

Rethinking Pleasure in the Shakespearean Playhouse

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Summary of Content

This study proposes that identifiable within the plays of Shakespeare is a rethinking of pleasure that can be understood as a response to the social, cultural, political, and religious changes that marked the onset of modernity. This response, it is suggested, takes the form of: a) the foregrounding of pleasure as a central philosophical concern; and, b) an exploitation of the possibilities offered by the mid-sixteenth century birth of a marginal, professional theatre to explore and expand pleasure's forms and boundaries.

Following an opening discussion on relevant critical and historical contexts, explorations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Macbeth* are presented. These plays have been selected on the basis of the insights they offer into early modern understanding of the imagination and subjectivity – two focal points of early modern contestation that direct conceptualisations of pleasure.

The discussion on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* investigates the play's management of pleasures of the imagination, and pleasures of order. The focus then turns to pleasure's relationship with polytheism as the possibility that *Dream* presents an unyoking of pleasure from its ties with virtue is posited.

The discussions on *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* explore how pleasure is rethought as the plays investigate the traumas and possibilities that face the subject in a changing early modern world.

Interaction between pleasure and the reassessment of subjectivity that the plays present is discussed through reference to Lucretius, Copernican heliocentricity, and Montaigne.

Macbeth is shown to interrogate and expand the registers of pleasure within an evolution of the aesthetic. This is discussed via reference to the aestheticisation of violence, Renaissance understanding of the imagination, the aesthetic theory of Schiller, and the clash between the emergent humanist universe and the providentialist teleology central to the doctrine of election. A concluding section outlines discoveries made and points towards areas for future study.

Note on Texts

In the hope of aiding the reader, minimal adjustment to spelling has been made to early modern sources. The long “s” has been written as the lowercase “s”, and where appropriate the letters “u” and “v” have been adjusted.

Illustration

The burning of Master John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester. Anno 1550. February 9 284

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Chapter 1

Rethinking Pleasure: Definitions, Critical Contexts, Historical Contexts

You abuse the worde Pleasure verye muche, when taking it
sometime in one Sense, sometime in an other.¹

And we'll strive to please you every day.²

Abstract: Following an overview that explains the central proposition of the thesis, and outlines how the thesis is structured, this chapter offers a definition of pleasure, introduces the critical contexts relevant to the study, then outlines the historical contexts that support and reflect the argument made. The central proposition is that identifiable within the plays of Shakespeare is an ongoing rethinking of pleasure that can be understood as a response to the social, cultural, political, and religious changes that marked the onset of modernity. This response, I propose, takes the form of: a) the foregrounding of pleasure as a central philosophical concern; and, b) an exploitation of the possibilities offered by the mid-sixteenth century birth of a marginal, professional theatre to explore and expand pleasure's forms and boundaries. Shakespearean theatre is defined, then, as engaging with an early modern debate about pleasure as it seeks to broaden the fields of thought through which pleasure is fathomed, and expand the dramatic range of the early modern stage. Critical focus on this rethinking, it is argued,

¹ Stephen Gosson, *The Ephemerides of Phialo: Devided into Three Bookes* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), 65v, EEBO-TCP.

² *Twelfth Night*, V.i.400. A promise made to audiences by Feste. The edition of *Twelfth Night* cited here and throughout is, William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1998, repr. 2017), 1191-217. References are to act, scene, and line.

enables new insights into the plays to develop and new understandings about the ambition of Shakespeare's theatre to emerge. Discussion on critical context develops out of the suggestion that the post-1980s new historicist focus on power has resulted in: a) a failure to satisfactorily address the concept of pleasure; and, b) a reductive backgrounding of investigation into the realm of the aesthetic. It is proposed that the critical approach to pleasure must employ a methodology that enables engagement with pleasure's historical contingency and its quality of timelessness. Three historical contexts are discussed so as to provide an overview of the playhouse-related early modern status of pleasure. These contexts are: a) the birth and status of early modern London's professional theatre; b) the debate between the antitheatricalists and the defenders of the theatre; and, c) the Protestant aesthetic.

Overview

This is a study of the culturally mobile concept of pleasure within the early modern theatre of Shakespeare, and of the early modern cultural conditions that led to a heightening focus on pleasure as a problematic of prominent and far-reaching concern. The aim of this study is to identify and elucidate a Shakespearean rethinking, or reshaping of pleasure. Evident within Shakespearean theatre, it is argued, is a response to the social, cultural, political, and religious instabilities that accompanied the onset of modernity that takes the form of: a) the foregrounding of pleasure as a central philosophical concern; and, b) an exploitation of the possibilities offered by the mid-sixteenth century birth of a marginal, professional theatre to

unpack and rethink pleasure.

A key focus throughout the discussion that follows falls on how Shakespeare foregrounds and aesthetically elaborates the concept of pleasure in the context of a new, post-Reformation world of protean subjectivity growing out of an old world of fixed social role.³ To explain in more concrete terms, the approach to Shakespearean theatre offered here is motivated by the observation that the concept of pleasure was subject to increased attention and problematisation as a result of England's official adoption of Protestantism, signalled by the English Reformation, and, in particular, the 1559 Elizabethan Settlement, and the transition from medieval feudalism into early modern capitalism. Changes in faith practice and worldview demanded, it is argued, a rethinking of the agencies, uses, and dangers of pleasure.⁴ Consider,

³Hugh Grady describes this old world/new world context as 'the brave new world of available social identities of early modern London and the older inflexible ideologies of social station'. Hugh Grady, "Falstaff: Subjectivity between the Carnival and the Aesthetic," *The Modern Language Review* 96, no. 3 (July 2001): 611, JSTOR. Grady's juxtapositioning of 'carnival' and 'aesthetic' speaks of this idea of movement from a pre-modern fixed subjectivity to the unfixed subjectivity of the post-reformation world. Jonathan Dollimore traces a related path of change in subjectivity in his discussion on Marston's *Antonio* plays. Dollimore suggests that Marston's 'protagonists are not defined by some spiritual or quasi-metaphysical essence, nor, even, a resilient human essence; rather, their identities are shown to be precariously dependent upon the social reality which confronts them. Correspondingly, revenge action is not a working out of divine vengeance, but a strategy of survival resorted to by the alienated and dispossessed. Moreover, in that action is a rejection of the providential scheme which divine vengeance conventionally presupposed.' See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, reissued 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 29.

⁴ A useful parallel context here is provided by Daniel Baraz in his 2003 analysis of early modern adjustments to the medieval conceptualisation of cruelty. Baraz identifies a change in attitudes to pain as medieval thought gives way to more humane sixteenth-century sensibilities. He suggests that 'a more relativistic attitude to the issue of cruelty'

for example, the impact of Protestant iconoclasm on the aesthetic response to altarpieces, stained glass windows, and ecclesiastical paintings, or how pleasure taken in dramatic performance is conditioned by the need to pay for a theatre ticket. Also relevant to this problematisation of pleasure is the transformative impact of the Scientific Revolution – in particular the epistemological rupture instigated by Copernican heliocentrism – on the early modern understanding of the relationship between the subject and physical cosmology, or celestial mechanics. A key suggestion is that present within the recalibration of theological thought instigated by the Copernican decentring of humanity is a need to reassess the firmness of Christian virtue's grasp on the values and meanings of pleasure – and the plays of Shakespeare perform such a reassessment. This study will argue, then, that Shakespeare's theatre – whilst fulfilling audience demand for entertainment – explores and rethinks the concept of pleasure as it engages with the unstable, changeable, cultural moment. What I attempt to do here is describe and analyse a Shakespearean investigation into pleasure through enquiry into how four plays have addressed and presented pleasure within their 'emotional and

developed during the sixteenth century, and this resulted in 'the positioning of absolute quantitative boundaries beyond which pain and violence were always cruel, regardless of any justification'. Daniel Baraz, *Medieval Cruelty: Changing Perceptions, Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (New York: Ithaca, 2003), 145. John R. Yamamoto-Wilson cites Baraz's observation and correctly identifies this as signifying a turn towards human rights. A turn towards human rights represents, I would suggest, a recalibration of the status of pleasure. See John R. Yamamoto-Wilson, *Pain, Pleasure and Perversity: Discourses of Suffering in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Ashgate, 2013), 13-14.

intellectual textures'.⁵

Following this introductory chapter, which it is hoped will orient the reader to the critical and historical contexts relevant to the argument, the discussion will focus on the Shakespearean rethinking of pleasure as identifiable in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594/1595), *Hamlet* (1600), *Twelfth Night* (1601), and *Macbeth* (1606).⁶ These plays have been selected on the basis of the insights they offer into early modern understanding of the imagination and subjectivity – two focal points of early modern debate and contestation that can be identified as directing conceptualisations of pleasure. The discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, constituting the second chapter, investigates the relationship between the pleasures of the imagination and the pleasures of order that the play presents. Michel Foucault's thinking on order and Pierre Bourdieu's thinking on cultural capital provide impetus to the approach.⁷ The discussion develops into analysis of pleasure's relationship with polytheism and fantasy as it posits the possibility that *Dream* experiments with the connotations of an unyoking of pleasure

⁵ T. G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.

⁶ Dates of composition as listed in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, eds. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1998; repr., London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 17.

⁷ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). Pierre Bourdieu presents his fullest exploration of cultural capital in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984). For discussion on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital see David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 42-45, 127-32.

from its age-old tie with virtue. Chapters 3 and 4 offer discussions of *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* respectively. Here the focus is on how the concept of pleasure requires recalibration as the plays investigate ‘the brave new world of available social identities of early modern London’ growing out of ‘the older inflexible ideologies of social station’.⁸ Interaction between the concept of pleasure and the reassessment of subjectivity that the plays present is discussed through reference to the atomic materialism of Epicurus and Lucretius, Copernican heliocentricity, and the multifarious, mutable, Montaignian self.⁹ The fifth chapter focuses on *Macbeth*. This discussion contains a reading of the play as a pre-Schillerian experiment in the power of the aesthetic to morally edify. *Macbeth* is categorised as following a moral narrative arc which is necessarily and richly challenged by the immoral pleasures awakened and investigated at its showing. Topics central to the discussion include the aestheticisation of violence, Renaissance understanding of the function, nature, and effect of the imagination, and the play’s resonance with the Elizabethan/Jacobean clash between the emergent humanist universe and the providentialist teleology central to the doctrine of election.¹⁰ The chapter will close with a

⁸ Grady, “Falstaff,” 611.

⁹ Reid Barbour highlights a sixteenth-century resurgence of interest in Epicurean thought ‘by Valla, Erasmus, Ficino, and Landino (among others)’ and notes Montaigne’s reading of Epicurean pleasure as being located in restraint and austerity, not, as common (and mistaken) belief had it, excess and lasciviousness. Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 14, 49.

¹⁰ Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

focus on Cynthia Marshall's theory of self-shattering – an important theorisation of playgoing pleasure developed out of insights offered by Freudian, Lacanian, and post-Lacanian thought that stands in negotiation with Stephen Greenblatt's still influential theory of self-fashioning.¹¹ The final chapter offers a summation of the key assertions and arguments made and offers suggestions for future directions that research into early modern pleasure might take.

It is hoped that communicated throughout are: a) a sense of Shakespeare being *about* pleasure; and, b) a sense of early modern theatre demanding that the playgoer engage with the concept of pleasure whilst also taking pleasure in the play.

Pleasure: A Working Definition

Before presenting a broad context for the arguments I offer in regard to the concept of pleasure in early modern literary output and, more specifically, in the plays of Shakespeare, it is useful, here, at the very outset, to propose a working definition of pleasure. It is hoped that that the definition I offer will aid in orienting the reader through the discussions on the critical contexts, historical contexts, and plays that follow.

¹¹ Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* offers four leading definitions of pleasure:

- a. The condition or sensation induced by the experience or anticipation of what is felt to be good or desirable; a feeling of happy satisfaction or enjoyment; delight, gratification. Opposed to pain.
- b. The indulgence of physical, esp. sexual, desires or appetites; sensual or sexual gratification. to take one's pleasure: to have sexual intercourse.
- c. Sensuous enjoyment regarded as a chief object of life or end in itself; pure enjoyment or entertainment, hedonism. Frequently contrasted with business.
- d. The condition or fact of judging something to be satisfactory; satisfaction, approval.¹²

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* opens its entry on pleasure with the following:

Pleasure, in the inclusive usages important in thought about well-being, experience, and mind, includes the affective positivity of all joy, gladness, liking, and enjoyment – all our feeling good or happy. It is often contrasted with the similarly inclusive pain, or suffering, of all our feeling bad.¹³

The study I offer here is of a Shakespearean rethinking of pleasure. To present a working definition of pleasure conducive to this study I would like to accept the *OED* and *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* definitions, and add a list of conditions to suit my purpose. I offer, then, a contextualised working definition of playhouse pleasure in list form that accepts the general definitions that the *OED* and the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* provide:

¹² *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "pleasure, (n.)", (accessed 22 December 2018).

¹³ Leonard D. Katz, "Pleasure," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2016), <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/pleasure>> (accessed 16 December 2018).

- i) Theatres can be considered as housing two areas of pleasure. The first of these would be the aesthetic pleasures felt by the audience as they experience the play. The second would be the forms of pleasure that the play explores during performance.
- ii) Pleasure is an everyday feeling or sensation, and a concept of great philosophical importance. Plays can attend to both of these categories.
- iii) Pleasure can be regarded as either beneficial or damaging to human well-being. As such it is a category of experience that demands management.
- iv) The fictional context of the play allows pleasure to replace pain. Pleasure taken in the dreadful descent of King Lear from robed king to semi-naked wretch, or the tragic, untimely deaths of Romeo and Juliet, is enabled by audience awareness of the nature of fiction's otherness to reality.¹⁴

I would like to add four further items to the list. These four items have been separated from the list above so as to emphasise the fact that they direct the critical methodology that I adopt throughout the play discussions that follow.¹⁵ This methodology is discussed in further detail

¹⁴ Here I am rejecting what Greenblatt describes as 'the post-structuralist challenge to the stable difference between the fictive and the actual' and accepting the Aristotelian view that, as Juri Dutta describes it, 'the difference between "real" reality and literary reality...is fundamentally irreconcilable'. Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990), 13. Juri Dutta, *Ethnic Worlds in Select Indian Fiction* (London: Sage, 2014), 15.

¹⁵ The implications for the critical approach to pleasure of pleasure being defined as both timeless and historically contingent are discussed by Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 12-15 and Bishop, *Theatre of Wonder*, 13-14. I discuss this further on pp. 33-41 of this thesis.

below.

- v) Pleasure can be deemed historically contingent in the sense that the stimuli and contexts that create pleasure can carry period-specific cultural value, or the status of pleasure itself can be recalibrated by the cultural moment. This is one aspect of, for example, previously enjoyed media products like films, TV programmes, pop songs, and plays feeling old or out-of-date, or previously enjoyed pleasures being dulled, sharpened, stigmatised, or destigmatised by developments in knowledge, adjustments to faith practice, or adjustments in social awareness.¹⁶
- vi) Pleasure can be deemed timeless in that our current experiencing of pleasure matches that experienced throughout the history of humankind. It would be difficult to argue that the pleasure that accompanies, for example, listening to a favourite piece of music, is historically contingent.
- vii) Pleasure is *felt* as psychological satisfactions and enjoyments, but can be *understood* as a problematic that continues to evade satisfactory understanding. As such, pleasure is

¹⁶ Exemplification is useful here. Consider Thomas Laquer's observations on the impact on the status of pleasure of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century animal experimentation and anatomical dissection. As scientific focus turned away from a holistic reading of the natural world and 'concentrated instead on individual organs and their mechanical workings', claims Laquer, 'a new kind of medicine, and the new institutions in which it was practised, made subjectively reportable states, such as pleasure, of relatively little scientific interest'. Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 188. Gail Hawkes explains that 'if women spontaneously ovulated, as was proved by the examination of physical virgins, then sex, and especially orgasm, was irrelevant for fertility. Conception was disconnected from pleasure with the discovery that only men ejaculated'. Gail Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 120-21.

susceptible to claim and definition.¹⁷

viii) Pleasure is resistant to totalisation.

As mentioned above, I offer this working definition here in the hope that a sharing of the picture of pleasure that I have worked with during the writing of this thesis will be of use to the reader as s/he processes the arguments that follow. The definition is presented as relevant to this thesis, but it does not profess to be a successful definition of pleasure per se.

Pleasure in Early Modern London

Changing status

The suggestion that the sixteenth century bore witness to growing engagement with the concept of pleasure is supported by the period's literary output. A 'Title' search for the word 'pleasure' across all texts dating from 1500 to 1620 in the EEBO-TCP database returns 227 hits.¹⁸ This

¹⁷ Consider the challenges to the understanding and management of pleasure implicit in Lisa Shapiro's summarised fusing of the utilitarian, emotivist and aesthetic understanding of the concept: 'On received views, pleasures are taken to be principally motivating of action, themselves unanalyzable, caused, rather than responsive to reasons, and, perhaps because of that, antithetical to rationality'. Lisa Shapiro, ed., *Pleasure: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2.

¹⁸ Historical Texts EEBO (Early English Books Online) Collection, < <https://historicaltexts.jisc.ac.uk> > (accessed 29 December 2018). I concur with Phil Withington in the suggestion that 'the vocabulary of title pages offer a more precise index of usage than general surveys of all text, in that the searches tend to be more reliable, comprehensive and easier to contextualize. They are also more suggestive of a word's cultural purchase, because titles can be expected to resonate with and speak to anticipated audiences'. See Phil Withington, "The Invention of Happiness," in *Suffering and Happiness in England 1550-1850: Narratives and Representations*, eds. Michael J. Braddick and

search was conducted with the fuzzy and two variant options enabled. A similar search for occurrences of ‘delight’ returns 113 hits. A search for all occurrences (thus, not restricted to titles alone) of ‘pleasure’ returns 6121 hits, and a similar search for ‘delight’ returns 3689 hits.

A degree of perspective is offered by percentages, and these are usefully provided by Phil Withington in his investigation into early modern developments in the concept of happiness.¹⁹ Withington uses ‘pleasure’ as a ‘perennial affinity term’ in his study.²⁰ (The choice of the term ‘pleasure’ for such usage is, it should be noted, suggestive of early modern interest in discussing and unpacking the concept.) Withington’s data shows that between 1500 and 1530 the word ‘pleasure’ appears on less than 0.4 percent of all title pages on the EEBO-TCP database. By 1560 this figure has climbed to 1 percent and, peaking at 1.8 percent in 1590, stays over 1 percent until the closing years of the first decade of the seventeenth century. By 1700 this figure has dropped to approximately 0.3 percent. This signals the possibility that early modern writers became increasingly interested in, troubled by, or drawn to, the concept of pleasure as the sixteenth-century progressed. I contend that the managing of social, religious, political, and cultural changes brought out about by the Reformation, the translation of medieval feudal

Joanna Innes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 35, and Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 8-9.

¹⁹ Withington, “Invention of Happiness,” 38.

²⁰ Ibid.

society into an early modern capitalist society, and developments in scientific understanding, involved management of – and investigation into – pleasure, and this is reflected in the increased focus on pleasure identifiable in the pamphlets, plays, books, and other public documents printed and circulated during the second half of the sixteenth-century.

Shakespeare's foregrounding of pleasure

A search of the *Concordance of Shakespeare's Complete Works* on the Open Source

Shakespeare website reveals that the word 'pleasure' occurs 192 times in Shakespeare's

works.²¹ The figures for selected variants of 'pleasure' are as follows: 'please', 401; 'pleased',

75; 'pleasures', 41; 'pleasing', 24; 'pleaseth', 17; 'pleasest', 2. The figures for delight and

selected variants are: 'delight', 76; 'delights', 20; 'delightful', 7; and, 'delighted', 6.²² It is

difficult to draw conclusions from this data as pleasure can be understood as a category of

human experience without comparison. Categories of human experience like, for example,

loneliness, ambition, fear, wonder, love, and hate all carry a sense of pleasure within them.

²¹ Search conducted on Open Source Shakespeare, *Concordance of Shakespeare's Complete Works*, <<http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance>> (accessed 12 December 2018).

²² A parallel search for 'pleasure' and selected variants was conducted using John Bartlett, *A Complete Concordance to Shakespeare* (1894; repr., London: Macmillan, 2003). In Bartlett's concordance, 'pleasure' is listed as occurring 206 times. The figures for the selected variants are: 'please', 371; 'pleased', 77; 'pleasing', 21; 'pleaseth', 17; 'pleasest', 2. Plural forms are not listed separately. Bartlett's concordance was prepared from the 1875 Globe edition of *The Works of William Shakespeare*. The *Concordance of Shakespeare's Complete Works* on the Open Source Shakespeare website uses the 1864 edition of the same text.

Relatedly, categories of human experience like discomfort or revulsion can be understood – if the complication of taking pleasure in discomfort and revulsion can be momentarily sidelined – as being located on the negative side of a spectrum of pleasure.²³ I wish to suggest that the number of occurrences listed above speaks of Shakespeare’s focused engagement with the concept, but the very nature of pleasure – its singularity – denies a strong empirical argument.

In his *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, Alexander Schmidt offers the following definitions for Shakespearean usage of the word ‘pleasure’ in its substantive noun form:

1. delight, gratification, enjoyment, amusement; objectively and subjectively
2. will, choice, command.²⁴

The definition offered by Schmidt for Shakespearean use of the word ‘pleasure’ in its verb form is ‘to gratify, to fulfil the wish of’.²⁵

The differences between the definitions ‘delight’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘amusement’ offered by

²³ Regarding the taking of pleasure in the unpleasurable, consider Laura Frost’s assessment of the Modernist author/reader relationship: ‘Along with offering thrilling and powerful innovation, modernist writers ask their readers not just to tolerate, but also to embrace discomfort, confusion, and hard cognitive labor. Modernism, in short, instructs its reader in the art of unpleasure’. Laura Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and Its Discontents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 6.

²⁴ Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary: Every Word Defined and Located, More than 50,000 Quotations Identified*, 3rd ed., v. 2 (Berlin: George Reimer, 1902; New York: Dover, 1971), 873-4. Citations refer to the Dover edition. The original title was *Shakespeare-Lexicon*.

²⁵ Ibid., 874.

Schmidt are vague, and difficult to process. There is perhaps a sense of *degree* of pleasure communicated – with ‘delight’ at the top of the scale, and ‘amusement’ at the bottom.

‘Gratification’, due to its connotations with the satisfaction of desire (i.e. the slaking of thirst) – and as exemplified in the American legal term ‘gratification of lust’ – can, but need not necessarily, carry a sense of the animalistic human succumbing to cravings.

Note should be made of Schmidt’s inclusion of ‘objectively and subjectively’. This highlights an important aspect of pleasure. Pleasures can be subjective in that they vary according to individual person and the conditions felt by that person. These would be pluralistic pleasures.

An objective pleasure would be fastened to a sense of goodness or happiness independent of individual feeling or sensation. Objective pleasures can, therefore, deny or oppose subjective pleasures. It is tempting to suggest that Schmidt’s identification of Shakespearean reference to pleasure as being both subjective and objective could be pointing towards the possibility of the playwright wrestling with – and finding tension in – this subjective (pluralistic) versus objective (pluralism denying) opposition. (Falstaff’s catechism against honour (discussed in more detail below) provides an example of one man rejecting the hegemony-serving yoking of honour to the good life so as to follow his own desires (*I Henry IV*, V.i.127-40).)²⁶ The point, however,

²⁶ The edition referred to here is William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan (London: Bloomsbury, 2002).

should not be pushed too hard. This subjective/objective opposition is a quality of the human understanding of pleasure and, as such, is likely to arise whenever the concept of pleasure is engaged with.

The word ‘pleasure’ appears in 36 plays of the 37 included within the Open Source Shakespeare concordance database. The only play in which the word ‘pleasure’ does not appear is *The Comedy of Errors*. Most occurrences are found in *Henry VIII* (15) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (12) and only one occurrence is listed for both *Coriolanus* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

While I accept that usages of the word ‘please’ might, in numerous instances, be deemed mere social formality offering little or no obvious leverage into the concept, it is apparent that ‘pleasure’ and its variants are regular and constant elements within Shakespeare’s tapestry of words. Even a cursory glance at play titles uncovers a foregrounding of pleasure. Consider, for example, the guiding presence of the concept of pleasure in the following titles of comedies:

The Comedy of Errors; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; *As You Like It*; *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will*; and, *All’s Well that Ends Well*. Whilst on the subject of titles, we might also consider the promise and shaping of pleasure offered by the word ‘tragedy’ in, for example, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, and *The Tragedy of Hamlet*.²⁷

²⁷ The subject of taking pleasure in tragedy is the focus of an important strand of philosophical thought. In *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure* A.D. Nuttall maps out a history of ideas on the subject as he explores Aristotle’s classical suggestion that pleasure is found in the playgoer’s distanced (thus safe and uninvolved) enjoyment of art’s

There is an obvious – an axiomatic – tie between playhouses and pleasure; pleasure, being theatre's product, is what playgoers attend playhouses for. I would suggest, however, that discussion of pleasure in the context of Shakespearean theatre must stretch beyond the limited, but nonetheless fascinating, sense of the psychological satisfactions and enjoyments of the playgoer. Vital to our understanding of early modern theatre is investigation into the playwright's referencing of pleasure as he offers it to his audiences. It is Shakespeare's unpacking and rethinking of pleasure – as presented in his plays – that provides the central focus for this thesis.

Pleasure performed

At this stage I would like to present analysis of two performance moments from the plays of Shakespeare which should further assist in this introductory contextualisation of Shakespeare's foregrounding and rethinking of pleasure. The first is an example of interaction between metatheatre in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Induction 2, 125-32) and antitheatrical invective. The second is Falstaff's parodic catechism on honour (*I Henry IV*, V.i.127-40). It should be noted

control and shaping of the tragic sequence, Nietzsche's focus on unreason, and the Freudian proposal that the human unconscious reveals a being naturally inclined to find joy in death. Nuttall offers the suggestion that, paralleling pleasure in strenuous physical exercise, tragedy exercises the psychic responses of fear and pity as preparation for the crises of death and loss that life brings. See A. D. Nuttall, *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

that more detailed investigation into the antitheatrical attacks on theatre follows below. The brief discussion I offer here merely aims to serve as an introduction to the topic of antitheatricalism, and to direct the reader towards an understanding of Shakespeare's theatre as being – to a considerable degree – *about* pleasure. The discussion on Falstaff's catechism will serve both to close this introductory highlighting of Shakespeare's foregrounding of the concept of pleasure and to lead into an outlining and defence of the critical approach adopted by this study.

In a 1579 diatribe against attending the playhouses of London, offered by the Anglican antitheatricalist Stephen Gosson, playwright and player are not pleasure's masters. Gosson insists that plays:

seeke not to hurte, but desire too please...yet the corne whiche they sell, is full of cockle.... There is more in them then wee perceive, the Divell standes at our elbowe when we see not, speaks, when we heare him not, strikes when we feelee not, and woundeth sore, when hee raseth no skinne, nor rentes the fleshe.²⁸

This school of early modern thought holds that playhouses present a threat to the playgoing public; 'the corne whiche they sell, is full of cockle'.²⁹ The use of 'cockle' here warrants explanation as it sheds light on Gosson's understanding of the nature of pleasure. Cockle, a type

²⁸ Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1579), 20r, EEBO-TCP.

²⁹ Ibid.

of weed also known as tare or danel, appears in one of the New Testament parables within the Gospel of Matthew.³⁰ This parable tells the tale of an enemy planting cockle in a good man's wheat field. The good man explains that removal of the damaging cockle should not take place until harvest time because it is difficult to differentiate between the weeds (the cockle) and the wheat until the ears of the plants have reached maturity. The key concept that I wish to highlight here is difficulty of differentiating between good and bad.

The suggestion in Gosson's text is that inherent to the playgoing experience is exposure to a threat to human salvation which is not easily recognised – or which is resistant to identification. This 'cockle within the corn' imagining of the hiddenness of a damaging, salvation-threatening aspect to playgoing pleasure is followed by Gosson's claim that 'the abuses of plaies cannot be shoven, because they passe the degrees of the instrument, reach of the plummet, sight of the minde, and for tryall are never brought to the touchstone'.³¹ The threat of playgoing pleasure is, thus, rendered doubly potent by its unidentifiability – or inherent state of hiddenness – and its resistance to evaluation or gauging.

A response to this understanding of playhouse pleasure as carrying an unnoticed, unnoticeable

³⁰ 13 Matt. 24-30 (King James Version).

³¹ Gosson, *Schoole of Abuse*, 21r.

moral threat is identifiable in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Here Shakespeare offers an in-performance defence of the delight of watching a play:

Your honour's players, hearing your amendment,
 Are come to play a pleasant comedy;
 For so your doctors hold it very meet,
 Seeing too much sadness hath congealed your blood –
 And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy –
 Therefore they thought it good you hear a play
 And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
 Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.

(Induction 2, 125-32)³²

This speech forms part of the deception of the tinker, Christopher Sly. Having been discovered drunk and asleep, Sly is translated by the lies and cunning of a genuine Lord and his servants into a melancholic, 'noble lord' (Induction 2, 97). Sly, now a bearer of a prescribed false identity is, in turn, prescribed a comedy by the absent, invented doctors evoked by the speech. Here the pleasure of watching a play is deemed restorative – a curative that will ease sadness and encourage healthier blood flow. Importantly, this context suggests that the pleasure of playgoing is gaugable, controllable, and worthy of prescription.

It would be reductive to suggest that the tensions in play between Gosson's evaluation of the

³² The edition referred to here is William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

pleasure of playgoing and that communicated by the play-prescribing doctors of *The Taming of the Shrew* provide a satisfactory overview of the status of pleasure in the early modern theatre of London. As this thesis aims to show, the problem of pleasure in the early modern playhouse stretches far beyond this Gosson versus *Shrew* opposition. This introductory juxtaposing of evaluations of playhouse pleasure does foreground, however, the idea of playhouse pleasure as a site of contestation alive within the discursive terrain of the historical moment. What we can identify is a battle to define pleasure's potentialities. Attacked at its birth for offering – according to the claim made by Gosson – delight that unwittingly, and unnoticed, corrupts, the secular theatre of early modern England is called upon to defend its pleasures as it first offers them.³³

The introduction to a Shakespearean management of pleasure that I offer here can be taken in a different direction and unpacked further through a focus on identifiable intersections between the concept of pleasure and Falstaffian subjectivity. If the extract from *Shrew* presents Shakespeare managing, or defending pleasure, the deployment of Sir John Oldcastle as parodic

³³ In explaining that Gosson's 'book, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, shows that the emergence of drama was a phenomenon which was felt to require explanation even before there had been performed a single one of the plays we now consider the classics of the Elizabethan stage', Martin Wiggins highlights the fact that London's professional theatre and its pleasures faced vocal opposition from its very outset. Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9. Stephen Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), EEBO-TCP.

priest points toward a playwright pushing towards new and expansive registers for pleasure.³⁴

Falstaff means fun. Falstaff tells us that ‘pleasure, not didacticism, is the brief of the Shakespearean theatre’.³⁵ His rotund, larger-than-life body is matched by his swollen and swelling pursuit of pleasure at every turn. One might say that Falstaff personifies pleasures. It is the indivisibility between the concept of pleasure and the concept of subjectivity within the Falstaff figure that makes him extraordinarily useful to the investigation I offer here. To explain this I would like to focus on the worshipping of pleasure and challenge to faith and orthodoxy communicated by his catechismal spiel on the foolishness of pursuing honour. Hal’s proposal that Falstaff should seek honour on the battlefield as he ‘owest God a death’ (V.i.126) receives the following response:

‘Tis not due yet. I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, ‘tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word ‘honour’? What is that ‘honour’? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o’Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. ‘Tis insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I’ll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon. And so ends my catechism.

