, in which the colonist, like the witch-suspector, cannot abide the other’s indifference to him:

The refusal to return and restore the image of authority to the eye of power has to be reinscribed as implacable aggression, assertively coming from without: *He hates me.* Such justification follows the familiar conjugation of persecutory paranoia. The frustrated wish “I want him to love me,” turns into its opposite “I hate him” and thence through projection and the exclusion of the first person, “He hates me.”

As I will show, where colonial desire is most invested in insisting on difference – in the drive to replicate a European self through the native people, or to re-make the native land in the image of a fantasy of Europe, both of which crop up in blocked, ambivalent forms in *Histoire d’un voyage* and “A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia” – is often where, if we

---


20 Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture,* 100. Bhabha is talking about a nineteenth-century process of civil address and legal inscription, but the tense cycle of craven, paranoid investment can be seen in the absence of those regimes.
attend more deeply to its affect, there is the most to say about thwarted, melancholic identification.

The colonial encounter scene has been interpreted as an ultimate exemplar of radical difference, in some of the canonical scholarship on colonial wonder and strangeness in the writing of history and the production of colonial knowledge. More recently, the complicated work of difference and projection in these early travel narratives – their languages of embodiment, value, eye-witnessing, ornamentalization, and more – has generated a rich body of criticism which has brought the methodologies of feminist and postcolonial theory to bear on early modern colonial writing, interrogating its representational practices to illuminate how English and European discourses about the rest of the world relate to the period’s ideologies of gender, race, nation, and religion. This project is informed by and indebted to the attention which that work pays to the shaping forces of fantasy, imagination, and desire in colonial description. But because the project of explicating colonial representations of difference and otherness has proved so fruitful and inexhaustible, I want to turn instead to the equally complicated and problematic forces of identification, which have attracted less attention in studies of early modern desire and colonialism alike. Fittingly, this dialectic – between two descriptive registers, of recognition/identification and difference/alterity, which are in constant interplay, and which gain meaning and dramatic force by contrast to one another – is also the


central theoretical axis for the history of sexuality: in terms of content, in asking what categories of anatomy, gender, age, or status constituted like or unlike sexual pairings in a given context; and in terms of method, in questioning what proportions of identification and difference structure our relations to past sexualities, and why. This confluence means that a queer problematics of sameness and difference – which includes deviant ways of distinguishing one from the other – governs both my methodology and the substance of my analysis in this chapter. Part of my project is to widen the focus of where we look for colonial desire, from the representations in colonial writing to the subject of the conquest narrative: the voyager/travel-writer whose authoring gaze generates these representations.\(^\text{23}\) I am not looking at what that subject sees so much as looking at his looking at Indian bodies and things – thereby bringing the voyager’s narratorial voice within the scope of my analysis. Following the imperative in queer critical practice to dismantle poses of dispassionate objectivity, I am restoring the specificity of these colonial lookers’ desires, by locating them in the encounter scene not as naturalized, omniscient recorders, but as subjective, embodied, desiring participants in an immediate, sensory experience of contact. However strenuously these accounts insist on their own historical and ethnographic facticity, they are loaded with passionate investment; my project is to explicate what those investments are, and what is queer about them.

The trans-temporal colonial melancholia I describe in \textit{A Briefe and True Report} and \textit{Histoire d’un voyage} is produced as a specific affective mode by both conditions of the text’s production – failure, loss, profound temporal disjunction, upheavals of identification and dis-

\(^{23}\) Unfortunately, this study is necessarily limited to an analysis of European desires. However, there is exciting work being done that seeks to recover the perspectives of American people as subjects looking at the colonizers in the encounter scene; see Beatrix Pastor, “Silence and Writing: The History of the Conquest,” trans. Jason Wood, in \textit{1492/1992: Re/Discovering Colonial Writing}, ed. René Jara and Nicolas Spadaccini, \textit{Hispanic Issues} 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Pastor takes up the project of “writing the history of those without one,” which, like my study of the European colonial voyager’s queer desires, is also a “fantasmatic process” of locating lost objects of desire “in the not-quite-total silences of the texts.”
identification with regard to religion, nationality, and other categories – and the stylistic features of the writing itself: recursive, backward, and non-linear narrative arcs, repetition, negation, disavowal, and heightened affect. I would contend that these features signal queer valences of colonial desire when they are found in other places as well. While I recognize of course that some colonial texts – and parts of texts – may be more- and less-queer than others, I am not interested in compiling a taxonomy of certain texts, or certain instantiations of desire, which “are queer” in their likeness to one another and their difference from a set of normative, “straight” representations of colonial desire. Rather, I argue that a queer undercurrent of failed, overly-identificatory, trans-temporal, melancholic eroticism runs through the early modern travel narrative genre; and that it is constitutive of the form and shape of colonial desire as we read it in the early European colonial context and elsewhere, despite its largely having gone un-remarked in criticism on early modern travel writing.²⁴

3. “If you would picture to yourself a savage”

Building on existing scholarship examining the material world of the encounter scene, I find that the queer melancholic desires voiced in Jean de Léry and the Virginia texts are lodged in significant material things, properties in the encounter scene which carry and communicate these narratives’ impossible longings. Kim Hall, quoting Frantz Fanon, characterizes the status of the non-European native “other” as “an object in the midst of other objects.”²⁵ As Roland Greene puts it, the New World of Brazil is “an object as well as a place of objects,” both

²⁴ Of the critics who have written on same-sex, gay, or queer erotics in the colonial sphere, only Carla Freccero, in the last chapter of *Queer/Early/Modern*, a methodological intervention titled “Queer Spectrality,” has articulated a similar valence of loss and desire in colonial writing. Freccero advocates for a queer historiography of being haunted by the past, which she distinguishes from melancholia’s “entombment” – although much of her language of queer, trans-temporal erotic affect resonates with the melancholic modes of past- and future-oriented desire I am describing.

²⁵ Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 211.
European and American, which attract, hold, and transmit erotic feeling across civilizations – key among those objects being the discourse of love itself.\(^\text{26}\) In this project, however, my point is not that travelers desire the material things of the New World, or that their desires for the native American people are routed through the material things of the New World (though both are often true); it is that material things in the New World *embody* and *transmit* the erotic currents that power these narratives. The physical materials of native American civilizations seem to take on uncanny efficacies – they are endowed with seemingly super-natural powers by which they exceed the conventions of colonial description. And European objects, too, are newly animated in New World settings as markers of unexpected affect: identification, longing, wonder, loss. I see the material things that populate the encounter scene as contact points of reciprocal influence between the imaginative/affective realm of desire and the physical world – where things materialize affect, or the materiality of things is constituted out of affect. The objects in these texts, both artificial and organic, index where the voyager/history-writer’s narratorial voice wanders into excessive feelings of identification and affection for American people, places, and times. The affects I trace out in Jean de Léry and *A Briefe and True Report* reflect these dualities between other and self, immediacy and abstraction. They are modes of expression which are, by turns, immanently, almost fetishistically invested in the tactile surfaces and material specificity of the New World, and narcissistically consumed with the radically disintegrated, inadequate, alienated, and hallucinatory subjectivity of the colonizer.

The objects of Jean de Léry’s description in the *Histoire d’un voyage* – the human bodies of the Tupinamba Indians among whom he lived in Brazil and the made things on and around them – structure and mediate Léry’s and the readers’ desires. They function as nodes of

---

materialized affect, making visible what is queer about the text’s melancholic mode of feeling. Specifically, the points in the *Histoire d’un voyage* where artificial materials are intimately articulated or attached to human bodies are the places where we see its narrative voice at its queerest and most melancholic, where a queer affective load is bodied forth in Léry’s performance of ethnographic description. In Léry’s Chapter VIII, which details the bodily styles and practices of the Tupinamba Indians – titled “Of the Natural Qualities, Strength, Stature, Nudity, Disposition, and Ornamentation of the Body of the Brazilian Savages, Both Men and Women, Who Live in America, and Whom I Frequented for About a Year” – material things focus and transmit a complex interplay of identification and disidentification, rendered in vivid sensory detail. The *Histoire d’un voyage* has been called a foundational work of early natural history or anthropology for its turn, midway through the work, from the adventure/romance narrative temporality of a history-of-a-voyage account to the taxonomizing, encyclopedic structure which comprises the central and chief part of the text, detailing the Tupinamba (and, to a lesser extent, the Margajas) Indians’ clothes, weaponry, music-making, food, law, religion, social customs, and language. Chapter VIII, which focuses in detail on the bodies of the Tupinamba people, marks this transition to a straightforwardly ethnographic register. The previous seven chapters have comprised linear autobiographical narrative of the voyage from France, the arrival in Brazil, and the ministers’ exile from the colony to live among the Indians; then suddenly, outside of any narrative temporality, Léry begins describing what he saw on his sojourn, starting with the Tupinamba body.

At the outset, the long descriptive passages of bodily ornamentation and accessorizing are obliquely queer, their proportions of bodily familiarity to exoticizing otherness subtly skewed in

27 Claude Lévi-Strauss in the opening lines of *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (New York: Atheneum, 1972), cites the *Histoire d’un voyage* as an ancestral ur-text, calling it “that breviary of the anthropologist, Jean de Léry” (85).
favor of identification. The conventional language of deviance by which the bodies of the New World are described – the alteritizing or othering strain of colonial interpretation – is certainly present. But there is something else besides difference at work in Léry’s interpretation. He inserts a discourse of bodily similitude alongside one of bodily alterity, insisting on an essential fleshly identification between his presumptively European male reader, himself, and the extravagantly ornamented male objects of his narrative attentions. (He treats the women separately, always as gender-marked, and nowhere near as thoroughly). Then, however, this delicate oscillation is thrown into a completely queer mode of erotic speculation by one evocative accessory: a penis sheath made of Brazilian grasses or French cloth.

It is not only the Tupinamba men’s beauty, he argues, but their bodily sameness, their physical identity with European men, that makes them fit objects of desire. They are “not taller, fatter, or smaller in stature than we Europeans are; their bodies are neither monstrous nor prodigious with respect to ours. In fact, they are stronger, more robust and well filled-out, more nimble, less subject to disease; there are almost none among them who are lame, one-eyed, deformed, or disfigured.”

Léry invites the reader to imagine the Tupinamba people going about their affairs naked, which he calls “no less strange than difficult to believe for those who have not seen it,” but then debunks the widespread belief that they are covered in hair, saying “they are not by nature any hairier than we are over here in this country.”

At one of several points where the ethnographic narrative of Tupinamba accessorizing seems to start over, Léry again begins with an attractive and racially un-marked male nude: “If you would picture to yourself a savage according to this description, you may imagine in the first place a naked man,

---

28 Léry, 56.
29 Léry, 57.
w
c
w
w
w

well formed and proportioned in his limbs.”

The European reader, whose knowledge of naked male bodies is tacitly assumed, is asked to conjure the Tupinamba man’s bodily form, presumably based on his autoerotic self-inspection, his fantasy (ideal) of his own body’s appearance, and mental images (remembered or imagined) of other, presumably also European, naked male bodies. Léry’s memorial conjuration of absent, naked Tupinamba men is thus supplemented with other fantasmatic projections of the projected reader – and his recollected others. Reading Léry’s narrative as – and through – an idea of queer colonial desire demands that we acknowledge the potential function of this fantasmatic “naked man” as a transmitter of erotic desire: it is an icon that draws together writer and reader, memory and fantasy, through bodily identification; it is a body functioning as a thing, enhanced by a masculine erotic charge.

This emphasis on identification with a homoerotic tint situates Léry’s voice athwart expected discourses of relation to the “other” in ethnographic description. The points of bodily strangeness and difference he records become queerly eroticized against a ground of physical similarity. Onto a homo-erotically alluring canvas of identical nakedness, Léry projects a detailed litany of practices that mold the body into ever-stranger shapes in the mind’s eye: pulling out all of their body hair, “even the beard and eyelashes and eyebrows,” to appear not only de-sexed but “wall-eyed, wandering, and wild”, de-forming their faces into hermaphroditic grotesques by piercing their lips and cheeks and “sticking their tongues through that slit in the lip, giving the impression to the onlooker that they have two mouths” (on this, Léry performatively – and cryptically – withholds judgment: “I leave you to judge whether it is pleasant to see them do that, and whether that deforms them or not”); and covering themselves

30 Léry, 62.
31 Léry, 57.
with feathers, so that “they seem to be all downy, like pigeons or other birds newly hatched.”

A series of hyper-detailed “contemplations” of an ideal Tupinamba man in various costumes and poses is set out to stimulate the reader’s graphic imagination and solicit his desire – but each of these accessorizing practices further unmoors the naked body at its center from any European norms of sex or gender. This chapter becomes an uncanny version of a *blazon*, displaying and offering for the reader’s appraisal the strangely-sexed and -gendered bodies the Tupinamba construct for themselves. What is interesting about the connection to the romantic *blazon*’s anatomization of the body is that here, the naked, identificatory Tupinamba body is mutated into a figure of exotic attraction and grotesque horror *not* by its natural anatomy or its parts, but by the artificial material accessories and practices – the tweezing, piercing, lip-bones and -stones, gum, down, and feathers that are the instruments of Tupinamba beauty, self-styling, and social/sexual custom. These things are the vehicles that invite the insertion of the reader’s affective response as part of the text’s apparatus. And as tactile traces of the Indian’s actual, embodied presence, they also produce an imaginary material ground upon which the European man can fantasize not only about looking at the Indian, but about doing things to him.