(V.i.127-40)

³⁴ Ronald Huebert shares this understanding of early modern theatre as displaying an expansion ‘in the register in which pleasures are represented’. Ronald Huebert, *The Performance of Pleasure in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1.

³⁵ Indira Ghose, *Shakespeare and Laughter: A Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 4.

Here Falstaff prioritises the life and pleasure of the subject over honour, faith and God. As Harold Bloom suggests, ‘if there could be a religion of vitalism this would do very well for its catechism’.³⁶ What Bloom calls ‘a religion of vitalism’ can, for the purposes of the argument I offer here, be more usefully understood as, as Grady puts it, an awareness ‘that ideology need not be the be-all and end-all of human social reality’.³⁷ Here Falstaff is bestriding (to use Grady’s phrase once more) ‘the brave new world of available social identities of early modern London and the older inflexible ideologies of social station’.³⁸ In this speech Falstaff weakens, indeed negates, the influence of the concept of honour – a concept embedded within ‘the older inflexible ideologies of social station’ – on the choices and behaviour of the subject.³⁹ This can be read as a demystification of honour which frees the self from the ideological ties of religious faith and service to the monarch. Honour, seen as an orthodoxy-serving ideological construct that serves to block categories of pleasure that Falstaff wishes to pursue, is banished. The subject has claimed and negotiated the right to pursue his pleasures freely.

The significance of Falstaff’s labelling of his attack on honour as a ‘catechism’ should not go unnoticed. The speech does, indeed, adopt the instructional, question/answering structure of the

³⁶ Harold Bloom, *Falstaff: Give Me Life* (New York: Scribner, 2017), 3.

³⁷ Ibid. Grady, “Falstaff,” 613.

³⁸ Grady, “Falstaff,” 611.

³⁹ Ibid.

catechism. Thus, Falstaff deconstructs the definition of honour that serves the Christian faith as he parodies the church by adopting its literary form whilst inverting the content of its message. Falstaff, empowered to approach new subjectivities by the political, religious, and social instabilities of the cultural moment (the shaping of the old medieval into the new early modern), adopts the role of carnival priest to claim a subject's freedom from the demands on action and behaviour that church and monarch seek to enforce.

Playgoers are offered pleasure in open, forceful transgression/rebellion (with Falstaff), pleasure in taking the moral high ground (opposed to Falstaff), pleasure in the logic of the catechism's construction, pleasure in one's recognition that a parodied catechism is being performed, pleasure in the sheer energy of Falstaff's rejection of Hal's command, pleasure in the gap between the actor's control and Falstaff's release, pleasure in Falstaff's robust performativity (the list could go on and on). If we are to focus on pleasure as a concept rather than a psychic response, however, it becomes apparent that the dedication to engineering pleasure through subjective reinvention that Falstaff displays yokes the subjective process plotted by early modern theatre – the ongoing reinvention of identity within the changing scene, context, and situation – to 'a world newly open to the unfettered subjectivity created through shifting ideologies, religions, social stations, changing gender roles, and malleable sexuality'.⁴⁰ This

⁴⁰ Ibid., 612. For further discussion on Falstaff's shaping of the concept of pleasure see Frances Teague, "Falstaff:

context of ‘unfettered subjectivity’ within a newly ‘shifting...changing, and malleable world’ can be understood as enabling expansion in the ways in which pleasure can be thought about, or evaluated.⁴¹ In performing his catechism, Falstaff does not just give pleasure to the playgoer, he reaches towards an increase, or expansion, in the possibilities for pleasure. Accessible to and through Shakespeare’s theatre, I argue, are new registers through which pleasure could be understood.

In line with the aims of this introductory section to the thesis, the discussion on Falstaff’s subject-freeing catechism that I offer here is designed further to highlight the centrality and importance of the concept of pleasure to Shakespearean theatre. As with the juxtaposition between Gosson’s antitheatricalist argument and an opening moment from *The Taming of the Shrew* above I am attempting here to paint a picture of Shakespeare as managing pleasure, shaping the concept of pleasure, and being *about* pleasure.

Having highlighted the importance of the concept of pleasure to the historical moment that saw an old world of fixed social role transform into a new world of ‘unfettered subjectivity’ and, thus, presented a central reason for conducting this investigation into an early modern

Shakespeare’s Cosmic (Comic) Representation,” in *Acting Funny: Comic Theory and Practice in Shakespeare’s Plays*, ed. Frances Teague (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), and Jonathan Hall, *Anxious Pleasures: Shakespearean Comedy and the Nation-State* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995).

⁴¹ Grady, “Falstaff,” 612.

rethinking of pleasure, I would like now to move towards the next stage of this discussion and direct attention to the post-1980s critical neglect of pleasure in research into Shakespeare and early modern theatre.⁴² This will lead into an outlining of the critical methodology I will adopt throughout the discussions on the four plays that follow.⁴³ The limitations present in the critical methodology of new historicism and cultural materialism in regard to the study of early modern pleasure can, I believe, be highlighted through careful consideration of the connotations of Falstaff's presentation of a malleable subjectivity devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. As we move onto the next stage of the investigation, then, it is useful to keep Falstaff close at hand.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ In *A Future for Criticism*, Catherine Belsey's 2011 plea for redirection in critical approach to literary studies, the author devotes her opening chapter to the theme of pleasure and its critical neglect. In considering the role of pleasure within the consumption of artistic products, Belsey's questions and observations are pertinent and challenging:

How should we account for the delight we evidently derive from the depiction of invented experiences, imagined events, and counterfactual worlds? And why has criticism so little to say about the nature of this enjoyment? To be sure, book reviewers in the press commonly assess the pleasure quotient of the work in hand, but generally without any sense of obligation to analyse it. Indeed, the Sunday papers tend to reiterate a naïve set of more or less tautological phrases to indicate approval: 'a good read', 'a page-turner', or, when it comes to literary novels, 'beautifully written'. Academic critics, on the other hand, prefer to evade the issue altogether. On the rare occasions when the question is posed, most of us shy away like wild things startled by a human intruder: our work is made of sterner stuff we protest.

See Catherine Belsey, *A Future for Criticism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 2.

Approaching Pleasure: Critical Context and Methodology

Power-resistant Falstaff

As Grady explains, it would not be difficult to use ‘Bakhtinian notions of heteroglossia and carnival to describe Falstaff’s potential to invert and resist the ideologies of power into which Hal is being interpellated’, but ‘Falstaff’s challenge to the basic tenets of 1980s newer criticisms has been underappreciated and underdefined’.⁴⁴ In referencing Bakhtin, Grady presents an opposition between pleasure and power in which pleasure escapes from its usual position in post-1980s critical argument; power’s slave, servant, and clay to be moulded. A point to stress here is that Grady labels Falstaff’s version of carnival as Bakhtinian rather than Barberian.⁴⁵ The difference between the two readings of carnival lies in the relationship

⁴⁴ Grady, “Falstaff,” 610. For an explanation of interpellation see Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). Althusser’s commonly cited explanation of interpellation begins as follows: ‘As a first formulation I shall say: all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject’. Althusser then explains a key necessitation of his theory: ‘This is a proposition which entails that we distinguish for the moment between concrete individuals on the one hand and concrete subjects on the other, although at this level concrete subjects only exist insofar as they are supported by a concrete individual’. Next Althusser explains interaction between ideology and the subject: ‘Ideology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or “transforms” the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “Hey, you there!”’ Finally an image of the moment of interpellation is presented: ‘Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was “really” addressed to him, and that “it was really him who was hailed” (and not someone else)’. All quotations from Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 174.

⁴⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare’s Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom*

between power and pleasure. C. L. Barber reads carnival as being a momentary release from orthodox norms which is controlled and permitted by ruling powers, and which is understood to serve the goals of these ruling powers. Bakhtinian carnival constitutes a direct challenge to authority in that it serves as a levelling force which grants equal status to all voices. Thus, for example, the profane and high culture are permitted to enter into dialogue with one another on an equal footing. Labelling Falstaff as Bakhtinian constitutes a reading of the old knight as potentially anti-authoritarian, and potentially resistant to state-sanctioned, orthodox forces of interpellation. Falstaff will not *be* anything other than that he is. Grady's point is that Falstaff's resistance to the totalising readings of Shakespeare – readings that are an inevitable result of the new historicist/cultural materialist focus on power – is deserving of further and deeper critical attention.

Grady goes on to explain that 'since the late eighteenth century', Falstaff has been identifiable as 'one of the principal cases in point for late Enlightenment and Romantic notions of transcendent subjectivity'.⁴⁶ The key word here is 'transcendent', which suggests an otherworldly, pre-Althusserian understanding of subjectivity, and hence a subjectivity unimpinged by interpellative control. Once again, resistance to the aspect of Foucauldian

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

⁴⁶ Grady, "Falstaff," 609.

thought that sees power as directing subjectivity is evoked.⁴⁷ The approach and methodology of new historicism and cultural materialism famously encourage a focus on ‘the influence of ideology and discourse on the subject’.⁴⁸ The result, says Grady, is that ‘they have too often eliminated the subject as such, producing uneven, at times unworkably deterministic theoretical models’.⁴⁹ There is something of this argument in Anthony Burgess’s description of ‘Falstaffian spirit’:

The Falstaffian spirit is a great sustainer of civilization. It disappears when the state is too powerful and when people worry too much about their souls...There is little of Falstaff’s substance in the world now, and, as the power of the state expands, what is left will be liquidated.⁵⁰

Can this ‘Falstaffian spirit’ be unpacked further?⁵¹ Its ties to malleable subjectivities, and resistance to state power and religious doctrine suggest that it might be important to the understanding of Shakespeare’s theatre – and, being so, evident in other forms within Shakespeare’s plays. If we are to follow this path of exploration, required, I would argue, is a

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault is commonly understood to see subjectivity as subject to power. See Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 4 (Summer, 1982). In a 1995 study, however, Joseph D. Lewandoski identifies contradictions in Foucault’s thinking and defines Foucault as ‘Janus-faced’. See Joseph D. Lewandoski, “Rethinking Power and Subjectivity after Foucault,” in *Symplokē*, v. 3, no. 2, special issue, *The Histories of Michel Foucault* (Summer 1995): 221. Lewandoski suggests that Foucault, along with sublimating the subject to power, ‘sees the possibilities of individual subjects’ capacities for self-making, thereby perceiving subjects as bodily sites of resistance to various networks of power and truth regime’. See Lewandoski, “Rethinking Power,” 221.

⁴⁸ Grady, “Falstaff,” 609.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Anthony Burgess. Unreferenced. Cited by Harold Bloom in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1999), 282.

⁵¹ Ibid.

means of approaching Shakespeare's theatre that is resistant to the totalising readings that grow out of a focus on power. I would suggest that a focus on the concept of pleasure offers such a means. Here the critical usefulness of pleasure's resistance to totalisation comes into sharp focus.

Pleasure as Resistant to Totalisation

Pleasure, the concept that lies at the very centre of this thesis, is, by its very nature, curiously resistant to analysis. This is, I would argue, the very reason for its value as an avenue towards greater understanding of Shakespeare's theatre, and the society that Shakespeare's plays reflected and anatomised. As Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin explain, 'pleasure is a tricky subject for analysis because of its heterogeneity, its unpredictability, and its disruptiveness'.⁵² Dawson and Yachnin go on to emphasise that they 'find this congenial, since pleasure as a category resists the tendency to totalize'.⁵³ As Dawson and Yachnin see it – and I agree – a 'category' (here the category of pleasure) that 'resists the tendency to totalize' is a 'category' that carries the potential to unpack the multifariousness of human social practice and highlight the uncertainties and malleability of the human social context.⁵⁴ A focus on pleasure

⁵² Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

leads to a picture of human existence filled with the fractures and inconsistencies that, I will argue, are a characteristic focus of Shakespearean theatre. The suggestion is that the variousness of pleasure, its openness to contestation and resistance to control, definition, or mastery, renders critical focus on it a suitable gateway into developing understanding of theatre's place in the recording and explaining of human experience. To consider this pleasure-theatre equation from the reverse side, pleasure might be deemed a concept efficaciously approached by study of Shakespeare's theatre.

The claim that approaching Shakespeare through a strong focus on the concept of pleasure will lead to new interpretations of performance moments and new understandings of the early modern cultural landscape runs counterpart to the proposal, mentioned above, that the new historicist power-focused reading of Shakespeare – the approach to analysis that has dominated investigation into early modern theatre over the past thirty-five years – has created a blindspot in critical enquiry. This claim and proposal can be further explained, and defended, via reference to Ian Bruff's 2009 critique of Open Marxism and 'Foucauldian perspectives on power' titled 'The Totalisation of Human Social Practice: Open Marxists and Capitalist Social Relations, Foucauldians and Power Relations'.⁵⁵ Bruff's study is useful as the deficiencies it

⁵⁵ Ian Bruff, "The Totalisation of Human Social Practice: Open Marxists and Capitalist Social Relations, Foucauldians and Power Relations," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* v. 11, no. 2 (May 2009), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2009.00366.x>>

identifies in Foucault's reading of power carry the suggestion of limitations within new historicist analysis.⁵⁶ The key focus here grows out of understanding power as a totalising force, and pleasure as a force resistant to totalisation.

In presenting Bruff's argument here, I do not wish to suggest that the new historicist focus on power (the result of the movement's embracing of Foucault), is, in itself, reductive. Rather, I would like to suggest that critical insights that develop out of unpacking intersections between early modern theatre and power read as totalising might be usefully complemented – or interrogated – by a study of intersections between early modern theatre and pleasure, a concept read as resistant to totalisation.

Bruff finds deficiencies in Open Marxism's suggestion that 'capitalist social relations are the singular constitutive source of human activity' as this theorisation is necessarily built upon 'an ontology which totalises human social practice'.⁵⁷ As Bruff explains, 'for Open Marxists, capitalist social relations are the singular constitutive source of human activity'.⁵⁸ Of relevance to critical analysis of early modern theatre is Bruff's similarly-directed critique of Foucault's

⁵⁶ For an overview of new historicism see Jean Howard, "The New Historicism of Renaissance Studies," *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (1985).

⁵⁷ Bruff, "Totalisation," 333, 342.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 343.

reading of power's role in human social practice:

Human social practice is totalised by power relations which are the singular constitutive source of such activity. And again, there is only one way to know about the world—through a study of power relations—which means that Foucauldian perspectives are as guilty of epistemological austerity as Open Marxism.⁵⁹

The accusation of epistemological austerity might serve as a warning bell. It certainly warrants consideration. Is it possible that the new historicist focus on power, rich seam of investigation as it is, has served to elide study of pleasure? Bruff, for example, suggests that 'there is a need to resist the temptation of claiming to know how human social practice can be understood with recourse to a singular aspect (no matter how important) of such practice'. My defence for exploring the early modern theatre through maintaining a focus on the concept of pleasure lies, in part, in pleasure's potential to address the epistemological austerity identified by Bruff, and Yachnin and Dawson.

Approaching Pleasure: Historical Contingency and Timelessness

I would like now to offer discussion on the critical approach to pleasure offered by Greenblatt.

In *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, Greenblatt comments upon the

importance he lends to the role of pleasure in the field of literature.⁶⁰ (One of the world's

⁵⁹ Ibid., 334.

⁶⁰ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 13-15.

leading new historicists, thus a central elucidator of the totalising force of power, addressing the issue of pleasure in literature should not be regarded as somehow surprising or smacking of inconsistency. It would be absurd to suggest that power and pleasure are not related. As explained above, my suggestion – one also made by Grady, Yachnin, and Dawson – is that the understanding of pleasure as generated by a focus on power is a limited understanding. New understandings about early modern theatre are forthcoming if pleasure is placed centre-stage rather than defined as a construct shaped by power.) In discussing pleasure, Greenblatt distinguishes between his personal response – usefully claiming that being unsettled by the experiencing of text or play constitutes a form of pleasure – and an intellectual interest in discovering what pleasure is, and what meanings and significances it carries:⁶¹

Pleasure is an important part of my sense of literature – that is, part of both my own response (for pleasure and what I have called disturbance are often identical) and of what I most wish to understand. I am frequently baffled by the tendency especially in those explicitly concerned with historical or ideological functions of art to ignore the analysis of pleasure or, for that matter, of play...Literature may do important work in the world, but each sentence is not hard labor, and the effectiveness of this work depends upon the ability to delight...You certainly cannot hope to write convincingly about Shakespeare without coming to terms with what Prospero at the end of *The Tempest* claims was his whole “project”: “to please.” (The terrible line from *King Lear* echoes darkly as a condemnation of failed art: ‘better thou/Hadst not been born than not t’have pleas’d me better.’)⁶²

This ‘wish to understand’ pleasure presents, however, difficulties if, like Greenblatt, the

⁶¹ Greenblatt’s suggestion that ‘pleasure and...disturbance are often identical’ keys in with the discussions on *Macbeth* and Cynthia Marshall’s theory of self-shattering below. See pp. 308-9 of this thesis.

⁶² Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 12.

researcher is interested in the history of the concept.⁶³ As Greenblatt says, ‘pleasure as a category is extremely elusive for historical understanding’.⁶⁴ The reason for this difficulty is pleasure’s ‘transhistorical stability’.⁶⁵ Greenblatt gives shape to what he is approaching here by referencing ‘a contradiction’ within the arena of economic determinism ‘that Karl Marx never managed to resolve’.⁶⁶ Marx observed that despite ancient Greece having, in comparison to the modern world, rather unsophisticated economic structures, its art ‘can still afford us aesthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment’.⁶⁷ This presents a challenge to the new historicist as new historicism ‘insists in a strong way upon the historical embeddedness of literary texts (or cultural artifacts in general), insists, that is, upon the inseparability of their meaning from the circumstances of their making or reception’.⁶⁸ It becomes impossible to ignore the fact that pleasure must exist both inside and outside of history.

Greenblatt’s unpacking of this question regarding the historical contingency – or lack thereof – of pleasure then takes a different turn as a suggestion is offered that better fuels new historicist

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ David Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 63.

⁶⁷ Karl Marx, *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 144. Cited by Greenblatt (1990), 12-13 and David Hawkes, 63. Marx’s text was first written in 1857.

⁶⁸ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 13.

investigation:⁶⁹

We can, however, argue that the transhistorical stability or continuity of literary pleasure is an illusion; we can suggest that there is little reason to believe that the pleasure generated by *The Tempest*, say, was the same for the Jacobean audience as it is for ourselves. The overt material sign of gratification – the applause for which Prospero asks at the close – is the same, but the actual nature of that gratification, the objects and sensations and meanings and practices by which it is provoked and to which it is attached, differs significantly.⁷⁰

‘The task then’, continues Greenblatt, ‘would be to historicize pleasure, to explore its shifts and changes, to understand its interests’.⁷¹ Thus, Greenblatt negotiates a denial of pleasure’s timelessness as he posits the possibility of period-specific pleasure: the practice of applauding is the same, but the motivations for – and meanings of – the applause of the early modern audience differ to those of, for example, the twenty-first century audience.

This discussion on Greenblatt’s approach to management of pleasure’s historical contingency and/or timelessness leads smoothly into the introduction of four pleasure-related book-length studies that have been influential over the analysis of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Macbeth* that follows below. I would like here, then, to introduce these

⁶⁹ Jerrold Levinson’s proposal that ‘art of a given moment must *involve*, as opposed merely *to follow*, that which has preceded it’ adds a further thread of meaning to historical contingency. If art is impelled to involve the approaches/understandings of the art that preceded it, the pleasures offered must – at least in part – be specific to the historical moment. Jerrold Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 232.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

studies and explain how the study that I offer relates to them.

Approaching Pleasure: Historicism and/or Formalism? The Horatian Defence. Self-Shattering. Expansion and Choice.

Here I refer to four book-length studies that focus on early modern pleasure so as to locate the argument I offer within this arena of critical debate, and identify and defend the critical methodology I have adopted. Having discussed these four studies I outline the approach to pleasure that this thesis will take.

The four studies discussed here are: T. G. Bishop's 1996 study of wonder, titled *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder*; Robert Matz's focus on the early modern poet's tactical employment of the Horatian commonplace of profit and pleasure in *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (2000); Cynthia Marshall's *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (2002), a study of the early modern drive towards self-shattering through the consumption of extreme violence; and, Ronald Huebert's 2003 wide-ranging investigation into the spectrum of pleasures presented by the theatre of Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Marston, John Webster, Thomas Middleton, and John Ford titled, *The Performance of Pleasure in English Renaissance*

Drama.⁷²

Directly relevant to the discussion above on critical methodology's management of the historical contingency and/or timelessness of pleasure is T. G. Bishop's 1996 study of wonder – a category of human experience that falls within pleasure's broad spectrum. Bishop explores 'some occasions on which plays desire and expect audiences to be "overwhelmed" by what they hear and see', citing an interest in 'what happens at such moments, for those within the fictions, those on the stage and those in the audience, and especially what happens to the relations between these constituencies, where the central work of the theatre takes place'.⁷³ The aim of Bishop's study, then, is to unpack the agencies and role of wonder as, through studies of *The Comedy of Errors*, *Pericles*, and *The Winter's Tale* moments in which wonder is a performance goal are explored. For Bishop, 'theatre shares philosophy's impulse to frame acts of human perception in a critical and self-conscious way', but 'differs from the philosophical eye in wishing to incorporate the dynamisms that mark perception into its investigations'.⁷⁴ In line with this understanding of theatre's marriage of philosophical investigation into the human

⁷² Bishop, *Theatre of Wonder*. Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*. Huebert, *Performance of Pleasure*.

⁷³ Bishop, *Theatre of Wonder*, 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

experience with the psychic responses generated by new perceptions, Bishop suggests that 'it is not the purging or conversion of wonder into something else that theatre seeks, but the placement of that emotion in relation to an audience's understanding of the action'.⁷⁵ Bishop then emphasises his reading of wonder as being related to a sensing rather than a process of enquiry: 'Wonder registers not the audience's analysis of the action, but something more like their sense of its significance. Wonder, that is, is less directed to the acquisition of knowledge than to the perception of meaning'.⁷⁶

Bishop's study of the nature and agencies of wonder as it is made manifest in the theatre environment offers important insights into the critical approach to pleasure. The first is found in the blending of an historicist approach with elements of a formalist approach. Bishop explains that 'a reason for resisting...an historicist path' can be found in the 'strong sense that complex verbal artifacts such as plays demand and deserve treatment of an answering patience and complexity, one that is not always easy to achieve, least of all where one eye must be kept on the pursuit of a large historical thesis'.⁷⁷ Bishop's decision to support historicist methodology with occasional recourse to formalist practices, while motivated by the sheer difficulty of maintaining a historicist focus when processing the complexities of early modern language,

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 13.

carries the implication that certain aspects of Shakespeare's presentation of pleasure (here wonder) are located outside of historical contingency; pleasure must, at least in part, house the concept of timelessness.

The implication that formalist study *necessarily* highlights the timeless – contained within the discussion above – is unintentional. As Bishop explains, 'the...polemic separation between formal and historical methods of address is in the end a false and largely invidious dichotomy, what Blake would have called a "cloven fiction"'.⁷⁸ Bishop's study of *The Comedy of Errors*, for example, draws conclusions about the play's early modern view of gender from formal analysis of its linearity-related imagery. Given Bishop's insight, I have chosen to adopt both historicist and formalist approaches throughout this study. The central drive of the thesis I offer seeks to historicise pleasure, and locate Shakespeare's expansive rethinking of the concept within this historicisation. Formalist techniques are, however, employed when deemed appropriate.

The second insight that Bishop offers is perhaps more a prerequisite than a matter for selection. When embarking on a study of this type there is a need to maintain an 'assumption', traceable to 'Aristotelian' thought which designates drama as 'a form of human knowledge comparable

⁷⁸ Ibid.

with other forms'.⁷⁹ This being the case, drama must be considered to have 'an interest in investigating and seeking to represent its own nature and status as a form of knowledge'.⁸⁰ Throughout the study I offer, then, pleasure is considered to project qualities that are here timeless, there historically contingent, whilst theatre is considered to be a form of art – and human activity – which explores its own abilities to unpack and present categories of human experience. The theatre of Shakespeare, irresistibly self-reflexive as projected by its grounding in the theatrum mundi topos, and comfortable in its metatheatricity and management of the spatial distinction between locus and platea, is, of course, famously suited to the exploration of its own abilities.⁸¹

A second study that I have found useful in directing the approach to pleasure that I have adopted is Robert Matz's *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context*. Using the thought of Pierre Bourdieu on cultural capital and pleasure, Matz provides an investigation into the adoption by early modern writers of the Horatian

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Here I evoke Robert Weimann's distinction between the onstage positions he terms locus and platea. Locus refers to the upstage position and full engagement with what Phyllis Rackin terms 'the mimetic illusion'. The platea is the liminal, downstage position in which the player might raise awareness of the theatricality of the occasion by stepping out of the 'mimetic illusion' to engage directly with the playgoer. Weimann discusses the agency of this structuring in relation to *Macbeth* in Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 196-208. Phyllis Rackin, "History into Tragedy: The Case of Richard III," in *Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 31.

commonplace ‘*aut prodesse...aut delectare*’ (for both profit and pleasure), as a central idea from which to structure their defences of literature. Approached by Matz are the forms that this engagement with the idea of profit and pleasure take in Sir Thomas Elyot’s major work, the *Booke Named the Governour*, Sir Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poetry*, and Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*. All three of these writers are defined by Matz as seeking to negotiate ‘the ambivalences created by a moment of cultural change’, and literature and its pleasures are defined as unstable, contested cultural forces.⁸²

Sir Thomas Elyot, claims Matz, adopts a conflicted position in that he proposes an Erasmian reformation of the culture of the country’s elite (a reformation that foregrounds ‘discipline and learning’) despite maintaining a position within the gentry.⁸³ The humanism of Elyot, it is suggested, exists alongside ‘the unreformed pleasures of the old chivalric and courtly nobility’.⁸⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, argues Matz, uses the Horatian idea of profit and pleasure firstly in his proposal that poetry could serve to improve the nation’s warrior force. With the decline of the warrior force Sidney, says Matz, re-locates his defence of literature by using it to address contradictions between the courtly life of excess and ‘reformist Protestant discourses’.⁸⁵ Matz’s

⁸² Matz, *Defending Literature*, 25.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 83.

study also incorporates a close reading of book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*, the Book of Temperance which foregrounds Spenser's 'yoking of courtly...and Protestant-humanist codes'.⁸⁶

The discussions I offer on Shakespearean theatre move the aspects of Matz's discussion that focus on the fight to define pleasure and defend literature into the arena of the Shakespearean playhouse. Central here is engagement with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. The discussions that follow on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth* all, therefore, communicate a sense of instability in the status of pleasure (as highlighted by Matz).

Cynthia Marshall's 2002 study, titled *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* posits the possibility of the early modern self searching for self-dissolution within the pleasurable consumption of staged, pictorial, and narrated violence. The understanding of pleasure offered is grounded in Freudian, Lacanian, and post-Lacanian thought. Marshall's 'goal is to establish the discursive terrain within which something we call pleasure would have been experienced in the early modern period and thus...re-insert into a

⁸⁶ Ibid., 88.

workable critical model consideration of the formal, aesthetic grounds of textual pleasure'.⁸⁷

In outlining the theoretical *modus operandi* of her investigation Marshall explains that she deemed it appropriate to 'deviate from the cultural historicist approach' as 'its dominant emphasis on the way texts do cultural work has eclipsed the dimension of pleasure and enjoyment from consideration'.⁸⁸ Marshall then explains that 'in breaking decisively with an earlier ahistorical formalism that understood violent episodes or images as motifs contained within an encompassing and usually affirming aesthetic design, cultural historicism has paid inadequate attention to elements of formal structure and often has overlooked the question of audience or reader reception'.⁸⁹ The 'text's goal', says Marshall, of 'entertaining an audience' should be considered 'for semiotic rather than intentionalist reasons'.⁹⁰ This means defining the audience as 'the site at which texts take on meaning' – rendering them 'crucial to discerning how and why violent entertainments signified'.⁹¹ Thus, like Bishop, Marshall suggests that investigation into playhouse pleasure is well-served by a return to formalism and demands a focus on audience response. A focus on audience response is employed in relation to pleasure, the imagination, and *Macbeth* in chapter 5 of this thesis, but my central concern is with how Shakespeare is rethinking pleasure within the intellectual and emotional terrain of the play.

⁸⁷ Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*, 5.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Marshall's investigation focuses in part on prominent conceptions of the forming of the self in early modern England. Once again, Marshall expresses the need to re-examine recent and popular critical thought. Here Marshall seeks to examine and depict a process of self-shattering (a label surely designed to reflect and counter Greenblatt's self-fashioning), which she considers to be a prominent and repeated constituent of the early modern theatre experience. Promotion of the idea that early modern texts carried the tendency to 'shatter rather than...affirm selfhood' generates opposition to Greenblatt's 'concept of self-fashioning' which gave new strength to the 'humanist narrative of the birth of individualism in the Renaissance' and 'new impetus to a paradigm equating subjectivity with power and control':⁹²

Although in many eras extreme forms of art have offered what Nietzsche theorized as Dionysian release, a conjunction of forces led to the proliferation of such works in England during the Renaissance. An emergent sense of the autonomous self, individually operative as never before in the spheres of politics, religion, and commerce, existed in tension with an established popular sense of the self as fluid, unstable, and volatile. Because the narrative terms in which we have understood the so-called birth of subjectivity invest value in the emergent self, we have overemphasized its early dominance, for a surprising variety of popular texts indicate the considerable pleasure afforded to early modern audiences by experiences of shattering or dissolution. These were moments of allowable reversion to the unstable and poorly defined idea of selfhood familiar from humoral psychology, underlying the antitheatricalists' idea of emotional contagion, and granted theatrical license in the form of imagined identification with suffering martyrs.⁹³

It should be noted that Marshall considers this backward-looking process of self-shattering to

⁹² Ibid., 2.

⁹³ Ibid., 3-4.

be, at least in the long term, paradoxically supportive of the emergence of the autonomous self.

Self-shattering is defined as capable of providing momentary recuperative escape from the

stresses of the fashioning of the individual self:

If in one sense texts affording self-shattering served as counterforces to the development of modern subjectivity, in a longer view they enabled its growth by offering temporary respite from the accumulating pressures of individual selfhood.⁹⁴

The logical progression from this point concerns the whereabouts of the literary episodes that

induce moments of self-shattering. Marshall's rationale for text selection is telling:

Considering the way narrative poems about rape and popular stage plays featuring dismemberment and gory death proliferated in the early modern period, it seems obvious that early modern codes of textual pleasure depended upon a significant charge of violence. However, rather than attempting to demonstrate the pervasiveness of self-shattering throughout the period's texts, I have chosen to focus upon a representative variety of works from several genres. I have selected particularly striking examples of texts that undo or negate the self, and by the standards of established literary tradition, these works are distinctly marginal.⁹⁵

The implication here is that whilst episodes of self-shattering attendant to stark violence are

widespread within early modern literature, those deemed 'particularly striking' by Marshall are

also labelled 'distinctly marginal' in the context of 'the standards of established literary

tradition'.⁹⁶ This denotes a curious correlation which appears to provoke further inquiry: if the

⁹⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

‘particularly striking’ is also ‘distinctly marginal’ the forces of critical reception have been at work.⁹⁷

The texts discussed by Marshall include a series of minor sonnets by some lesser known English Petrarchists, John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, *Titus Andronicus* and John Ford’s *The Broken Heart*. As described below, Marshall’s study proceeds through analysis of the self-rupturing violence presented by the texts selected via reference to psychoanalytic theory:

As I investigate why readers and viewers would seek out texts and forms of entertainment that repackage the inequities and horrors of everyday life, psychoanalytic theory provides some crucial tools for engaging relevant issues of subjectivity, identity, and modes of personal interaction. Since audience response is notoriously difficult to index or explain – a difficulty compounded by the absence of sustained early modern reflections on the pleasures of reading about or viewing violence – I proceed dialectically, setting Renaissance denunciations of theatrical involvement beside insights from modern phenomenology into the dynamics of viewer response, early modern theories of the passions next to Freudian, Lacanian, and post-Lacanian theories, and Reformation models of sacrifice and self-loss against contemporary understandings of subjectivity and identity.⁹⁸

Analysis of *Titus Andronicus* begins with a contextualised variation of the question that lies at the very centre of Marshall’s investigation:

Why would an audience, any audience, enjoy Titus’s reiteration of violence against the human body?⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 107.

The question is pertinent: ‘enjoyment or pleasure of some form is the goal of any paying theatrical audience, as Shakespeare was well aware’.¹⁰⁰ Marshall’s answer is provided through assessments of two elements of the play’s functionality. The first is the play’s ability to create ‘a shifting dynamic of sympathetic identification’ which stems from ‘drama’s capacity to fracture its audience in several ways’.¹⁰¹ The second is the play’s pornographication of the violence of martyrdom (a trait which, Marshall argues, is also found in Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, and which perhaps reflects an attitude towards sexual violence incongruent to socially acceptable responses of the post-Freudian, 21st-century reader).¹⁰² Central here is the mutilated and raped body of Lavinia in its presentation to the audience as an object (I use the possessive pronoun and noun advisedly) which demands self-reflexive audience response. Lavinia confronts the audience with the dilemma of response to a fetishised form. How does one deal with fascination which sits beyond one’s spectrum of sympathetic identification? In presenting Lavinia to his audience, Marshall claims that ‘Shakespeare accomplishes a two-part innovation in the entertainment industry – first, by transferring images of martyrs from the page to the stage where they could be bodied forth and, second, by explicitly sexualizing Lavinia’s martyrdom through the rape narrative’.¹⁰³ The outcome of this is a play, or at least a moment

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Consider Bruce R. Smith, “Rape, Rap, Rupture, Rapture: R-rated Futures on the Global Market,” in *Textual Practice*, 9, 3 (1995). John Foxe, *Book of Martyrs* (London: John Day, 1563).

¹⁰³ Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*, 110.

within a play, which ‘presents the paradox of extreme imagery of physical violence existing outside an available framework of emotional response. The play deploys physical violence in disturbingly revelatory ways, troubling the familiar claims of audiences and critics to oppose violence, challenging the humanist aesthetic that sees suffering and pleasure as inherently unrelated.’¹⁰⁴ This elicitation of ‘sadistic and masochistic responses’, Marshall implies, marks a shattering of self – an early modern theatrical pleasure.¹⁰⁵

I find that Marshall’s theory of self-shattering, and her illustration of early modern engagement with violent imagery and text can inform the projection of the early modern imagination offered by *Macbeth*. This is discussed in chapter 5. Also approached in chapter 5 is the possibility of Macbeth’s rapt wrestling with the concepts of pre-destination, free will, ambition, morality and the connotations for subjectivity implicated by the *theatrum mundi* topos presenting the playgoer with the opportunity for jouissance through self-dissolution.¹⁰⁶ I choose, however, also to consider the possibility of pleasure in Macbeth being felt in a force/counterforce relationship as delight in transgressive sensation; the thrill of following the tormented murderer

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 137

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Excitation due to sex, seeing, and/or violence, whether positively or negatively viewed by conscience, whether considered innocently pleasurable or disgustingly repulsive – is termed jouissance, and that is what the subject orchestrates for him or herself in fantasy.’ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 60.

is experienced alongside joy in the ever-present embrace of morality that the play projects. This is discussed within the context of Schiller's theory of aesthetic education.¹⁰⁷

Ronald Huebert's 2003 unpacking of pleasure's relationship with early modern theatre investigates the staging of erotic pleasure, and the experiencing of aesthetic pleasure by readers and spectators. Huebert seeks to highlight how different playwrights present author-specific understandings of what pleasure is. He offers chapters on Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Marston, John Webster, Thomas Middleton and John Ford, and a discussion on the relationship between gender ideology and 'the pleasure of discovery', 'the aesthetic appeal of sexual violence' and the locating of 'aesthetic pleasure...outside the domain of the explicitly rational and ethical' that involves Thomas Heywood, Francis Beaumont, and John Fletcher.¹⁰⁸

In something of a protest against the marginalization of early modern writers that, Huebert claims, represents an 'anomalous state of affairs' and 'has a great deal to do with institutional pressures and market forces of various kinds' the plays of Shakespeare are granted scant attention.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Friedrich Schiller, "The Stage as Moral Institution", trans. anonymous, in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974).

¹⁰⁸ Huebert, *Performance of Pleasure*, 106.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

The discussion offered here shares Huebert's suggestion that in the English Renaissance 'pleasure occupied a different and much more prominent place in the agenda of...playwrights than it had in the medieval drama'.¹¹⁰ Displayed, posits Huebert, is 'a new attitude towards pleasure' which 'strongly endorses the notion of choice'.¹¹¹ This recalls Martin Wiggins' picture of a 'dour' medieval drama being replaced by an early modern product offering 'a sudden plenitude of dramatic riches' previously 'undreamed of'.¹¹²

Huebert suggests that in the plays of the playwrights he discusses 'the register in which pleasures are represented is vastly expanded'.¹¹³ 'It has', claims Huebert, 'obviously become possible to think of pleasure, even erotic pleasure, as something quite different from sin'.¹¹⁴ The study I offer embraces this idea of an expanded register through and with which pleasure might be interrogated and performed.

Whilst Huebert's suggestion that an expansion in the ways in which pleasure can be thought about is identifiable in early modern theatre has proved to be enormously useful, I have chosen to take the discussion in somewhat different directions to those taken by Huebert. Most obviously, I

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹¹² Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*, 1.

¹¹³ Huebert, *Performance of Pleasure*, 1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

choose to focus on Shakespeare rather than eschew the rich and complex discussions on pleasure that his plays offer. It should also be noted that Huebert focuses on differentiation between the performance of author-specific types of pleasure whereas the focus that I offer here is on a Shakespearean rethinking of pleasure.

To close, Huebert's addressing of the concept of the aesthetic requires brief comment which will lead into the next section of this discussion. Huebert cites Stephen Dedalus's proposal that aesthetic pleasure is 'static' whilst desire is 'kinetic', then questions this proposal.¹¹⁵ Central to this refutation is Huebert's identification of an 'interweaving' of the erotic and the aesthetic that is 'greatly fostered...by the theatrical environment itself, where both erotic and aesthetic pleasures are very much on display'.¹¹⁶ Huebert supports his suggestion that 'the boundary between erotic pleasure and aesthetic pleasure needn't be absolute' by calling attention to the fact that 'in the English Renaissance theatre, erotic pleasure was necessarily a performance, and therefore called attention to itself by means of various self-conscious strategies that wouldn't be

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 8. Stephen Dedalus is a Joycean figure who appears in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Dedalus claims the following: 'The tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts.' James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992), 158.

¹¹⁶ Huebert, *Performance of Pleasure*, 8.

appropriate under more “realistic” or “naturalistic” conditions’.¹¹⁷ The implication here is that any consideration of the Shakespearean rethinking of pleasure should engage with the concept of the aesthetic, and the sense of cultural value central to Dedalus’s differentiation between the ‘kinetic’ and the ‘static’.¹¹⁸ I find this a useful idea, and have employed it in considering the pleasures of *Macbeth* as pre-empting Friedrich Schiller’s engagement with the transgressive aesthetic as a means to education.

As the title of this thesis suggests, the aim here is to identify, analyse, and explain a Shakespearean rethinking of pleasure. The study does not attempt to offer a complete picture of what might be called Shakespeare’s world of pleasure. The focus, rather, is on how the concept of pleasure is managed within the intellectual and emotional terrain of the four plays selected. This approach demands, I believe, that the plays select the areas of pleasure theory through which they can be efficaciously unpacked. I found that Michel Foucault’s understanding of the pleasures involved in policing sexuality and resisting this policing offered a way of approaching *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’s dialogue on pleasure, the imagination and virtue. *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* present similarities in that both plays carry ties to Montaigne and Lucretius in their investigations of mutability and the decentered subject. These ties are highlighted in the discussions that follow.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist*, 158.

Macbeth's imaginative engagement with the horror of murder and employment of the concept of the aesthetic within the play itself led me to employ the aesthetic theory of Schiller in my investigation of the play's shaping of pleasure. As mentioned above, Marshall's theory of self-shattering has also informed the investigation.

Having given a brief overview of studies that have influenced the planning and structuring of this study, and briefly listed the approaches to the concept of pleasure that will be employed, I would now like to turn to the topic of critical engagement with the concept of the aesthetic and, relatedly, the relationship between the aesthetic and cultural value, in the field of early modern literary studies.

Positioning the Aesthetic

In their introduction to *The New Aestheticism*, a 2003 collection of essays that serve as a manifesto for critical reclamation of the specificity of art, John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas provide an outline of the resistance to aestheticism inherent to dominant critical approaches since the 1980s.¹¹⁹ They suggest that this resistance has resulted in considerable oversights that now require addressing:

The very notion of the 'aesthetic' could be said to have fallen victim to the success of recent developments within literary theory. Undergraduates now pause before rehearsing complacent

¹¹⁹ John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas, *The New Aestheticism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

aesthetic verities concerning truth, meaning and value, verities that used to pass at one time for literary criticism. The rise of critical theory in disciplines across the humanities during the 1980s and 1990s has all but swept aesthetics from the map – and, some would argue, rightly so... Notions such as aesthetic independence, artistic genius, the cultural and historical universality of a text or work, and the humanist assumption of art's intrinsic spiritual value have been successfully challenged by successive investigations into the historical and political bases of art's material production and transmission. Theories of textuality, subjectivity, ideology, class, race and gender have shown such notions of universal human value to be without foundation, and even to act as repressive means of safeguarding the beliefs and values of an elitist culture from challenge or transformation. The upshot of this series of interventions has been the rapid expansion of the canon, as well as a profound questioning of the very idea of canonicity. Art's relations to dominant ideologies have been exposed from a number of perspectives, as well as its potential to challenge these ideologies. What has frequently been lost in this process, however, is the sense of art's specificity as an object of analysis – or, more accurately, its specificity as an aesthetic phenomenon. In the rush to diagnose art's contamination by politics and culture, theoretical analysis has tended always to posit a prior order that grounds or determines a work's aesthetic impact, whether this is history, ideology or theories of subjectivity. The aesthetic is thus explicated in other terms, with other criteria, and its singularity is effaced. Theoretical criticism is in continual danger here of throwing out the aesthetic baby with the humanist bathwater.¹²⁰

Engaging with 'the aesthetic baby' (in its specificity) within 'the humanist bathwater' opens, I would argue, vital pathways of investigation when addressing the concept of pleasure in the context of the Shakespearean playhouse. Furthermore, and as intimated above, the concept of aesthetic pleasure lies akin to the concept of cultural value – and this latter concept is central to the formulation of an approach to pleasure. Stephen Regan goes so far as to suggest that the late twentieth-century 'return of the aesthetic', permitting a highly-focused and directed employment of the term, is a direct result of critical neglect of the theme of cultural value:

What 'the return of the aesthetic' signifies is a revival of interest in a more disciplined and

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1.

theoretical use of the term. There is a common perception among scholars in arts and humanities subjects that the powerful new methodologies of the 1970s and 1980s, particularly those imported from psychoanalysis and deconstruction, severely challenged and displaced traditional ideals of harmony, regularity and organic unity, but failed to offer a satisfactory account of what constitutes ‘value’. It is within this uncertain realm of cultural value that the aesthetic has been reactivated and redefined.¹²¹

The centrality of the concept of cultural value to consideration of the engendering of pleasure within early modern theatre performance is highlighted by even a cursory glance at the antitheatrical/pro-theatrical pronouncements of the likes of Gosson and the pamphleteer, polemicist, pornographer, and amateur theologian Thomas Nashe.¹²² Furthermore, in suggesting that ‘the theater has...never lacked a streak of antitheatricalism of its own. Perhaps a vigorous dose of it forms an essential ingredient in its vitality’, Jonas Barish positions the relationship between aesthetic pleasure and cultural value at the very centre of the creative forces inherent to play production and performance itself.¹²³

Implicit within the above is the need to move away from the bifurcation of approaches to pleasure which positions ‘the disapproval of pleasure on the one hand and the assertion that

¹²¹ Stephen Regan, “Introduction: The Return of the Aesthetic,” in *The Politics of Pleasure: Aesthetics and Cultural Theory*, ed. Stephen Regan (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 1.

¹²² For an overview of Nashe and his writings that focuses on the centrality of literature to the socio-cultural context see Stephen Guy-Bray, Joan Pong Linton, eds., *The Age of Thomas Nashe: Text, Bodies and Trespasses of Authorship in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹²³ Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 450.

pleasure is all on the other'.¹²⁴ While such a division is displayed in the variance between the moralist approach to pleasure voiced by the antitheatricalists and the hedonistic approach to pleasure assigned to the common playgoer by these same antitheatricalists, and, consequently should be incorporated as a focus for investigation into pleasure in the context of the Shakespearean playhouse, it can be argued that Shakespeare, as a proto-theorist of pleasure, dismisses this approach as reductive.¹²⁵ Steven Connor offers a lucid explanation of this reductiveness and a strong argument in support of resistance to it:

Put simply, for the hedonist, pleasure and value are identical; for the moralist, they are distinct. Where the moralist will characteristically attempt to measure the value of pleasure by exchanging it for some currency, such as 'good' or 'justice', the hedonist takes pleasure to be the very medium of exchange, as it were, the money form of value; the moralist aims to convert pleasure into value, the hedonist to convert all value back into pleasure.

Most attempts in this century to account for aesthetic pleasure adopt one or the other of these alternatives, arguing either the moralist position that pleasure and value are distinct, or the hedonist position that they are identical. But this binarity constitutes a ruthless logical shrinkage. In most cases, the very enquiry into the relationship of pleasure and value induces splittings, displacements and reformulations in the respective meanings of these terms; such that, for example, attempts to distinguish value from pleasure tend to end up generating a distinction between fundamentally different forms of pleasure, while attempts to identify value and pleasure may depend on a similar distinction between different forms of value in pleasure. In most cases, too, the move to concentrate, generalize and hypostatize the alternatives of value and pleasure will be undercut by the very mobility of the terms as employed in the argument. Nowhere is this more the case than in political versions of aesthetic theory, which bring about a particularly intense conjunction of

¹²⁴ Steven Connor, "Aesthetics, Pleasure and Value," in *The Politics of Pleasure: Aesthetics and Cultural Theory*, ed. Stephen Regan (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 204.

¹²⁵ Shakespeare's resistance to this binary understanding of the pleasure and morality is implicit to the discussion on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that constitutes chapter 2 of this thesis.

questions of pleasure with questions of value; and, as a consequence, nowhere is it more important to resist the reductive binarity of pleasure or value.¹²⁶

Post 1980s investigations into early modern cultural and socio-political conceptualizations also suggest that falling into the trap of blind acceptance of the model of aesthetic pleasure built upon a hedonist/moralist bifurcation recalling the playgoer v. Protestant fundamentalist contention central to Elizabethan and Jacobean antitheatricalism might prove to be reductive. Indeed, the relationships that exist between the aesthetic and cultural value have proven to be complex enough to direct certain practitioners of new historicism towards engagement with the aesthetic, be this engagement slight or central. New historicism's initial neglect of aestheticism is, then, addressed with logical inevitability within new historicist practice itself due to the existence of junctions at which play, power, cultural value and the aesthetic meet. Greenblatt's powerful assessment of Shakespeare and his art, published in 1988, clearly points towards an intertwining of the socio-political and the aesthetic:

Shakespeare's plays, it seemed, had precipitated out of a sublime confrontation between a total artist and a totalizing society. By a total artist I mean one who, through training, resourcefulness, and talent, is at the moment of creation complete unto himself; by a totalizing society I mean one that posits an occult network linking all human, natural, and cosmic powers and that claims on behalf of its ruling elite a privileged place in this network. Such a society generates vivid dreams of access to the linked powers and vests control of this access in a religious and state bureaucracy at whose pinnacle is the symbolic figure of the monarch. The result of this confrontation between total artist and totalizing society was a set of unique, inexhaustible, and supremely powerful works of art.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Connor, "Aesthetics, Pleasure and Value," 203-4.

¹²⁷ Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 2.

Greenblatt, then, is of key importance to this attempt to investigate theorizations of pleasure as his work embraces cultural poetics without rejecting the aesthetic. Indeed, in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, a collection of Greenblatt's studies ranging from 1976 to 1990, the aesthetic is approached in relation to capitalism, carnival, Marxism, realism and western ideology, as well as theatrical pleasure.¹²⁸ It should be noted that Greenblatt's approach can be aligned with that of Theodor Adorno in that in the work of both thinkers 'the relation of the artwork to its social context' is foregrounded alongside engagement with the aesthetic.¹²⁹ Notably, both also allow art to maintain its autonomy, and hence its critical stance, whilst embracing this key focus on socio-cultural factors.¹³⁰ A manoeuvring away from Kant's suggestion that aesthetic pleasure can only be valuable if it does not direct towards individual gratification or profit is, of course, inherent to employment of this aspect of the approach to aesthetics promoted by Greenblatt and Adorno.

A potentially fertile, and, importantly, highly workable, theorization of aesthetic pleasure was offered by Terry Eagleton in 1990, and, in turn, supported by Connor:

Eagleton suggests valuably the doubleness of autotelic aesthetic pleasure, the fact that it can

¹²⁸ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*.

¹²⁹ Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University of Press, 2009), 36.

¹³⁰ For further discussion see Connor, "Aesthetics, Pleasure and Value". See also Theodor Adorno, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: The Athlone Press Ltd., 1997).

represent a challenge to dominative and instrumentalist modes of thinking even as it brings about a soothing and reactionary resolution of political tensions and problems.¹³¹

The relevance of Eagleton's conceptualisation of the aesthetic to the birth of a secular, professional early modern theatre is clear:

The emergence of the aesthetic as a theoretical category is closely bound up with the material process by which cultural production, at an early stage of bourgeois society, becomes 'autonomous' – autonomous, that is, of the various social functions which it has traditionally served. Once artefacts become commodities in the market place, they exist for nothing and nobody in particular, and can consequently be rationalized, ideologically speaking, as existing entirely and gloriously for themselves. It is this notion of autonomy or self-referentiality which the new discourse of aesthetics is centrally concerned to elaborate; and it is clear enough, from a radical political viewpoint, just how disabling any such idea of aesthetic autonomy must be. It is not only, as radical thought has familiarly insisted, that art is thereby conveniently sequestered from all other social practices, to become an isolated enclave within which the dominant social order can find an idealized refuge from its own actual values of competitiveness, exploitation and material possessiveness. It is also, rather more subtly, that the idea of autonomy – of a mode of being which is entirely self-regulating and self-determining – provides the middle class with just the ideological model of subjectivity it requires for its material operations. Yet this concept of autonomy is radically double-edged: if on the one hand it provides a central constituent of bourgeois ideology, it also marks an emphasis on the self-determining nature of human powers and capacities which becomes, in the work of Karl Marx and others, the anthropological foundation of a revolutionary opposition to bourgeois utility. The aesthetic is at once...the very secret prototype of human subjectivity in early capitalist society, and a vision of human energies as radical ends in themselves which is the implacable enemy of all dominative or instrumentalist thought.¹³²

A consideration of Eagleton's 1990 theorization of aesthetic autonomy within the context of the

¹³¹ Connor "Aesthetics, Pleasure and Value," 203. See also Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 64-65.

¹³² Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 8-9.

Shakespearean playhouse enables a rich and revealing analysis of the agency of performance-located pleasure, and posits the possibility of pleasure evoked via an autonomous aesthetic being a ‘double-edged’ cultural force. This double-edgedness is found in the autonomous aesthetic being deemed both a reinforcing of state and religion-enforced ideologies (an expression of complicity with—and acceptance of—the ‘dominant social order’), and a reflection of the ‘revolutionary opposition to bourgeois utility’ of the self-determining subject.¹³³ The shape of such ambivalence sits comfortably alongside Shakespearean theatre’s ability to reinforce state power structures whilst unpacking the theatrics that support them. *Henry V*, for example, provides a clear example of theatre revealing itself, or performing its own workings, as it projects strongly propagandist support for the English monarch.¹³⁴ Thus, the monarchy is supported by the language and spectacle of the play as the workings of theatre that support the monarchy are exposed as a man-made construct. When considered conceptually, the autonomy that enables this – ‘a mode of being which is entirely self-regulating and self-determining’ – serves as a model for, as Eagleton suggests, the new modes of ‘human subjectivity’ made possible by the birth of capitalism.¹³⁵ Also presented is opposition to ‘all dominative or instrumentalist thought’ by ‘a vision of human energies as radical ends in themselves’.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Consider the prologue to *Henry V*. Here Chorus outlines the limitations of stage and actor whilst calling upon the audience to imagine vast, violent battles and a glorious monarch.

¹³⁵ Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 9.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Impure aesthetics

The movement here is towards regarding the aesthetic as permitting engagement with, as outlined by Grady, ‘the social, the political and the historical’.¹³⁷ The theoretical context here is outlined by Grady in his introduction to impure aesthetics, the approach employed in his 2009 investigation into a Shakespearean aesthetic displayed in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Timon of Athens*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*:

For many people, of course, aesthetic discourse is invariably a discourse about beauty and unity, and this narrow conception gives the term a certain fin-de-siècle mauveness, a radical separation from reality that denies rather than challenges existing reality. But ‘aesthetics’ as used here contains the ugly as well as the beautiful, and references rather than denies reality while acknowledging an element of domination within it as well as one of emancipation.¹³⁸

At a later stage in the introductory section to his study, Grady further clarifies his belief that the aesthetic and reality, here denoted as ‘the social, the political, and the historical’,¹³⁹ can be regarded as overlapping elements within the realm of the artistic:

I believe that a reinvigoration of ‘impure aesthetics’ is a step towards a new appreciation of the specifically aesthetic content of Shakespearean drama and a deeper understanding of the imbrication of Shakespearean aesthetics with the social, the political, and the historical, in both its original context and in our own. It is possible, I think, to bring the concept of the aesthetic to the fore again, but with a different content from that of Kant, the New Critics, and Northrop Frye – and one that builds on, rather than abandons, the critical methods of the last thirty years. I am not alone

¹³⁷ Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics*, 39.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

in this belief. Both in the United States and in the United Kingdom, a new interest in aesthetics has arisen within the last decade, often by critics determined not to lose criticism's engagement with the political since the 1980s. And this beginning of a new interest in the aesthetic comes, I believe, in part through a perception that non-aesthetic criticism has largely exhausted itself, or led into disconcerting dead-ends.¹⁴⁰

In promoting critical acceptance of impure aesthetics, Grady, recalling Connor and Eagleton, stresses the need for academics to avoid 'reductive binary thinking in their use of the concept of the aesthetic'.¹⁴¹ For Grady, however, in a movement away from the moralist v. hedonist polarisation, such binary thinking is found in art being 'understood either as a version of ideology, or as an irrationalist practice through which contemporary Postmodern critics have undermined rationality'.¹⁴² Grady then lists studies by Frederic Jameson, Terry Eagleton and Stephen Greenblatt as being particularly noteworthy for their resistance to this reductive approach.¹⁴³ It is hoped that the discussions I offer on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth* define the theatre of Shakespeare as being similarly resistant to such reductivity.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴² Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2. Here Grady is referring to Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002); Frederic Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London: Verso, 1998); Frederic Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno; Or, The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990); Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*; and particularly, Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). A further key text cited by Grady is John J. Joughin & Simon Malpas, eds., *The New Aestheticism*.

The idea of Shakespeare offering a new, expansive, explorative theatre that displays its own discoveries of the potential and nature of the aesthetic is central to the thinking of Christopher Pye. In his 2009 exploration of ‘the relation between *Othello*’s political entailments and its aesthetic status’ Pye argues that:

Othello exemplifies the emergence of the aesthetic as such, and...suggests how intimately this modern transformation entails a set of political correlates: the appearance of the state as a formal entity (which is to say, the disincorporation of the organically conceived sovereign body politic) and the coming into being of the citizen-subject.¹⁴⁴

Of interest here are the intersections between the pleasure of playgoing, the status of the aesthetic, and the emergence of an early modern subjectivity. Whilst Pye is not primarily concerned with audience response, his extrapolations upon the centrality of the aesthetic to *Othello* shed vibrant light on the concept of pleasure in the playhouse:

By foregrounding the aesthetic as an organizing category, the play indicates at what makes the relation between the aesthetic and developmental models of history so vexed. Conceived as autonomous form transcending any thematic grounds, the aesthetic is explicitly bound up with the play’s limitlessness as a signifying formation; the aesthetic comes into being in relation to those internally inscribed horizons, comparable to the vanishing point in pictorial art, through which the play seeks to embody or comprehend its own infinitude as a representational structure. Such evocations of the play’s figurative limits bring to view the problematic character of the historical transformation *Othello* articulates. For even as its internalized horizons amount to the aesthetic condition of an emerging subject – a definitionally limitless “universal” being – that reference to

¹⁴⁴ Christopher Pye, “‘To throw out our eyes for brave Othello’; Shakespeare and Aesthetic Ideology,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 60, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 425.

infinity suggests why the play resists a simple, developmental account of its own historical determination.¹⁴⁵

Pye's suggestion that *Othello* depicts the emergence of 'an art that takes itself at its own ground, without reference to an authorizing reality or prior Scripture – and the state as a formal entity, constituted on the rational autonomy of law rather than on the sovereign body-politic, conceived in organic and substantial terms' recalls Eagleton's discussion on autotelic aesthetic pleasure.¹⁴⁶ It is, perhaps, the creation of a sense of infinitesimal 'self-referential, self-grounding energies', common to 'both the modern state and the modern work of art' that has strong implications for the status of the early modern conceptualisation of pleasure in the playhouse.¹⁴⁷

Here, Eugen Fink's assessment of the impact of play on the player's conception of time and self-identity helps to explain the connections between boundlessness and pleasure. Fink defines play as having 'only internal purpose, unrelated to anything external to itself'.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, 'in the autonomy of play action there appears a possibility of human timelessness in time. Time is then experienced, not as a precipitate rush of successive moments, but rather as the one full

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 425.

¹⁴⁶ Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Shakespeare's Citizen-Subject: Distracting the Gaze, Contracting the City: A Response to Christopher Pye," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 60, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 448.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Eugen Fink, "The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play," *Yale French Studies*, no. 41 (1968): 21.

moment that is, so to speak, a glimpse of eternity'.¹⁴⁹ Fink then theorises the 'double existence' of players as follows:

The player who participates in a game executes in the real world an action of a familiar type. Within the context of the internal meaning of play, however, he is taking over a role. Here we must distinguish between the real man who "plays" and the man created by the role within the play. The player hides his real self behind his role and is submerged in it. He lives *in* his role with a singular intensity, and yet not like the schizophrenic, who is unable to distinguish between "reality" and "illusion". The player can recall himself from his role; while playing, man retains a knowledge of his double existence, however greatly reduced this knowledge may be. Man exists in two spheres simultaneously, not for lack of concentration or out of forgetfulness, but because this double personality is essential to play.¹⁵⁰

For Fink, then, the pleasure of play is inherently linked to the creation and embracing of a moment in which the normative territories of time and self are dissolved and reassembled to permit timelessness and a duality of consciousness of self. This assessment of play recalls Pye's unpacking of audience engagement with *Othello*. Here pleasure is enabled and managed by the play's formation of its own autochthonic aesthetic:

If *Hamlet* is propelled by mystery, *Othello* poses the perhaps more inscrutable question of what holds our attention in a play in which we know too much. In such a context, tragic pleasure, ordered around catharsis and sublimation, gives way to sheer masochism, and the internalization of death and negation associated with classical tragedy is replaced by a self-depleting and divisive theatricality in which the audience's captivation is merely intensified by its drive for absolute evidentiary certainty. "Make me to see't", "be sure thou prove my love a whore" (3.3.364, 359), and "Go to, well said, well said" (4.1.114) Othello says from the sidelines, a prompter to the scene where Iago goads Cassio to speak of what Othello takes to be his cuckolding. Othello's self-annihilating captivation at such a moment figures the audience's own masochistic absorption in a

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 23.

drama whose trajectory is agonizingly clear, in which we already anticipate all. The point is not the vast epistemological space between the audience and the hero. At some level, all know and all are captivated because everything functions within a fictive or aesthetic field, an autochthonic, self-begotten domain, which inscribes audience and characters alike.¹⁵¹

In *Othello*, then, Pye identifies a rethinking of pleasure that steers away from the ‘catharsis...sublimation, and the internalization of death and negation’ of the tragic tradition and enables ‘sheer masochism’ and ever-intensifying ‘captivation’ through the ‘drive for absolute evidentiary certainty’.¹⁵² As mentioned above, spoken of here is an ambitious, secular theatre developing out of the classical and medieval traditions that preceded it. Central to this development is an emergent awareness – the awareness identified by Pye in his elucidation of the pleasure *Othello* offers – of the possibilities presented by an aesthetic which is pulling away from the ties of ‘authorizing reality or prior Scripture’.¹⁵³

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the rethinking of pleasure, here posited and unpacked in relation to *Othello*’s emergent aesthetic by Pye, manifests itself in other moments in other plays. I am not suggesting that the management of the aesthetic identifiable in *Othello* is identifiable elsewhere, but I do see the expansion of the possibilities of pleasure that such management of the aesthetic produces as being an identifiably Shakespearean trait. I wish to

¹⁵¹ Pye, “‘To throw out our eyes for brave Othello’,” 430-1.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Lupton, “Shakespeare’s Citizen-Subject”, 448.

explore how Shakespeare used the possibilities offered by the newly-founded arena of the early modern playhouse to rethink comic pleasure in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, and tragic pleasure in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Implied in each and all of the play discussions I offer is an understanding of the Shakespearean playhouse as projecting an emergent awareness of its art as being definable within its own specificity. Before beginning these discussions, however, it is useful to offer further context through providing an overview of London's early modern theatre scene.

Approaching Pleasure: Historical Contexts

The birth and development of professional theatre

Contemporaneous with the period of social, religious, political, cultural and scientific change witnessed by early modern England was the birth of England's professional, secular theatre. In 1567 the Red Lion, regarded to be London's earliest example of a permanent theatre purpose-built as a venue for professional performance, was constructed in Stepney.¹⁵⁴ The venture was

¹⁵⁴ For a more detailed account of the early stages in the sixteenth-century growth and development of London's theatre scene see W. R. Streitberger, "Adult Playing Companies to 1583" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19-38. For a book-length discussion on early modern playhouses, acting companies, acting practices and audiences see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For a discussion of London's theatre scene that focuses upon the application of the terms 'public', 'common' and 'private' to sixteenth-century playhouses see Eoin Price, *'Public' and 'Private' Playhouses in Renaissance England: The Politics of Publication* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). In *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660* Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram provide a detailed description of early modern playhouses alongside a wide variety of relevant primary source

short-lived. The only play documented to have been performed at the Red Lion, a play now lost, was *The Story of Samson*, and there is no evidence to suggest that this theatre was open for business for anything more than a month or two during the summer of 1567.¹⁵⁵ A key moment in the history of London's theatre scene was marked, however, by the 1576 building of the Theatre. Whilst the Red Lion was created as a performance space for touring companies, the Theatre, built by the actor-manager James Burbage, was a home and base for a group of actors. The Curtain, built on a site within a few hundred yards of the Theatre in the following year, offered a similar model of practice. Wiggins highlights the importance of this transformation in the shape of London's commercial theatre scene in his suggestion that these two theatres 'helped to give drama, hitherto a peripatetic activity performed on *ad hoc* stages at fairs and inns, a more stable economic and institutional infrastructure. Players, or at least those at the top of their profession, were no longer shiftless, travelling vagabonds but established businessmen with their own premises, almost like shopkeepers'.¹⁵⁶ An identifiable geographical location for

documents. See Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram (eds.), *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 287-649.