In Léry’s ethnography, material objects thus queer the affective relation between the looker and the Tupinamba object of his gaze; they operate as prostheses to de-form and defamiliarize Indian bodies, confusing the lookers’ desires. In the midst of these numerous accessories, however, one use of a prosthetic object – the most literally prosthetic one – stands out from the rest as especially laden with queer colonial desire:

32 Léry, 58.
33 Nancy Vickers points out the poetic *blazon*’s essential commercial discourse in its merchandizing of the (usually female) body, and how it constructs a triangulated commercial transaction – which, I would add to her argument, is also a triangulated erotic transaction – between a seller (here, the narrator), a buyer (the reader), and an object to be praised and sold (the Indian man), in “‘The blazon of sweet beauty’s best’: Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*,” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 95-115.
I have seen old men (but not all of them, and none of the young men or children) take two leaves of these grasses and arrange them together and bind them with cotton thread around their virile member; sometimes they wrapped it with handkerchiefs and other small pieces of cloth that we gave them.³⁴

In contrast to the practices that efface and confuse sex – the tweezing, the hermaphroditic lip piercings – the penis sheath worn as a sole piece of clothing by aged Tupinamba men augments sex. The penis sheath sends Léry into a reverie of identificatory speculation as to why the Indians style their bodies as they do. The sight – or rather, the concealment – of these Tupinamba male “members” so “arranged” and “bound” temporarily tips the narrative from an ethnographic stance that performatively sidesteps editorializing and identification into free speculation and fantasy.³⁵ Léry extends his imagination to put himself in the Tupinamba men’s place, to imagine their desire and how it relates to their bodily accessorizing:

It would seem, on the face of it, that there remains in them some spark of natural shame, if indeed they did this on account of modesty, but, although I have not made closer inquiry, I am still of the opinion that it is rather to hide some infirmity that their old age may cause in that member.³⁶

“On the face of it,” Léry allows, the penis sheath “would seem” to have a received explanation: the notion of “natural shame,” which posits a supposedly-universal human feeling of bodily shame as a consequence of the Fall. (The question of the Brazilian Indians’ “natural shame” is one to which Léry returns throughout the ethnographic section of the text, and it is connected to the larger question – also a question of identity versus difference – of their status with respect to God and sin, on which Léry’s position is radical in its ambivalence.) The kinds of feelings about the penis sheath that Léry imagines for the Tupinamba men are indicative of his queer oscillation between registers of identity and difference. Both hypothetical explanations for it are somewhat

³⁴ Léry, 57.
³⁵ Léry, 58.
³⁶ Léry, 58.
identificatory – that is, they imagine the Tupinamba man as a human subject (like a European subject) – but they exemplify two possible modes of identification with the native “other” and reveal Léry’s preference for the queer mode, the one that depends on affective identification, imagination, and desire. The “natural shame” hypothesis, which Léry entertains and then rejects here, is a common move in colonial description, a prescriptive form of identification in which the voyager/history-writer imposes a universal rubric on what he sees, holding the native “other” to the same ideals or constructs that govern European society; perhaps they do this because of “some spark” of the same “natural shame” that makes us feel compelled to modesty.\textsuperscript{37} The received “natural shame” explanation combines a normativizing assumption about humanity in the general case with an alterizing distinction in the specific case: the American native differs from the European colonial writer in degree, falling short of the humanist ideal. It is also a teleological rubric: the native shows only a “spark” of a moral faculty that the writer fully possesses – although, interestingly, Léry reverses the temporality of the telos that sees the American “other” as primitive with the phrase “there remains in them some spark of natural shame.”

Léry, however, rejects the moralizing assumption that “they did this on account of modesty,” substituting his own conjecture, which embodies a queer mode of identification and erotic speculation on the American “other”: the notion that the men who wear the penis sheath do so “to hide some infirmity that their old age may cause in that member.” Léry reads the penis sheath as a prosthetic accessory which, by concealing the natural body in its “infirmity,” creates

\textsuperscript{37} The “natural shame” thesis represents a “straight” mode of identification with the other which is analogous to the early modern discourse of didactic history; that is, it is identification that works through exemplarity, playing off of the simultaneous universal representativeness and moral exceptionalism (positive or negative) of “strange men.” As Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero describe in “Caxton, Foucault, and the Pleasures of History,” “alteritism often proceeds in a dialectical relation to concepts of sameness or universality” in this exemplary mode, in which political power/knowledge is generated through “the perpetual transformation of and identification with otherness” (Premodern Sexualities, xv).
an illusion of an idealized male body. Léry’s theory about the old Tupinamba men’s reasons for
wearing the penis sheath is founded in a sense of affective identification that is personally and
erotically interested, rather than universalizing. Rejecting the teleological hierarchy between the
Indians’ “spark of natural shame” and the ostensibly fully-ignited “natural shame” that
Europeans are supposed to carry, Léry imagines an alternate agenda for the Tupinamba man’s
desire to accessorize. He suspects that for the old man, the penis sheath might materialize a
feeling that is altogether different from idealized “natural shame,” one that is rooted instead in a
personal, corporeal sense of being-looked-at in his bodily specificity.

Moreover, in guessing at their reasons, Léry positions himself as like the Indian men. His
prurient, intimately interested thesis is an imaginative creation, a leap of identificatory fantasy
which abandons “natural shame” (his own as well as theirs) to ask how a man might feel about
his aging penis. Léry's conjecture – that men who have become old would wear the penis sheath
out of personal vanity, self-conscious of being looked at and compared sexually with other men
whose younger, more virile penises are visible all around them – can only be formulated by
imagining how, in their place, he would feel, what he would do, and why. The desire he imputes
to them, to “hide some infirmity that their old age may cause in that member,” must be the same
reason he imagines he would wear the penis sheath, if he were one of them. His hypothesis also,
crucially, relies on speculation as to what the Tupinamba men’s covered penises might look like
(which, Léry insists, is speculation: he vaguely glosses over the definite alterations wrought by
age as “some infirmity” old age “may cause,” and emphasizes his failure to “make closer
inquiry”). And this speculation must rely, in turn, on comparative observation of all of the
uncovered, younger Tupinamba men’s penises he has encountered. Léry’s theory about the
penis sheath performs an alternative mode of colonial looking, a queer version of trans-cultural
identification and desire. It indexes both Léry’s participation in sizing up other men and his ability to identify with being sized up by other men. His imagining of Tupinamba men’s affective investment in their bodily self-styling reveals a current in his narrative of intimate, empathetic and voyeuristic bodily identification, based in an enduring fantasy of sharing the Tupi men’s sensual experience and erotic knowledge. It is a performance of what I call “queer fantasmatic ethnography” on Léry’s part, a register of ethnographic description which contains and is shaped by a fantasy of trans-cultural erotic connection and knowledge.\(^{38}\)

The extended meditation on the penis sheath is an example of how Léry’s identification and desire circulate through bodies, objects, and his descriptions of them: its queerness derives from the ambivalent relationship between what Léry observes, his imagination, and his desire. The passage is queer not only because of a certain male-male genital eroticism, but because of the subtle charge of erotic identification contained in its observations of the native “other” and its fantasies about him. Léry’s sentimental and ethnographic involvement in the penis sheath can be read as reminiscent of what Eve Sedgwick calls “camp recognition,” a queer form of audience investment in cultural objects wherein a reader recognizes shades of his own submerged motives and desire: we can see Léry, like Sedgwick’s subject, “dealing in reader relations and in projective fantasy (projective though not infrequently true) about the spaces and practices of cultural production” in the culture he is essaying to describe. Such a reading uses the generous, spacious, and perverse angles of camp sensibility to nuance the discussion of queer colonial desire in travel narratives, acknowledging that Léry’s – no less than our own – “perceptions are necessarily also creations.”\(^{39}\)

The voyager’s displacement in the encounter narrative foregrounds

---

\(^{38}\) My characterization of Léry’s mode of interpretation as queer fantasmatic ethnography mirrors Freccero’s call in “Queer Times” for a methodology of queer “‘fantasmatic’ historiography” (488) in our methodological approach to historical archives and events. See also *Queer/Early/Modern*, 4.

\(^{39}\) Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 156.
a negotiation that inheres in all scenes of desiring: the proportions of similarity and difference in affective relations with love objects. It is exactly this proportionality that, by the dictates of the heterosexual romance plot, homoerotic desire gets “wrong.” The proportions of erotic identification and alterity in an affective bond have been aggregated with other hierarchizing qualities of love relationships, bundled-in with the foundational mandate of difference expressed in the binary sex/gender system and the heterosexual teloi of romance, marriage, and reproduction. The desire to experience, in the area of sex and gender, a greater proportion of identity rather than difference with one’s love object is thus a queer desire.

Jean de Léry’s queer fantasmatic ethnography of the penis sheath is a scene of looking which bears obvious resonances to the Freudian notion of the fetish. But rather than a prosthetic accessory that stands in for the mother’s phallus, as in Freud, the penis sheath here signals a near-encounter with the father’s phallus. It doesn’t cover or compensate for an imaginary lost object, but for a real, present object of identification; Léry identifies with the wish to conceal and supplement the “infirmity” that age might cause in “that member,” as a young man (he was twenty-two) sentimentally hailed by the sexual vanity and desire of an old man. The penis sheath effects Léry’s act of empathetic projection by bringing about, and then narrowly averting, a confrontation with the aged Tupinamba man’s actual, naked penis. Operating as something like a Freudian fetish object, it displaces and refocuses the colonial voyager’s gaze to a point just above, around, and alongside the object of homoerotic, identificatory, culturally transgressive, cross-generational desire. It is not the thing itself, but the quality of Léry’s affective

---


41 Fetishistic desire, like melancholic desire, is a structurally queer form of desire, thanks to its deviant, arrested, non-normative erotic trajectory. The idea of the fetish originates in an early modern colonial scene: Portuguese colonial voyagers called the golden ceremonial objects of the West African civilizations they encountered feitiço or fetisso (meaning “magical practice” or “witchcraft”), suspicious of the supra-material powers to control, animate,
investment in it – the pointedly interested, identificatory temperature of his ethnography – that endows the penis sheath with meaning and erotic significance. Along with the other Tupinamba objects (lip bones, feathers) that draw Jean de Léry’s intense scopophilic investment – his pleasure in looking – the penis sheath is a player in a queer version of fetishism premised not on sexual difference but on other vectors of belonging and desiring, a fetish-like plot in which objects attract, re-route, and materialize erotic affect, drawing fetishistic attention to themselves without resolving into fixed substitutions for different-or-identical genitalia.

In this text fascinated with accessories – jewelry, feathers, and especially the penis sheath – and material things in general, one of the best-known images, and the first one Léry includes, seems to expand the category of “thing” to include Tupinamba women. Léry’s drawing features a Tupinamba man who does not need to rely on the old men’s prosthetic nod to vanity.

“Thus you will see him as he usually is in his country,” we are told; although the image shows a considerably more naked, less adorned male body than Léry has just described at length: a naked man with plucked hair, slit lips and cheeks with pointed bones or green stones in the holes, pendants in his ears, “his body painted; his thighs and legs blackened with the dye that they make from the genipap fruit,” and necklaces “made up of innumerable little pieces of the big seashellhat they call vignol.” Instead, this Indian man is closer to the un-marked “naked man” Léry asks his reader to conjure at the start of each description, “wearing only his crescent of polished bone on his breast, his stone in the hole in his lip, and, to show his general bearing, his

and subject the body that they were believed to possess when worn, though they were of a different, artificial substance. See William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I” in Res 9 (1985) 5-17; also “The Problem of the Fetish, II” in Res 13 (1987) 23-45; and “The Problem of the Fetish, III,” in Res 16 (1988) 105-123. The word is redolent of the same denigration of belief in the powers of bodily accessories as the commentators Léry contradicts, who wonder if the old men wear the penis sheath out of “some spark of natural shame.” By the same token, the Freudian definition of the fetish casts uncannily-attractive material things as improper love objects in the unidirectional plot of male (hetero)sexual maturation, into which infantile identification and desire are diverted, and become deviant attachment, as a coping mechanism for the horror of sexual difference (Freud, “Fetishism,” 152-153).

Léry, 62.
unbent bow and his arrows in his hands.”

Figure 2, Jean de Léry, *Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Bresil, autrement dite Amerique* ([Geneva]: Pour Antoine Chuppin, [1580]), 107. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University.