¹⁵⁵ John H. Astington offers a discussion on possibilities regarding the Red Lion performance of *The Story of Samson*. This discussion draws intimations from the inclusion of the word 'story' in the play's title. Astington suggests that, titled as a story, the play likely consisted of a 'succession of episodic scenes', and 'temporal progression would have dictated structure and meaning'. The discussion expands into a proposal that an audience member might have interpreted an episode likely to be included, Samson's fight with the lion, as being 'a particularly protestant image, pitting Samson, the man endowed with divine grace according to St Paul, against the savage and bestial enemy, Rome'. Thus a potent picture of a theatrical offering of anti-Catholic Protestant pleasure is painted. See John H. Astington, *Stage and Picture in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 8-10.

¹⁵⁶ Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*, 11.

theatre serves, I would argue, as a concrete verification of the cultural moment's acceptance of the relevance of the pleasures that theatre provides. This new-found, distinct, signalled, and confirmed identity of a space for theatre – and theatre alone – also motivates and enables the kind of investigation into the potentialities of the aesthetic that Pye identifies in *Othello*. (A hall, or the backyard of an inn, carry a social context aside from theatre that makes the play a temporary visitor of the space. This speaks of compromise to occasion. A playhouse – as the name suggests – is a building that has a defined purpose and thus encourages, I would argue, a heightened focus on innovation of the product.)

From the 1570s through to the end of the century, the number of playhouses in London increased, and, relatedly, the number of plays produced rose rapidly.¹⁵⁷ M. C. Bradbrook's listing of leading London theatres that opened between 1557 and 1642 includes seven inn-yard

¹⁵⁷ M. C. Bradbrook explains that 'by the end of the sixteenth century, a whole family of London theatres, descended from James Burbage's original venture, had appeared'. See M. C. Bradbrook, *The Living Monument: Shakespeare and the Theatre of His Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 4. In *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts*, Margot Heinemann provides a vivid description of London's growth and change from the reign of Henry VIII to 1600. The rise in population during this period, suggests Heinemann, is estimated to be a circa 400% leap from 50,000 to 160-180,000. Heinemann also notes that 'a high proportion of London's people had been there for a generation or less, or lived there only part of the year'. 'England', it is explained, 'was in process of change from a society based on rank and status to one based more directly on wealth and property; and this meant a shake-up of social and moral codes' involving 'an exceptional degree of social mobility'. Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3.

theatres, ten arena theatres, seven private theatres, and five royal theatres.¹⁵⁸ This increase in venues, and, importantly, increase in type of venue (the various types of theatre were defined, as one might imagine, as offering various types of audience experience to that offered by the arena theatres) generated an increase in demand for plays to be performed and, it could be argued, awareness of the need to provide performance moments of demographic-specific pleasure.¹⁵⁹ The diary of Philip Henslowe, the most prominent of the theatre managers of the time, and owner of the Rose throughout the 1590s, tells us that a professional theatre company would perform in excess of thirty plays per year.¹⁶⁰ These plays, if designed to be financially successful (Henslowe's text is romantically labelled 'diary', but it functions as an account book) would need to be suited to a wide and disparate audience. This is a picture of an ever-expanding – and evermore established – theatre environment generating an ever-expanding demand for play content and playhouse pleasure.

New forms of drama developed as the venues in which it could be performed increased. This new theatre, famously fashioned, managed, and dominated by John Lyly, Thomas Kyd and

¹⁵⁸ Bradbrook, *Living Monument*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Wiggins suggests that the use of the same play in a variety of venues suggests that there must have been 'some continuity of taste' within audiences. Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*, 17. W. Reavley Gair outlines John Marston's tendency to analyse his audiences and adjust play content to suit what he identified as a specific playgoing public. See W. Reavley Gair, 'John Marston: A Theatrical Perspective' in *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions*, ed. T. F. Wharton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27-44.

¹⁶⁰ *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Christopher Marlowe before the baton was grabbed by Shakespeare, bore little resemblance to its immediate, pre-early modern predecessor. As Wiggins explains, prior to the 1580s ‘English drama appears to have consisted mainly of quasi-allegorical plays preaching the dour Tudor lessons of continence, obedience, and strict, disciplinary child-rearing’.¹⁶¹ The intimation here is that early modern theatre is identifiable by its overcoming of a ‘dour’, reductive didacticism, and its willingness to explore and perform pleasure.¹⁶² The consequent increase in registers through which pleasure is fathomed that, I argue, Shakespeare offers, is a central constituent of this period of development in the history of theatre. I am proposing that within the process of the evolution of theatre as it experimented with the possibilities proffered by its new professional, secular shape, prominent, important, and – for reasons briefly mentioned above and discussed in more detail below – curiously underexamined, is a rethinking of the concept of pleasure.

While theatre found a concrete location with the 1576 building of the Theatre, the status of play and playing projected a sense of ambivalence as it toed and froed between the marginal and the central. This status, I would suggest, was an enabling force in the expansive investigation of pleasure that Shakespeare undertook. I refer to Shakespearean theatre as being marginal/central and ambivalent because actors and theatre companies served court and monarch in the great

¹⁶¹ Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*, 7.

¹⁶² Ibid.

halls of England, but also presented their products to London's public from what Jean E.

Howard describes as 'a liminal cultural space on the city's suburbs'.¹⁶³ As source material, plays tapped into both popular, salt-of-the-earth festive culture and areas of classical thought and political argument that might be deemed to be the preserve of the intellectual-literate elite. Plays were censored, which speaks of playhouse pleasure being directed towards support for state, status quo, and monarch. The fact that censorship was deemed necessary speaks, however, of playhouse pleasure exceeding the limits deemed suitable by the orthodox authority, or being located in a field of experience deemed unsuitable by regulatory forces.¹⁶⁴ At the centre of all lies a focus on the production, control, and steering of pleasure.

In *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*, Steven Mullaney offers a thorough and connotation-rich assessment of the geographical and ideological position of the Shakespearean playhouse in Tudor and Stuart London.¹⁶⁵ Mullaney speaks of 'the cultural conditions' of this moment in history allowing 'for a relatively brief period of time, a theatre of ambivalent status but considerable ideological range and license'.¹⁶⁶ Stressed here is

¹⁶³ Jean E. Howard, "Renaissance Antitheatricality and the Politics of Gender and Rank in *Much Ado About Nothing*," in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F O'Connor (London: Methuen, 1987), 164.

¹⁶⁴ Jean E. Howard makes a similar point. See Howard, "Renaissance Antitheatricality," 164.

¹⁶⁵ Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vii.

the importance of an embracing of an understanding of ‘the particularities of time and place’ in the building of ‘an aesthetic perspective’ on early modern drama.¹⁶⁷ Central to this aesthetic perspective, suggests Mullaney, is an appreciation of the early modern playhouse ‘as a troublesome and potentially subversive social phenomenon that threatened religious and civic hierarchies and yet, despite considerable antagonism, could neither be outlawed nor put down’.¹⁶⁸ Mullaney’s conception of the ideological and geographical position of the Shakespearean playhouse, recalling Howard’s highlighting of liminality, centres upon implications of ambivalence:

Popular drama in Renaissance England was born of the contradiction between a Court that in limited but significant ways licensed and maintained it and a city that sought its prohibition; it emerged as a cultural institution only by materially embodying that contradiction, dislocating itself from the confines of the existing social order and taking up a place on the margins of society. Erected outside the walls of early modern London in the “licentious Liberties” of the city, the popular playhouses of Elizabethan England occupied a domain that had traditionally been reserved for cultural phenomena that could not be contained within the strict or proper bounds of the community.¹⁶⁹

The Shakespearean playhouse is ambiguously licensed, and ambiguously positioned. As suggested above, this ambiguity can be understood as a functional ambivalence which, it will later be argued, plays a central role in the generating (antitheatricalists might prefer the term ‘fomenting’), directing, and sustaining of the pleasures brought into being within and by dramatic performance. Licensing, of course, smacks of ambiguity as the licensed exists in a

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

curious purgatory in which freedoms are paradoxically offered and restricted by the governing authority; attendant on the offering of a license is an inherent setting of parameters by the licensing authority. Freedom, then, is invited by the walls that surround it. Thus, the license offered by the court is defined by its parameters – the negotiation surrounding admissible performance content being characterised by the often idiosyncratic and always politicised interpretations of the court-based censoring authority. The Shakespearean playhouse is embraced by the court to a greater or lesser degree whilst simultaneously being perceived as a potential threat. The implication is that the welcoming gesture of licensing is, due to the parameters inherent to the license, concomitantly, an oxymoronic marginalisation through centralisation.

This marginality is implicit in the wording of the 16 May 1559 proclamation created to prohibit unlicensed plays and interludes. The proclamation states that authorities concerned with the control of performance content were to:

permit none to be played wherein either matters of religion or of the governance of the estate of the commonweal shall be handled or treated, being no meet matters to be written or treated upon but by men of authority, learning, and wisdom, nor to be handled before any audience but of grave and discreet persons.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ *Tudor Royal Proclamation*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, C. S.V., 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 2:115. Quoted in Montrose, Louis, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 24.

The installation of this system of licence stems from Tudor engagement ‘in a complex process of consolidating temporal and spiritual power in the hereditary ruler of a sovereign nation-state’.¹⁷¹ This need to control and/or prohibit popular entertainment, festival proceedings and drama of a religious nature inherently implies, of course, a belief in the strength and ability of such events to create community-wide ideologies that threaten the status of Court and Queen. The pleasure of playgoing is understood here as being irresistibly willed into being by a communal need for recreation and, simultaneously, presenting itself as carrying a threat to the nation-state. Marginalisation is seen as a means to dilute, or stem this threatening process. This form of marginalisation is, of course, contradictory as it places theatre within the support structure of Crown and Court, albeit restricted by content-related parameters, and outside the free public sphere; thus, as mentioned above, it is an oxymoronic, embracing marginalisation. Of interest to this study is the impact of this ambivalent marginalisation on the function of pleasure in performance.

As intimated above, the geographical location of the early modern playhouses element of ambivalence which directs the nature and function of performance-related pleasure. London’s theatres were pushed into the “licentious Liberties” of the city area, thus outside the walls of late sixteenth-century London. That the “licentious Liberties” housed brothels and gaming

¹⁷¹ Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, 24.

houses alongside theatres denotes these theatres as being part of an entertainment district rendered marginal, threatening, and anti-social by city authorities and fundamentalist Protestant moralists. In *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), discussed above, Gosson, in his role as one of theatre's chief and most public opponents, broadcasts the notion that theatres themselves were culpable as foyers to prostitution:

In our assemblies at playes in London, You shall see suche heaving, and shooving, suche ytching and shouldring, too sitte by women; Suche care for their garments, that they be not trode on: Suche eyes to their lappes, that no chippes lighte in them: Suche pillowes to their backes, that they take no hurte: Suche masking in their eares, I knowe not what: Such giving them Pippins to passe the time: Suche playing at foote Saunt without Cardes: Such ticking, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such māning them home, when the sportes are ended, that it is a right Comedie, to marke their behaviour, to watche their conceates, as the Catte for the mouse, and as good as a course at the game it selfe to, to dogge them a little, or follow aloofe by the Printe of their feete, and so discover by slotte where the deare taketh soyle. If this were as well noted, as il seene: or as openly punished, as secretly practised: I haue no doubt but the cause would be seared to drye up the effect, and these prettie rabbits verie cunningly ferretted from their borrowes. For they that lacke Customers all the weeke, either because their haunt is unkowen, or the Constables and Officers of their parish watch them so narrowly, that they dare not queatche; To celebrate the Sabboth, flocke to0 Theaters, and there keepe a generall Market of bawdrie. Not that any filthinesse in deede, is committed within the compasse of that ground, as was once done in *Rome*, but that every wanton and is Paramour, everye man and his Mistresse, every John and his Joane, euery knave and his queane, are there first acquainted & cheapen the marchandise in that place, which they pay for else, where as they can agree.¹⁷²

Gosson's argument is built upon a weakening generalisation which any London playgoer would

¹⁷² Gosson, *The School of Abuse*, 17v-18r.

be able to dismiss or, at the very least, recalibrate.¹⁷³ Surely soliciting in the stalls cannot be as widespread or prevalent as suggested in this anti-theatrical bombast. While the extremity of Gosson's account leads to a questioning of the legitimacy of his argument, clearly communicated is the marginality – in the sense that city-based definitions of criminality and immorality were not wholly enforceable in this 'exterior' locale – of theatre, and the impact of this marginality on the nature of the pleasure that the theatre space offered. Gosson's description of playgoer behaviour suggests that the fictional play presented on stage is secondary to the sexual anticipation and bartering of the world of prostitution – the geographical proximity of the theatres to London's brothels deemed a governing factor in the onset of this social effect. The purpose of the play is threatened by the society of playgoers as interactions between spectators supersede the interactions between the *dramatis personae* on stage. The suggestion, one that requires further thought and attention, is that the source of pleasure in the playhouse need not solely be the play proper. Relatedly, the activities and mindset associated with the auditorium might direct the content and style of on-stage performance. In Gosson's picture of a community of sex-focused playgoers, the societal dynamics exerted within the theatre building define themselves as pleasurable moments of role-

¹⁷³ For further discussion on this extract of Gosson's text and the dilemma it presents to the "serious" playgoer, see John Gillies, "The Author's Accomplice, or the Unsearchable Complicities of Players in the Making of Elizabethan Drama," in Graham Bradshaw, Tom Bishop, and David Schalkwyk, eds, *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Vol. 10, Special Section, The Achievement of Robert Weimann* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 119-42.

playing prior to a highly anticipated denouement. Here erotic pleasure threatens the status of the play. In the context of Shakespearean scholarship, however, it would be reductive to prioritise analysis of the pleasure of the playgoer despite the play above analysis of pleasure debated within the play and causally related to the play. (It should not be forgotten that Tudor and Stuart responses to professional theatre performances suggest the playgoer taking a critical stance to the fictions presented. Opinions, interpretations and understandings vary in depth, insight and application, but all stem from engagement with the play.)¹⁷⁴ The degree to which the playgoer engages with the play-world presented is, however, crucial to the theatre experience. This is an area approached in some depth by Bishop and Marshall.¹⁷⁵ The discussion that I offer on *Macbeth* also centres upon the impact of Shakespeare's shaping of pleasure on the audience member.

A second influential and pleasure-related element within the relationship between playgoer and play is the commodification of art inherent to professional theatre performance. The perceived impact of individual payment for access to such theatre performances on the status quo is outlined in an extract from the *Accounts of the Master of the Merchant Taylors Company* for 16

¹⁷⁴ For a study of Tudor and Stuart responses to drama of the period, see Charles Whitney, *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Whitney focuses on dramatic allusion in his exploration of historical audience response, thus broadening the arena of study to incorporate analysis of response made by women and the working population.

¹⁷⁵ Bishop, *Theatre of Wonder*. Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*.

March 1573:

Whereas at our Comon Playes and suche lyke Exercises whiche be commonly exposed to be seene for money, everye lew'd persone thinketh himselfe (for his penny) worthye of the chiefe and moste comodious place withoute respecte of any other, either for age or estimacion in the comon weale, whiche bringeth the youthe to suche an impudente famylaritie with their betters that often tymes greite contempte of Maisters, Parents, and Magistrats followeth thereof, as experience of late in this our Comon Hall hath sufficiencyntly declared, whereby reasone of the tumultuous disordered persones repayingne hither to see suche Playes as by our Schollers were here lately played, the Maisters of this Worshipful Companie and their deare ffrends coulde not have entertaynment and convenyente place as theyoughte to have had, by no provision beinge made, notwithstandinge the spoyle of this howse, the charges of this Mystery and their juste Authoritie which did reasonably require the contrary.

Therefore, and ffor the causes ffirist above saide, yt is ordeyned and decreed by the authoritie of this presente Courte, with the assente and consente of all the worshipfull persones afforesaide, that henceforthe their shall be no more any Playes suffered to be played in this our Comon Hall, any Use or Custome heretofore to the contrary in anywise notwithstandinge.¹⁷⁶

Here the commodification of art has led to a threat to established societal behaviour patterns. If

‘everye lew'd persone thinketh himselfe (for his penny) worthye of the chiefe and moste

comodious place withoute respecte of any other, either for age or estimacion in the comon

weale’, the theatre represents a locale in which social roles are questioned and relaxed as the

penny paid is seen as the cost of entitlement to equality and a negation of custom in relation to

interaction according to social status.¹⁷⁷ Once again the theme of ambivalence returns to the

¹⁷⁶ “Appendix C: To Memorial III,” *Memorials of the Guild of Merchant Taylors: Of the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist in the City of London* (1875), 565-87, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=64160>> (accessed 12 December 2011). Quoted in Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, 47, but assigned to 16 March 1574, not 16 March 1573.

¹⁷⁷ “Appendix C: To Memorial III,” 565.

argument: contradiction is found in the situation in which hierarchies interrogated and exemplified within the fictional performance – as in status-influenced interaction between *dramatis personae* (consider the unpacking of hierarchical interaction in the interchanges between Hamlet and Osric in *Hamlet* (V.ii.81-195), and Leonato and Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing* (III.v.1-52) for example) – are negated within the community of playgoers.

When playgoers committed to a negation of hierarchical social interaction instigated by an empowering, or equalising, payment for entrance to the theatre engage with a performance in which social hierarchies are displayed and, consequently, reinforced, where sits pleasure?

Furthermore, how does this negotiation of social hierarchy interact with the social stratification reinforced by the very architecture of the theatre (wealth correlates to seating position) and the theatre's 'each must play his part' projection of the *theatrum mundi* topos?

In the closing phrase of The Prologue to Part One of the 1590 edition of *Tamburlaine the Great* Christopher Marlowe offers freedom of response to each individual spectator, recalling the negation of differentiation according to social status called into being by the commodification of art:

*From jygging veins of riming mother-wits,
And such conceits as clownage keepes in pay,
Weele lead you to the stately tent of war,
Where you shall heare the Scythian Tamburlaine;
Threatning the world with high astounding tearms,
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.*

*View but his picture in this tragicke glass,
And then applaud his fortunes as you please.*¹⁷⁸

For Marlowe then, each individual spectator, granted complete freedom of response, may applaud the play as s/he pleases. There is a casualness within this context which speaks of an aesthetic product separate from the moral and psychological concerns of what Dutta terms “‘real’ reality”.¹⁷⁹ Such freedom, enabled by the nonusefulness implicit to the art product plays a key role in determining the nature and function of the aesthetic form in play. This freedom, as Greenblatt explains, enables charged engagement with the actuality outside the theatre’s walls:

Shakespeare’s theater is powerful and effective precisely to the extent that the audience believes it to be nonuseful and hence nonpractical. And this belief gives the theater an unusually broad license to conduct its negotiations and exchanges with surrounding institutions, authorities, discourses, and practices.

These negotiations were defined by the unequivocal *exclusion* of relatively little from the privileged space of the playhouse, even though virtually everything represented on the stage was at least potentially dangerous and hence could be scrutinized and censored. The Elizabethan theater could, within limits, represent the sacred as well as the profane, contemporary as well as ancient times, stories set in England as well as those set in distant lands. Allusions to the reigning monarch, and even to highly controversial issues in the reign, were not necessarily forbidden (though the company had to tread cautiously); the outlawed practices and agents of the Catholic faith could be represented with considerable sympathy, along with Turks, Jews, witches, demons, fairies, wild men, ghosts. Above all – and the enabling agent of this range of representational resources – the language of the theater was astonishingly open: the most solemn formulas of the church and state could find their way onto the stage and mingle with the language of the marketplace, just as elevated verse could alternate in the same play with the homeliest of prose. The theater is marked

¹⁷⁸ See Prologue to Part 1 of the 1590 edition, Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great Parts 1 and 2*, ed. David Fuller in *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987-98), v. 5, 7.

¹⁷⁹ Dutta, *Ethnic Worlds*, 15,

off from the “outside world” and licensed to operate as a distinct domain, but its boundaries are remarkably permeable.¹⁸⁰

The theatre of Tudor and Stuart London, then, could be deemed an arena definable by its ambivalence—its existence fostered by the contradictions it houses and is housed by. The suggestion is that this ambivalence, engendered by cultural and political contexts of the Tudor and Stuart periods, is a directing factor in the discussion of pleasure presented within theatrical performance, and an active element within the process of generating pleasure amongst the population of playgoers.

Contesting Pleasure: The Antitheatricalists v. the Defenders of the Theatre

The closing four decades of the sixteenth century were witness to a rich and public stage in the previously extant (dating famously back to Plato’s expulsion of poetry from his republic)—and still ongoing—debate on the value, or lack thereof, of poetry, plays and the pleasures they generate.¹⁸¹ It should not be forgotten that this stage in the history of antitheatricality

¹⁸⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 19.

¹⁸¹ Plato’s attitude towards poetry – concern about its appeal to pleasure at the expense of a focus on reason – stands in tension with his use of the poets (particularly Homer) throughout his dialogues. Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann usefully explain this tension: ‘It is not the least paradox that Plato is both the western philosopher who more than any other cites, or alludes to, works of poetry, and the one who is at the same time the harshest critic of poetry’. See Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, eds., *Plato and the Poets* (Koninklijke Brill Nv: Leiden, 2011), xiii. For Plato’s criticism and evaluation of poetry see, in particular, Book III and Book X of the *The Republic*. See *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

culminated in the closure of the theatres in 1642.¹⁸² John Dover Wilson suggests that *A Woorke of Joannes Ferrarius Montanus touchynge the good orderynge of a commonweale*, a Latin Italian text translated into English by William Bavand, can be considered to be the first written defence of non-religious drama available to an English-language readership.¹⁸³ The defence was based on the belief that drama could present models of behaviour that could be beneficially followed by the spectator. John Northbrooke's *A treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes, or Enterludes, with other idle pastimes, &c., commonly used on the Sabbath day, are reproved by the Authoritie of the word of God and auntient writers. Made Dialoguewise by John Northbrooke, Minister and preacher of the word of God*, (1577), offers a different perspective on the playhouse's role in society in its presentation of anxiety about the impact of numerous leisure activities, including playgoing, on human well-being and the society-wide work ethic.¹⁸⁴ Northbrooke accepts, however, that theatre – if performed privately, in Latin, and with no bawdiness or gaudiness – could be used in moral instruction. Philip Stubbes, a fellow antitheatricalist, follows a similar line of thinking in his exclusion of school and

¹⁸² Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre*, 18.

¹⁸³ Johannes Ferrarius, *A Woorke of Joannes Ferrarius Montanus touchynge the good orderynge of a commonweale*, trans. William Bavand (Wight: London, 1559). See John Dover Wilson, "The Puritan Attack Upon the Stage," in *Cambridge History of English Literature 6, Part 2: The Drama to 1642*, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 377. Diana Akers Rhoads notes Wilson's observation in her outline of the early modern debate on the status of poetry. Diana Akers Rhoads, *Shakespeare's Defense of Poetry: A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 3.

¹⁸⁴ John Northbrooke, *A treatise against dicing, dancing, plays, and interludes. With other idol pastimes* (London: 1577). No printer was listed for the 1577 edition. Thomas Dawson is listed as the printer of the 1579 edition.

university plays, or academic drama, from his criticism of the entertainment offered by the professional playhouses.¹⁸⁵ It is worth noting that much of Northbrooke's argument, as suggested by the word '*Dialoguewise*' in the title, is presented in play form. This evokes an important point, made below in regard to Gosson, about the use of the theatrical to attack the theatrical.¹⁸⁶ Gosson's attacks on theatre, titled, *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), *The Ephemerides of Phialo...and A Short Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse* (1579), and *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582) respectively, punctuate the debate and, simultaneously chart the journey of Gosson's attitude towards drama from acceptance of what he deemed to be morally sound content to condemnation of all theatrical performance. *The School of Abuse* was dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, and likely motivated Sidney to express opposition to Gosson in his *Apologie for Poetrie* (c. 1583). It is important to note, however, that Sidney does not directly address Gosson's claim that stage plays present a moral threat to the playgoer. Sidney's text has little to say about theatre *per se*, and much to say about the ability of the poet to unite his art with the pursuit of virtue. Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*, coupled with Thomas Lodge's *Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Playes* (1579), registers something of a conclusion to the debate.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London: Richard Jones, 1583), EEBO-TCP.

¹⁸⁶ As discussed below, theatre itself was perfectly capable of making the antitheatrical argument. Jean Howard investigates the antitheatrical elements in *Much Ado About Nothing* to 'examine how the play's representations of theatrical practice naturalize and/or contest particular Elizabethan understandings of the social order'. Howard, "Renaissance Antitheatricality," 164.

¹⁸⁷ For a full discussion on this debate see Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. See also Arthur F. Kinney, *Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson* (Salzburg: Salzburg Studies in English Literature, 1974), 1-

It should be noted that there are a number of late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century publications which mark a return to this very debate, but the comments made are largely less well-honed, redundant repetitions of previous utterances.¹⁸⁸ Mention should be made, however, of the speech made by Paris in John Massinger's *The Roman Actor*.¹⁸⁹ Paris, a tragedian, is asked to respond to the claim, made by Aretinus, Caesar's spy, that players ply a treasonous, deceitful trade that breeds immorality and undermines the government. Paris responds with a defence of theatre that suggests that plays present a healthy model for human behaviour and

67. Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: 1595). Sidney's text was written c. 1583. It also appeared in 1595 as *The Defence of Poesie*. Thomas Lodge, *Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Playes* (London: c.1580). In his preface to *Alarum against Usurers*, Lodge explains that 'the godly and reverend...forbad the publishing' of his *Defence*. Edmund Gosse suggests that Lodge probably 'hurried' his text 'through the press' so as to ensure that a copy reached Gosson. See Thomas Lodge, *Alarum against Usurers* (London: T. Este for Sampson Clarke, 1584), EEBO-TCP. Also see Edmund Gosse's privately printed book titled *Memoir of Thomas Lodge* (1882), 7. Charles C. Whitney explains that Lodge's text 'achieved some limited circulation despite its suppression, and Gosson managed to get hold of a copy'. See Charles C. Whitney, *Thomas Lodge* (London: Routledge, 2017), 410. *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* represents Gosson's response to Lodge.

¹⁸⁸ The most prominent examples of early modern texts that engage with the antitheatricalists v. the defenders of the theatre but merely repeat arguments previously made are Thomas Heywood's defence of the theatre titled *An Apology for Actors* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1612) and William Prynne's *Histrion-mastix* (London: Edward Allde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes and William Iones for Michael Sparke, 1633). The full title of Prynne's text gives a useful overview of content: *Histrion-mastix The players scourge, or, actors tragædie, divided into two parts. Wherein it is largely evidenced, by divers arguments, by the concurring authorities and resolutions of sundry texts of Scripture ... That popular stage-playes ... are sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly spectacles, and most pernicious corruptions; condemned in all ages, as intolerable mischiefes to churches, to republickes, to the manners, mindes, and soules of men. And that the profession of play-poets, of stage-players; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-playes, are unlawfull, infamous and misbeseeming Christians. All pretences to the contrary are here likewise fully answered; and the unlawfulness of acting, of beholding academicall enterludes, briefly discussed; besides sundry other particulars concerning dancing, dicing, health-drinking, &c. of which the table will informe you. By William Prynne, an utter-barrester of Lincolnes Inne.*

¹⁸⁹ John Massinger, *The Roman Actor: A Tragedy*, ed. Martin White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). See I.iii.23-146.

locates the responsibility for moral well-being firmly with the playgoer. He thus renders the pleasure of playgoing virtuous as long as the playgoer is of moral worth. It is rather an ingenious defence as it as it deflects the attacks made by Gosson et al. away from the stage and into the auditorium. Lodge is of particular interest here, as his focus on reaction to – and evaluation of – satirical content defines Gosson as decadent rather than virtuous. As Charles Whitney explains: ‘The gist of his [Lodge’s] argument is clear: that opposition to satire, on the page or on the stage, is the sign of a decadent state. Gosson’s unease with plays stems not from genuine religious “zeale” but from his unwitting complicity with the decadence he claims to condemn.’¹⁹⁰

Relevant to this study are the conceptualisations of pleasure that motivate and direct judgements within this early modern debate. Closer inspection of the contributions to the debate offered by Gosson, alongside critical insight offered by Arthur F. Kinney, highlights the centrality of understanding of the agency of pleasure to early modern evaluation of the playhouse experience.¹⁹¹ I should stress, here, that the emphasis on Gosson that follows is not intended to suggest that his voice in some way overshadowed other comment on threats and benefits of playing and playgoing. As George Sampson and R. C. Churchill point out, in the

¹⁹⁰ Charles C. Whitney, *Thomas Lodge* (London: Routledge, 2017), 411.

¹⁹¹ Kinney, *Markets of Bawdrie*.

1574 text titled *A forme of Christian pollicie*, Sir George Fenton ‘anticipates nearly all the later Puritan arguments against the stage’.¹⁹²

Kinney’s analysis of the philosophical sway of Gosson’s thinking and argumentation clearly suggests that pleasure, for Gosson, is a problematic of central concern:

Gosson was a devoted student of the New Learning of the humanists. Again and again Gosson recites those traditional views of life and literature that the schoolmen attempted to propagate from 1500 onwards, saturating the English cultural and educational accomplishments with their conservative use of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, and their interest in an aesthetics grounded in didacticism.¹⁹³

Gosson’s acceptance of ‘conservative use of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero’ suggests a viewpoint that can only starkly oppose human activities in which experiencing pleasure is rendered a priority. In Gosson, this active support of New Learning is further coloured, and further conservatised, by acceptance of ‘the Augustinian view of man’s likely corruptibility alongside an acceptance of the Pelegian heresy of human perfectibility based not only on the presence of

¹⁹² George Sampson and R. C. Churchill, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, repr. 2004. 1st ed. 1941), 285. The label ‘Puritan’ is problematic. It was first used pejoratively and, hence, carries the reductive air of prejudice. Within the context of the antitheatricalists v. the defenders of the theatre debate, however, it is a useful signifier of an attitude of objection to what might be considered the non-virtuous aspects of the playhouse experience. Basil Hall offers a discussion on the complexities involved in identifying and containing the meaning of ‘Puritan’. See Basil Hall, ‘Puritanism: The Problem of Definition’, *Studies in Church History* (1965).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

inner grace but in the training and regulation provided by education and law'.¹⁹⁴ The extract

below, taken from *The Ephemerides of Phialo*, highlights Gosson's early understanding of

playhouse pleasure and points towards his objections to the playhouse:

You abuse the worde Pleasure verye muche, when taking it sometime in one Sense, sometime in an other: Now fleeting above, then diving to the bottome, and with the Hedgehogge, never abiding that quarter, wher the wind blowes, you are able to drawe the simple awry, and make them angle for butterflies in a drie ditch.¹⁹⁵

Wisdome, Justice, all vertues, all Artes, all that we doe in this life, levels, say you, at nothing but pleasure. Can you make such a hotchpotche of vice and virtue, that eache with the other shall both agree? that contraries shall nestle togeather in one bodie, one parte, at one instant? The pleasure that is got by vertue is an honest delight of the minde, reioycing in nothing but that which is good; yet is it not that which vertue seeketh, for the Countriman soweth his Grayne to reap the fruite, though hee gather the flower, that growes up with it. And we exercise vertue not for pleasures sake, but to do good; refusing not the pleasures that spring up with it, as flowers with corne, and follow it continually as a shadow the body; neither doe they please us because they delight, but delight because they please.¹⁹⁶

In these early stages of his protestation against theatre, Gosson clearly recognises pleasure as a problematic and divisive concept, and crucially insists that it may be an acceptable by-product

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 4. A point to note here is that in 1584 Gosson, an Anglican, registered at the Jesuit English College in Rome. The English College offered training for Catholic missionaries. This is relevant to the discussion presented as the notion of learning through drama had been strongly supported and funded by the Jesuits throughout the sixteenth century. Thomas Dixon briefly outlines this episode in Gosson's life in *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, 56. Dixon explains, however, that it is 'possible' that Gosson's stay in Rome was spent spying on the English Catholic priest Robert Southwell for Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's secretary. See Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, 56. Robert Southwell was convicted of high treason, then hanged at Tyburn in 1595.