The image looks at first glance as though it represents a heterosexual, reproductive, nuclear family relation between the man portrayed and the woman behind him (which undoubtedly has something to do with its being by far the most commonly reproduced image from the *Histoire d’un voyage* in modern media), but Léry’s explanation undoes this reflexively imagined narrative of heteronormative domesticity. The woman is, literally, scenery: “To fill out this plate, we have put near this Tupinamba one of his women, who, in their customary way, is holding her child in a cotton scarf… Next to the three is a cotton bed… There is also the figure

---

43 Léry, 62.
of the fruit that they call ananas…“44 “His” woman and “her” child are properties in a materialist tableau of objects which are of interest for how they touch and incorporate with the Tupinamba male body. The woman is an accessory, an “object in the midst of other objects,”45 significant as objects of attention for their visual interest and novelty – and also for how they show, shape, and augment male bodies. Like the penis sheath, the woman, the hammock, the bow, the pineapple, and the rock in this drawing all function as accessories, to hold and conduct the viewer’s desiring gaze around, away from, and back towards the naked, native male body. They do not divert erotic attention to themselves, nor are they marshaled into a unidirectional plot trajectory, nor deployed to prove or deny some answer to the colonial crisis of identification and difference. But the woman also functions as something more akin to the half-spectral naked men conjured in the body decoration passages: she is a human body used as a thing, whose material appearance maps commonality and otherness on to the Tupinamba male body in shifting, overlapping patterns of identity and difference that are not organized around heterosexual, reproductive erotics.

4. “I have them before my eyes”

At the end of the chapter on the bodily description of the Brazilians, Léry shifts without fanfare back into the past tense, reasserting the temporal and spatial disjunction of his return to France and revealing his anatomizations of Tupinamba bodies for the memorial reconstructions that they are: “During that year or so when I lived in that country, I took such care in observing all of them, great and small, that even now it seems to me that I have them before my eyes, and I

44 Léry, 62.
45 Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, 109, quoted in Hall, Things of Darkness, 211.
The naked and ornamented Tupinamba man Léry still sees “before [his] eyes,” though he is not there, is of the same fantasmatic order as the unadorned, prototypical “naked man, well formed and proportioned in his limbs” he earlier asked his reader to conjure as a familiar canvas for his exotic alterations. It is also, that is, a deeply identificatory image, incorporated into him, part of him, as easily called to mind as the image of one’s own body or that of one’s lover. Carla Freccero also draws attention to the liminal, not-quite-materiality of the Indian bodies in this text and their strange, simultaneous cohabitation with French bodies: “The spectral images of the indigenous Americans seem to be superimposed upon the French people Léry does, in fact, have before his eyes; they are with him in a quasi-material way, phenomenal but not fully present.” I focus, however, on the materialized traces of Indian bodies and objects constituted in Léry’s writing and drawing. If this text embodies an always-already futile attempt to furnish forth Léry’s lost American “others,” and the weight of his feeling for them, what relation do these descriptions and drawings of naked flesh and feathers have to the flickering images eternally lodged “before [his] eyes” and “forever… in [his] mind”?

The *Histoire d’un voyage* is a melancholic history written by a perpetually longing subject. Jean de Léry cannot *mourn* the Indians as one mourns the death of a more conventional love, because he never really possessed them; so he desires, impossibly, to retain them. His writing requires him to project the force of his imagination across time and space, in an attempt to access the lost objects of his desire. Léry claims that in his case, the persistence of his fantasy actually powers his writing, because the experience of looking at the Tupinamba was so sensually satisfying when he was in their presence. He seems to attribute the images of the

---

46 Léry, 67.
47 Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 95.
Americans that are still “before” and “in” him at the time of his writing to the “care” he took in observing them, as though his visions are constituted by some still-unspent remainder of the attention he devoted to their bodies, or a lasting residue of the pleasure he experienced in looking at them while in their presence.

In Freud's account, both mourning and melancholia carry the same negative affects that permeate Léry’s *Histoire d'un voyage*: pain, self-reproach, lowered interest in the present. Melancholia, however, is queered in almost every respect from mourning. Melancholic desire clusters around an unspeakable crux, its objects “withdrawn from consciousness.”

“Even if the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia,” Freud writes, it might be that his love for that other had some content that he could not consciously articulate. He might know “whom he has lost, but not what he has lost in him.”

Léry, as a bereft, backward-looking voyager/travel-writer, is in just such a melancholic position. It was inevitable that he would return to France and lose the Tupinamba Indians, but it is what he has lost in them – that unknown and unspeakable kernel of secret love and meaning – that persists. Unrequited, foreclosed, and ideational loves like this are the province of melancholia; it is the shape taken by desires that circulate outside of and against reproductive and romantic teloi, never resolving in heterosexual coupling, or indeed in anything we might call consummation at all. Jean de Léry’s colonial desire, like melancholia, is always-already failed in its ends, longing for love objects which can neither be kept nor released – because not only were these objects not-quite possessed, they did not leave, either. Léry did.

---

49 “One feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either” (245).
50 Freud, “Mourning,” 245.
Melancholia is the love that remains for an object after the object has been taken away; it is the problem of loving something that is no longer there. Mourning’s generic form is a linear, teleological model of time in which time is divided into discrete, distinct and self-identical temporal periods, following a clear, unidirectional sequential progression. In mourning it is absolutely clear what happened in the past (what was lost), what one feels in the present (what the lost object meant), and how the process of detachment will unfold in the future towards the end of the “work” of mourning: an ego in a normative state of being “free and uninhibited again.” Mourning, then, is a plot; a repeatedly-performed pattern of affective conflict and resolution, which progresses along a known trajectory and culminates in an expected end. Its key features its conventionality and its finitude: “We rely on its being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful.”

Mourning is an example of how a trajectory of feeling can become a plot prescribing the normal way for desiring subjects to contend with attraction to a love objects (and with their loss).

Melancholia, however, flagrantly refuses this plot. It encodes a problem of temporality within its structure, in that it refuses the directionality and the telos of mourning – its object is gone, and it is not “overcome after a certain lapse of time.” Especially as it shapes colonial travel narratives, melancholia has a queer temporality: both because it goes on for too long, and because its love objects are absent and unspeakable – not the proper, visible, present others of heteronormative romance plots. These improper objects are improper because they are gone – melancholia persists in its erotic investment in past-ness, defying mourning’s progressive detachment from erotic objects in the past and its end of an “uninhibited” ego which can find new objects in the present. It turns in on itself, negating itself in identification with the love

---

51 Freud, “Mourning,” 245.
52 Freud, “Mourning,” 244.
object, which is figured as a regression (never just “degeneration”), a reversal of the heteronormative telos of Freud’s sexual-difference plot.53

The language of past-ness opens up a space from within Freud’s text for the queer undoing of hetero-erotic plots with the idea that narcissistic identification, the feeling that deviant subjects “substitute for” object-love, has already come before.54 Narcissistic identification is essentially desire from the past, always looking back to the past. Its “regressive” mode of attachment links it not only to the individual’s own infantile, polymorphous past, but to identificatory styles of desire which are often denigrated for obstructing some compulsory plot of supersession: desires that are regarded as selfish, immature, bygone, arrested, or passé. Melancholia’s past-ness thus belies – and exposes as a rigidly heteronormative teleology – Freud’s insistence that narcissistic identification is the supplement and object-love the “real” attachment, locating within Freud’s hierarchy the germ of its own deconstruction. A queer temporality, then, links together melancholia’s deviant orientation towards objects from the past, its narcissistic incorporation of those objects, and its excessive temporal persistence and duration. Thinking about melancholia in temporal terms – as a persistent and identificatory love

---

53 Freud categorizes identification as the surrogation of the desire for difference, “a substitute for the erotic cathexis.” But some attachments – or some subjects, it seems – were always-already suspiciously narcissistic in their object-choices: when “the object-choice has been effected on a narcissistic basis,” the melancholic’s object-love has some essential susceptibility to “regress into narcissism” at the first “obstacle.” However, this regression is also a return, back to “a preliminary stage of object-choice… the first way – and one that is expressed in an ambivalent fashion – in which the ego picks out an object” (249). In “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” Freud defines narcissism as the “original” erotic condition, which is sustained and intensified in “perverts and homosexuals” as well as in “the maturing of the female sexual organs,” and which only normal, Oedipal, heterosexual men completely banish.

54 Other scholars of psychoanalysis have traced how Freud’s revisions of his ideas on narcissism and sexual inversion “subordinate[d] both to the teleology of procreative heterosexuality,” so that “inversion becomes not a separate dynamic of cathexis with its own authority, but a misplaying of the singularly authorized heterosexual cathexis.” Gregory W. Bredbeck, “Narcissus in the Wilde: Textual cathexis and the historical origins of queer Camp,” in The Politics and Poetics of Camp, ed. Moe Meyer (New York: Routledge, 1994), 62-63. See especially 59-64 on Freud’s subtle heteronormativizing of his account of sexual maturation. I am interested, instead, in mining Freud’s pejorative language of regression and reversion to recover the queer potential of desires that are degraded as “backwards” or “inverted,” in order to illustrate how the past-ness pervading Jean de Léry’s voyage narrative is constitutive of its queer colonial melancholia.
for lost objects from the irretrievable past – makes it easy to see melancholia’s queer shape, its
nostalgic (literally, the persistent pain of homesickness)\textsuperscript{55} or anachronistic orientation, in the
shape of the voyager’s longing for literally and symbolically lost love objects.

Jean de Lery's *Histoire d’un voyage* is a documentation of loss; it is also, materially, a
document upon which loss is performed again and again. Léry's account, in his "Préface," of the
circumstances of its composition and eventual publication is one structured by multiple, complex
iterations of delay, ambivalence, and loss. He claims that it is not consensually that after having
"waited so long" — until more than twenty years after the voyage — he has finally "brought this
history out." Other people had asked that he publish his oft-repeated oral narrative of his
memories of the New World — that “rather than let so many things worthy of memory remain
buried, I should set them down in writing” — and so, in 1563, he “wrote a rather full report of
them.”\textsuperscript{56} He then moved from the place he was living, however, and leant the manuscript to a
friend; later, it was confiscated (presumably by censors) at the city gates of Lyon from the other
friends who were trying to return it to the author. It was at that point, Léry says, “so utterly lost
that in spite of all my efforts, I could not recover it.”\textsuperscript{57} “Distressed” over the loss of his book, he
retrieved the rough draft from the person who had transcribed the first copy, had a second fair
copy made, and finished the book. But when France erupted into the Wars of Religion, Léry
"was constrained, in order to avoid that fury, to leave in haste all my books and papers and take
refuge in Sancerre. Immediately after my departure everything was ransacked, and this second
American collection disappeared.” This second text, then, is literally, materially consumed by the
intra-French sectarian violence that infuses Léry’s re-writing from where it sits in his memory,

---
\textsuperscript{55} *OED Online*, s.v. “nostalgia, n.” 1. and 2a., http://oed.com./.
\textsuperscript{56} Léry, “Préface,” xlv.
\textsuperscript{57} Léry, “Préface,” xlv.
lodged in the period between his return voyage and the publication of his *Histoire*. Ultimately, it is the first copy, which Léry had thought to be irretrievably lost, that is returned to him in 1576 by a friend who tracks it down from the moment of its disappearance in Lyon.

In 1578, when Léry at last publishes the *Histoire* — in order, he says, to refute what he sees as the abominable lies represented in André Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle* — it is cut off from the events it narrates by decades of religious conflict, including the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572 and the and Siege of Sancerre in 1572-73, both events of religiously motivated torture and mass murder which do shattering, haunting violence to the narrative of French nationhood. By the time of its publication, then, the *Histoire d’un voyage* is a post-traumatic text; its memories of the native Americans are riven by the intervening undoing, in the famine, cannibalism, and atrocity of the Wars of Religion, of the boundary demarcating the unthinkable. It is not only this historical loss which permeates the text, though. It has a propensity to get lost itself, even as it laments and attempts to remedy its losses; loss is its repetition-compulsion.

Léry is beset by his “inability to hang on to or preserve the recorded traces of the event”; he laments how his scribal copies “had kept slipping out of my hands.” The text constantly escapes Léry’s possession, only to constantly be reconstituted and recovered, repeating not only his irremediable loss but its prosthetic supplementation. The loss at the center of the text figures a melancholic compulsion to write down the events of his contact with the Indians in an attempt to “retain [or keep] things in their purity,” as he later ponders the savages’

---

58 Freccero characterizes the event and its aftermath of memory and forgetting as a “modern” or proto-modern trauma in France’s narratives of nationalism and secularism (*Queer/Early/Modern*, 87).


60 Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 87.

61 Léry, “Préface,” xlvi.
inability to do—and then to lose that textual record, thereby symbolically repeating the trauma of leaving the colony and the Indians and returning to France.

5. “I left some of my belongings behind me”

The decisive moment of this loss is the always-already-regretted moment of leave-taking with which I began, where Léry’s backward longing undermines, even reverses, the voyage narrative’s homecoming telos with its recuperation of familiar objects and proper domestic and national identities. The encounter with Brazil has reversed and unsettled his desire, so that he no longer feels appropriate identifications at all:

So that saying goodbye here to America, I confess for myself that although I have always loved my country and do even now, still, seeing the little—next to none at all—of fidelity that is left here, and, what is worse, the disloyalties of people toward each other—in short, since our whole situation is Italianized, and consists only in dissimulation and words without effect—I often regret that I am not among the savages, in whom (as I have amply shown in this narrative) I have known more frankness than in many over here, who, for their condemnation, bear the title of "Christian."63

At this moment of leave-taking, Léry shifts out of the long-past time of the narrative to “confess” to the reader a feeling that seems to begin at this moment and to continue through to the time of his writing, pervading the years in between:64 his feeling of “regret that I am not among the savages” persists; it comes “often” and seems to seize upon him unbidden. Léry’s colonial “regret” contains a frisson of slightly forbidden, and involuntary, feeling that returns long after he has left America, to trouble his sense of who he is and whom he loves. It carries a touch of something illicit that must be confessed to the reader, because it puts into question Léry’s

---

62 Léry, 144.
63 Léry, 198.
64 “Tellement que pour dire ici Adieu à l’Amerique, je confesse en mon particulier…” Histoire d’un voyage (1994), 507.
expected and prescribed national and religious identity. He “confesses” an intimate experience of the “savages,” in whom he has come to “know” something which has compounded his disidentification from Frenchmen with an excess of positive identification with the Indians.\(^\text{65}\) Despite himself, and in excess of the normative expectations of national identity that require him to protest his past and present love for his country, he persistently identifies with and longs for the Indians’ surpassing “rondeur” – a suggestively embodied word for frankness or fullness. The Frenchmen by contrast are empty, dissimulating men, “Italianized” (meaning corrupted and dissipated), in bad faith, and “Christian” in name only. In the memory that keeps coming back to Léry, the “savages” in their great “rondeur” are capacious, simultaneously full and receptive, able to take and hold the nostalgic desire Léry loads into them; whereas Frenchmen are withered, degenerate, no longer holding any signification at all – the whole of French society, he laments, is reduced to bare signifiers, “paroles sans effect.” He is haunted by the lingering after-effects of knowing (“j’ay cogneu,” the same verb used to mean “knowing” in the carnal sense) this “rondeur” that subtly suggests the erotic receptivity the Tupinamba men possess in excess of the capacities of his fellow Frenchmen.

Here, the queer voyager/history-writer’s altered and re-routed investments in the native American “other” have re-drawn the conventional lines of belonging and difference. The persistent, powerful, and problematic “regret” Léry for no longer being among the native Americans is based in a deep sense of sameness and likeness with these lost, unattainable love objects. (In other words: he wants what he cannot have, he wants it too much, and he wants it because he feels it is the same as he, and he as it.) But Jean de Léry confesses that even after many years, he also has been altered vis-à-vis such categories of identification and distinction, by

---

the strange experience of witnessing the Indians’ “rondeur,” “tasting the goodness” of the land of Brazil… and then losing it all forever, saying goodbye to the place where he had found “the means of serving God” as he wished and to the people he had come to prefer, to regret, “often,” and for the rest of his life, that he is no longer among them.

The colonial desire of the *Histoire d’un voyage* is born out of the impossible desire to change one’s categorical order, to become like the other or to make the other like oneself – it is a longing for metamorphosis, an impossible becoming-other, in order to inhabit identities and relational positions that are always-already foreclosed. Colonial desire based on an excess of this kind of identification has something in common with the erotic allures of “going native” and religious/cultural conversion, a major focus of anxieties about voyaging in the period – but the Brazilian sojourn Jean de Léry recounts is, significantly, not a story of going native. The decisive, apostate move of deviant trans-identification does not happen here; the others, along with the only-ever-fantastical possibility of identity with them, are lost.

I call Léry’s colonial desire specifically *queer* and *melancholic* because it hails this tradition of *renegados*, converts, and race traitors – and then asks, what about those who wanted to make that break, but did not or could not? The transformation his colonial identification wreaks in him is occult, lacking the performative or even bodily marker of the *renegado’s* conversion. His longing for an impossible becoming-other is invisible and has no end; there is no conventional narrative for mourning one’s non-conversion, and no conventional archive for these feelings. I place Léry in a genealogy of subjects who would have been other than they are, who would have loved otherwise, given the chance in another place and another time.

Léry regrets something he did – leave America – which it is too late to undo, and which it was always entirely inevitable that he would do. To point out the resonance of this expression of
always-already negated, moot longing with the history of shame-ridden gay desires, we can call Léry’s love for the native Brazilians the “love that dare not speak its name” while there remains any possibility of its consummation. Like Freud’s melancholic who can only articulate *I loved him* after the fact, Léry writes, years later, *I would have loved to have stayed*. In the mode of a melancholic response, his recurrent, repeated (compulsive?), and vaguely guilty feeling of “regret that [he is] not among the savages” is belated and futile; his reaction only comes upon him after the fact of his departure, when he is powerless to reverse it.

Melancholia’s queer temporality endows it with an uncanny, self-perpetuating intensity. It contains something unarticulated, “*something else besides* which is lacking in mourning,” and that “something” is an excess of negative, self-negating affect: “In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.” It is bodied forth in intricately spiraling performances of backward-looking regret, defeat, and abasement – it transmogrifies feeling low into a high performance art. This coexistence of excessive regret and a total inability to resolve or even signify it gives rise to scenes of the pathetic and the ludicrous, like Léry’s account of the wrenching (and absurd) sequence of calamities following the ministers’ protracted, nearly-lethal attempts to leave Brazil, in which a melancholic rhythm of repeated, dramatic failure is drawn out and intensified by the eruption of queer desire.

No sooner has the ship set sail than the wind blows it back, preventing it from leaving shore. After attempting to sail and being blown back to land for “seven or eight days,” they discover that the ship is leaking, and is “already so full of water, which was still coming in full

---


68 The economy of excess in which melancholia partakes is queer excess – it is related to other queer modes of affect that are too, too much, over the top, flamboyant, caricatures of themselves.
force, that it could not be steered, and one could feel it sinking little by little.” The young
ministers aboard feel the queer sensation that death is imminent – or, even stranger, that death
may have already occurred:

You need not ask whether, when we were all awakened and made aware of the
danger, we were marvelously stunned. In truth, it seemed so likely that we would
be submerged at any minute that some, suddenly losing all hope of being saved,
acted as if they were already dead and at the bottom of the sea. 69

These men’s seemingly temporary performance of “dead and at the bottom of the sea” puts
pressure on the narrative’s insistence on impossible, foreclosed events, such as Léry’s fantasy of
staying in America. The narrative temporarily tries out a limit case here of how far a constantly
thwarted, abortive narrative can go. It worries the categorical distinctions between a plot that
progresses into the future (albeit in a recursive form) and the ultimate removal of the body from
narrative time in death; and between a successful voyage (where the voyagers return to France)
and an unsuccessful voyage (where they don’t).

The sailors give up on their first attempt to leave America and limp back to “the land of
the savages, which was not far away,” constantly hand-pumping water out. The ship is deemed
“too old and worm-eaten for the voyage we were undertaking”; they are advised to return to Fort
Coligny – for an indeterminate, possibly permanent time – and “wait there for another ship from
France, or else… build a new one.” 70 The ship’s master refuses – the voyage looks so grim that
“if he returned to land, his sailors would leave him” – but offers a boat for anyone who wants to
return to the colony — after the revelation that “there was not enough food in the ship to feed all
the passengers.” Six of the purportedly-inseparable “fifteen or sixteen” ministers, including
Léry, initially get on the proffered return boat in an attempt to escape seemingly-inevitable

69 Léry, 198. Imagining what this affect could have looked like is in itself amazing; how does one act as if dead and
at the bottom of the sea?
70 Léry, 199.
shipwreck or famine. First, they seize what scarce provisions they can: “We quickly put our belongings into the boat that was given us, with a little root flour and some drink.” But then, the persistence of melancholic homosocial attachment intervenes. As the six retreating men take leave of the rest of the ministers,

one of them, full of regret at my departure and impelled by a particular feeling of friendship, put out his hand as I was in the boat, and said, “I beg you to stay with us; for even if we cannot get to France, still there is more hope of safety on the coast of Peru, or on some island, than in returning to Villegagnon, who as you very well know will never leave you at peace over here.”

Léry is torn between two of the fundamental forces of the queer colonial melancholia he and his text embody – attachment to love objects, and the inexorable movement of time – at a rare moment when, rather than intensifying each other, they work at cross-purposes through the touch of a “particular” friend’s hand, stretched across the space between a ship and a boat. After more than a year away from France, after six months previously at sea, and after two months of living with the Tupinamba while waiting for this ship to arrive, all of a sudden, at that instant, Jean de Léry is out of time. The other young minister is “full of regret at my departure,” and at the moment when he and Léry are in two different vessels on the sea his regret apparently overflows its vessel, impelling him to “put out his hand” and beg Léry not to go back to the Brazilian shore. Léry’s investment in the “particular feeling of friendship” they share is great enough to inspire a grand romantic gesture: Léry climbs back onto the ship at the last possible instant, and credits his friend with preserving him from danger:

Upon these remonstrances, and seeing that there was no time for more discussion, I left some of my belongings behind me in the boat, and, hastily climbing back into the ship, I was thus preserved from the danger that you will soon hear about, and which my friend had clearly foreseen.

---

71 Léry, 199.
72 Léry, 200.
At the moment of this near-abortive departure, Léry is caught between his attachment to his “particular” friend, his thorough love and identification for the Tupinamba Indians on the shore, and the perverse, non-linear temporality he seems to inhabit; it feels as though time varies its speed when months of the seemingly immobile period of waiting suddenly run out, leaving him no time to decide and sweeping him along, back into the teleological homeward flow of the voyage narrative plot.

Of course, besides his Tupinamba love-objects, Léry loses some material items as well: the “belongings” he drops and leaves behind in the boat, like his repeatedly-lost manuscripts, symptomize an expulsive drive to leave behind remnants and traces of himself in the places where he has been, and a compulsion towards losing material things of value and investment. The belongings also turn out to function as tiny part of Jean de Léry that is transported back to the shore to remain in Brazil forever, absent from him but closer to the Tupinamba. And he takes a remnant of Brazil with him, as well: his “memoirs, most of them written with brazilwood ink, and in America itself.”73 Fashioned out of the very substance of the land of Brazil, this ur-text stands in for the parts of himself Léry leaves behind, and furnishes the germ of the melancholic impulse that will permeate the rest of his life. Melancholic identification is lodged not just in the affective content of these “memoirs,” but in the thing itself; or, more accurately, in how the writing functions as a thing. From its first instantiation as notes and drawings written with brazilwood ink, the writing must be made to materialize, over and over, its writer’s impossible desires. Its production and reproduction is a melancholic – even autoerotic – process in which the writer strives to become, at least in part, what he has lost. Léry’s copious flood of

---

73 Léry, “Préface,” xlv.
words and images seem unexpectedly imbued with some excess of affective intensity.\textsuperscript{74} The narrative’s insistent communicativeness also betrays Léry’s queer aesthetic priorities: his obvious love for the ostensibly-instrumental mechanisms of ethnographic colonial inscription – drawing and description – as ends in themselves, only incompletely subordinated to the godly purpose that is supposed to be Léry’s ultimate end; and, conversely, his instrumental use of his religious mission to place himself in the presence of the American ‘other.’

Yet the \textit{Histoire d’un voyage} remains all-too-aware that there is “something else besides” in the encounter with the Tupinamba that the text cannot narrate – something incommunicable except through the embodiment of memory in affect. Léry continually claims to be confounded by the difficulty and incommunicability of this affective excess while striving to signify it:

\begin{quote}
But their gestures and expressions are so completely different from ours, that it is difficult, I confess, to represent them well by writing or by pictures. To have the pleasure of it, then, you will have to go see and visit them in their own country. "Yes," you will say, "but the plank is very long." That is true, and so if you do not have a sure foot and a steady eye, and are afraid of stumbling, do not venture down that path.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

The impossibility of conjuring the Indians’ ineffable being for his readers does anything but deter Léry – far from leaving the reader to “visit them in their own country,” he exhaustively fills twenty-two chapters of encyclopedic detail (including a “colloquy” of the Tupinamba language). He sketches the spectral Tupinamba “others” of his memory in as much detail as possible, to compensate for the palpable (to him) absence of their flesh. His passionate erotic investment in the “difficulty” – indeed in the inevitable failure – of the task is obvious. His vanished love objects continue to dwell inside of him, but can no longer be seen. His work can only sketch out his hallucinatory pleasure for his reader; only he personally undergoes the bodily sensation of the

\textsuperscript{74} Léry’s obvious passion for representation brings to mind Freud’s remark that one of the affects of melancholia is volubility verging on mania: “One might emphasize the presence in him of an almost opposite trait of insistent communicativeness which finds satisfaction in self-exposure” (Freud, “Mourning,” 247).