¹⁹⁵ Gosson, *The Ephemerides of Phialo*, 65v.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 66v-67r.

of human activity, but should not be a goal of human activity. The temptation here is to label Gosson a Puritan objector to the London theatre scene. Kinney, however, proposes that the attaching of such a label to Gosson would be reductive and, relatedly, symptomatic of a succumbing to the narrowing effect of blind acceptance of twentieth-century thought patterns:

Our current impatience with the common moral arguments against poetry have caused us to dismiss Gosson generally as a Puritan or as an unoriginal, and therefore not very important, thinker. Neither charge will stand under the briefest examination of such evidence as we now have. Although Gosson shared with the Puritans an interest in the reformation of man's character measured by the pragmatic test of his behaviour, a keen awareness in the power of Logos and the need for good moral instruction, and a basic distrust of wit and fancy, these attitudes were in no way the exclusive province of the Puritans. In major ways – in his plea for moderation, in his understanding of man as dependent on God rather than self-sufficient, and in his advocacy of reason even...at the expense of faith – Gosson's ideas are radically opposed to the basic outlook of the most popular and influential Puritans of his day.¹⁹⁷

This carries connotations for early modern understanding of pleasure. If Kinney's analysis is accepted, Gosson is capable of modes of thinking incompatible with protestant fundamentalism, but still develops a wariness of pleasure taken in art that aligns him with the Plato of *The Republic*:

To chart Plato's increasing disenchantment with poetry and Gosson's is to draw parallel lines. Although in *The Schoole* Gosson is concerned with drama which is not edifying, the faults he finds are faults of misuse, not faults of nature. But like the increasingly wary Plato, Gosson remarks in *Playes Confuted* that art is by nature treacherous and the actor by nature corrupt of reason and decency. Gosson, too, fears the effect of drama on both individual and society because of inherent

¹⁹⁷ Kinney, *Markets of Bawdrie*, 26-27.

and unavoidable dangers.¹⁹⁸

Gosson, according to Kinney, also aligned himself with Plutarch—a further influential figure in the field of New Learning. Pleasure’s slipperiness—or resistance to control and ownership—starts to come into sharper focus here. Let us consider Gosson’s Plutarchian acceptance of pleasure in poetry by embracing its definition as the lubricant through which instruction can flow:

In Plutarch Gosson found the Platonic and Lucretian dictum that poetry serves as honey to cover the necessary wormwood of medicine transposed into the new maxim that poetry provides the necessary delight to make appealing the moral pill of instruction. Plutarch thus justified the style and imaginative power of poetry, both emotionally attractive, as necessary to the performance of art, a somewhat questionable axiom to which Gosson subscribes allegiance so that his own artful prose will not be inconsistent with his attack on poetry and drama.¹⁹⁹

Now the focus turns to an undermining of this utilitarian definition of pleasure as acceptable if deemed a countering force to austerity, and thus supportive of instruction through art, by Gosson’s far more complex analysis of pleasure communicated within and by the ‘corne’ and ‘cockle’ analogy cited and discussed above.²⁰⁰ To reiterate, here pleasure is deemed dangerous

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 31. Gosson’s writing technique, defined as ‘euphuistic style’ is attributable to the influence of John Rainoldes. In his *Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Playes* (c. 1580) Thomas Lodge identifies Gosson’s literary style as an attempt to offer pleasure in the poetic within a disavowal of said pleasure. See 1-3. Robert Maslen discusses this aspect of the paradox of pleasure in *Elizabethan Fictions: Espionage, Counter-espionage, and the Duplicity of Fiction in Early Elizabethan Prose Narratives* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), 55-56. Maslen, referring to *Love’s Labour’s Lost* suggests that the King of Navarre’s exposure of Berowne’s paradoxical attitude to scholarship (‘How well he’s read, to reason against reading!’ (I.i.94)) serves as a partner-piece to criticism of Gosson’s hypocrisy.

²⁰⁰ Gosson, *The School of Abuse*, 37-38.

because it pollutes the playgoer whilst preserving its own imperceptibility and untraceability.

Kinney's suggestion that Gosson accepts a 'classical, not Renaissance, and in this instance Aristotelian' conceptualisation of the imagination is central to this understanding of pleasure as an intangible, demonic force.²⁰¹ The outcome is that Gosson serves as an example of a writer trapped by the paradox that pleasure presents: utilitarian potential cannot be separated from pleasure's steering into idle neglect of reason and the real:

Gosson sees imagination as that part of man which gathers and interprets sense data for a response by reason, a task critical to the process of understanding and the action of the will, yet through accidentally misunderstood or distorted responses, precisely the seat of man's grievous errors... It is this distrust which accounts finally for his desire to eliminate the products of the imagination from his ideal commonwealth.²⁰²

The suggestion here is that Gosson, a key interrogator of the early modern playhouse experience, finds himself impelled to generate pleasure through the employment of poetic technique within the expression of opposition to such pleasure.²⁰³ Wiggins makes a similar point when he explains that Gosson's previous career as a playwright 'gave him not only an

²⁰¹ Kinney, *Markets of Bawdrie*, 36.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Jean Howard raises precisely this issue in regard to the antitheatricity within *Much Ado About Nothing*: 'Just as support for the theatricality of *certain* groups can be found in the antitheatrical tracts, making them speak, as it were, against themselves, so Shakespeare's play speaks against itself in several important senses'. Howard goes on to explain that the play 'appears to police its own protheater tendencies by acknowledging the validity of much antitheatrical polemic and reproducing its writing of the social order, especially its fear of the dangerous duplicity of women and those who aspire to positions beyond their station.' Jean Howard, "Renaissance Antitheatricity," 172.

insider's information but also a more literary prose style than his fellow antitheatricalists, and a clearer sense of narrative'.²⁰⁴ Wiggins expands his point to suggest that Gosson's 'explanation of drama is itself like a play; it has an escalating sequence of events driven by a leading character, Satan'.²⁰⁵ Foregrounded is the presence of a problematic central to the defining and evaluation of plays and playgoing. This idea of the process of performance opposing the very reason for performance is revisited in chapter 3 in reference to Hamlet's theatrical antitheatricity.

This antitheatricalist reading of playgoing that leads to the deduction that playhouse pleasures have a detrimental effect on the playgoer bears close relation to the reading of playgoing foregrounded by the defenders of the theatre. The overall impact created is that the defences carry none of the potency or persuasiveness of the attacks. Barish provides a typical assessment of the perceptibly weaker stance of the defenders of the theatre:

The defenses of the stage that survive from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tend to be feebler than the attacks on it. The defenders usually share the assumptions of their opponents. They concede in advance the Christian-Stoic ideal of constancy, and the illusoriness of earthly experience. They equate changeability with hypocrisy. And they shrink sometimes from the brashness and hubbub of the playhouse, preferring not to risk contamination from that quarter.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time*, 8.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 117.

Barish then employs the examples of Sidney and Heywood to highlight the weaknesses in the defences made. Sidney ‘censures comedy for its licentiousness’.²⁰⁷ ‘Heywood manages to push the argument into absurdity at once, by alleging as his prime instance of the power and glory of the stage the rape of the Sabines, the signal for which was given by Romulus *at the theater*.’²⁰⁸

The defences made are aligned with Gosson’s attacks in that the ability of theatre performance to attract and possess the playgoer, thus instigating adjustments in mindset, is highlighted. The key question here concerns not theatre’s ability to influence, but whether the influence of theatre on the playgoer’s imagination is considered to be positive and society-enhancing or negative and detrimental.

Here Thomas Nashe, one of early modern London’s most prominent pamphleteers, offers a useful argument. As author of *Christ’s Tears Over Jerusalem*, a 1593 text promoting religious reform to address increasing levels of sin and immorality in London, Nashe appears to be a prosyletizing supporter of the Church of England. As writer of the erotic poem *The Choice of Valentines*, Nashe acquires the label (if, given the early-modern context, an anachronistic term

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 118.

is permitted) of pornographer. Mauricio Martinez offers a description of Nashe that colourfully communicates his contradictoriness: ‘religious polemicist, marginal dramatist, and sensationalist prose pamphleteer – with a penchant for the salacious mixing of the pious and the vulgar – was well suited to an age preoccupied with the development of a popular consensus surrounding the theology of the English’.²⁰⁹ This is clearly exemplified in the following extracts from Thomas Nashe’s *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Divell* (1592):

How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyen two hundred yeare in his Tomb, he should triumph againe on the Stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the teares of ten thousand Spectators at least, (at severall times) who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.

In playes, all cozonages, all cunning drifts overguylded with outward holinesse, All stratagems of warre, all the canker-wormes that breede on the rust of peace, are most lively anatomiz’d: they shew the ill successe of treason, the fall of hasty climbers, the wretched ende of usurpers, the miserie of civil dissention, and how just God is evermore in punishing of murther. And to prove every one of these allegations, could I propound the circumstances of this play and that play, if I meant to handle this Theame otherwise than obiter. What should I say more? They are sower pills of reprehension wrapt up in sweete words.²¹⁰

In his defence of theatre, Nashe suggests that the pleasure taken in engaging with mimetic performance permits a process of instruction through example: the theatrical representation of

²⁰⁹ Mauricio Martinez, “Terrors of Conscience: Thomas Nashe and the Interiorization of Presence,” *Renaissance and Reformation* v. 36, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 46.

²¹⁰ Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Divell* (London: Abell Jeffes for John Busbie, 1592), 26r-26v, EEBO-TCP.

heroic behaviour encourages similar behaviour in the audience. This argument is then paired with the proposal that theatre provides a safe and affordable distraction with which the leisure time of the potentially criminal and anti-social can be filled. Nashe's suggestion is that taking pleasure in fiction is surely preferable to seeking one's pleasure in 'mischiefe'.²¹¹ Nashe's text thus unyokes the pleasure of playgoing from the threat to salvation – a threat repeatedly communicated by the likes of Gosson and Northbrooke.

The statements and responses held within this debate on the value of playgoing between the antitheatricalists and the defenders of the theatre generate a late sixteenth-century problematic around the conceptualisation of pleasure. Pleasurable impact on the playgoer is a given, but attempts to define the ill or good of such pleasure warrant argument and counter-argument. Within the debate, Renaissance Neoplatonism provides sturdy opposition to Platonic thought:

The Stoic assumption that pleasure must be deficient in virtue, and virtue deficient in pleasure, never gained much credence among Renaissance Neoplatonists...The more comprehensive the virtues and the pleasures become, the more largely they are bound to overlap; and when a pleasure or a virtue becomes all-embracing...then goodness becomes indistinguishable from bliss.²¹²

Barish offers an example of Neoplatonic pleasure as presented in early modern London:

²¹¹ Ibid., 27r.

²¹² Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1958), 47. Quoted in Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 174.

When we encounter a title like “Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue” as the name of one of Ben Jonson’s masques, therefore, we rightly suspect that we have moved into the domain of Neoplatonism, and when the substance of the masque consists of an elaborate series of allegorical demonstrations of this reconciliation, ending with the crowning reconciliation of a dance, we are sure of it.²¹³

The early modern antitheatricalists versus defenders of the theatre debate thus paints pleasure as a problematic. Pleasure is conceptually linked to damnation in one breath, then labelled a path to virtue in the next. It is deemed wickedly unmeasurable by one camp, and a prescribable cure for humoral imbalance by another. Defined within this debate as omnipresent, but resistant to definition and control, pleasure presents itself as a concept unknowable, but always close at hand. Pleasure is, of course, central to the playhouse experience, thus the theatre is ideally suited to its interrogation. Context, however, is vital. When considering, to borrow Huebert’s phrase, ‘the performance of pleasure’ in Shakespeare’s theatre the influence of Protestantism on the shape and evaluation of the aesthetic should not be overlooked.²¹⁴ I would like, then, to conduct a short investigation into the Protestant aesthetic before moving on to the discussions of the plays.

The Protestant Aesthetic

The subtitle above, if the thinking of Daniel T. Jenkins were to be accepted, might be usefully modified by the addition of a question mark.²¹⁵ Thus, ‘The Protestant Aesthetic’ would become

²¹³ Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 174.

²¹⁴ Huebert, *Performance of Pleasure*.

²¹⁵ Daniel T. Jenkins, “A Protestant Aesthetic? A Conversation with Donald Davie,” in *Literature and Theology*, 2,

‘The Protestant Aesthetic?’. Here Max Weber’s understanding of Protestantism as translating the theological into a moral guidebook that teaches how to live life well, or ethically – meaning selflessly (i.e. with due concern for one’s fellow humans, simply, rejecting gaudy distraction from the real, the here, and the now), and, relatedly, with temperance – collides with the potentially transgressive, ambivalent, distracting, pleasure-centred, and corrupting aesthetic.²¹⁶

‘Talk of a Protestant aesthetic’, says Jenkins, ‘sounds...like a contradiction in terms’.²¹⁷ The question mark expresses surprise and asks whether the term ‘aesthetic’ should be preceded by the modifier ‘Protestant’. The contradiction felt is a result, explains Jenkins, of ‘anti-Protestant propaganda, both ecclesiastical and secularist’, which defines Protestantism as ‘anti-artistic’ and Puritanism as ‘a synonym for hatred of pleasure’.²¹⁸

It should not be overlooked that the argument referenced by Jenkins’s positioning of a question mark is built not only upon a rather narrow understanding of Protestantism, but also upon a reductive understanding of the aesthetic as being the servant of pleasure alone. It is perhaps the sensing of the reductiveness of this view of Protestantism and the aesthetic, and the desire to seek for a more nuanced unpacking of relationship between them, that led Jenkins to insights

no. 2 (September 1998): 153.

²¹⁶ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²¹⁷ Jenkins, “A Protestant Aesthetic,” 153.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

offered by the record of Donald Davie's 1976 Clark lectures at Cambridge titled *A Gathered Church: The Literature of the English Dissenting Interest, 1700-1930*.²¹⁹ What Jenkins discovers is Davie's suggestion that a Protestant aesthetic unrequiring of the question mark does exist, and it is used to display, express, and promote 'the virtues of simplicity, sobriety, and measure'.²²⁰ Davie does not offer a precise breakdown of what 'simplicity, sobriety, and measure' might mean, but clearly communicated, suggests Jenkins (and I find myself in agreement), is an understanding of the Protestant approach to the art product that refuses to forget the Calvinist understanding of man's fallen state – hence denies the glory of the poet and shies away from any duplicity, deceit, or ambivalence.²²¹ Here it is useful to draw attention to the central position of the concept of 'simplicity' within Protestant thought and within the construction of the Protestant aesthetic.

In his discussion on the Protestant 'construction of English simplicity in the early modern period' which investigates how this construction 'came to signify Protestant access to truth, honesty, discernment and self-control', Jo Carruthers explains that 'it is in poetic form that Reformation doctrines elide technical qualifications to instil in the reader a lasting impression

²¹⁹ Donald Davie, *A Gathered Church: The Literature of the English Dissenting Interest, 1700-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

²²⁰ Jenkins, "A Protestant Aesthetic," 153.

²²¹ Ibid.

of the intimacy of divine truth for the Protestant individual'.²²² This emphasis on

'transparency' is projected, claims Carruthers, in George Herbert's "Divinity" (1633):²²³

But all the doctrine, which he taught and gave,
Was clear as heav'n, from whence it came.
At least those beams of truth, which only save,
Surpass in brightness any flame.

(lines 13-16)²²⁴

Carruthers accurately highlights 'the overriding image that persists in Herbert's stanza' as being

'the transferral of heaven to earth, of doctrine's clarity, purity, truth, and life'.²²⁵ This

foregrounding of simplicity as signifying 'Protestant access to truth, honesty, discernment and

self-control'²²⁶ is identified by C. S. Lim as being present at a later stage in the same poem.²²⁷

Here Herbert tackles the controversial topic of transubstantiation:

But he doth bid us take his blood for wine,
Bid what he please; yet I am sure,
To take and taste what he doth there design,
Is all that saves, and not obscure.

(lines 21-24)

²²² Jo Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture: Islamophobia and the Protestant Aesthetic* (London: Continuum, 2011), 28.

²²³ See Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture*, 28-37.

²²⁴ George Herbert, "Divinity" in *George Herbert: The Complete English Poems* (London: Penguin, 2012).

²²⁵ Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture*, 28.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ C. S. Lim, *The Temple of George Herbert: A Rhetorical Reading* (Singapore: Partridge, 2018), 53

Lim suggests that ‘the solidly commonsensical attitude’ of Herbert’s approach to transubstantiation ‘skirts volumes of differing interpretations of the meaning of the Eucharist’.²²⁸ The challenge to understanding that exists in the tension between the pre-Reformation Catholic suggestion that the bread and wine used in the Eucharist change in their very essence to become the body and blood of Christ and the Zwinglian denial of such transubstantiation in favour of an understanding of the Eucharist as symbolic rather than sacrificial is by-passed by a faithful acceptance of mystery. Simply accepting God’s ‘design’, the poem suggests, ‘Is all that saves’.²²⁹ Presented in this stanza, then, is a Protestant poet negotiating away from complex argumentation, and embracing a simplicity built upon a non-interrogative acceptance of divine mystery.

One challenge for the Protestant artist is to unite the *seeming* that communication through the aesthetic is dependent upon with the Protestant rejection of the duplicitous, contestable message and its attendant evocation of non-virtuous pleasures.²³⁰ This to say that the drive towards Protestant use of poetry to communicate its message of Christian faith, virtue, and acceptance of divine mystery demands a partnering drive towards a defence for the poetry offered. This

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ For a discussion on Zwingli’s denial of transubstantiation see John Broome, *The Reformers Zwingli and Calvin*, 3rd ed. (Harpندن: Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 1994), 12.

²³⁰ For a related discussion on rhyme, prayer and poetry, see Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), 57-84.

situation is approached by Greenblatt in his unpacking of Edmund Spenser's depiction of desire in book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*.²³¹ Greenblatt notes that Spenser's 'denizens' of the Bower of Bliss – an erotically-charged rethinking of Paradise that tempts towards indulgence and excess – 'acknowledge time solely as an inducement to the eager satisfaction of desire here and now, before the body's decay, and not as the agency of purposeful direction':²³² After 'deare delight', and 'huge affection' that 'did in pleasure melt' the lovers 'like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt'.²³³ Thus, claims Greenblatt, a 'distinction between a pleasure that serves some useful purpose, some virtuous end, and a pleasure that does not' is presented. The lovers have indulged in purposeless pleasure while the poem calls, suggests Greenblatt 'for sexuality found in the power of love to inspire virtuous action and ultimately, with the sanctification of marriage, in the generation of offspring'.²³⁴

The pairing of pleasure and profitability identified here is as relevant to delight in verse as it is to sexual relations. Evoked in Spenser's depiction of the Bower of Bliss – and in Greenblatt's analysis, is Horace's "aut prodesse...aut delectare" (profit and delight/either profit or delight) topos, an approach to the aesthetic which, in its very wording, speaks of the need to defend

²³¹ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 176.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.12.45.

²³⁴ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 176.

pleasure just as it speaks of the need to render the journey towards profit attractive.²³⁵ Central to the Protestant aesthetic and its drive towards the profitability of simplicity, then, is a careful management and defence of pleasure taken in literature.

Regularly cited in analysis of Spenser's goal in writing his epic poem is his explanation, offered in a letter to Raleigh, that the 'generall end' is to 'fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline'.²³⁶ Jo Carruthers reads Spenser as seeking to achieve this very goal in his construction of the reader as a consumer of poetry who keeps, for reference purposes, the Bible at her side: 'Through the saturation of his poem in biblical imagery, Spenser encourages, or more accurately necessitates, the reader's propensity to refer back to the Bible in all interpretive effort'.²³⁷ Spenser, suggests Carruthers, demands 'a Scriptural mode of reading'.²³⁸ This 'alert readership' must be willing, for example, to refer to Ephesians 6 to comprehend why the shield of the Redcrosse knight displays 'the cruell markes of many a

²³⁵ *De arte poetica* in *Horace: Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), lines 333-34.

²³⁶ Edmund Spenser, "The Letter to Raleigh," in *Edmund Spenser: Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (1912; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 407. Cited in discussions on Spenser's didacticism by Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 88 and Shormishtha Panja in *Sidney, Spenser and the Royal Reader* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 104.

²³⁷ Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture*, 29.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

bloody fielde' even though 'armes till that time did he never wield'.²³⁹ (The incongruity is solved by a symbolic reading of the shield as representing 'the shield of faith', rendering the knight 'a novice' accepting and displaying 'the armour of God in his inheritance of the Christian journey'.)²⁴⁰ The tidy closedness of this reading-practice based solution to the management of pleasure and profit is a partner to the lesson on differentiation between virtuous desire and ill-judged lust that the Bower of Bliss offers.

This idea of the Protestant aesthetic constantly seeking a defence in profit is approached from a different direction in Huston Diehl's 1997 study of early modern drama.²⁴¹ Diehl proposes that theatre produced in early modern London was centrally engaged with cultural forces produced by the Reformation and, indeed, became one such force itself. Relevance is found in the fact that 'Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy emerged as a cultural form around the time that the reformers succeeded in suppressing the popular religious cycle drama'.²⁴² The relevance of this to the investigation I am undertaking here lies in the possibility that the pleasure offered by the

²³⁹ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1.1.4-5. Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture*, 29. Carruthers suggests that the practice of deciphering the poetic aesthetic through reference to the Bible as an informing, companion text was widespread: 'The Bible becomes *The Faerie Queene*'s parallel text as it does in so many other early modern works; through repeated and detailed reference to the Bible, the reader's task is set out as that of interpretation through a biblical code, so that he or she can only decipher the text by use of a biblical lens.' Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture*, 29.

²⁴⁰ Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture*, 29.

²⁴¹ Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

theatre of Shakespeare might be calibrated, at least in part, by this sense of a secular theatre replacing the familiar religious cycles. This sense of theatre as replacement for ritual lost is alive in Diehl's observation that the growth of secular theatre occurred 'during a period when the English Church substituted new forms of religious rituals and practices in place of the forbidden Mass, the outlawed ceremonies, and the discredited images of the medieval Church'.²⁴³ This carries particularly strong resonances through the discussion on *Macbeth* that constitutes the fifth chapter of this thesis.

Diehl paints a picture of the birth of a Protestant aesthetic that is required to manage the loss of the aesthetic arena of a now forbidden Catholicism. As Diehl explains, the fusing of a nascent Protestant aesthetic with the trauma of Reformation must surely have had shaping influence on post-Reformation early modern drama, and early modern drama must surely have played a shaping role in the public's management of the reform it was living through:

Playwrights were among the first Englishmen to live their entire lives in a predominantly Protestant culture. And its audiences, comprising a wide spectrum of society, were required by law to practice the new religion. Many of them must have also actively embraced Protestantism, for the citizens of London were among the first and most ardent English Protestants.

It would therefore be surprising if the drama were not shaped in part by Reformation controversies – and if it did not participate in shaping its audience's understanding of religious reform.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Having contextualised Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy as a product of nascent Protestantism and a shaping agent within the societal process of religion-centred reform, Diehl asks four key questions, all of which are pertinent to the study of the pleasure in the Shakespearean playhouse:

How are we to understand the extraordinary popularity of the theater in a city where Calvinist teaching and Protestant preaching also flourish?

What might be the relation between the suppression of late medieval religious culture, with its well-established forms of popular piety, its rituals, symbols, plays, processions, and devotional practices, and the emergence of a popular theater under the Protestant monarchs Elizabeth and James?

In what ways might the tragedies of the English Renaissance stage rehearse the drama – and the trauma – of reform?

In what ways might they [the tragedies of the English Renaissance stage] be agents of reform, destabilizing their audiences' relation to images and nurturing new, Protestant ways of seeing?²⁴⁵

In suggesting that theatre might locate a defence of its pleasures in a 'nurturing' of 'new, Protestant ways of seeing' Diehl evokes the commonplace of profit and pleasure discussed above. Diehl finds hints towards the answers she seeks in the fields of response employed by supporters of the theatre (and, in particular, Thomas Nashe – discussed briefly above) when staging their defences against the claims and attacks of the antitheatricalists. The Protestant tenor of Nashe's defence of the theatre provides an apposite example:

Thomas Nashe bases his defense of the stage on the very distrust of theatricality that the reformers

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

seek to arouse. The theater, he asserts, is valuable because it deconstructs – “anatomizes” – theatricality. Instead of praising the artifice of the stage, he argues that drama reveals and holds up for examination a dangerous and duplicitous artfulness that pervades human affairs... Rather than celebrate the power of the theatrical spectacle, Nashe argues that plays illuminate the ways in which hypocritical rulers, malicious villains, and clever con-artists trick people by manipulating images. Far from dazzling the eyes of its spectators, theater, he claims, exposes the very agents of bedazzlements. By using the language of Protestant polemics against idols, he reiterates and reinforces the reformers’ fears of art, and he praises the theater because it uncovers fraud, reveals hypocrisy, unmask artifice. For Nashe, theater is an agent of reform, not an idolatrous spectacle, and it functions in much the same way as the antitheatricalists tracts themselves, anatomizing cunning artifice in order to suppress it, displaying theatricality in order to demonstrate its fraudulent nature.²⁴⁶

Adrian Streete offers similar insight to that offered by Diehl as he identifies the tendency within the Protestant aesthetic to foreground the presence of falsehood in human discourse:

If those English writers on signs whose work was informed by Reformed theology shared one trait, then it was their focus on human misrepresentation, distortion, and falsification when man came to view the world. For many Protestant thinkers, this meant stressing the essential artificiality of all communicative discourse, especially speech.²⁴⁷

Streete then quotes George Puttenham (*The Arte of English Poesie*, 1589) and Thomas Wilson (*The Art of Rhetoric*, 1553) to illustrate Protestant suspicion of communicative speech:

Speech is not natural to man saving for his onely habilitie to speake, and that he is by kinde apt to utter all his conceits with soundes and voices diversified many maner of ways (Puttenham, 1589).²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 72.

²⁴⁷ Adrian Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 129.

²⁴⁸ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (Yorks: The Scholar Press, 1968), 119

By the corruption of this our flesh, man's reason and intendment were both overwhelmed (Wilson, 1553).²⁴⁹

Further Protestant anxieties are added to this suspicion of communicative speech when the context of plays and playing is considered. As Streete explains, theatre is a shaper of – and nodal point for – imitation and multiple forms of communication:

What...happens when the Protestant subject gazes upon an actor? After all, theatre brings together res and verba, written language, spoken language and outward signs in a form of secular imitation. It does so through the potentially transgressive figure of the actor, a personage who is both the imitator and the imitated.²⁵⁰

'Perhaps' suggests Streete, 'the most important point to recall here is that imitation was a branch of rhetoric'. A brief look at the leading OED definition of 'rhetoric' highlights its value to the theatrical practitioner/dissembler and the reasons for attendant opposition from numerous Protestant fundamentalists:

The art of using language effectively so as to persuade or influence others, esp. the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques to this end.

It is an art famously employed by Mark Antony in act 3, scene 2 of *Julius Caesar*.²⁵¹ Here, shortly after the assassination of Caesar, the uncritical crowds of Rome are persuaded by the oratory of Mark Antony to turn against Brutus and his fellow conspirators. In *In Defence of*

²⁴⁹ Thomas Wilson, *The Art of Rhetoric in Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric*, ed. Wayne Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 175.

²⁵⁰ Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*, 129-30.

²⁵¹ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (London: Bloomsbury, 1998).

Rhetoric Brian Vickers highlights Mark Antony's employment of rhetorical techniques listed by Quintillian.²⁵² These techniques include the showing of the bloody toga, and the assimilation of the emotion deemed apposite, or most persuasive. We might also note Mark Antony's nuanced variation on the technique of *Epanodos*, or *regressio* (the repetition of the main terms in an argument):²⁵³

But Brutus says, he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honourable man. (III.ii.87-88)

Yet Brutus says, he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honourable man. (III.ii.94-95)

Yet Brutus says, he was ambitious,
And sure he is an honourable man. (III.ii.99-100)

In 1642, Thomas Fuller, a Church of England clergyman, expresses the context examined here with vigorous brevity:

Some condemne Rhetorick as the mother of lies.²⁵⁴

Streete extends his argument to clarify the threat of theatre, as perceived within fundamentalist Protestant thought:

²⁵² Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 78-79.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 494.

²⁵⁴ Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 23-24.

An actor was dangerous precisely because he used the tools of rhetoric not necessarily to argue...but to persuade the viewer of the veracity of the imitation, even to the point of making the imitation seem more 'real' than 'reality' itself.²⁵⁵

It is clear that this sense of 'veracity' of 'imitation' plays a role in the driving of early modern iconophilia and iconophobia. The onset of iconoclasm presents, therefore, pivotal theoretical challenges for public theatre. How can a theatre maintain economic profitability and sufficient authority-centred support to ensure that the gates remain open whilst also managing the iconophobia concurrent to religious upheaval? (The pleasures of playgoing alone could well be enough, of course, to counter (or render redundant) rejection of the theatre on the grounds that it embraces dangerous and deceitful practices built upon a blasphemous empowering of icon and image.) Diehl's explanation of this context highlights a complex embracing of a Protestant aesthetic in which theatrical reliance on iconography and imagery is tempered, or debated, via a self-reflexive assessment of spectatorial gaze. Herein, according to Diehl, lies the crux of the debate on legitimacy of theatrical performance between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century antitheatricalists and theatre practitioners:

The real difference between the antitheatricalists and the dramatists of early modern England, I suggest, lies not in their religious orientations, as has often been assumed, but rather in how they interpret the iconoclastic agenda of the reformed religion. Whereas the antitheatricalists conclude that all forms of theater are polluted and should be forbidden, the dramatists seek to reform the stage, developing rhetorical strategies that disrupt older modes of sight and producing plays that conform to Protestant theories of art and representation. Even as they display discredited forms of

²⁵⁵ Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*, 130.

theatricality and spectacle, exposing them as fraudulent and illusory, they also use the stage to advance new – reformed – modes of seeing and interpreting.²⁵⁶

Within Diehl's Protestant aesthetic the playgoer is asked to experience 'new' and 'reformed' 'modes of seeing and interpreting'.²⁵⁷ The plays themselves thus engage playgoers in a debate on the politics of pleasure and, recalling Freudian thought, render the aesthetic, or supplementary, central to the experience of human existence.²⁵⁸ Stanley Corngold suggests that a 'felt tension of reason and imagination, logic and rhetoric, argument and performance' – a tension that the discussion above suggests was present in the collision between early modern secular theatre and the Protestant aesthetic – denotes 'complex pleasure'.²⁵⁹ This complex pleasure can, suggests Corngold, also be understood as 'new forms of feeling'.²⁶⁰ I would like to close this discussion on interaction between playgoing and the Protestant aesthetic with this idea of art's exploration into and expansion of pleasure's forms and boundaries, and carry this idea into the discussions I offer on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Macbeth*.

This chapter has offered an overview that introduces the central proposition of the thesis, and

²⁵⁶ Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*, 66.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ For a discussion on the Freudian context here see Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 262-65.