\textsuperscript{75} Léry, 67.
Indians’ persistent, lingering presence (“Even now it seems to me that I have them before my eyes, and I will forever have the idea and image of them in my mind”). The melancholic desirer wants to consume his others: he “wants to incorporate this object into itself,” Freud writes, "and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it.” Léry consumes the Tupinamba men – and has them perpetually within him – by incorporating their bodies into his text. If Montaigne can be said to melancholically incorporate a single cannibal in his book as an identificatory figure for a lost ideal of nature, then Jean de Léry’s erotic longing shows up as obsessive, compulsive, unstinting – he incorporates a horde of Indians into *Histoire d’un voyage*. These artificially-incorporated half-ghostly others signal what Derrida, in *Specters of Marx*, names as “the disjointure in the very presence of the present… [the] non-contemporaneity of present time with itself.” They signal the persistent presence, through the trans-temporal reach of queer desire, of the past in the present.

6. “Manie strange sightes”

The native others in Thomas Harriot’s narrative, “A Briefe and True Report of the New-Found Land of Virginia,” and in John White’s illustrated appendix to it, “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in That Part of America Now Called Virginia,” also figure the trans-temporal reach of queer desire, but into the future. Colonial desire, which inheres in longing for lost pasts in Jean de Léry’s narrative, manifests in Harriot’s and White’s texts as longing for

---

76 Léry, 67.
fantasmatic, impossible futures imagined by the English and inhabited by Englishmen and Virginians. Harriot and White attempt to materialize the fantasy that the colony will continue and to reproduce in their texts’ representations of Virginian people and things. If Jean de Léry’s lost, longed-for Tupinamba Indians are revenants or ghosts of the past in the present, the “savage” bodies and material objects in Harriot and White instead signal the uncanny absent-presence of the future in the present. As in the Histoire d’un voyage, queer colonial desire in “A Briefe and True Report” works through both New World object relations and the construction of historical time. Harriot’s descriptions of Indian encounters with English materiality, and White’s images of Indian (and ancient British) bodies and customs – a pair of representations from different yet related times in the failed Virginia project – play with temporality, shaping affective relations across historical epochs in ways that ultimately undercut patrilineal, heterosexual reproduction as the inevitable telos of the colonial plot.

The conditions of these texts’ production make the failure – and, concomitantly, the queering – of colonial reproductive futurity notably clear. Like Jean de Léry’s narrative, “A Briefe and True Report” is produced out of a colonial venture where the expected trajectory of conquest is derailed, and the expected lines of identification and knowledge between natives and voyagers become blurred and scrambled. Its representations of the Algonkian people of Virginia are so novel, and their strategies of discursive and visual mediation so visible, at a crucial moment of English historical self-perception. And, I think most saliently, none of the fantasies voiced in “A Briefe and True Report” ever came to fruition; there was no continuing genealogy of representations of the English settler colony at Roanoke into which these texts were inscribed as the origin point. The disappearance of the Roanoke colony makes it impossible for modern readers to accept its account of itself as realistic colonial prediction; in a way that is often elided
in foundation myths of continuously-populated settler colonies, this text’s surreal colonial fantasies are visible as fantasies.

At different points, the text of Harriot’s fairly brief, not incredibly true “Report” actually partakes in both “straight” and “queer” modes of colonial description, with different structures of temporality and sexuality implicated in each. The imagined futures of the “Report” do more than just communicate the teleological, reproductive colonial project of the Virginia Company – though they do do that. Just as Léry’s love for his ethnographic technologies, in themselves, saturates his text, the pleasures transmitted in Harriot’s detailed descriptions and White’s exhaustive drawings belie their politicized insistence that the New World is blank, before or without civilization. The representational, mimetic erotics of the text are, I argue, integral to its queerness. In my reading, Harriot and White render their stated agenda of colonial reproduction as a convoluted set of aesthetically- and affectively-laden images which, on closer examination, defy the logics of heterosexual reproduction and linear time.

In his well-known essay on Harriot, “The History That Will Be,” Jonathan Goldberg alludes to Harriot’s obsession with describing colonial events yet to come, and his naked investment in speaking those futures into being.\(^{80}\) Goldberg points out that “while many pages of his tract merely look like a list of the resources of the newfound land, it is less a catalogue of what is there as what may be there once English agricultural habits are transported.”\(^{81}\) Everything in the “Report” “will be” able to be produced in the Roanoke colony once the land is “planted and husbanded as they ought.”\(^{82}\) Moreover, Goldberg shows how, on closer

\(^{81}\) Goldberg, “History,” 15.
examination, many of Harriot’s wishful projections have marooned in disaster (like the pearls “lost at sea”), or were never there at all (like the dye Harriot includes because it grows in the Azores, “which is the same climate”!). Goldberg reads this as an attempt to inscribe onto the American land what Lee Edelman has more recently called “reproductive futurity,” the heteronormative and white-normative mandate that limits the range of what the future is allowed to mean – but, interestingly, Harriot is attempting to impose it at the level of “straight” (appropriately, Englishly productive) minerals, and straight plant life. What I take from Goldberg’s reading, however, is that Harriot’s language of futurity is already failed and futile, a projection of imaginary goods which are nevertheless not there on Roanoke. Indeed, I suggest we read “A Briefe and True Report” retrospectively, back through the fact of the Roanoke colony’s historically uncanny failure – which is, after all, how it was read by virtually everyone who read the 1590 edition. Could we then see Harriot’s “fantasmatically projective” writing instead as a queerly futuristic form of melancholic longing, reaching forward, rather than backward, across time? If the idea of queer colonial longing — which I explored in its classically melancholic, past-oriented instantiation in Jean de Léry — is taken as specifically stretching across linear time, exploring it in the Virginia texts will reveal a version of colonial desire which is more occult and complex, more fantasmatically, anticipatorily melancholic, and more queer than its propagandistic rhetoric can account for. Rather than an obsessive longing for a past love object that is no longer there, which the lover is powerless to regain, I see it evincing

---

the New Found Land of Virginia (Frankfurt, 1590), 9. Citations from “A Briefe and True Report” are cited hereafter in the footnotes by Harriot’s name and page numbering.

83 Harriot, 11.
85 Goldberg, “History,” 16.
an un-mournable loss of a specific future, which the text’s technologies of description and publication are powerless to bring about.

In keeping with my aim of further explicating the text’s queer colonial desires, I am interested in the moments where native bodies and things, rather than being seamlessly instrumental to the writers’ teleological colonial fantasies, exceed and even resist the projective attempts at colonial inscription into which the writers enlist them. I think that the queer, trans-temporal, melancholic erotics of “A Briefe and True Report” are engendered not only – or not even chiefly – by the ideological work of certain techniques of colonial inscription, but by the surprising and dangerous re-organizations of identification and difference brought about in the radical dislocation of the Roanoke venture. This can be seen in the tiny portion at the end of Harriot’s “Report” called “Of Such Other Thinges as is Be Hoofull for those which shall plant and inhabit to know of; with a description of the nature and manners of the people of the countrey” — the only section to describe any actual relations with the Algonkian Indians. Near the end, the godly Harriot tells that in every Algonkian town he visited in Virginia, he tried to “make declaration of the contents of the Bible” to the residents, as he saw fit. But, despite his best efforts, his forays into evangelism would habitually get a bit out of hand:

Although I told them the book materially & of it self was not of any such virtue (as I thought they did conceive), but only the doctrine therein contained; yet would many be glad to touch it, to embrace it, to kisse it, to hold it to their breasts and heades – and stroke over all their bodie with it.”

Over Harriot’s protestations, his Algonkian interlocutors seemed to find great virtue in “the book materially & of it self.” This can of course be read, like several passages in Léry ridiculing the Tupinamba man “in his full Papal splendor,” or comparing the Tupinamba maracas ceremony

---

86 Harriot, 27.
87 Léry, 64.
to “the bell-ringers that accompany those impostors, who, exploiting the credulity of our simple folk over here, carry from place to place the reliquaries of Saint Anthony or Saint Bernard,” as a mapping of the Protestant voyager’s anti-Catholic iconoclasm onto the New World, equating the Americans’ suspicious religious impulses with those of another “other” whose form is already familiar. However, this is also a vivid image of all-consuming, fetishistic enjoyment of a made material thing. The Indians do not just perform quasi-ceremonial gestures of reverence with the Bible; they gratify their sensory impulses with it, “embracing it,” “kissing it,” and becoming amorous with it in a style that is certainly not organized around any normative type of eroticism, genital or otherwise. The book functions as an instrument of pleasure, or a toy. And then, as they “stroke all over their body with it,” it becomes a supplement to a scene of polymorphously perverse, full-body group eroticism.

Harriot has an explanation, however – he insists that the Indians are holding the book against their breasts and their heads “to show their hungry desire of that knowledge which was spoken of.” Harriot has an explanation, or at least a spin, for everything in this text, which dates from the first English expedition to Roanoke Island in 1585, and which is meant to entice prospective English settlers to come to Virginia. In the few pages devoted to “the nature and manners of the people,” he states that the main point he wants to get across about the “naturall inhabitants” (as he calls the Algonkian Indians), is that they “are not to be feared----but that they shall have cause both to feare and love us, that shall inhabit with them.” But if this is a sort of affective prescription for settler colonization, it leaves something out: it states that the natives will feel both fear and love, and that the prospective English settlers are not to feel fear; but left

---

88 Léry, 142.
89 Harriot, 27.
90 Harriot, 24.
unsaid is whether the English are, or aren’t, supposed to feel love for the American people they “shall inhabit with” (or any instruction, really, as to what feelings they are to feel about the people of this so-called “New Found Land”). Such unexplained asymmetries and strange omissions in language as this missing instruction to love – or not to love – are exactly the kind of evidence I see as signaling an unacknowledged affective load in colonial writing. I think some of the richest meanings are to be found in the crevices between how a text explains things to itself and how things might look to an outsider: for instance, in the unintended valences of gestures like the Indians’ book-kissing and full-body book-eroticism. The disjunction between whatever desires and pleasures – unknowable to us – the Algonkian Indians are expressing with and on Harriot’s Book; and the wishful identification and investment that come through in Harriot’s own account of what they feel, is where I begin to notice hints of a more complicated, more affectively-fraught, ‘shadow’-side of early modern colonial description, powered by identificatory projections and affective bonds (like forbidden fear, or unspeakable love) between English and Algonkians. It can often be accessed by noticing where colonial rhetoric fails to completely control the meanings it attempts to inscribe onto the native culture – or onto the travel writer, for that matter; as Thomas Harriot’s explanation fails to completely account for the eroticism of the Book.

Even as he surveys the fortifications of their towns and estimates the army they could muster, Harriot’s narrative is obsessed with communicating (or imagining?) the Algonkians’ attitudes toward and feelings about the English. He hopefully predicts that the Indians “shoulde desire our friendships and love, and have the greater respect for pleasing and obeying us.” If we are reading Harriot’s narrative for its flashes of over-identification and affective excess, what

---

91 Harriot, 25.
we see emerging out of the text are moments of imaginative, even ecstatic bodily empathy between Harriot and his Algonkian “others”: moments that reverse the poles of identification and difference; or moments where bodies and things exceed, and even resist, the narratives into which they’re being inscribed.

In one compelling example, the mathematician Harriot carries to Virginia an array of beautiful and intriguing scientific tools from Europe. The narrative displays these instruments with and around the Englishmen as though they are wondrous bodily appendages:

Most thinges they sawe with us, as Mathematicall instruments, sea compasses, the vertue of the loadstone in drawing yron, a perspective glasse whereby was shewed manie strange sightes, burning glasses, wildefire woorkes, gunnes, bookes, writing and reading, spring clocks that seeme to goe of themselves, and manie other thinges that we had.  

One expected reading of this scene would focus on how these tools are used to “dazzle” the natives with Western power and knowledge.  But that is not entirely what is going on here – the instruments are not depicted as functioning technologies, but as things of wonder and ornamental allure which attract the Indians’ desire and conduct it back to the Englishmen. These things facilitate a two-way circulation of interlocking pleasures, in which the Englishman enjoys looking at the Indians enjoying looking at his instruments, which he also enjoys. The imputation of divine, not human, art to the tools re-enchants them and reverses, if just for an instant, the teleological time of scientific progress. In the Indians’ eyes, familiar technologies, like “the vertue of the loadstone in drawing yron,” regain some of their magical and alchemical valence; a “perspective glasse” shows not the world around it but “manie strange sightes,” and incendiary tools like “burning glasses,” and “wildefire woorkes” become remarkable explosions.

---

92 Harriot, 27.
93 Goldberg reads Harriot as attempting to “dazzle” the natives with writing, and to endow writing with magic-making power by including it on this list (18).
Previous readings of these encounters, such as Scanlan’s, have noted the insistence of Harriot’s fixation on the Indians’ feelings, his fantasy that they “shoulde desire our friendships and love, and have the greater respect for pleasing and obeying us.” This project, though, takes Harriot’s language of affective investment here as desire, rather than subordinating desire to the political and theological problems such languages supposedly represent. In this light, Harriot’s fantasies of the Indians’ desire for the English is legible as an instantiation of inverted colonial desire for the native American other, reversed from its original direction. I am assuming that, as Goldberg has suggested, “what is recorded as if spoken by the natives may well be in part a European fantasy”; Harriot's extensive ventriloquizations of the Indians must therefore amount to a “hybrid text” of “complicities, accommodations, projections, mistranslations.” But, given that multivocality, I see Harriot’s projection of desire for his friendship and love onto the Indians — which is utterly constitutive of colonial desire’s violent erotic projectivity — taking a specifically queer form here, due to the affective functioning of material objects in the encounter scene.

What ties together these scientific instruments and the even more erotically-laden book (a

---

94 Harriot, 25.
95 While it contains a hint of affective “ambivalence,” the dichotomy Scanlan sets up between “fear and love” as the two operative perceptions of the natives’ and the colonizers’ feelings about each other reduces the complex interplay of desire, identification, disidentification, projection, melancholia, and negative affect animating these encounter scenes to a single bipolar axis. I am skeptical of the claim that the currents of desire in these texts “furnish their Protestant readers with a means of resolving the tension between two different modes of perceiving the colonial encounter” – or indeed that colonial desire functions so efficaciously as to furnish anyone with any sort of resolution at all (41).
96 Scanlan, Colonial Writing, 52-54.
97 Goldberg’s intervention seeks to complicate teleological readings of this text, like Stephen Greenblatt’s in “Invisible Bullets,” which make the native voices “testify to their own disappearance and replacement by us” (15); he critiques the teleological model of historical time as a colonialist fantasy, in which modern critics’ un-interrogated vocabularies of future projection and retroactive prediction can all too easily play into assumptions of the inevitability of European colonial domination.
98 Recall Homi Bhabha’s formulation in The Location of Culture of the colonizer’s longing for the love of the colonized subject, and how quickly longing can turn into the imputation of aggression: “‘I want him to love me,’ turns into its opposite ‘I hate him’ and thence through projection and the exclusion of the first person, ‘He hates me’” (100).
Bible, no less!) with which I began, is that by any normative standards of Harriot’s, the Indians are using these items *wrongly* in multiple ways. And yet, they are enjoying them on their own terms, making and transmitting affective meaning which is legible, to us, reading about them four centuries later – regardless of what the colonial narrator knows or says about it. The direct pleasures taken in these items, and the public-yet-secret character of their meanings for the Indians, makes me think of a particular kind of queer identification that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes in her essay, “Queer and Now.” Sedgwick remembers that as a child, “the ability to attach intently to a few cultural objects, objects of high or popular culture or both, objects whose meaning seemed mysterious, excessive, or oblique in relation to the codes most readily available to us, became a prime resource for survival.”

She discusses the way in which such objects of queer recognition unaccountably capture, focus, and facilitate the desires of those who feel an attraction to them, who *use* them in ways that others do not.

Though the social and cultural stakes are completely different, in the Indians’ hands, the scientific instruments and Bible become objects of communal pleasure and affiliation, in a wonderfully literal version of Sedgwick’s formulation: “objects whose meaning seemed mysterious, excessive, or oblique in relation to the codes most readily available to us.” The mystery, of course, is mutual – I am *not* just comparing the Virginian Algonkians, investing their conquerors’ tools with ineffable, lost meanings, to imperiled queer children (though they *are* represented here as both polymorphously infantile and erotically suspect). It is Harriot, actually, who is acting in the role of Sedgwick’s queer child, investing this site where (as Sedgwick puts it) “the meanings didn’t line up tidily with each other” with “excessive and oblique” meanings

---


100 Sedgwick, Ibid., 3.
that focus his excess of “fascination and love.”\textsuperscript{101} Harriot of course makes a performative effort to impose the codes “most readily available” to him, claiming the instruments made many of the Indians say that "if they knew not the truth of god and religion already, it was rather to be had from us, whom God so specially loved, then from a people that were so simple, as they had found themselves to be in comparison of us."\textsuperscript{102}

This is not only a fantasy of the Indians admitting their inferiority (although it is that).\textsuperscript{103} It is also a fantasy of knowing how the Indians perceive the dynamics of identification and difference between him and themselves – a fantasy of perfectly knowing how one is seen by the other. These scenes of near-fetishistic embodied pleasures represent a queer turn in Harriot’s narrative because, in a reversal of the conventional erotics of the colonial exchange, the transmission and reception of affect flows "backwards," from the Americans to the English. At cross-currents to the English endeavor of colonial inscription, the Algonkians do not appear to be in any way effectively altered – Christianized or scientized – by Harriot’s normative readings of their gestures. Rather, in these two scenes it seems that Harriot, standing in for the collective body of Englishmen, is instead hailed into an Algonkian erotic economy of wonder and sensory delight by the Indians’ communications of pleasure in his European objects. Whatever we cannot know of the Algonkians’ belief system, mythology, or economy of desire, their feelings are apparently undeterred by Harriot’s repeated caveats, as he witnesses their “hungrie desire,” which is obviously not simply desire for “that knowledge which was spoken of.”

\textsuperscript{101} Sedgwick, Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{102} Harriot, 27.
\textsuperscript{103} This fantasy appears periodically in the voyage-history genre, including George Best's 1570s accounts of Martin Frobisher's voyages to Baffin Island; it appears as a claim that native Americans communicate – in words or by gestures – their self-consciousness of their relative cognitive simplicity as compared to the English, and their inability to grasp the abstract principles that animate English technology and scientific thought. See Greenblatt, \textit{Marvelous Possessions}, 114-116.
Harriot’s predilection for projective fantasies of the *English* body as seen by the Indians stands in contrast to Léry’s exhaustively-elaborated “contemplations” of the Indian body augmented with various prosthetic accessories. If Léry looks at Indian bodies queerly, envisioning and presenting queer bodies for the Tupinamba men, Harriot could be said to reverse Léry’s stance of queer colonial looking at the native other; in his fantasies it is the Algonkians who envision queer, uncannily potent and artificially augmented bodies for the English colonists. The colonist’s longing is not just an excessive investment in the native American men; it is part of the history of queer affect because the fantasy of dazzling metamorphosis that haunts it – into a potent, disassemble-able machine-body of brass, glass, and iron that seems to “go of itself,” arrayed with fire and “strange sights”; a body that would be irresistible to its impossible objects of desire – is an impossible one.

7. “We were not born of women”

By far the best-known passage in “A Briefe and True Report” – so well-known that it is almost transgressively passé to return to it “once more, with feeling” – is the “invisible bullets” story, about which much has been said regarding the reach of erotic desire through historical time since Stephen Greenblatt cited it in “Invisible Bullets.” This bizarre anecdote recounts “one other rare and strange accident […], which mooved the whole countrey that either knew or heard of us, to have us in wonderfull admiration”:

> There was no towne where we had any subtile devise practised against us, we leaving it unpunished or not revenged (because wee thought by all meanes possible to win them by gentlenesse) but that in a few days after our departure from everie such towne, the people began to die very fast, and many in short space. […] This happened in no place that wee coulde learne but where wee had bene, where they used some practise against us.  

---

105 Harriot, 28.
The narratorial voice shifts here to join the Indians in a discourse of wonder, citing the register of cheap-print monster and prodigy pamphlets which published “rare and strange accidents,” because this event remains wondrous and unexplained to the English as well. Harriot purports to archive the Algonkians’ theories about the unexplained disease that kills enormous numbers of their population; and about what order of being the Englishmen are. The fictive trans-historical genealogies detailed in this series of explanations are deviant, chaotic, and grotesque; but they are also quite specific in positing distinct, specific connections between men, all of which demonstrate the possibility of thinking radical alternatives to the telos of reproductive futurity in the colonial scene. In the midst of what must have been a singularly disturbing and opaque moment in the English/Virginian encounter, when Harriot’s reversion to a language of wonder betrays that European technologies of knowledge production and inscription are totally useless to describe what is happening, (someone’s) profoundly negative fantasies enact not only many possible historical trajectories, but many possible configurations of melancholic identification and relationality through and across time.

The Algonkian people, as the narrative has it, experience themselves as confronting a mysterious, implacably intelligent desire whose drive is revenge and whose sympathy rests entirely with the English. From the carnage they observe, the Englishmen’s “friends & especially the [chief] Wiroans Wingina,” conclude that the Englishmen can manipulate the constraints of space-time and materiality to enact lethal violence, believing “that it was the worke of our God through our meanes, that wee by him might kil and slai whom wee would without weapons and not come neere them,”\textsuperscript{106} or "that we shot them ourselves out of our pieces from the place where we dwelt, and killed the people in any such towne that had offended us as

\textsuperscript{106} Harriot, 28.
we listed, how farre distant from us soever it was.” This fantasy of the Englishmen’s ability to violently effect native bodies from a distance, either “without weapons” or “out of [their] pieces,” is eroticized through language that figures killing, slaying, and shooting as kinds of touch, which must come from the English men’s bodies or their prosthetic “pieces”; and thus must, if they are felt at a distance, indicate some unnatural bodily extensibility. Harriot maintains that the disease makes the Algonkians regard the English as un-killable sorcerers, conjurers, or supernatural beings:

This marvelous accident in all the countrie wrought so strange opinions of us, that some people could not tel whether to think us gods or men, and the rather because that all the space of their sickness, there was no man of ours knowne to die, or that was specially sicke: they noted also that we had no women amongst us, neither that we did care for any of theirs.

These ventriloquized “theories” have received numerous readings, but I would argue that they are queer in more ways than previous scholarship has addressed. Harriot’s perverse, ventriloquized theories embody the queer mode of desire that is my focus in this project: they all construct elaborate trans-temporal, non-reproductive, even supernatural relationships between the English and the Algonkians. That is to say, they all construct queer genealogies: they are structurally queer, in that they cast the Englishmen as asexual, non-patrilineal ancestors or descendants. They are temporally queer, in that they traffic in visitations from the past and future, and in sex and violence that can travel across time. And they are also, in no small part, sexually queer: having noted about the first Roanoke expedition “that we had no women amongst us, neither that we did care for any of theirs,” the Algonkians see the English as a sodomitical, gender-undifferentiated race of men who reproduce with one another.

This text, of course, was written from Harriot’s experiences on the first venture, the 1585

107 Harriot, 29.
108 Harriot, 29.
Richard Grenville expedition, which had no women; John White’s “lost” 1587 colony was supposed to be reproductive. There is surely a literal, sexual meaning to what the Algonkians “note” about the Englishmen, although it remains totally un-interrogated by Harriot, the critical work on Harriot, and most of the critical work on the early modern voyage narrative. The all-male exploratory expedition, which shares the homosocial incarceration of the ship with all sea voyages but adds the dislocation of landing in a completely alien world, is a certain site of actual sex between men, most likely in many, various erotic and social formations. While we cannot recover further meanings besides deep, deep strangeness that the Algonkian people imputed to the Grenville party’s homosociality, it spurs them, as Harriot has it, to imagine new, quasi-human bodies, sexualities, and ontological statuses for the English voyagers.

In the Algonkians’ first theory, the Englishmen are undead ancestors: “Some therefore were of opinion that we were not born of women, and therefore not mortal, but that we were men of an old generation many years past then risen again to immortalitie.” They are revenants from the past, risen like zombies, Christ, or the fabular returning kings of European national mythologies. Their spectral return, or re-animation, in Virginia inaugurates a queer ancestor relationship with the Algonkians, as indirect, non-patrilineal kin. The Indians seem to be saying that the Englishmen’s invulnerability to the sickness, like Macduff’s invincibility to Macbeth, derives from their unnatural, un-timely, woman-less generation. The second theory brings the mystified future into the present: the Englishmen are harbingers of a coming race: “Some would likewise seem to prophesy that there were more of our generation yet to come, to kill theirs and take their places, as some thought the purpose was by that which was already done.” This line has often been read as a post-hoc ratification of the telos of European conquest. Goldberg

109 Harriot, 29.
110 Harriot, 29.
objects to Greenblatt’s teleological reading of these conjectures as “eerily prescient,” pointing out the colonial desires at work in modern American critics’ “making-acceptable of the Algonkians as our ancestors, as those who testify to their own disappearance and replacement by us.” But far from implying any sexual reproductivity, in my view a prophecy from the future which says that the replacement of one generation with another will be enacted not by birth but by murder and usurpation can also be read as a queer fantasy of an end to reproductive futurity, in which annihilation is the alternative to the normative telos of heterosexual sex and reproduction. The wondrous killing that the English have done on Roanoke so far (which some think is annihilation already well underway) might be the beginnings of an annihilatory model of a queer colonial future: one that would mirror melancholia’s death drive and its eerily self-perpetuating duration.