²⁵⁹ Stanley Corngold, *Complex Pleasure: Forms of Feeling in German Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), xiv.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., xiii

discussions on the defining of pleasure, the critical contexts relevant to the study, and the historical contexts that support and reflect the argument made. As explained above, this thesis proposes that identifiable within the plays of Shakespeare is an ongoing rethinking of pleasure that can be understood as a response to the social, cultural, political, and religious changes that marked the onset of modernity. This response, it is suggested, takes the form of: a) the foregrounding of pleasure as a central philosophical concern; and, b) an exploitation of the possibilities offered by the mid-sixteenth century birth of a marginal, professional theatre to explore and expand pleasure's forms and boundaries. Shakespearean theatre is defined, then, as engaging with an early modern debate about pleasure as it seeks to broaden the fields of thought through which pleasure is fathomed, and expand the dramatic range of the early modern stage.

Critical focus on this rethinking, it is argued, will enable new insights about the plays to develop and new understandings about the ambition of Shakespeare's theatre to emerge.

Working from the belief that the post-1980s new historicist focus on power has resulted in: a) a failure to satisfactorily address the concept of pleasure; and, b) a reductive backgrounding of investigation into the realm of the aesthetic it has been proposed that the critical approach to pleasure must employ a methodology that enables engagement with pleasure's historical contingency and its quality of timelessness. Thus, both historicist and formalist approaches will be employed throughout the play discussions. A related and important element of critical

approach that has been discussed is the need to find a way to resist the totalising interpretations of early modern theatre that generate from a focus on Foucauldian power. Such readings tend to reduce pleasure to a category of human experience that exists merely in power's service. The ability of pleasure to resist totalisation has been identified and it has been proposed that prioritising focus on pleasure over focus on power – or considering pleasure at a distance from the concept of power will lead to new insights into Shakespeare. It has been proposed that the contribution that this thesis makes to the critical debate on early modern pleasure is found in the identification of a Shakespearean exploration and expansion of pleasure's forms and boundaries that speaks of a theatre breaking away from the old world of fixed role and managing the opportunities and anxieties associated with the modern 'unfettered subjectivity'.²⁶¹

Discussions have been offered on the birth and status of early modern London's professional theatre, the debate between the antitheatricalists and the defenders of the theatre, and the Protestant aesthetic so as to illustrate the centrality of pleasure to the cultural moment and provide historical context for the play discussions that follow. Throughout these discussions the cultural moment has been defined as carrying an instability – a tendency towards change and/or growth – that fuels an expansive approach to pleasure.

²⁶¹ Grady, "Falstaff," 612.

It is hoped that communicated throughout the play discussions that follow are: a) a sense of Shakespeare being *about* pleasure; and, b) a sense of early modern theatre demanding that the playgoer engage with the concept of pleasure whilst also taking pleasure in the play.

Chapter 2

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Pleasure, Virtue, and Imagination

The natural law is said to be reason, insofar as it is a natural power of the soul by which the human person distinguishes between good and evil, choosing good and rejecting evil.¹

And Phant'sie, I tell you, has dreams that have wings,
And dreams that have honey, and dreams that have stings;
Dreames of the maker, and Dreames of the teller,
Dreames of the kitchin, and Dreames of the Cellar.²

The imaginative person has an option on the unknown.³

Abstract: This chapter considers the contribution of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the early modern debate on interaction between pleasure, profit and the imagination. The play is read as being structured to generate an investigation into pleasure and to permit exploration of the potential of the aesthetic realm. The play's structure, it is argued, takes the shape of a reflexive dialogue between a world presenting pleasure found in order and its pursuit (Theseus's Athens), and a companion world – a world that serves as the key focus for this discussion – that is relaxed about the unlawfulness within us, and

¹ Huguccio of Ferrara. Commentary on Gratian's *Decretum* in Odon Lattin, *Le droit naturel chez saint Thomas d'Aquin et ses predecesseurs*, 2nd ed. (Bruges: Beyart, 1931), 109. Huguccio is thought to have been the first to ally reason with natural law. See Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law and Church Law, 1150-1625* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 64-65. Also see Jean Porter, "Does the Natural Law Provide a Universally Valid Morality?," in Cunningham, Lawrence S., ed., *Intractable Disputes about the Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press: 2009), 65.

² Ben Jonson, *The Vision of Delight* (London: 1617), ll. 61-64.

³ Nadia Boulanger in B. Monsaingeon, *Mademoiselle: Conversations with Nadia Boulanger*, trans. R. Marsack (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 110.

comfortable presenting the non-virtuous epiphany as a path to new perceptions (Titania's woods). The reading offered of the world of order, Theseus's Athens, employs Michel Foucault's analysis of the economy of power relating to the policing of sexuality to unpack the imagining of pleasure that Shakespeare offers.⁴ The reading offered of the world beyond Athens engages with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as it posits a Shakespearean rethinking and reshaping of the Horatian profit/pleasure commonplace which takes the shape of an exploration and expansion of pleasure's forms and boundaries.⁵

The first section of the chapter, presenting introductory material, outlines the concepts and areas of thought through which the play will be discussed. These are: a) *Dream*'s re-imagining of the Horatian profit/pleasure commonplace; b) *Dream*'s figuring of pleasure in order and pleasure in the pursuit of pleasure; c) *Dream*'s oppositional structure; and, d) natural law, polytheism, learning, and fantasy. The second section extends the analysis of *Dream*'s presentation of marriage and unpacks the possibility that the play presents a plea for forgiving reassessment of the dissonance between the demands of the law and the drive towards the natural-unlawful within human nature. This, I argue represents a recalibration of the Horatian profit and pleasure commonplace. The third section engages with dream theory in an investigation of 'Bottom's Dream' as an unyoking of the concept of virtue from the concept of pleasure. The chapter closes with a discussion on the moralisation of Ovid and *Dream*'s figuring of fantasy and the aesthetic.

⁴ The key text here is Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*.

⁵ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

Dream's re-imagining of the Horatian profit/pleasure commonplace

When in *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters* Anthony Munday claims that the playwright 'who writeth for reward...neither regardeth virtue, nor truth; but runs unto falshood, because he flattereth for commoditie', he references an intersection of concepts central to the understanding of early modern playhouse pleasure.⁶ Munday's preacherly warning highlights a collision between pleasure and profit within the arena of professional, secular drama – a collision central to the debate between the antitheatricalists and the defenders of the theatre. The antitheatrical claim that the falsehoods projected by and through poetry in a bid to attract and entertain were deleterious to salvation through Christ finds a clear statement of opposition in Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*.⁷ Sidney's defence of poetry is communicated in concentrated form in his citing of the interpretation of the Horatian approach to poetry presented by Persius in *Satires*: 'Omne vafer vitium ridenti tangit amico'.⁸ The 1891 Cassel's National Library edition of Sidney's text offers Dryden's translation of the Latin, and includes translation of the surrounding text to add context:

⁶ Anthony Munday, *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters* (London: 1580), 109v, EEBO-TCP.

⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: 1595). Sydney's *Apologie* is thought to have been written c. 1583.

⁸ Persius, *Satires* (I. 116). Guy Lee and William Barr, *The Satires of Persius: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary*, trans. Guy Lee (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1987). Sir Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy," in *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 229. The translation of 'Omne vafer vitium ridenti tangit amico' offered by Niall Rudd is: 'While his friend is laughing, that rascal Horace lays his finger / on all his faults'. Niall Rudd, trans., *The Satires of Horace and Persius* (London: Penguin, 2005), Kindle.

Unlike in method, with concealed design
 Did crafty Horace his low numbers join;
 And, with a sly insinuating grace
 Laughed at his friend, and looked him in the face:
 Would raise a blush where secret vice he found;
 And tickle, while he gently probed the wound;
 With seeming innocence the crowd beguiled,
 But made the desperate passes while he smiled.⁹

This constitutes a defence of poetic embellishment, or the deceit inherent to the creation of – and engagement with – poetry, on the grounds that the pleasures generated by the artist attract and keep the attention of the reader and, hence, allow the moral instruction that the poetry contains to work. Within this defence runs a plea for acceptance of an expansion of the aesthetic, or the suggestion that the antitheatrical dampening of the ambitions of the aesthetic might serve to restrict the spiritual development of the reader, or spectator. If profit is served by the pleasures of poetry, banning the pleasures puts an end to the profit. Both Sydney and Horace here claim a profitable, virtuous end and define the imagination as a conduit to virtue.¹⁰

⁹ Sir Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poesie and Poems*, ed. Henry Morley (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1891), 65.

¹⁰ I read the shaping and projection of virtue offered by early modern antitheatrical discourse as being something of an amalgamation of the four classic cardinal virtues (temperance, prudence, courage and justice) and the three Augustinian Christian virtues (faith, hope, and love). The variety of antitheatricity in focus here is built upon the belief that poetry and plays pose a threat to virtue.

I see this profit/pleasure context as being rethought and reshaped by *Dream*. The play, I would like to argue, seeks to explore and question the limitations of the meaning of ‘profit’ as evoked within early modern understanding of the Horatian commonplace. This, in turn, permits an exploration and expansion of pleasure’s forms and boundaries. I am proposing that *Dream* reaches toward a positive imagining of a type of profit – produced out of pleasure – that does not fit into the model presented by Horace, Munday, and Sidney. To clarify, in the early modern debate on pleasure’s relationship to profit, the definition and use of profit is agreed upon by all. It might be described as moral improvement as in Thomas Nashe’s suggestion that theatre provides accessible models of appropriate human behaviour, or it might take a more spiritual turn as in George Herbert’s teaching of Protestant simplicity in his poem “Divinity”.¹¹ Profit in *Dream*, however, focuses upon epiphanies that are disconnected from the Protestant moral frameworks supported by, amongst others, Nashe and Herbert. This will be discussed in greater detail below in regard to *Dream*’s evocation of polytheism and learning.

***Dream*’s figuring of pleasure in order and pleasure in the pursuit of pleasure**

The presentation of pleasure found in order and its pursuit is foregrounded in the play’s opening scene. An air of the pending nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta (our nuptial hour / Draws on

¹¹ Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse*, 26r-26v (discussed on pp. 94-96 of this thesis). George Herbert, “Divinity” (discussed on pp. 99-101 of this thesis).

apace) – and, shortly thereafter, of Lysander, Hermia, Demetrius and Helena – serves as the backdrop to Theseus’s management of Egeus’s legal claim to the right to choose a husband for his daughter, Hermia.¹² The orderedness of Athens, and the socio-cultural constructs in place to protect and support this orderedness (here marriage and the Athenian legal system) are, thus, positioned at the centre of the scene. Egeus’s demand smacks of levels of cold resolution and inflexibility that must be managed by his superior, the Duke: ‘I beg the ancient privilege of Athens: / As she is mine, I may dispose of her, / Which shall be either to this gentleman, [Demetrius], / Or to her death, according to our law / Immediately provided in that case’ (I.i.41-45). The Duke does not defy the legal system of Athens, but his response to Egeus’s request smacks of a tendency towards a humanising of the legal arena. He offers Hermia the opportunity to ‘take time to pause’ (I.i.83), thus creating a window of opportunity to ‘question...desires’ and ‘examine...blood’ (I.i.66-67). The Duke’s words carry the sense that through fusing the humane with the legal a suitably harmonious solution might be reached. This sense is strengthened by the attention he extends to Demetrius and Egeus. Having advised Hermia as to how to manage her plight, he then turns to the two men who have made a claim against her: ‘But, Demetrius, come, / And come, Egeus; you shall go with me: / I have some private schooling for you both’ (I.i.114-16). My suggestion here is that Egeus and Theseus

¹² I.i.1-2. The edition of the play used here and throughout is William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

perform variations within the same arena of pleasure. They both take pleasure in the power contingent to control of sexuality – albeit presented at different political levels – and, thus, present the taking of pleasure in order, and the pursuit of order. The initial phases of what Claire Colebrook succinctly describes as the ‘resolution and harmonisation of temporary, playful and illusory disruptions to social order’ are perceptible within this scene.¹³ The focus on marriage as resolution, or conclusion, and the employment of legality toned to the humane in the search for solution signal comedy’s drive towards contentment in restoration of foundational order. The suggestion here is that pleasure in the pursuit of order registers as a defining aspect of Theseus’s Athens, finding its expression in the drive towards marriage, and recourse to policing and legality.

This presentation of order and humane rationality within Shakespearean theatre is much commented upon. Relevant studies include those offered by Paul A. Olson and Arthur O. Lovejoy.¹⁴ Olson, expressing a form of conservatism now unfashionable, reads Theseus’s marriage to Hippolyta as a victory of reason over passion.¹⁵ Lovejoy, in his seminal work, *The*

¹³ Claire Colebrook, *Gender* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 29.

¹⁴ Paul A. Olson, “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage,” *ELH* (1957). Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), xxiv. Claire Colebrook also identifies these studies as offering useful insights into the status of order and rationality in the Athens of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. See Colebrook, *Gender*, 29.

¹⁵ Olson, “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage,” 99.

Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea illustrates the force of the notion ‘that the scheme of things is an intelligible and rational one’ and proposes that this reading of the human experience ‘provided the chief basis for most of the more serious attempts to solve the problem of evil’.¹⁶ Thus order is seen as a solution to ‘the problem of evil’ and, hence, a bringer of peace and contentment. As this ordered, rational world, and the correlating of pleasure with restoration to order inherent to it, is a familiar and much commented upon element within the play’s critical history, I refer to it here only briefly so as to enable a registering of the contrastive nature of the definition of pleasure presented by the world of the woods beyond the city limits.

Relevant here, and providing a useful link from this focus on pleasure taken in order and its pursuit to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’s presentation of a world relaxed about the unlawfulness within us, is a discussion offered by Michel Foucault on the economy of power relating to the post eighteenth-century policing of sexuality.¹⁷ In view is the relationship between pleasure found in the power of control over sexuality, and pleasure found in luxuriating in what the ordered world deems rejection of, or disrespect for, this policing,

¹⁶ Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, xxiv.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 45.

controlling power. Foucault's suggestion is that the excursions into the policing of human sexuality:

may have the over-all and apparent objective of saying no to all wayward or unproductive sexualities, but the fact is that they function as mechanisms with a double impetus: pleasure and power. The pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it. The power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing, or resisting.¹⁸

Foucault's text warrants close unpacking. The definitions of 'the pleasure that comes of exercising a power' and 'the pleasure that kindles at having to evade' carry within them, unmentioned as it is, intimations of virtue's absence in the evaluation of pleasure.¹⁹ Foucault's yoking of pleasure to the verbs 'questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light' ties the task of policing the erotic to human qualities that find no place in the list of four classic cardinal virtues (temperance, prudence, courage and justice) and the three Augustinian Christian virtues (faith, hope, and love).²⁰ Likewise, a stance of defiance to this policing is deemed unvirtuous. The verbs that Foucault employs to illustrate the actions of the evaders of order are 'show off', 'scandalize', and 'resist'.²¹ Presented here, then, is a troubled questioning of pleasure. A suggestion held within Foucault's text is that virtue, pleasure, and

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

erotic freedom cannot cohabit in a society that polices ‘all wayward or unproductive sexualities’.²²

My main focus in this chapter is the attempt, made by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to release the erotic from virtue's grasp. I wish to examine *Dream*'s relaxedness about the unlawfulness that is bedfellow to the human chaos of sexuality.²³ The world outside Theseus's city of Athens presents itself, it will be argued, as an environment in which this form of unlawfulness unites with the aesthetic in an approach to higher truthfulness. Offered are pleasures, and an aesthetic, that challenge the foundational order that is fled from – and recalibrate the pleasure/virtue equation. In *Dream* the law presents its solutions to the problem of the chaos of sexuality (and, as discussed above through reference to a Foucauldian illustration of pleasure taken in power, this in itself creates a pleasure problematic), whilst the unlawful within, a force that seeks to explore pleasure's potentialities when unyoked from the concept of virtue, drives towards an

²² Ibid.

²³ David Wiles suggests that ‘*A Midsummer Night's Dream* displays a complete lack of concern with the process of courtship. The rites of courtship – a first encounter in a romantic environment, the interchanging of love tokens, the composing of love verses – are all completed before the action of the play begins. The play is concerned with the actual physical union of male and female.’ David Wiles, “*A Midsummer Night's Dream* Urges Brides to the Wedding Bed,” in *Sexuality in William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream,"* ed. Gary Wiener (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2014), 54. Stanley Wells disagrees: ‘In no other play by Shakespeare is the process of courtship leading to marriage so central a concern’. Stanley Wells, “Translations in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,” in *Translating Life: Studies in Transpositional Aesthetics*, eds. Shirley Chew and Alistair Stead (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 15.

unsanctioned, higher truthfulness – or non-virtuous epiphany. To summarise, pleasure in order and pleasure in chaos are performed alongside each other in a reflexive dialogue as the relationship between pleasure and virtue is interrogated and recalibrated.

***Dream's* aesthetic, natural law, polytheism, and learning**

The suggestion that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents the playgoer with a reflexive dialogue between numerous opposing components has become something of a critical commonplace.²⁴ Highlighted oppositions include Athens with the wood, waking hours with dreams, and the real world with the aesthetic realm of theatre.²⁵ When these concrete

²⁴ For a detailed review of critical reaction to *Dream*, stretching from 1662 to 1996, see Dorothea Kehler "A *Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Bibliographic Survey of the Criticism," in Dorothea Kehler, ed., *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 3-83. George A. Bonnard proposes a less tidy structure to the play: 'Shakespeare loved to bring together in the same play a variety of diverse and even incongruous elements. Of none of his plays is this truer than of *Midsummer-Night's Dream*. It would be difficult to imagine a more fantastic combination of heterogeneous elements drawn from all kinds of sources.' George A. Bonnard, "Shakespeare's Purpose in *Midsummer Night's Dream*," in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 92 (1956), 268. In "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Illustrated Editions" Stuart Sillars concurs as he highlights the difficulty that the complex amalgam of components that constitute *Dream* presented to Victorian illustrators: 'In a play with as much diversity of setting as the *Dream*, the intertwined trinity of plot and character, and the complex variations of mood and tone, to say nothing of the comic yet intellectually teasing nature of the final interlude, the task of illustrator and designer, the unnamed figure responsible for bringing together word and image, was much increased.' Sillars, "*Dream* in Illustrated Editions," *Shakespeare Survey*, 65 (2012): 93.

²⁵ The tendency of critical response to *Dream* to focus on the interplay between themes or concepts placed in juxtaposition is highlighted by David Schalkwyk: 'It is difficult to read criticism of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (indeed of the whole Shakespeare canon) without encountering again and again the epistemological dichotomies "appearance and reality", "truth and illusion", "emotion and reason". These are almost invariably moral divisions. David Schalkwyk, "The Role of Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 66 (May, 1986): 51.

oppositions are translated into concepts (i.e. Athens, waking hours, and the real world can be read as the civilised, the rational, and security in order; the woods, dreams, and theatre can be read as wild/mad, irrational, and order-resistant) it becomes apparent that value judgements according to the tenets of natural law (also coined by the term ‘right reason’ in early modern England) are prominent and debated as the play runs its course. Natural law is a concept central to the pleasure/virtue dynamic and, therefore, deeply relevant to this discussion. Bottom notably questions the standing of natural law when he observes that the erotic is beyond reason’s control.²⁶ When Titania speaks of her love for him, Bottom observes that ‘reason and love keep little company together nowadays’ (III.i.139-40). I read Bottom’s insight as constituting an illustration of the play’s interrogation of a problem with pleasure in microcosm and propose that *Dream* is asking how natural law and the naturalness of human erotic life might be yoked. Central to this study is the role of the aesthetic in managing and understanding this yoking.²⁷ This is an important context that, I will argue, drives towards recognition of the aesthetic’s claim to existence. This is discussed in greater detail below in relation to Bottom’s aesthetic response to his experiences with Titania.

²⁶ As John A. Allen explains, ‘Critics are generally agreed that Bottom as ass is the epitome of common sense’. John A. Allen, “Bottom and Titania,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* v. 18, no. 2 (Spring 1967): 117.

²⁷ To clarify, here I take a very different approach to the aesthetic than that adopted by Sidney Homan in *When the Theater Turns to Itself: The Aesthetic Metaphor in Shakespeare* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981). Homan reads aesthetic metaphors presented within Shakespeare’s theatre to gain insights into the plays. In this study of *Dream* I attempt to locate a reason or purpose for the very existence of the aesthetic.

It is useful here to consider how natural law is shaped and perceived. Cicero offers an early, useful, and much cited definition:

True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrongdoing by its prohibitions...It is a sin to try to alter this law, nor is it allowable to repeal any part of it, and it is impossible to abolish it entirely. We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or people, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and at all times, and there will be one master and ruler, that is God, over us all, for he is the author of this law, its promulgator and its enforcing judge. Whoever is disobedient is fleeing from himself and denying his human nature, and by reason of this very fact he will suffer the worst punishment.²⁸

As implicit in Cicero's definition, foundational to natural law is theorisation of pleasure as being categorizable according to its moral agency – or lack thereof; moralists would suggest that for pleasure to be defensible it must ally itself with some form of value sanctioned by natural law, whilst hedonists would suggest that pleasure represents value itself.²⁹ I would like to argue that areas within human nature referenced as lawful or nurturing according to the

²⁸ Cicero, *The Republic*, XXII. Cicero, *On The Republic, On The Laws*, trans. C. W. Keyes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 211. Cited by R. S. White in *Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 26. Richard A. Horsley assesses Ernst Troeltsch's suggestion that 'Christian Natural Law is the acceptance and reinterpretation according to Christian and ecclesiastical principles of Stoic Natural Law' and proposes that theorisations of natural law in Cicero and Philo are dependent upon reinterpretations of Stoic ethics offered by Antiochus of Ascalon. Richard A. Horsley, "The Law of Nature in Philo and Cicero," *The Harvard Theological Review*, 71, no.1 (Jan-Apr, 1978): 35. See Ernst Troeltsch, 'Naturrecht, christliches,' [Natural Law, Christian], *RGG 4* (1st ed.; 1913) 697-704 and *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (2 vols.; New York: Harper, 1960) 1.142-62.

²⁹ See Steven Connor, "Aesthetics, Pleasure and Value."

concept of natural law as outlined by Cicero are sedimented through *Dream* in juxtaposition to areas within human nature referenced as unlawful or threatening; the lawful marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta is, for example, presented alongside the relaxed unlawfulness that defines the extraordinary interaction between Bottom as ass and Titania. *Dream*, thus, presents pleasure as a problematic as in the world of the play it attaches itself to both the lawful and the unlawful on the journey to resolution, salvation or higher truthfulness.³⁰ To reiterate, while western thought – governed by theorisations of natural law – displays a tendency to yoke pleasure to virtue, *Dream* daringly threatens to dissolve this mutuality.³¹ (As discussed later in this chapter, the tendency for poets to claim the status of ‘first lawmakers’ directly aligns poetry with support for natural law.³² *Dream* I claim is more interested in investigating the concept of natural law than aligning theatre with it.)

The play’s performance of an unyoking of pleasure from the concept of virtue that I posit in the

³⁰ Theorisation of pleasure’s relationship with virtue is a central challenge to the arena of western thought. The problem is outlined by George Rudebusch in his summary of relevant content in the early dialogues of Plato: ‘In the *Protagoras*, Socrates defends the claim that pleasure is the only good. But in the *Apology* and elsewhere Socrates unquestionably believes that virtue is a good above all others. Socrates cannot, it seems, have it both ways. Either virtue, as in the *Apology*, or pleasure, as in the *Protagoras*, may be the supreme good—but not both.’ George Rudebusch, *Socrates, Pleasure and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

³¹ A relevant resonance here is found in the uneasy, threatened partnership between pleasure and virtue evoked by the title of one of Ben Jonson’s most well-known masques: *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (London: 1618). Jonson’s masque speaks of tension in that both title and festive performance context suggest that a separation of pleasure and virtue is a traumatic possibility.

³² George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Edward Arber (London: Alex Murray & Son, 1869), 23.

discussion that follows drives towards an early modern theorisation of pleasure that is less limited and less limiting than that bound by attendance to the binary (good/bad) structuring of morality inherent to Christianity's understanding of natural law. By presenting a magical wood that is home to a variety of powerful spirits and vast psychological flexibility *Dream*, I argue, adverts and explores the potentialities of the pagan polytheistic.³³ In doing so, the play translates the shape of acceptable pleasure away from that prescribed by the mould of natural law – at least in its Thomist-Christian, monotheistic reading – and towards a variousness demanded by the vast scope of human natures, and irreconcilabilities within these natures.³⁴ Here Wystan Hugh Auden's highlighting of polytheism's attachment to learning is useful. Auden explains that 'elaborate polytheism enables one to learn certain laws of nature that you can change'.³⁵ His point is that Puck and the magical creatures of the wood represent forces that Bottom and the four lovers cannot control. Such forces might be falling in love, or having someone fall in love with you. The learning is found in the process of managing and experiencing when such forces strike. On entering the woods the four lovers and Bottom all experience testing transformations that lead to new perceptions. Harold Bloom is expressing

³³ Patrick O'Dougherty suggests that Puck may be a symbol of polytheism. See Patrick O'Dougherty, *Shaking Up Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Dreamwork and Complexity* (Minneapolis: The Hellenist America Institute Publishing Company, 1994), 80.

³⁴ For an introduction to the Thomist-Christian reading of natural law see Jean Porter, *Nature As Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 1-4.

³⁵ Wystan Hugh Auden, *Lectures on Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 56.

this same polytheistic learning context when he suggests that *Dream*'s 'four lovers...enter ...Alice's world in *Through the Looking Glass*', and this initiates an era of conquest of themselves or others.'³⁶ The polytheistic universe, then, presents a broad palate of possible events and outcomes that is recognised as constituting a learning environment.³⁷ There is a sense in which this encourages a wide range of growth and a wide range of acceptance. The result is a broadening of the fields of thought through which pleasure can be fathomed.

To clarify, my suggestion is not that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is implicitly anarchic, but rather that it speaks to a numinosity within aspects of human nature which are stigmatised by Thomist Christian thought. (I define 'Bottom's Dream' as unlawful, but reaching towards higher truthfulness.) The play thus becomes a defence of poesy and the imagination – but this defence does not take recourse to Christian moral edification.³⁸ On offer to the engaged playgoer is a self-reflexive theatrical experiment in the unhinging of pleasure from virtue.

³⁶ Harold Bloom, *William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 119.

³⁷ Fantasy theory is relevant here. For a full discussion see Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).

³⁸ In assessing Shakespeare's exposition of 'controlled imagination in art' in *Dream*, Dent proposes that 'in offering a defense for its own existence the play simultaneously offers us Shakespeare's closest approximation to a "Defense of Dramatic Poesy" in general. In some measure, surely, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is such a defense, although one that expresses its view by indirection and without the emphasis upon strictly moral edification one commonly finds in more formal defenses. More legitimately than Greene, Shakespeare might well have appended to his play: *Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci.*' R. W. Dent, "Imagination in A Midsummer Night's Dream," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15, no. 2 (Spring, 1964): 129.

Before The Wood: Lawful Marriage v. Unlawful Nature

The play opens with marriage – or, more precisely, a probing exposition of the tendency of marriage to appropriate conceptions of pleasure and shape them to its own virtuous designs.³⁹

Within the first eight lines of *Dream* the natural-unlawful within man is defined as being threatened with constraint and containment by the legal framework and social mores attendant to marital tradition. This is to suggest that the sexual frustration displayed by Theseus is caused by the customs and regulations that shape marriage. As sex is appropriated, translated, and rendered lawful by matrimonial constructs Theseus cannot sleep with Hippolyta until legally wed. One result of this, as displayed by Theseus, is a lot of thinking about sex. Pleasure is, if you will, pushed into the realm of fantasy. Theseus's words display the yearnings of a naturally

³⁹ In *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), Jonathan Goldberg suggests that 'marriage is the social institution whose regulatory functions ramify everywhere'. Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 19. Goldberg also suggests that the assigning of 'men and women to stabilized and opposing positions' is 'the work that marriage as an institution is supposed to do'. Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 41. Goldberg's argument is rooted in Foucault's insights into the conflict between each human individual's relationship with his/her body and mass regulation. Foucault's discussion on the relationship between sodomy and marriage highlights the regulatory roots of marriage politics: 'It would...be easy to find in the Christian doctrine of the flesh closely related themes of anxiety: the involuntary violence of the act, its kinship with evil, and its place in the play of life and death. But in the irrepressible force of desire and the sexual act, Saint Augustine was to see one of the main stigmata of the Fall (that involuntary movement reproduced in the human body man's rebellion against God); the Christian pastoral ministry was to set the rules of economy, on a precise calendar and according to a detailed morphology of acts; and the doctrine of marriage was to give the procreative finality the dual role of ensuring the survival or even the proliferation of God's people, and of making it possible for individuals to avoid pledging their souls to eternal death through indulgence in that activity. In short, this was a juridico-moral codification of acts, moments, and intentions that legitimated an activity that was of itself a bearer of negative values; and it inscribed it in the dual order of the ecclesiastical institution and the matrimonial institution.' Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality*, v. 2, trans. Robert Hurley, (London: Penguin, 1984), 138.

unlawful creature bound by socio-political regulation:

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
 Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
 Another moon; but O, methinks, how slow
 This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,
 Like to a stepdame or a dowager
 Long withering out a young man's revenue.

(I.i.1-6)

The duke's desires are held in check by the dictates of legal process (here framed in terms of contractual adherence to time and legal access to 'revenue').⁴⁰ The requirement on him to follow regulatory nuptial tradition – in this instance to painstakingly delay conjugal pleasure for the four long days that stand between him and the activation of his marriage contract – signifies law's yoking of pleasure to virtue: Theseus must subjugate desire to conformity to moralising forces. These legalities of marriage are symptomatic of societal adherence to rules that find their grounding in the concept of natural law. Within the erotic anticipation of Theseus's speech lies the first evocation of one of the play's guiding themes – the relationship between the unlawful within human nature and the constructs designed to contain it. Catherine Bates clarifies:

Marriage – the endpoint to which courtship stories inevitably as if magnetically tend – is literary

⁴⁰ For a discussion on the legal background of the dowager's withholding and spending of the 'young man's revenue' and its connotations with the resistance of Athenian law to abrogation see Peter C. Herman, "Equity and the Problem of Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Or, the Ancient Constitution in Ancient Athens," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 4. no., 1 (Winter, 2014): 9-10.

shorthand for the control of human sexuality by law. In its natural state human sexuality might look something like the world depicted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: a riot of rape, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, sex change, hermaphroditism, species pollution, and sexual perversion of every kind. In Ovid's text men have sex with gods, animals, objects, each other, and themselves – as indeed do women – and more than one character rejects the most primal taboos as artificial constraints upon sexual expression from which the animals are blissfully exempt. Yet it is such rules – the incest taboo, laws against consanguinity, the advisability of marriage outside the tribe, the establishment of polygamy or monogamy, and so forth – which wrestle to control this otherwise chaotic sexuality and bring it into some semblance of order.⁴¹

Dream, I argue, questions compatibility between the institution of marriage and natural sexual union. The comedic frustrations of a Theseus desperately wanting to get Hippolyta in the sack carry with them the pleading cry for release and acceptance of the unlawful within his nature. Might the play be opening with a playful castigation of virtue's tyrannical insistence that the chaos of sexual pleasure be housed within the order of marriage?⁴² Might *Dream* be investigating possibilities for the erotic that stand in opposition to the directing of sexuality towards marriage and family that is endorsed by *The Faerie Queene*?⁴³ This would suggest endorsement of the profit/pleasure Horatian commonplace, but in a register that is relaxed about

⁴¹ Catherine Bates, "Love and Courtship," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 104.

⁴² I am not overlooking the traditional housing of the erotic within the comedic drive towards marriage that the play presents. I am suggesting that alongside presentation of this drive other more relaxed, less lawful structures for evaluation of erotic pleasure are offered. A vast amount of literary criticism defines marriage as being central to Shakespearean comedy. Leo Salingar, for example, reads Shakespeare's comedies as being 'essentially celebrations of marriage, of the approach to marriage, which he presents in a social as well as a personal aspect'. Leo Salingar, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 17.