The image which is often made to stand in for this whole set of genealogical fantasies is that these spectral conquerors to come are the present Englishmen’s ghostly lovers and servants: “Those that were immediately to come after us they imagined to be in the aire, yet invisible and without bodies, and that they by our intreaty and for the love of us did make the people to die in that sort as they did by shooting invisible bullets into them.” The Algonkian “phisitions” read a corroborating material explanation in a strange sign they observe in the victims’ bodies: “that the strings of blood that they sucked out of the sicke bodies, were the strings wherewithal the

---

111 Goldberg, 15.
112 Lee Edelman provides a psychoanalytic argument for a queer theory and politics that refuses what he calls “reproductive futurism,” the prescriptive ideological form of reproductive futurity that delimits the terms of political discourse itself to terms that assume the absolute primacy of heteronormative sexual reproduction, in No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
113 A possible future of iterated annihilation and replacement would mean that heterosexual reproduction had been annihilated and replaced by another, queer mechanism of generation. This next-order model of polymorphously queer, death-driven, non-sexual reproduction – in which the very mechanism of reproduction is constantly reproducing and/or re-modeling itself – raises the possibility of comparisons to modern and postmodern mechanisms of colonial empire, global capitalism, and biopolitics.
114 Harriot, 29.
invisible bullets were tied and cast.” Goldberg points out that this vision “may offer a version of Western horror even as it asks the natives to articulate it,” but I want to focus on the European fantasy, as well as nightmare, revealed in the hyper-potent penetrative powers of these specters of futurity. The image contains a great deal of eroticism, all of it queer: the men immediately to come after, the men of air, are like little witches’ familiars, erotically enslaved to the present Roanoke Englishmen, whose telepathic “intreaty” to kill they obey “for love of us.” Their invisible bullets on strings of blood invite comparison to Cupid’s invisible heart-arrows, or to the invisible powers of alteration found in the analogous bodily fluid, semen: they are shot for love, but cause death instead. Though the men of air seem as uncannily automated as zombies, this is not precisely an “Algonkian ‘Night of the Living Dead,’” as Greenblatt dubs it[^115] — they are not back from the dead; they are not yet alive. These servants are harbingers of the future, but what has conjured them into this moment before their own time if not an identificatory love between men, reaching forward to bind them to those who came before?

8. “In times past as savage”

To further flesh out my explanation of fantasmatic queer genealogies, and why they signify a queer mode of colonial discourse, I will move on to other places in the 1590 folio where we can see fantasies of time-bending genealogical affiliation connecting Europeans and Americans. When John White’s 1590 appendix, “True Pictures and Fashions of the People in That Part of America Now Called Virginia,” is mentioned in criticism, it tends to be framed as a set of illustrations corresponding to Thomas Harriot’s “Report,” which adds visual interest and novelty, but makes no substantive claims of its own. However, focusing on White’s “True

Pictures” on its own terms, it quickly becomes apparent that White’s images and descriptions constitute a distinct, visual account of the contact between English and Algonkians in Virginia, which differs from Harriot’s in subtle but significant ways.

White was on both the first and second voyages, and the leader of the second venture; he left to seek relief for the colony soon after landing, so it is probable that most of his drawings date from the first expedition, for which he was the recording artist. Traces of the complex network of power-inflected homosocial relations that brought this edition into being are visible on the title page of the “True Pictures,” however. The declaration that Virginia was “Discovered by Englishmen sent thither in the years of our Lorde 1585. at the speciall charge and direction of the Honourable SIR WALTER RALEGH Knight Lord Warden of the stannaries in the duchies of Corenwal and Oxford…” (as well as the dedication to the entire volume) are obsequies in the voice of the engraver and publisher, Theodor de Bry, to Raleigh, whose lauded status as the honorary patron of De Bry’s book belies the three years of deferred petitions by John White for a relief voyage. De Bry also reveals that White’s captions were “Translated out of Latin into English by Richard Hackluit,” who, out of his own history with Harriot’s account and their shared affection for White’s images, “first Incouraged me to publish the Worke.”¹¹⁶ De Bry credits White’s actual “Pictures” as being produced by way of and through Raleigh again (twice) and himself: “Diligentlye collected and draowne by IHon White who was sent thither speciallye and for the same purpose by the said Sir Walter Ralegh the year abovesaid 1585. and also the year 1588. now cutt in copper and first published by Theodore de Bry att his wone chardges.”

This appendix, then, compactly embodies a history of accumulated transactions of affectivity, money, texts, and images between men. As a made thing, it is a key into multi-layered

¹¹⁶ De Bry’s “To the gentle Reader,” quoted in Hulton, “Introduction,” xiii.
economies of service, instrumentality, debt, knowledge, pleasure, and capital around the colonial enterprise.

The bulk of the “True Pictures” is constituted by twenty-one richly detailed portraits and descriptions of the people of Roanoke Island and of Secota, Pomeiooc, and Dasemonquepeuc on the mainland: their dress, foodways, hunting techniques, the layout of their towns, their burial ways, ritual observances, and body markings. Unlike Jean de Léry, John White presents men and women in equal measure, in front-and-back-view plates according to their locality, age, and specific social station. White’s caption on the bodily ornamentations of this “Prince of Virginia” (as White calls him) is as precise in its alteritizing description as Jean de Léry’s “contemplations” of the Brazilians: their haircut is like a “cokscombe,” their earrings are “thick pearles, or somewhat els, as the clawe of some great birde, as cometh in to their fansye,” and, in the midst of their jewelry and body paint, “under their brests about their bellyes appear certayne spots, whear they use to lett them selves bloode, when they are sicke.”

117 Harriot, A. Citations from John White’s appendix, “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America Novv Called Virginia…,” are cited by the author of the larger work, A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia, and the folio page signatures used as page numbers in White’s appendix.
Although White does not deconstruct the Indians by asking us to strip them naked, a similar identificatory body comes across in these images: underneath the exotic and striking crests of hair, painted faces and limbs, feathers, chains of beads, and animal skins with tails and fringes, their torsos are those of classical sixteenth century nudes. Theodor De Bry bears much of the credit for the identificatory erotics of these bodies: he altered White’s watercolors, moving the Algonkian figures into classical poses and Europeanizing their faces, gestures, and bodily habitus. But De Bry’s classicized naked bodies are overlayed in each plate with White’s intricate, meticulous representations of fashion and cultural objects, among the most detailed of

---

118 Hulton, “Introduction,” xi.
the entire colonial period: bows and arrows; a priest’s hare-skin cloak; a “plate of copper hanging from a string” worn as a necklace “in token of authoritye, and honor.” These made things are included not, as Jean de Léry says of the pineapple, woman, and child in Figure 1, “to fill out the plate,” but in use, being worn, constructing subjects’ specific situatedness in a culture and a system of relationality in which the Englishman who observes them is undeniably implicated. In a similar fashion to Jean de Léry’s written descriptions of monstrous-yet-alluring bodily practices, the work these highly stylized-yet-exotic native American things are doing on the Algonkians’ bodies in these images is what draws the viewer’s gaze into an oscillation of identification and desire. The paradoxical foreign civility of the socially ranked, normatively gendered, and materially productive Indian presences they fashion also exposes Harriot’s insistence on Virginia’s “emptiness” as a projective fiction.

Figure 4, “A chieff Ladye of Pomeiooc VIII,” “The True Pictures and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America Novv Called Virginia…,” A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (Frankfurt, 1590), A6.

“A chieff Ladye of Pomeiooc” holds one arm through a skein of beads folded about her neck and carries “a gourde full of some kind of pleasant liquor.” Her child, a girl of “7 or 8 yeares olde,” has her girdle “drawen under neath” between her legs “to cover their privilliers withall.” De Bry gives the child a (presumably American) rattle, not shown in White’s original drawing; but in the other hand she holds a European babydoll – the single object in the “True Pictures” that brings the time of European colonial voyaging into collision with the quotidian temporality flowing through Algonkian objects. The doll in the little girl’s hand indexes the material and affective exchanges of colonial encounter that have already taken place: “They are greatlye Deligted with puppetts, and babes which wear brought out of England.” But it also hints at how those exchanges touch the Algonkian world these plates aspire to archive – invisibly, but inexorably, altering the relations of the *werоans* to his bow and arrow, the men to their boats, the women to their cooking pots and food (some of which they are now giving to the English, as they are unable to feed themselves), and their god, “The Idol Kiwasa,” to his worshippers. Such hinted-at fantasmatic counter-histories and possible futures can be glimpsed in these engravings by reading through and around their illusory stance of recording an ethnographic “truth.”

Like Harriot’s text, White’s work constructs material and affective interchanges between Europe and America, the past and the future, in which one masquerades as or stands in for the other and the movement from one to the other reverses direction. In the body of the “True Pictures,” these queer effects are insinuated in subtle markers of affective and temporal rupture: the conflict between identification and difference in De Bry’s alterations of White’s drawings;

---

120 Harriot, A6.
121 Harriot, A6.
122 Harriot, D2.
the European doll. But then at the end of the “True Pictures” of Virginia, queer melancholic colonial desires erupt in a curious coda – “something else besides,” as though De Bry could not bear to bring his volume to an end – which is unaccounted for in the table of contents: “Some Pictures of the Pictes which in the olde tyme did inhabit one part of the Great Bretainne.” De Bry credits John White with wanting these included, in order to make a point about the Indians’ temporal and kinship relations to the Englishmen. The introduction reads:

The painter of whom I have had the first of the Inhabitants of Virginia, give me also these 5 Figures following, found as he did assure me in a old English Chronicle, the which I would well set to the end of these first Figures, for to show how that the Inhabitants of the great Bretannie have been in times past as savage as those of Virginia.¹²³

There follow engravings of "Picts 1 through 5," with elaborately tattooed bodies and archaic weapons, set into a bucolic landscape exactly like the American one in the Indian drawings. The stated purpose of these images correlates with that of Harriot’s propagandistic account of Virginian commodities: they point to the past in order to prove the telos of the colonial future, pre-emptively elegizing the soon-to-be-disappeared inhabitants of the land in anticipation of the promised, Providential English colony.

¹²³ Harriot, Er.
However, by juxtaposing these Picts with the Algonkians and the English, White maps a trans-temporal comparison onto a trans-cultural one – a move that disintegrates synchronic or essential notions of English identity or hierarchized cultural difference. John White’s “Picts” project a dream of futurity onto America, enabling the colonizing Englishmen to imagine themselves as men from the future “race to come” that the Indians ostensibly expect. But, they also project the Englishmen’s mythical past onto America’s present. The Indians then become like the ancestors of the Englishmen, uncannily translated through history to meet their spectrally-begotten queer children in the space-out-of-time of America. The voyage to America could equally be imagined as a voyage back in time or a voyage to the future, complicating a simple primitivist or futurist trajectory either way.

But, coexisting with the “Briefe and True Report” and the “True Pictures” in this desire-
laden volume, “Some Pictures of the Picts” open up ambiguous relational possibilities which can also be used to destabilize linear, heteronormative historical narratives. Their multiple, overlapping axes of relation have the effect of re-casting the idea of “straight” temporal difference as something far more occult: an uncanny coexistence, within a fractured and non-self-identical present, of two different temporalities which are bent or bridged together by the English voyage to Virginia – and then again by these images, and their inclusion here in De Bry’s volume. The “Picts” may also open up possibilities for radical identification with the “savage” Virginians – and perhaps even gesture towards universalism. If the Picts, the “inhabitants of the great Bretannie,” are assumed to “have been in times past as savage,” they may be seen as having some immanent continuity with the only-arbitrarily-less-savage present inhabitants of Great Britain (though their connection is also contingent upon colonial violence). The volume, then, places the Virginians on a non-patrilineal, oblique continuum with the Picts, and thus with the English.

White’s images, both “True Pictures” and “Picts,” posit an alternative, non-linear model of history which stand in marked contrast to Harriot’s wishfully projective “Report” (which, let us remember, only dabbles in queer genealogy in the face of an apocalyptic pandemic utterly inexplicable by any other means). The trans-historical kinships and connection it constructs are closer to the weirdly asexual, queer genealogies in Harriot’s hybrid fantasies of revenant men of the past, invisible bullets, and enslaved men of air than to Harriot’s ostensibly factual reportage. Any genealogy that includes White’s “Picts” also thwarts the timeline of heterosexual reproduction, connecting ancestors and descendants (and confusing who plays which role) in relations far outside the time of a natural human life, and across super-historical epochs which negate any attempt to inscribe patrilineal, reproductive historical time. Nor do these genealogies
seem to have any basis in the heterosexual dyad, or in intercourse; the fantasy-kinship relations forged between present, de-territorialized Englishmen, lost past selves, and about-to-be-lost American “others” are certainly eroticized, but they are entirely queer.