⁴³ The 'purposeful direction...expressed in *The Faerie Queene* as a whole by the idea of the quest – is for sexuality found in the power of love to inspire virtuous action and ultimately, with the satisfaction of marriage, in the generation of offspring,' Greenblatt, *Self-fashioning*, 176.

unlawfulness.

The plea of the unlawful for release from the social structures that give shape to the understanding of virtue and house the chaos of sexuality can be heard behind and within the commands and directions presented by the marriage manuals that were in common use in early modern London. Mark Breitenberg explains that this period in history bore witness to ‘an abundance of marriage manuals, practical handbooks describing the duties and responsibilities of husbands and wives...in response to a growing readership increasingly interested in such matters’.⁴⁴ Breitenberg then suggests that ‘the prevalence of such texts is undoubtedly due in part to the growth in literacy among men and women, but their emergence in a period that was re-negotiating its understanding of the roles of men and women in the family also suggests a growing anxiety about the potential for disorder’.⁴⁵ Anxiety and disorder are symptomatic of incompatibility between the pleasure-focused will and the legal and social codes that restrain it. The historically-specific disorder caused by the renegotiation of family member roles within early modern marriage that Breitenberg highlights is related to – and accompanied by – the universal disorder caused by conflict between sexual desire and sanctioned sexual behaviour. This conflict is evident in the two distinct and oppositional voices produced within the

⁴⁴ Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

following extract from the letters of Jerome and subsequently employed by the Spanish

humanist Juan Luis Vives in *The Education of a Christian Woman*:

I wish to remove from young men and young women the incentives to sensual pleasure. Neither the fires of Etna nor the island of Vulcan, nor Vesuvius nor Olympus seethe with such fires as the marrow of youth.⁴⁶

The first voice is that of a moralist calling for a psychic castration of the young via control of imaginative response to sexual stimuli. The second voice – the voice that motivates this call to extinguish the incendiary sexuality of youth – is the scream of the lusting, excitable young as

⁴⁶ Jerome *Letters* 54. 8-9 in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 14 vols., 2d ser. (1880), 6: 105. cited by Juan Luis Vives in *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 89. A related context here is found in Francis Petrarch's *Petrarch's Secret*. As in the extract from Jerome's *Letters*, presented is a collision between Christian faith and a liberal early modern humanism. In *Petrarch's Secret* Petrarch interrogates his own moral well-being by placing himself under the scrutiny of St. Augustine. One source of Plutarch's unhappiness is identified as being his desire for Laura. St. Augustine condemns Plutarch for his inability to release himself from – or manage – desires associated with the temporal world:

S. Augustine. Well, has the sin of lust never touched you with its flames?

Petrarch. Yes, indeed, at times so fiercely us to make me mourn sorely that I was not born without feelings. I would sooner have been a senseless stone than be tormented by so many stings of the flesh.

S. Augustine. Ah, there is that which turns you most aside from the thought of things divine. For what does the doctrine of the heavenly Plato show but that the soul must separate itself far from the passion of the flesh and tread down its imaginings before it can rise pure and free to the contemplation of the mystery of the Divine; for otherwise the thought of its mortality will make it cling to those seducing charms. You know what I mean, and you have learned this truth in Plato's writings, to the study of which you said not long ago you had given yourself up with ardour.

See Francis Petrarch, *Petrarch's Secret or the Soul's Conflict with Passion*, trans. William H. Draper (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911), 52.

they demand an unhinging of the concept of pleasure from the concept of virtue.⁴⁷ Here we have an example of the natural-unlawful causing anxiety in response to a constraining morality.⁴⁸ *Dream* opens with this tension as it explicates Theseus's yearning for Hippolyta and, shortly thereafter, Hermia's refusal to accept her father's legally-sanctioned demand that she take Demetrius not Lysander (her lover) as a husband. A causal relationship between subjugation to the lawful-rational and a heightening in the potency of Eros is signalled throughout: the guarding of – and encouragement of – the moral renders virtue an enemy unto

⁴⁷ Resonant here is the role of the love philtre in *Dream*. The drugging of the eyes absolves the lover from responsibility to virtue as control of the passions has been reasonably lost/stolen by the magic at work. Succumbing to the drug signals, thus, a schism in the pleasure/virtue symbiosis. In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory offers a fifteenth-century telling of the Tristan story in which a similar succumbing to a love philtre is staged. Sir Thomas Malory, *Le morte darthur* (London: Caxton?), EEBO-TCP. Whilst, as in *Dream*, the drugged lover is absolved of moral blame for post-effect behaviour, unlike the situation in *Dream* the attendant rapture carries associations with the drive towards death. Malory's text was published in 1485. Also resonant here is the impact of the drive of Christian virtue on sexual desire communicated by *Sonnet 129*. Here Shakespeare describes a hatred of the drive towards the erotic that communicates respect for virtue despite its repressiveness: 'Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action; and till action, lust / Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame, / Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust; / Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight; / Past reason hunted, and no sooner had, / Past reason hated as a swallowed bait, / On purpose laid to make the taker mad; / Mad in pursuit, and in possession so, / Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme; / A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe; / Before, a joy proposed; behind a dream.' See *Sonnet 129* in *Shakespeare: Complete Works*, eds. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 1-12.

⁴⁸ Anachronistic thought can be misleading here. Pre-Freud restraint tended to be applauded. Post-Freud restraint is applauded but deemed a potential cause of later trauma. This is to say that the notion that keeping one's emotions bottled up might lead to later damage/tragedy was not prevalent in early modern England. I should temper this comment with mention of green-sickness. This was a disease whose cause was thought to be the unfulfilled desires of lovesick virgins. Cures involved a form of purging through, for example, bloodletting, having sex, or confession. For a full discussion see Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

itself. This is exemplified in Athenian law's pushing of Hermia into the wood.⁴⁹ My key suggestion here is that Shakespeare is staging a context in which the relationship between pleasure and virtue is simply not working.

Theseus's tension as he waits for marriage is, then, the tension of a sexually frustrated man struggling to keep pleasure and virtue reconciled. (His sexual history as serial rapist suggests that it is a struggle he is not guaranteed to win.)⁵⁰ The sense of incongruence between the lawful order of marriage and the unlawful chaos of human sexuality is clear. A second evocation of incongruence is found in the presentation of Theseus and Hippolyta as discordant figures standing on the boundaries of the concord of marriage. The Athenian, defined by his employment of legalese and his focus on reason and rationality, is to unite with the archetypal wild, passionate Amazon: the civilised is to join with the barbaric; the rational with the emotional. The man who defines the lovers' story of their night in the forest as 'airy nothing' (V.i.16) is to join the woman who finds 'something of great constancy' (V.i.26) in the selfsame

⁴⁹ Ning Wang posits the possibility of 'an alternative version of modernity, namely, Eros-modernity'. See Ning Wang, "Logos-modernity, Eros-modernity, and leisure," *Leisure Studies*, v. 15, issue 2, (1996), 121. Wang suggests that this 'Eros-version of modernity relates to the issue of how...irrational and non-rational factors (Eros) have been licensed to approved domains in order that they can be released and gratified'. See Wang, "Logos-modernity," 121. There are, of course, clear resonances with *Dream*, festival theory and carnival theory here. See theorisation of saturnalian ritual in C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 6-10, 206-9, and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 4-16.

⁵⁰ Theseus's sexual history is evoked by Oberon during his initial argument with Titania: 'How canst thou thus for shame, Titania, / Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, / Knowing I know thy love to Theseus? / Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night / From Perigouna, whom he ravished? / And make him with fair Aegles break his faith, / With Ariadne, and Antiopa?' (II.i.74-80).

episode.

Embedded within the play – and evoked by performance of discordance – is the suggestion that legal marriage between creatures carrying such disparate ideologies is ill-judged.⁵¹ The viability of this marital union is also challenged by the classical resonances that the Athenian/Amazonian couple carry into the world of *Dream*. They are a kind of sexually voracious, middle-aged Romeo and Juliet whose ‘death-mark’d love’ (*Romeo and Juliet*, Prologue, 9) is to lead to the violent killing of their ‘ill-starr’d son’ (Racine, *Phaedra*, 1546).⁵² This son, Hippolytus, is to suffer a tragic, violent death (‘his body one whole wound’ (*Phaedra*, 1550) at, albeit indirectly, his father’s hands.⁵³ Importantly – and this will be returned to later in reference to significances in the naming of Theseus as the designated audience member for ‘Bottom’s Dream’, Theseus’s failure in his search for truth, a failure of imagination, is a

⁵¹ The rather bleak reading of the field of meaning attached to the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta can be usefully compared to the discussion on ‘Love’s mind’ offered by Helena at the close of act 1, scene 1 (I.i.226-51). Presented here is an unpacking of the eros that marriage is asked to contain. Thus, the container (marriage) is figured in the Theseus/Hippolyta union, whilst the contained (eros) is interrogated by Helena. Helena defines eros as irrational, fickle, resistant to sensory information and, directed by the lover’s rudderless imagination, ultimately lawless.

⁵² William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1998), 1007-40. Jean Racine, *Iphigenia, Phaedra and Athaliah*, trans. John Cairncross (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

⁵³ I quote from Racine’s seventeenth-century text. The source for both Racine and Shakespeare would have been Euripides’s *Hippolytus* (428 B.C.E.). See Euripides, *Hippolytus*, trans. Ben Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). It should be noted that suggesting that Shakespeare read Euripides is controversial. In *Shakespeare’s Names*, Laura Maguire offers arguments to suggest that Shakespeare clearly ‘knew Greek drama’. See Laura Maguire, *Shakespeare’s Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 98-104.

causative agent in his son's death:⁵⁴

O God! lighten the darkness of my mind.
Show me the truth I am searching for.⁵⁵

(1411-2)

There is, then, in *Dream*'s presentation of the union of Theseus and Hippolyta an undoing of the idealistic vision of marriage that comic theatre and the comic tradition is understood to drive towards. From its very beginnings the play presents a degree of disdain for unions borne of power (consider Theseus as oppressor and Egeus as controlling patriarch), rather than pleasure. It is as if one thread of the intellectual terrain of the play is telling the totalising force of power to leave pleasure alone.⁵⁶

As the play continues, discord is further evoked in Hippolyta's response to Theseus's frustrated yearning for marriage. Her opening speech is a statement of opposition to her husband-to-be:

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night,
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
Now bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

⁵⁴ There are numerous instances of educative artistic performances for the benefit of a named member of the *dramatis personae* in Shakespeare. Prominent examples include the performance of 'a kind of history' in *The Taming of The Shrew* for Christopher Sly (Induction 2, line 135) and the presentation of Hermione as statue to Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* (V.iii.).

⁵⁵ Jean Racine, *Phaedra*.

⁵⁶ The relationship between power as a totalising force and pleasure is discussed on pp. 30-33 of this thesis.

(I.i.7-11)

Hippolyta's suggestion that time will pass quickly, not slowly, smacks of hesitancy in conflict with Theseus's eagerness. This sense of hesitancy is heightened by the Hippolyta's referencing of Diana's 'silver bow' (I.i.9). The bow is famously associated with Cupid and thus speaks of unimpaired love. Here, however, Hippolyta removes the bow from Cupid's grasp and places it in the hands of Diana. This blemishes the ideal that Cupid represents by evoking the idea of a lack of fulfilment in love and marriage. The result is severance between what the play might be expected to convey and what it actually conveys. (As explained above, the teleological drive of the early modern comedy is towards joy and release in the festive union of marriage. Do, however, Theseus and Hippolyta 'agree with sweet consent, / To this dayes merriment'? Is the stage not filled with a dark, troubling disharmony?)⁵⁷ This severance is not restricted to the commonly employed comedic topos of soon-to-be-dissolved disagreement between pre-nuptial bride and groom. The suggestion that time passes slowly for Theseus because he anticipates revelling in licensed pleasure whilst time passes quickly for Hippolyta because Theseus's pleasure is her wretchedness is clear and darkly comical. This is not to propose that Hippolyta is necessarily uncomfortable with the thought of sexual union with Theseus (although she might be, the inductive mirroring that exists between the Theseus/Hippolyta pairing and the

⁵⁷ The quotation is from Spenser's *Epithalamion* (c.1595) (ll. 83-4). For further discussion on the relationship between the festive, comedy and marriage see Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 132-39.

Oberon/Titania pairing suggests otherwise), but rather that Hippolyta is rendered anxious by her soon-to-occur initiation into the world of Athenian control and rationality. The cries of Hippolytus and Phaedra demand the playgoer's attention and speak of the tragedy that might be caused by seeking formulaic legal solutions to formula-denying passion. As signalled by her ability to comprehend 'constancy' where Theseus apprehends 'airy nothing' when they interpret the behaviour of the four lovers on waking after their night in the wood, for Hippolyta entrance into Theseus's civilised world could be seen as a regression and abandonment of a higher understanding, or truthfulness, attainable only when reaching beyond the boundaries of lawfulness.⁵⁸ This idea of finding higher truths beyond lawfulness is, I feel, central to *Dream's* projection of pleasure. This context becomes potent when considered as what Louis Montrose terms as an 'imaginative possibility'.⁵⁹ I am suggesting that Hippolyta's resistance to marriage to Theseus offers playgoers in early modern London access to the notion of a positivity within a high spiritual realm, but attached to unlawfulness. As will be discussed below, once the play reaches Titania's bower, *Dream's* relaxedness about the unlawful will be imparted all the more clearly.

⁵⁸ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV.i.124-85 and V.i.1-27.

⁵⁹ Louis Montrose uses the term 'imaginative possibility' to explain his notion of a culture-forming agency awakened by theatrical representation. Montrose relates this potency to re-presentation of Queen Elizabeth I in *Dream*. His usage of this phrase is suggestive of interpretation of theatre as 'dialectical rather than casual, ideological rather than occasional'. The metatheatrical content of *Dream* itself posits theatre as carrying just such cultural agency. See Louis Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture," *Representations*, 2 (1983): 62.

The initial interaction between Theseus and Hippolyta is followed by Hippolyta's now famous silence (I.i.20-126). Philip McGuire's 1984 assessment of this silence centres upon the politics of pleasure yoked to virtue:

When Theseus says that, having conquered her in battle, he will now make her his wife 'in another key, / With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling', Hippolyta says nothing, and she maintains that silence the rest of the time she is onstage. The defeated Queen of the Amazons becomes a mute observer as the man who 'won' her love by doing her 'injuries' (line 17) rules that a young woman who is one of his subjects must die or live a life cloistered among women if she does not obey her father and enter into a marriage that she does not want.⁶⁰

A key focus of McGuire's analysis is the openness to interpretation in performance that Hippolyta's silence offers. One possible reading is that Hippolyta's silence projects a protest against a stifling and oppressive patriarchal authority.⁶¹ Hippolyta's resentfulness at her

⁶⁰ Philip McGuire, *Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare's Open Silences* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1.

⁶¹ Laura Levine highlights the sexual violence embedded within the opening of *Dream* and suggests that this violence permeates the structures of legality that shape Athenian thought. For Levine, then, the unlawful shapes Athenian law during Theseus's term as duke. Laura Levine, "Rape, Repetition, and the Politics of Closure in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan and Dymphna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). In 2013 Levine revisits her 1996 study when comparing Balanchine's 1962 ballet version of *Dream* to Shakespeare's text. She concludes that the ballet's failure to present Theseus's armed wooing of Hippolyta results not in a deletion of history but, rather, 'an alternative history' that is conveyed 'iconographically'. Laura Levine, "Balanchine and Titania: Love and the Elision of History in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 65 (2013): 111. Susanne L. Wofford investigates the notion that rape can be a 'founding principle of states and marriages' in "The Social Aesthetics of Rape: Closures Violence in Boccaccio and Botticelli," in *Creative Imitation: New Essays on Renaissance Literature in Honour of Thomas M. Greene*, ed. David Quint, Margaret W. Ferguson, G. W. Pigman III and Wayne A. Rebhorn (New York: Binghamton, 1992). Cited by Levine in "Balanchine and Titania," 111.

oppression also, however, tells another tale which is relevant to this study. The interest lies in the way that Hippolyta's coolness towards Theseus's rule plays against the Christian ideal of marriage, and its self-claimed sponsorship of virtue.⁶² Paul Olson's succinct and accurate description of the view of matrimony articulated by Chaucer's Knight and Parson, and also found in La Primaudaye's *The French Academie* and Ben Jonson's *Hymenaei* highlights the spiritual resonances active within the concept of holy matrimony:

Marriage was assigned not only a positive social value, but various spiritual symbolisms were found in it. The meeting of God and the soul, the relationship of Christ and the Church, these also involved bonds of love which were described in marital terms.⁶³

Here a Christian claim to natural law is evoked. The 'bonds of love' central to Christian doctrine – and foundational to the Thomist conception of natural law – resonate through and with marital doctrine. The opposition to marriage-related doctrine that is inherent to Shakespeare's presentation of the Theseus and Hippolyta union thus connotes a turning away from natural law and a foregrounding of the unlawful. Act 1 scene 1 of *Dream* hints, then, at epiphanal blasphemies later to be delivered. It should be noted that I am not suggesting that Hippolyta's resistance to patriarchal authority stands in opposition to natural law in that this resistance presents itself as female rejection of male oppression. Such a position would be as

⁶² Theseus and Hippolyta are not, of course a Christian couple, but *Dream*'s passage runs through a starkly Christian landscape. This is not to say, of course, that it is a pro-Christian play.

⁶³ Olson, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage," 100.

uncomfortable as it is untenable. Rather I am suggesting that the troubled Theseus/Hippolyta union questions blind acceptance of marriage; the chaos of sexuality, the myriad possibilities for the form and nature of relationships between pairs of humans render the prescription of parameters a doomed imposition.

My proposition here is that the underlying thread in presenting Theseus and Hippolyta as the model bride and groom in an Elizabethan comedy is not anarchical but, rather, is suggestive of a dissonance between demands of the law and the unlawful within human nature. This constitutes a plea for reassessment.⁶⁴ *Dream's* approach to the unlawful, then, is one of investigative foregrounding rather than admonition. As will be explained later in relation to 'Bottom's Dream', this investigation leads to the depicting of the unlawful as a route not to damnation (as might be expected in the arena of Elizabethan poesy and its awareness of the profit/pleasure commonplace), but rather to a higher authority or truthfulness. If it is true that *A Midsummer*

⁶⁴ Much critical comment, however, defines the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta as a model union. Bonnard, for example, spills forth effusive praise of the couple amongst a large dosage of outdated gender politics: 'Every word of Theseus bespeaks his satisfaction at having found a true mate at last, one that he feels sure will be a good wife to him, a helpful companion through life, one also that will know how to keep her place, as her silence proves when he discusses Hermia's marriage with Egeus and the young lovers. Throughout that scene the Duke acts the sovereign judge of course and Hippolyta knows she has no business to interfere, which is not only tactful but highly sensible of her. And how full of common sense they are when they come upon the lovers asleep in the wood, when they watch the play performed in their honour! In fact, whenever they are present, the air we breathe is light, invigorating, and healthy; the atmosphere is clear, and in it all things appear in their true outlines and colours, in their due proportions and just relations; a wholly sane view of life seems to prevail'. See Bonnard, "Shakespeare's Purpose," 270.

Night's Dream was initially created as entertainment for a 1595 aristocratic wedding this aspect of the play becomes remarkably puissant.⁶⁵ If, however, the play was not designed for such purposes (and such a questioning, unravelling presentation of Theseus and Hippolyta as model bride and groom surely insists that the play was fashioned for scaffold rather than wedding festivities) this foregrounding speaks of the astonishing ability of Elizabethan theatre to lever socio-political patterns away from their government-fashioned ideological footings and present them as negotiable entities for the playgoer's pleasure and consideration.⁶⁶ The early modern playhouse offers the unlawful in human nature – here the chaos of human sexual desire – a stage on which it is granted license to fight against its oppression by the Thomist conception of natural law. This fight itself, acutely felt by Hermia, is staged by Shakespeare:

HERMIA	I do entreat your grace to pardon me. I know not by what power I am made bold, Nor how it may concern my modesty In such a presence here to plead my thoughts, But I beseech your grace that I may know The worst that may befall me in this case
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⁶⁵ For discussion on the possibility that *Dream* was written and first performed for a specific wedding celebration see Stanley Wells, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* Revisited," *Critical Survey*, 3, no. 1 (1991), 14-29, R. A. Foakes, ed., *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-4 and Olson, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage," 96-97.

⁶⁶ The suggestion I offer here regarding the likelihood of *Dream* being written for the actual wedding celebrations of an aristocratic household directly opposes that promoted by Diana Akers Rhoads: 'It is widely accepted that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written for the nuptial ceremony of a noble house, and the parallel between the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta and that of the noble couple must have been intended as a compliment. Shakespeare would hardly have made an invidious comparison'. Rhoads, *Shakespeare's Defense of Poetry*, 31.

If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS Either to die the death, or to abjure
 For ever the society of men.
 Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
 Know of your youth, examine well your blood
 Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
 You can endure the livery of a nun,
 For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,
 To live a barren sister all your life,
 Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
 Thrice blessed they that master so their blood
 To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
 But earthlier happy is the rose distilled
 Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
 Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

HERMIA So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
 Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
 Unto his lordship whose unwished yoke
 My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

(I.i.58-82)

Here we have a chilling prelude to the unlawful coupling between Bottom and Titania that is to be the centrepiece of the episode in the wood – indeed the centrepiece of the whole play. As Egeus's demand that his daughter, Hermia, marry his choice of groom, Demetrius, carries legal sway, the love that exists between Hermia and Lysander is rendered unlawful. The unlawful must, in the civilised world of Athens, be contained and re-directed. Thus Hermia must reject Lysander or face either death or a life of chastity. Law is cast as manacled spoiler whilst unlawful love (as deemed by father and duke) is cast as a threat to the status quo. The

playgoer's sympathies rest, of course, with Hermia – but not with Hermia alone. Theseus finds himself, as Trinculo would say 'in such a pickle' (*The Tempest* V.i.285) as he must find a legal solution to a problem located beyond the realm of Athenian jurisprudence. Here it is useful to focus on the connotations with legality evoked by the figuring of Theseus.⁶⁷

Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* includes a description of Theseus pertinent to the dilemma presented to him by Egeus's complaint:

He brought all the inhabitants of the whole province of Attica, to be within the citie of Athens, and made them all one corporation, which were before dispersed into diverse villages, and by reason thereof were very hard to be assembled together, when occasion was offered to establish any order concerning the common state. Many times also they were at variance together, and by the eares, making warres one upon an other. But Theseus tooke the paines to goe from village to village, and from family, to familie, to let them understand the reasons why they should consent unto it. So he found the poore people and private men, ready to obey and followe his will: but the riche, and such as had authoritye in every village, all against it. Nevertheles he wane them, promising that it should be a common wealth, and not subject to the power of any sole prince, but rather a popular state. In which he woulde only reserve to him selfe the charge of the warres, and the preservation of the lawes: for the rest, he was content that every citizen in all and for all should beare a like swaye and authority. (1: 52)⁶⁸

Theseus is a paradoxical figure.⁶⁹ Whilst *Dream* references his sexual voraciousness and

⁶⁷ Herman, "Equity and the Problem of Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," offers a comprehensive account of Theseus's legal self and considerable insight into the challenge that the concept of equity presents to the Theseus of *Dream*.

⁶⁸ Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans Englished by Sir Thomas North*, ed. George Wyndham, 5 vols. (New York, 1967). Cited by Herman. See Herman, "Equity and the Problem of Theseus," 7.

⁶⁹ D'Orsay W. Pearson paints a highly negative picture of Theseus and proposes that his failings as lover and father

misogyny, he is also associated with republicanism and identified as founder of the commonwealth of Athens. This is particularly pertinent to early modern England as Elizabeth I's realm was also considered to be a commonwealth – crucially meaning that in peacetime even “the monarch was a creature of the law”.⁷⁰ Indeed, in her much commented upon ‘Golden Speech’ of 1601, Elizabeth ‘very proudly rejected the absolutist notion that the monarch is above the law.’⁷¹ Her words suggest that Theseus would be a comfortable ally:

[Y]ou must not beguile yourselves nor wrong us to think that the glosing luster of a glittering glory of a king's title may so extol us that we think all is lawful what we list.⁷²

Here we have an example of Shakespeare ‘discovering in Plutarch's old story the fault lines of his own milieu’.⁷³ In *Dream* the ideals of commonwealth and republicanism are challenged by those aspects of human nature (call them unlawful if you will) that are unmalleable to law's blunt persuasion. Hermia's unlawful love challenges the legal structures designed to contain it.

far outweigh his occasional and irregular political successes. D'Orsay W. Pearson “‘Unkinde’ Theseus: A Study in Renaissance Mythography,” *English Literary Renaissance*, 4 (1974). Olson however, offers Theseus iconic status: ‘Long before Shakespeare wrote, Theseus had come to embody the reasonable man and the ideal ruler of both his lower nature and his subjects’. Olson, “*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage,” 101.

⁷⁰ Alan Cromartie, *The Constitutionalist Revolution: An Essay on the History of England, 1450-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 94.

⁷¹ Herman, “Equity and the Problem of Theseus,” 9.

⁷² Extract from Elizabeth I's ‘Golden Speech’ (1601). *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, eds. Leah S. Marcus, Januel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 343.

⁷³ James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 156.

As Elizabeth I's England connotes the ideals of commonwealth, and as the chaos of sexual attraction is a universal theme widely referenced in early modern literature, the dilemma facing Theseus as ruler and Hermia as ruled carries great resonance on the early modern stage. My suggestion here – and detailed explanation is soon to follow – is that *Dream* responds to this resonance by allowing the theme of law's struggle to manage the unlawful to engage with the play's world of fantasy. The lawful legal collides with the unlawful fantastic as the duke is, in a manner of speaking, asked to bear witness to the secular-epiphanal 'Bottom's Dream'.⁷⁴

In The Wood/'Bottom's Dream': Staging Fantasy's Agency

It shall be called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no
bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before
the duke.

(IV.i.213-15)

Bottom has just woken up in the magical wood. His dream, or his experiences with Titania and the fairies, have filled him with a new awareness that he senses is important, but he cannot put into words. He wants to express his dream in song, however. Perhaps his colleague, Peter Quince, will help out with the lyrics.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ The concept of Christian folly, as outlined by Erasmus in *The Praise of Folly*, is awakened in Bottom's attempt to recall his dream. Importantly, however, Bottom's religious ecstasy grows out of the unlawful. For a discussion on *Dream*'s resonances with Christian folly see Emily E. Stockard, "'Transposed to Form and Dignity': Christian Folly and the Subversion of Hierarchy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Religion and Literature*, 29, no. 3 (Autumn, 1997).

⁷⁵ 'I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream'. IV.i.212.

The discussion I offer here is seeking to unpack a Shakespearean rethinking of pleasure identifiable in the context of ‘Bottom’s Dream’.⁷⁶ The discussion will focus on ancient dream theory, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, Bottom’s ‘safety-first’ directorial decision, and Apulieus’s management of the profit/pleasure commonplace before suggesting that, in its management and presentation of ‘Bottom’s Dream’, Shakespeare’s play is driving towards an astonishing unyoking of pleasure’s ties to virtue as it signals our ‘need’ for the aesthetic, and the aesthetic’s ‘claim’ to existence.⁷⁷

Bottom’s calling for Theseus to bear witness to his ‘Dream’ is, in one sense, an enactment and resurrection of pre-Christian dream theory. As discussed by William Harris in *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*, the tradition of the *epiphany* dream existed in antiquity.⁷⁸

Such dreams were the preserve of leaders, rulers or charismatic societal figures and featured the appearance of a figure of authority – perhaps a god, hero or deceased relative – and the transmission of an important message from this figure within the dream to the dreamer. Casting

⁷⁶ Ewan Fernie speaks of ‘the spirituality of specifically brutish sexual congress in ‘Bottom’s Dream’.’ It is this yoking of the bestial and the spiritual/epiphanal that I investigate here. Ewan Fernie, ed., “Introduction: *Shakespeare, Spirituality and Contemporary Criticism*,” in *Spiritual Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 2005), 7.

⁷⁷ The language here was suggested by Professor John Gillies in draft revision notes (April, 2015).

⁷⁸ William Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 23-90.

the post-coital Bottom as newly-fashioned hero and bringer of an epiphanal message – this message being the ballad he has titled ‘Bottom’s Dream’ – denotes a licensing of the unlawful to reach towards higher truthfulness. Casting the ruler Theseus as the appropriate audience member strengthens further this sense of permitting the unlawful to speak truths.⁷⁹

Here, as suggested above, the epiphanal message received by Bottom has been generated by dream, or fantasy. There is a sense that Bottom has become the gatekeeper of a higher truthfulness – surely something about transformation, the erotic, and the imagination, and surely bestowed upon him through engagement with the polytheistic environment that the wood offers – that he feels must be delivered to Theseus.

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital might be applied to this context.⁸⁰ Bourdieu understands embodied cultural capital to be knowledge and means of communication acquired through experience and socialization.⁸¹ The acquiring of this knowledge and language allows growth and development in what Bourdieu would term as the *habitus*, meaning the acquirer’s

⁷⁹ IV.i.212-15.

⁸⁰ David Wiles points out the fact that Bottom’s name ‘relates to his trade’, thus his ‘*character* is not conceptually separable from his socio-economic status’. In positing Bottom’s momentary promotion to educator of Theseus, *Dream* presents ownership of the empowered aesthetic as enabling a crossing of socio-cultural boundaries. David Wiles, *Shakespeare’s Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 74.

⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*. David Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 42-45, 127-32.

way of being and thinking. As capital the knowledge, or language acquired, grants status or functionality within the community. A picture is drawn then of Bottom's profitable development through the transgressive pleasure he has experienced in Titania's bower. Bottom could be understood as having gained cultural capital, then educational capital (he has a message for Theseus) from spending time in an environment in which the erotic is prioritised over reason. It should be noted that important to Bourdieu is the amount of time spent in socialization before the habitus develops educational capital. This, of course, sits uncomfortably with the sudden experiencing of awareness associated with Bottom's secular epiphany. The resistance to the laws of time that dreams and fantasy present perhaps answers this inconsistency, however. To reiterate, what I am suggesting here is that in empowering Bottom with his 'Dream' the play presents the possibility of genuine profit – an increase in cultural capital – from sensual pleasures that Protestant early modern London could never sanction.

There is a complication, however. As outlined by Macrobius in *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, the resistance to order that characterises dreaming can allow the process to drive towards higher truthfulness but, contrastingly, dreams can also license falsehood. Macrobius suggests that there are five categories of dream: the nightmare and apparition are deemed false whilst the enigmatic, the prophetic and the oracular are deemed true.⁸² The dreamer faces a

⁸² Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University

dilemma similar to that that challenges Hamlet when he meets the ghost of his father: Is the persuasive spirit good or evil?⁸³

In her investigation into dream theorisation in early modern England, Janine Rivière highlights key insecurities about these phenomena.⁸⁴ An overriding concern, discussed by Rivière, is the natural or supernatural status of dreams. In *The moste pleasaunte arte of the interpretacion of dreams* (1576) Thomas Hill seeks to define the differences between natural and supernatural dreams. His definitions, however, are loose and not overly helpful. In line with Aristotle, he suggests that the bringer of ‘vaine dreames’ (deemed natural) is ‘overcharge’ of ‘meate or drinckes, or superstitious humors’.⁸⁵ ‘[T]rue’ dreams, according to Hill, are the preserve of ‘grave and sober persons’ who have the appropriate, or ‘proper’ ability to understand and interpret them. Such dreams:

Press, 1990), 87-92. Highlighted by Rhoads, *Shakespeare’s Defense of Poetry*, 61-2.