They are, in a very palpable sense, genealogies of future loss: because underlying every possibility, every wish of relation between the English and the Algonkians in Virginia is the certainty that no human life could witness a span of time in which “Picts” could turn into the current “Inhabitants of the great Bretannie” or the Algonkians could turn into something else, as yet without form; the certainty, then, that no one reading this folio text, nor making the leap into the other world it advertises, would be alive to see anything it promises. On a more immediate temporal scale, because of the disappearance of the Roanoke colony, the specific, nationalist case of colonial melancholia afflicting the English – which was soon to be transmitted to America as an acutely mythologized, racialized nostalgia for the “Lost Colony” – takes a suddenly fevered turn before England has even a toehold on the continent: because, before anyone knew it – indeed, by the time anyone read this book – the actual English settlers, whom these “Picts” are raised up out of an “old English Chronicle” in order to mobilize the money and political will to rescue, had already joined them in the lost, apocryphal time of legend.

Jean de Léry’s ecstatic experience at a Tupinamba religious ceremony, in Chapter XVI, “What May Be Called Religion Among the Savages,” is frequently considered to be the

---

climactic moment of eroticism in the *Histoire d’un voyage*; it is the closest Léry comes to describing himself as undergoing an erotic experience. But for my purposes, it is also the most immediate instance where the trans-temporal, melancholic, queer colonial desire that is my subject accumulates into the time of an event, into something that *happens*. The ceremony is by definition an unattainable, forbidden object of desire; Léry and his two “companions” are warned not to watch by French sailors and strictly ordered by the Tupinamba shamans to listen to the ceremony from the women’s house. Thus they access the experience from a gender-queered position, in a house surrounded by two hundred women. The “sabbath” begins with “a very low murmur, like the muttering of someone reciting his hours.”125 The violently physical phenomenon of possession that follows, with the Indians howling, leaping violently, making their breasts shake, foaming at the mouth, and fainting, “frightens” Léry; he believes himself to be witnessing true demonic possession.126 However, this manifestation of the demonic turns immediately into an experience of the sublime; witchcraft changes into ecstasy. The song changes into "a harmony so marvelous" that his fear morphs into an irresistible desire to come closer. Despite warnings of danger from the women and an interpreter,

I drew near the place where I heard the chanting; the houses of the savages are very long and of a roundish shape (like the trellises of gardens over here). Since they are covered with grasses right down to the ground, in order to see as well as I might wish, I made with my hands a little opening in the covering. I beckoned to the two Frenchmen who were watching me; emboldened by my example, they drew near without any hindrance or difficulty, and we all three entered the house.127

125 Léry, 141.

126 I am intrigued by Léry’s belated, after-the-fact insertion into his narrative of a parallel between his memory of the ceremony which so profoundly affected him and a “witches’ sabbath.” Léry even adds a passage from Jean Bodin’s witch-crazed treatise, *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1578), to the 1585 edition of *Histoire d’un voyage*, concluding that Bodin best describes what he witnessed twenty years before. Greenblatt is perceptive here when he describes how thoroughly literal and material – not metaphorical – Léry believes negative affects like suffering, pain, and torment to be; he calls suffering, pain, and torment part of the same erotic mechanisms as wonder and pleasure (*Marvelous Possessions*, 215).

127 Léry, 141-142.
Over the next two hours, Léry’s voyeuristic desire to watch and consume the spectacle morphs into total surrender and submission as he receives the song at a bodily, sensual level:

At the beginning of the witches’ Sabbath, when I was in the women’s house, I had been somewhat afraid; now I received in recompense such joy, hearing the measured harmonies of such a multitude, and especially in the cadence and refrain of the song, when at every verse all of them would let their voices trail, saying Heu, heuraure, heura, heuraure, heura, heura, oueh – I stood there transported with delight [tout ravi]. Whenever I remember it, my heart trembles, and it seems their voices are still in my ears. When they decided to finish, each of them struck his right foot against the earth more vehemently than before, and spat in front of him; then all of them with one voice uttered hoarsely two or three times the words He, hua, hua, hua, and then ceased.128

Freccero articulates Léry’s ravishment as “masochistic surrender,” an example of Leo Bersani’s notion of “self-shattering jouissance”: the affective marker of a gay or sodomitical subject’s radical erotic identification with the other such that the boundaries of self and other are obliterated. This self-shattering orgasm is, in Bersani’s death-driven queer theoretical framework, a perverse act of resistance: the “normative response” to this sensual joy within the erotic norms of “straight” colonial desire would be the “violent obliteration” of identification with the native other, in order for the necessary fiction of colonial difference to be produced.129

The response of queer colonial desire, instead, is the obliteration of difference in an experience of masculine ritual climax shared with “five or six hundred” dancing men in unison. This "ravishment" is a sensory, ecstatic marker of Léry’s cross-culturally transgressive and homosexual transformations. It is figured as affective overcoming and penetration (“whenever I remember it, my heart trembles, and it seems their voices are still in my ears”), in a language of erotic submission and receptivity that reverses colonial tropes of domination and mastery.

Moreover, this ravishment, and the way Léry connects it across time to the moment of his

128 Léry, 144.
129 Freccero, Queer/Early/Modern, 99.
writing his account, also reverses colonial tropes of possession and projective futurity. It could be called the founding moment of Léry’s melancholic, as well as queer, colonial desire. The erotic opens up a space outside of Léry’s Protestant divine/demonic dichotomy, a distillation of the sensual consequences of wonder where his “masochistic surrender” can persist over time, into the future, through melancholic desire. The voices of these Indian men are transformed into aural memories which penetrate him and stay inside of him as melancholic fragments of the lost ‘other,’ haunting him for the rest of his life. This mode of colonial longing is retrospective, passive, and homoerotic; it is directed towards now-absent love objects, lost from him, who remain spectrally present in him. He does not possess the Tupinamba men, or any part of Brazil – they possess him.

Figure 6, Jean de Léry, *Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Bresil, autrement dite Amerique* ([Geneva]: Pour Antoine Chuppin, [1580]), 246. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University.
This is not explicit mourning; Léry cannot mourn the impossibility of remaining with the Indians. It is queer colonial melancholia – a longing to be something impossible in order to be able to love an impossible object – that works both ways across time, in both texts. And I would further suggest that it can be seen as a sexual melancholia similar in structure to – and inter-implicated with – racial melancholia, which works to constitute the subject through sexual and racial norms: as the apparatus of obstruction, or refusal, which attempts to block the inevitable impingement of the social world onto the subject, maintaining an encrypted “fictional” world in the fancy. Judith Butler’s account of historical melancholy resonates with what Jean de Léry voices, in which “an other or an ideal may be ‘lost’ by being rendered unspeakable, that is, lost through prohibition or foreclosure: unspeakable, impossible to declare, but emerging in the indirection of complaint and the heightened judgments of conscience.”

Butler makes the point that this melancholic effect is not restricted to specifically gendered, intimate, or even intersubjective relations, but can follow the loss of “a country, a concept of liberty” which haunts the conscience as an internalized ideality. Léry does this explicitly in his regret-fueled relativistic “heightened judgments” about the savagery of his own country; but I contend that the melancholic ravishments of Léry’s conscience are also about sexuality, about the norms by which non-normative erotic objects (cross-racial, homosexual) are “rendered unspeakable.” Ann Anlin Cheng describes the constitutive melancholia at the heart of racial assimilation (in the sense Léry experiences in Brazil, of “taking in” and inhabiting, as well as blending in) as a mechanism of neither transparent identification nor alterity, but of dissimulation: “What if colonial desire itself is melancholic, and longs clandestinely to mime the ‘foreigner’ inside? What if we recast the failure of mimicry (in Bhabha’s terms), as instead an allowance for

\[130\] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 196.
dissimulation? And what if dissimulation – the other that is me – provides the very structure of identification?" Dissimulation is a negative form of concealment, the inverse of performative simulation, which holds back and encrypts the dangerous and powerful secret parts of a non-self-similar subjectivity; as such it is intimately implicated with queer desire – with secret identifications that divide public, proper feelings from shameful ones; and which are at once disavowed and assiduously cultivated. Both Harriot’s ventriloquized Algonkian theories of undead generations and future lovers made of air, and the yearning image-magic retroactively performed by John White’s drawings of the Picts, can also be seen as stances of dissimulation. They betray clandestine melancholic identifications, in an attempt to negotiate an internally-dissimilar, dissimulating subjectivity, which is both itself and other, both European and American; and which has to be imagined in another place and time, where it could never be accessed in life. In this, I argue, these early texts reveal a melancholic mechanism which gets at something like heterosexuality, as it does at the heart of whiteness or binary gender, showing a new perspective on “how what remains unspeakably absent inhabits the psychic voice of the one who remains.”

Reading colonial travel narratives for their affects of queer melancholia draws attention to the haunting persistence of disavowed, identificatory loves in other times and places besides the early colonial encounter scene, including our own. In conclusion, I want to turn these artifacts of thwarted colonial ambition toward another purpose, enlisting them in a methodological backward glance at the project of describing desires and sexualities across different historical moments. I see the melancholic character of the failed colonists’ investments

---

in their bygone native American love objects as analogous to our own, equally-fantasmatic relations to the early modern texts and subjects which are the objects of our scholarly fascination and love. As this project and others have pointed out, the accounts produced out of Léry’s, Harriot’s, and White’s voyages – the detailed ethnographic analysis of native customs; the intricate drawings of native bodies; the meticulous linguistic, materialist, and religious knowledge as well as the memories, puzzles, secrets, visions, and regrets – are always, already belated memorial reconstructions of encounters that were already heavily shot through with fantasy. In fact, I believe we can see the crisis of identification and difference at the heart of colonial discourse – and travel itself – as metaphorically recapitulating the question of how, as modern scholars, we should read representations of desire: as subjectively recognizable, or as inaccessibly culturally different from our own. Like histories of voyaging, histories of sexuality bespeak an ambivalent mix of empiricism and fantasy, desire and loss, identification and alienation. They bear tacit affective loads about their own strategies of representation and interpretive frameworks: investing too much, reversing ends and means, and betraying pleasures and priorities that run athwart of their stated imperatives of knowledge production and political polemic. And, often, they are shot through with moments of queer recognition that confound the supposed conditions of historical and cultural difference.

Describing the queerness in a culture without such a category is no less dense an objective, no less temporally- and epistemologically-convoluted an enterprise than the early modern traveler’s undertaking – and, at a fundamental level, just as impossible to know in any definitive way. That there can be no solution is not a reason to abandon the problem. The

---

133 Lezra addresses the moment of naming and interpreting the initiatory ‘event’ of trans-cultural encounter, and the phenomenological impossibility of accessing that event in historiography, arguing that “the form [of the event's] appearing – the morphology of the culture or of the moment – ‘precedes’ the event, which comes to form always and already in the shape of a sign, an event that ‘means something’” (Unspeakable Subjects, 40-41).
method I offer in this project is only one possible approach; but I submit that an affectively-invested critical reading practice can allow us to recognize where erotic energy, mediated through word and image, erupts from early modern plays and travel narratives to construct queer circulations of desire among subjects and things, queer mechanisms of generation, and queer relational modes. It can, also, allow us to recognize how these affective forces disrupt what we thought we knew about the worlds created in those texts – showing us something new about the workings therein of gender, materiality, reproduction, power, value, difference, and time. I would further submit that if we can recognize these literary effects as fantasmatic – no less so in the voyage accounts than in the drama – and still be alert to their queer consequences, we should be able to say that they are part of a fragmentary constellation of meanings under the astrological sign called, for want of a better term, sexuality. How this intervention alters the (already fictive, projective) critical map of early modern sexualities is, I hope, an improvement, in that it marshals the uncanny potential of readerly recognition – of erotic and affective hailing across time – to construct multiple, suggestive, non-teleological affiliations between ways of feeling. These cross-historical lines of connection de-center received models of sexual difference and linear history, to sketch out an alternative picture of early modern desire which can register, however faintly, some of the shapes of queer fancy.
Bibliography


Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge, 1994.


———. “Sidney’s Sapphics and the Role of Interpretive Communities.” *ELH* 69, no. 4 (2002): 979-1007.


Hic Mulier, or *The man-woman: being a medicine to cure the coltish disease of the staggers in the masculine-feminines of our times.* London: printed [at Eliot's Court Press] for I. T[rundle] and are to be sold at Christ Church gate, 1620.


The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys arraigned, convicted, and executed at the last assises at Huntington. London: Printed by the Widdowe Orwin, for Thomas Man, 1593.


Pitcairn, Robert. Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland; Comp. from the Original Records and Mss., with Historical Illustrations, & Edinburgh: Printed for the Maitland club, 1833.

———. The wonderfull discoverie of witches in the countie of Lancaster, With the arraignement and triall of Nineteene Notorius witches. London: Printed by W. Stansby for John Barnes, 1613.