⁸³ In *Hamlet*, the performance of *The Mousetrap* tests the ghost and Claudius simultaneously. Hamlet asks Horatio to watch Claudius during the performance: ‘If his occulted guilt / Do not itself unkennel in one speech / It is a damned ghost that we have seen / And my imaginations are as foul / As Vulcan’s stithy (III.ii.76-80). Distrust of dreams, spirits and playgoing are figured as related. The flawed human imagination lies at the centre of this distrust.

⁸⁴ Janine Rivière, “‘Visions of the Night’: The Reform of Popular Dream Beliefs in Early Modern England,” *Parergon*, 20, no. 1 (January, 2003).

⁸⁵ Thomas Hill, *The moste pleasaunte arte of the interpretacion of dreams* (London: 1576) (unpaginated). Cited by Rivière in “‘Visions of the Night’,” 113.

do signifie matters to come, and a spirite undoubtedlie shewing to them, whiche by her nature is a Prophetesse, that sendeth forth such a motion...through which the bodye as in her proper dwelling, may either be defended...or moved to the attayninge of goode things to come.⁸⁶

An awareness that dreams might be interpreted as natural or supernatural provides, I feel, nothing more than a rather limited frame of reference for investigation into Bottom's reaction to his dream. An awareness that *Dream* itself signals that the rare vision need not be a stranger to the unlawful might be more productive. To explore this further it is useful now to focus on the donkey in *Dream*'s wood.

Why an ass? Beyond the immediately perceivable humour inherent to dehumanising transformation (an iconically foolish appearance accentuating foolishness) and the contextual dissonance attendant to cacocallia (a braying donkey lying resplendent in a paradisaal bower as Queen Fairy's lover) what does performance of Bottom's altered appearance and its juxtaposition to the exposition of his dream tell us about the potentials seen by Shakespeare for order-resistant fantasy on the early modern stage? I will address this question through reference to Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* below.⁸⁷ Prior to this, however, I would like to consider Jan Kott's suggestion that the ass's associations with potent sexuality are of significance. Kott explains that 'since antiquity and up to the Renaissance the ass was credited with the strongest

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Apuleius, *The Golden Ass or Metamorphoses*, trans. E. J. Kenney (London: Penguin Books, 1998).

sexual potency and among all the quadrupeds is supposed to have the longest and hardest phallus'.⁸⁸ If Kott's interpretation is to be accepted, audience enjoyment (and indeed Titania's) of Bottom as ass would give the likes of antitheatricalists like Gosson, Munday and Stubbes cause for protest. Indeed, in describing female playgoers who 'have received at those spectacles such filthy infections, as have turned their minds from chaste cogitations, and made them of honest women, light huswives' Munday provides an illustration of reason's decline – and an attendant moral decline – stemming from the stirring of temporal passions within the witness to staged display of primitive, transgressive eroticism.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (London: Routledge, 1994), 182-83. First published, 1967. In a later, somewhat more conservative, analysis Kott explains that translation of man into ass was a common feature of pre-early modern 'folk festivities' such as the Feast of Fools and the day of Boy-Bishop. See Jan Kott, *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 50. See also Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 78-79. Kott's focus on *Dream* – a focus that begins with bestial eroticism in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* then takes on broader socio-political overtones in *The Bottom Translation* as it engages with Bakhtinian carnivalesque – is on finding meaning, or resonance, in the figure of the donkey, the erotic and/or the transmogrification of man. Such interpretations could clearly engage with Elizabethan theorisations of self-governance and the moral imagination and could, in turn, lead to rich investigations into the ambivalence of pleasure evoked by and through performance of *Dream*. The staged display of a comical-erotic magical realm within an essentially moralistic, pro-marriage narrative framework presents fascinating contradictions in the light of early modern estimation of the threat to morality posed by the enjoyment of playgoing. The play plays against the play. In doing so, however, the concept of natural law remains active. It stands as the 'what ought to be' in the face of the threat the aesthetic presents. Gail Kern Paster offers a further body-centred reading of Bottom by suggesting that as an ass he is 'recognizably a version of the trope of *proktos lalon*' (speaking ass), a recurring 'motif' in low-level 'European folk humour from the Middle Ages on.' Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 113-62, 127, 126.

⁸⁹ Anthony Munday, *A Second and Third Blast*, 54.

Here I would like to raise the issue of management of pleasure in play within the apparent incongruity between the arena for 'Bottom's Dream' (the end of a play with the duke present) the singer (Bottom – as will be discussed below, unwilling to evoke strong emotions) and the content of the song itself (never performed, of course). Would the singing of Bottom's experience in Titania's bower be an evocation of the lewd unlawful, or a moving towards the numinosity within aspects of human nature which are stigmatised by the Christian idea of virtue? I would suggest that Bottom himself projects an innocent chasteness throughout his seduction. He is not predatory. He projects none of the breathy urgency associated with Titania. He is, as the play title (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and the title of the ballad he wishes to compose to relay the occasion suggest, the passive recipient of a dream – or dreamlike experience.⁹⁰

Bottom's sensitivity regarding the evocation of unwanted response to the aesthetic (be it the ballad 'Bottom's Dream' or the play *Pyramus and Thisbe*) is communicated in a way that recalls Munday's opinion (cited above) of the dangers of imaginative response to theatre.

⁹⁰ We are drawing close here to a curious absence of Freudian pleasure principle. Consider Freud's introduction to his seminal text: 'In the theory of psycho-analysis we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension – that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure.' Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Dover, 2015), 1. Freud's text was first published in 1920 under the title *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*.

Consider Bottom's literalisation 'device', spoken during rehearsals for the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

I have a device to make all well. Write
me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we
will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus
is not killed indeed; and for the more better assur-
ance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus,
but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of
fear. (III.i.15-20)

Bottom's tendency to render fantasy literal, an approach to theatre designed to disarm its threat to the emotional state of the spectator, registers as an attempt to guarantee lawfulness. I am suggesting that this dampening of theatre's fires of emotion rests in tension with Bottom's desire to perform his 'Dream' to Theseus – which leads to the possibility that Bottom sees no moral threat in his dream. He displays a relaxedness about the unlawfulness of his encounter with Titania which, in turn, suggests that the epiphanal moment has superseded the lewd. Here the play is drawing towards a recalibration of intersections between pleasure, virtue and the imagination. New possibilities for pleasure and the aesthetic are being proposed and tested.

Before returning to Bottom's personal fantasy and the unyoking of the concept of pleasure from the concept of virtue that, I am proposing, the 'Bottom's Dream' episode drives towards, I now turn to the approach to pleasure's relationship with virtue adopted by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*. Apuleius might argue that Bottom as ass does not threaten the definition of morality

attuned to the concept of natural law. His ass, or his Lucius-as-ass, preceding Shakespeare's Bottom-as-ass by approximately 1400 years, is presented in a markedly moralistic (if pagan) context. As outlined in Apuleius's contents page, Lucius undergoes a journey from 'hungry to bed' through to 'Vision on the seashore – appeal to Isis – the goddess appears and promises rescue – her festival – Lucius himself again – devotes himself to the goddess's service, initiated – goes to Rome – two further initiations – promised a distinguished future as an advocate and admitted to office in an ancient priestly college by Osiris himself – happy at last'.⁹¹ Lucius's adventures, rich in titillating sexual episode and joy in the immoral ultimately constitute a journey to salvation. The pleasure found in the tale's anarchic whimsy is, as is suggested by E. J. Kenney, 'the honey on the astringent cup of edification'.⁹² Indeed Apuleius directly requests distanced and serious readerly engagement with his tales whilst promising a feast of worldly joys.⁹³ Apuleius's presentation of a donkey performing acts of lewdness with humans is, thus, defined as being a means to the pagan world's conception of a virtuous end. Pleasure is, thus, yoked to virtue.

Apuleius, then, licenses the lewd by positioning it within an educative context. Profit and

⁹¹ Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 3-5.

⁹² Ibid., xxvii. Once again the profit/pleasure commonplace is recalled here.

⁹³ Ibid., ix. This recalls the Spenserian context, discussed in the previous chapter, of reading with one's Bible at one's side.

pleasure find union. In this discussion I am suggesting that *Dream* finds a different way to manage its presentation of the lewdness of Bottom's interaction with Titania. An unpacking of this reveals, as mentioned at the head of this section, that the play is driving towards an astonishing unyoking of pleasure's ties to virtue as it signals our 'need' for the aesthetic, and the aesthetic's 'claim' to existence.⁹⁴

The discussion I offer here is seeking to unpack a Shakespearean rethinking of pleasure identifiable in the context of 'Bottom's Dream'. Before providing a close reading of the stage moment during which Bottom wakes I would like to further highlight how ancient understanding of the transferral of emotions, still accepted in early modern times, rendered the display of feelings (here the focus is on lust) threatening to the soul. Here attention turns to the concept of pneumatism.

Relevant to Titania/Bottom interaction is the theory of pneumatism.⁹⁵ This theory – essentially a way of understanding how the performance of emotions transforms both actor and audience –

⁹⁴ The language here was suggested by Professor John Gillies in draft revision notes (April, 2015).

⁹⁵ For a full discussion on pneumatism see Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 25-28. Roach explains that the foundations of the theory are found in the ancient's idea of imbibed breath carrying spiritual potency. An example would be Apollo breathing 'himself into the mouth or other convenient orifice of the Pythoness of Delphi...The "Spirit" which then lived in her and spoke through her...was the oracular God himself'. Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 26-7.

is, as Joseph Roach explains, ‘derived from the ancients’ understanding of the relationship between breath and states of consciousness and their association of the mind with the lungs’.⁹⁶

The feeling of emotion in the chest, home to ‘a congregation of *humours* and *spirits*’ was understood by the ancients to be ‘the reaction of volatile inhalations on the blood’.⁹⁷ As Roach goes on to explain, ‘the *praecordia* or diaphragm was viewed as a barometer of the passions; and the association of breath, thought, and blood explained the characteristic physiological manifestations of strong emotion, including the heaving breast, blushing, bulging veins in the neck, choking and purpling with rage, and sighing with grief... These inspiring forces came literally out of thin air. A vital *pneuma*, imbibed from a universal *aether*, supposedly permeated the blood as spirits, and, radiating outward from the heart and lungs, displayed inward feelings as outward motions’.⁹⁸ These ‘outward motions’, in turn, were believed, as Roach explains, to carry potency enough to ‘act on the bodies of the spectators’.⁹⁹ The actors ‘passions, irradiating the bodies of spectators through their eyes and ears, could literally transfer the contents of his heart to theirs, altering their moral natures’.¹⁰⁰

Armed with the actor’s potent ability to transform, Titania’s seduction of Bottom might be read

⁹⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

as a staging of the antitheatrical argument that claimed that such spectacles could through ‘filthie infections’ turn ‘minds from chaste cogitations’.¹⁰¹ Consider the flurry of breathy vowels in the confident, seductive, inviting drive of Titania’s language:

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
 Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note.
 So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape,
 And thy fair virtue’s force perforce doth move me
 On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

(III.i.133-37)

Out of this wood do not desire to go.
 Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
 I am a spirit of no common rate:
 The summer still doth tend upon my state,
 And I do love thee; therefore go with me.
 I’ll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
 And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
 And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep;
 And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
 That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

(III.i.146-55)

Degree is difficult to ascertain – but early modern antitheatrical comment and, indeed, play content itself (there is great dramatic purchase to be found in theatrical/on-stage presentation of spectacle transforming the spectator) suggest that the tendency to consider theatre content to be threatening to the subject’s moral status was widespread.¹⁰² Bottom as Kott’s potent, pleasure-

¹⁰¹ Munday, *A Second and Third Blast*, 54.

¹⁰² For a detailed discussion on the contribution of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to the antitheatricalists v. defenders

giving ass could – at least in the antitheatrical mindset – screw the playgoer’s soul. (Although Bottom’s air of naïve innocence in the face of Titania’s gushing seduction might locate the episode somewhere outside the reductivity of the merely sexually stimulating.) A framing, moralistic framework might, of course, be deemed capable of tempering or even removing any danger. Such is Apuleius’s claim. Key to Apuleius, then, is the moral context that surrounds the lewd moment, hence the concept of natural law is active. *Dream*’s Titania/Bottom interaction offers no such moral framework, despite offering epiphany. The disconnect from the concept of natural law is astonishing.¹⁰³

If the critic allows the play proper to lead her/his investigation, the slippery issue of taking pleasure in performance of *Dream* can be approached from a very different angle whilst maintaining a focus on the presentation of Bottom’s transformation. The structuring and thematics of the play suggest that the investigation initiated by the question “Why an ass?” is less pertinent, less challenging, and less confrontary than that initiated by the question “Why does Bottom’s response to his experience in the bower find expression via the aesthetic (a ballad to be sung as an epilogue to a play performed within a play)? Here we turn to Bottom’s

of the theatre debate see Rhoads, *Shakespeare’s Defense of Poetry*, 1-95.

¹⁰³ In this discussion I do not wish to suggest that the Bottom/Titania interaction is only about sex. Indeed, a completely different unpacking of Shakespeare’s management of pleasure in *Dream*’s bower could be structured around the concept of the pastoral, and a third formalist study might focus on delight in Titania’s language.

famous waking speech:¹⁰⁴

Bottom wakes.

When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer. My next is,
 ‘Most fair Pyramus’. Heigh-ho! Peter Quince? Flute the bellows-
 mender? Snout the tinker? Starveling? Gods my life! Stolen hence,
 and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream,
 past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass
 if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was – there is
 no man can tell what. Methought I was – and methought I had – but
 man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought
 I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen,
 man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart
 to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a
 ballad of this dream. Tt shall be called ‘Bottom’s Dream’, because
 it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before
 the duke. Peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing
 it at her death. *Exit* (IV.i.199-217)

Bottom approaches definition of his yet unwritten ballad content via a stumbling, malapropic re-telling of Pauline scripture. Jennifer Waldron’s 2012 assessment of ‘Bottom’s Dream’ as a ‘theologically inflected sensorium’ is particularly relevant here as it highlights power and tension in a perceived inability of the aesthetic to detach itself from the religio-social structures

¹⁰⁴ There is, perhaps, something of Lacan’s ‘Other Jouissance’ expressed in Bottom’s waking speech. Consider Fink’s explanation: ‘The Other jouissance involves a form of sublimation through love that provides full satisfaction of the drives. The Other jouissance is a jouissance of love, and Lacan relates it to religious ecstasy and to a kind of bodily, corporal jouissance that is not localized in the genitals the way phallic jouissance is...According to Lacan, the other jouissance is *asexual*...and yet it is *of* and *in* the body.’ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 120.

upon which it is founded.¹⁰⁵ Waldron's starting point is an important question: 'Why does Shakespeare's Bottom paraphrase Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (2:9) when he awakens from his dream?'¹⁰⁶ Waldron offers two related readings. The first proposes that Bottom's lewd action has resulted in momentary transcendence, thus signalling an undoing of Christianity's monopoly on spiritual rapture:

If we take Protestant phenomenology (or religion more generally) to be fundamentally anti-materialist, this "rare vision" might seem to parody religious claims to transcendent truth.¹⁰⁷

Waldron's movement from Protestantism to religion in general might be ill-advised; Bottom's reaction to his experience in Titania's bower surely suggests that polytheism lays a claim to higher realm rare visions. This is potent ground in a monotheistic culture which refuses to license non-Christian, even non-Protestant religious practice.

Waldron's second reading, in sharp contrast, aligns Bottom's speech with anti-theatrical assessment of theatre as vulgar in its earthiness and materiality (as compared to the divine spirituality attendant to Christian belief):

His synaesthetic description of this dream may similarly seem to offer metatheatrical commentary

¹⁰⁵ Jennifer Waldron, "'The Eye of Man Hath Not Heard': Shakespeare, Synaesthesia, and Post-Reformation Phenomenology," *Criticism*, 54, no. 3, (2012).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 403.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 405.

on the vulgarity of playing by comparison with the purity of Pauline spirituality.¹⁰⁸

According to my reading, this moment in *Dream* is marked by the play itself as being an on-stage moment of aesthetic response; Bottom's language references theatrical process.¹⁰⁹ The speech opens with the actor responding to his cue (further foregrounding the meta-aesthetic, this cue itself consists of Demetrius's suggestion that the four lovers should 'recount' their 'dreams' (IV.i.196)) by explaining that he will respond when cued, and closes with the prospect of exposition through the aesthetic – on this occasion, song. Importantly, and as mentioned above, Bottom designates Theseus as his audience member. The implication is an empowerment of the aesthetic through its employment in a remarkable reconciliation of the 'sensuous-lewd and the spiritual revelatory'.¹¹⁰ Presented here is the aesthetic's 'claim' and 'need' to existence. The aesthetic allows pleasure to be removed from virtue whilst still offering the spiritual revelatory.

Remarkable then is the moment when an Elizabethan clown stands alone on his stage to employ the aesthetic to express transcendent joy at the memory of a bestial sexual encounter with a

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ For Grady *Dream* is 'a play about the aesthetic'. Grady explains that 'the play implies such a concept – a concept "defined" in poetic and dramatic forms rather than theoretical language, but one no less viable for that'. Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics*, 48.

¹¹⁰ The language here was suggested by Professor John Gillies in draft revision notes (April, 2015).

fairy queen. His body – in Calvinistic thought a worldly object relevant to salvation – is transformed into that of a gluttonous, vulgar ass, and his language, in parodying St. Paul in the context of attempting to express an inexpressible post-coital bliss, is rendered profoundly blasphemous. And all of this to be presented to Theseus – a member of the *dramatis personae* figured out of the very concept of natural law who has allowed rationality to disable his imaginative faculty. More remarkable still is the relaxedness that the play displays about this unlawfulness. Bottom's waking moments, moments of reaction to the imagination's ability to approach the bottomless, invisible unknowable, thus speak of an unlawful embracing of the Ovidian world (a world of non-doctrinal pagan polytheism). Bottom's glorious, spiritual epiphany is rooted in unlawful pleasure. The irreverence is show-stopping.

Bottom's flailing recall of these words of St. Paul presents a tension that centres upon the status of the bodily and physical sensation. It is a tension prevalent in early modern conceptualisations of faith practice. The central question here concerns the body's relationship to the spirit. Common perceptions of Protestantism posit a distrust of the physical – hence Protestant rejection of Catholic 'idolising' of faith-related physical manifestations. At stake is appropriate faith practice and, consequently, the chance of salvation. The Puritan rejections of all that is not Scripture is ably explained by David Curtis Steinmetz:

Conviction about the absolute priority of Scripture rested on the Puritan's vision of the totality of

the sovereignty of God. God lays claim through Scripture to the whole of life, not merely to some areas or compartments. An appeal to tradition that overrides or invalidates Scripture is nothing less than the interposition of an obstacle to that total claim of God. The opposition to vestments, candles, and ecclesiastical offices not prescribed in Scripture was an outgrowth of the Puritan's understanding of the absolute sovereignty of God.¹¹¹

This distrust of the physical, or material, in the sphere of Protestant worship is, however, problematised by elevation of the status of the human body in Calvinist thought. Whilst man-made idols and artefacts – aesthetic products designed to enable worship – were rejected by Calvin, the human body itself was deemed to offer a positive agency in faith practice:

The Lordes supper, is it received in the minde only, and not also in the hands and mouth? Hath god engraven in oure bodyes the armes and badges of his sonne, that we afterward shuld pollute our selves?¹¹²

Thus, amidst the iconoclastic Protestant suggestion that God's presence could not be contained within aesthetic artefacts, there was reverence for the human body as a potential (if sanctified) house for the holy. At stake here, and as reflected within early modern antitheatricalist comment, is the valuing of sensory response to external stimuli – and the value of these external stimuli themselves. This represents, of course, a thematic nodal point for argument regarding the subject's relationship to his spiritual potential. If we recall, once more, the ass-headed clown

¹¹¹ David Curtis Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler Von Kaysersberg to Theodore Beza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 102.

¹¹² Calvin, *Four Godly Sermons Agaynst the Polution of Idolatries* (London: 1561), B1^r. Cited by Jennifer Waldron in *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice, and Early Modern Theater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 51.

speaking of eroticism leading to some form of spiritual revelation, pleasure's problematic relationship with virtue returns.

Dream's Ovid

I would like to close this discussion on Shakespeare's rethinking of pleasure in *Dream* by presenting a further context to Bottom's 'rare vision' through considering it alongside the Renaissance tradition of *Ovide moralisé* – or the moralisation of Ovid's erotic tales of transformation.¹¹³ Thereafter I would like to consider, in more detail, the connotations of presenting pleasurable fantasy to Theseus as a gateway to new understandings.

As outlined above, Bottom's employment of bowdlerised Pauline-Christian terminology to reflect upon his pagan/Ovidian 'rare vision', or illicit sexual encounter, is challengingly blasphemous. This is to say that the episode in the bower and the nature and expression of its memory stand in direct opposition to the Renaissance tradition of *Ovide moralisé*. What, then, can Shakespeare's reclamation of pre-moralised Ovid tell us about early modern pleasure in playgoing?

¹¹³ For a detailed discussion on Renaissance interpretation and employment of Ovid see Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1-47.

There need be no surprise that Arthur Golding, a dedicated Puritan and translator of Calvin's sermons in sixteenth-century England, decided to produce an English-language translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – 'a text as immoral as any contemporary play'.¹¹⁴ Golding, recalling Sidney, employed the moralising lens of allegory to render Ovid's fictions acceptable to his Puritan audience. Outward seeming could thus be distanced from inner meaning. As explained by Warren Ginsberg, allegory afforded the *Metamorphoses* a 'moral dignity':

Ovid's singular virtue during this time was seen as ethical, since readers whose temperament had been conditioned by allegory could avoid surface unseemliness by discovering a decorous example beneath.¹¹⁵

Thus it was that Ovid's text could find a position of support for monotheistic Thomist natural law despite its polytheistic paganism. Indeed, Golding highlights his subject's pre-Christian context as he seeks to quash accusations of immorality from his reading public:

I would not wish the simple sort offended for to bee,
When in this booke the heathen names of feyned Godds they see.
The trewe and everliving God the Paynims did not knowe:
Which caused them the name of Godds on creatures too bestowe.

(Preface, 1.1)¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Madeleine Forey, "'Bless Thee, Bottom, Bless Thee! Thou Art Translated!': Ovid, Golding, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *The Modern Language Review*, 93, no. 2 (April, 1998): 321.

¹¹⁵ Warren Ginsberg, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and the Politics of Interpretation," *The Classical Journal*, 84, no. 3 (Feb.-Mar., 1989): 222.

¹¹⁶ W. H. D. Rouse, *'Shakespeare's Ovid': Arthur Golding's Translation of the Metamorphoses* (London: Centaur Press, 1961).

Golding seeks to shape Ovid to Christian ethics so as to ensure that pleasure is reconciled to virtue. At the same intersection point between pagan classical antiquity and early modern Christian ethics Shakespeare, however, seeks to awaken tensions by pushing these two concepts apart. Bottom's bowdlerising of Pauline text and relaxedness about the morality of his 'rare vision' exemplify this. Interestingly, St. Paul becomes relevant here again for a second reason. Ginsberg explains that fiction's challenge to morality – a challenge documented by Golding and Sidney – was commented upon in the first century by Paul, 'who foretold a time when itching ears (*prurientes auribus*) would turn from the truth and convert, as it were, to fables (*ad fabulas autem convertentur*, 2 Tim. 4:3-4)'.¹¹⁷ Here Paul is speaking of the threat of the unlawful to pleasure's reconciliation to virtue. Pleasure – signalled by itching ears – leads away from Christian teaching and towards the fantasy of fable. Bottom, however, has been pulled towards fantasy but, nonetheless, found higher truthfulness. As explained above, he must now, with the help of Peter Quince, formulate his unlawful journey and arrival into an aesthetic pattern and perform it to his ruler. Once more we turn to the duke.

Dream sets Bottom's audience member, Theseus, a task. This task, one that stretches from the scene 1 sentencing of Hermia to her act 5 reprieve,¹¹⁸ is, as Louis Montrose suggests, 'to

¹¹⁷ Ginsberg, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and the Politics of Interpretation," 222.

¹¹⁸ Kiernan Ryan points out that the passage of *Dream* 'is suspended...between a verdict and a reprieve', Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 77.

comprehend – to understand and to encompass – the energies and motives, the diverse, unstable, and potentially subversive *apprehensions* of the ruled'.¹¹⁹ Montrose is referencing, of course, Theseus's assessment of the lovers' night in the wood (incorporating the compulsory Theseus v. Hippolyta opposition) and his subsequent conceptualisation of an unlawful creation of meaning:

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.
 The. More strange than true. I never may believe
 These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.

(V.i.1-6)

The play between apprehension and comprehension and its relevance to a higher truthfulness offered by the unlawful is in focus here. Theseus is necessarily sceptical of 'shaping fantasies' as his vocabulary of reason is not empowered with currency enough to find truthfulness beyond rationality. At stake here is moral/lawful appropriation of the process of sensing the world. Apprehension – and its connotations with instinct and a bypassing of rationality – is not to be trusted. Fables should not supercede scripture. Presented is an 'ethics of perception' stemming from a 'Greek epistemological framework', in other words, Elizabethan perceptions of the

¹¹⁹ Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies'", 61.

I am that merry wanderer of the night.
 I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
 In very likeness of a roasted crab,
 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
 And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
 And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and loffe
 And waxen in their mirth, and sneeze, and swear
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.

(II.i.42-57)

Thus Athens fades as the realm of dreams finds focus. Fantasy is granted currency. The foundational rationality of the laws of physics bows to the fantastic imaginary as playful Puck is offered up as an explanation for previously inexplicable minor accidents. This simple introduction to Puck serves as a gentle signalling of fantasy as something more than 'airy nothing'; it impacts upon the real world causing ale to be spilled and aunts to fall from stools. Fantasy has influence – and the sheer triviality of Puck's influence here – perhaps counterintuitively – gives pause for consideration rather than a reason for dismissiveness.

In the early modern conceptualization of poesy, fantasy is defined by its connotations with the damaging triviality of 'airy nothing' and the contrasting profundity of 'constancy'. Those who claim profundity are shouted down by those who deny fantasy's substance. Puck here evokes

this key argument about poesy as his trivial interventions into the real world serve paradoxically to hinder fantasy's progress. If one deems gossip and tale-telling bedfellows of fantasy, the fantasy figure's derailing of the gossip's idle lies and the aunt's 'saddest tale' denotes a halting of fiction's, or fantasy's influence upon reality; Puck's mischief translates gossip into silence and a sad tale into laughter. This serves as a slight example of *Dream*'s tendency to examine its own content and process by turning upon itself. (I am highlighting this slight moment as it stands as an introduction to the wood-centred fairy world of *Dream* and recalls Paul's bolder depiction of fantasy's threat to Christian reality above.) Such episodes give David P. Young reason to describe *Dream* as Shakespeare's '*ars poetica*'.¹²¹ Puck's mischief, then, speaks of fantasy's strength and fantasy's flaws. Fantasy claims agency and intervenes with actual events but also distracts from vital engagement with reality. Its evocation is as important as its abuse is traumatic. Sir Philip Sidney famously highlights the divine and the damaging aspects of fantasy:

For I will not deny but that man's wit may make poesy, which should be eikastike (which some learned have defined: figuring forth good things), to be phantastike (which doth, contrariwise, infect the fancy with unworthy objects), as the painter, that should give to the eye either some excellent perspective, or some fine picture, fit for building or fortification, or containing in it some notable example (as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, Judith killing Holofernes, David fighting with Goliath), may leave those, and please an ill-pleased eye with wanton shows of better hidden matters. But what, shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious? Nay truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming

¹²¹ David P. Young, *Something of Great Constancy: The Art of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 178.

force, it can do more hurt than any other army of words: yet shall it be so far from concluding that the abuse should give reproach to the abused, that, contrariwise, it is a good reason that whatsoever, being abused, doth most harm, being rightly used (and upon the right use each thing conceiveth his title), doth most good. Do we not see the skill of physic, the best rampire to our often-assaulted bodies, being abused, teach poison, the most violent destroyer? Doth not knowledge of law, whose end is to even and right all things, being abused, grow the crooked forester of horrible injuries? Doth not (to go to the highest) God's word abused breed heresy, and His name abused become blasphemy?¹²²

In theorising the 'phantastike' as a threat to worthiness and privileging the 'eikastike' as a means to virtue, Sidney communicates the duality central to early modern understanding of poesy's potency. The vision of the poet is founded upon the concept of virtue – but embedded within the concept of fantasy (poesy's seed and fuel) is the threat of abuse. Sidney accepts that poetry can have a detrimental effect on the individual through unwholesome stimulation of the imagination but, in turn, suggests that this same stimulative ability of poetry can enable efficacious moral teaching. As poets traditionally claim for themselves, or are granted, positions of extraordinary societal influence, the aligning of poesy with the central tenets of morality becomes deeply pertinent.¹²³ George Puttenham's graphic illustration of the historical role of the poet (1589) stresses rationality and moral fortitude. The civic truthfulness evoked here

¹²² Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy* (1595) in *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 236.

¹²³ In his paralleling of the artist and God, Aquinas plays an important role in this bestowal of divine powers on the poet: 'Just as in the mind of every artist there already exists the idea of what he will create by his art, so in the mind of every ruler there must already exist an ideal of order with respect to what shall be done by those subject to his rule...Now God, in His wisdom, is the creator of all things, and may be compared to them as the artist is compared to the produce of his art. (Article 1, Question 93)

clearly belongs in a different conceptual universe to the inexplicable higher truthfulness

perceived by Bottom in his Dream:

And for that they were aged and grave men, and of much wisdom and experience in th'affairs of the world, they were the first lawmakers to the people, and the first politicians, devising all expedient means for the establishment of Common wealth, to hold and contain the people in order and duty by force and virtue of good and wholesome laws, made for the persuasion of the public peace and tranquillity. The same peradventure not purposely intended, but greatly furthered by the awe of their gods, and such scruple of conscience, as the terrors of their late invented religion had led them into.¹²⁴

Relatedly, R. S. White, through reference to Shelley, stresses the moral responsibility on artist and audience attendant to the writing and consumption of poetry

Poets have always taken some version of Natural Law as their province, believing, as Shelley asserted, that their profession confers upon them the mantle of 'unacknowledged legislators of the world'. As authority for their particular legislative jurisdiction, at least in the English Renaissance, poets inserted themselves in a contemporary, legal debate between the claims of Natural Law as an unwritten and intuitive basis for all law, and positive law (man-made 'law of the land'). They firmly asserted the primacy of the former over the latter, although in the truly just state the two would be synonymous. If through Natural Law, according to Aquinas, people 'participate in' eternal law, then literature is treated by theorists and practitioners as a medium through which this participation could be effected. Readers and audiences are encouraged, even required, to make moral judgments which are at least implicit in the narrative and sometimes explicit, and thus confirm that they themselves have the potential to 'do good and avoid evil'. The English Renaissance...was a period in which at least writers felt that the order of imaginative literature was parallel to, and even coterminous with, the order of Natural Law, implicating and testing audiences and readers as much as fictional characters in making moral choices.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, 23-24.

¹²⁵ R. S. White, *Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature*, 6. The Shelley quote is taken from Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Defence of Poetry', (1821), first published in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, ed. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (London: Edward Moxon, 1840).

The contrast between the poets that White describes above and Bottom is clear: *Dream*, however, offers Bottom's unlawful aesthetic – poesy built upon fantasy – and an attendant non-judgemental relaxedness, to the ruler of Athens. The world of order is defined as needing an aesthetic unyoked from virtue.

This chapter has considered the contribution of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the early modern debate on interaction between pleasure, profit and the imagination. The play has been read as being structured to generate an investigation into pleasure and to permit exploration of the potential of the aesthetic realm. The play's structure, it has been argued, takes the shape of a reflexive dialogue between a world presenting pleasure found in order and its pursuit (Theseus's Athens), and a companion world that is relaxed about the unlawfulness within us, and comfortable presenting the non-virtuous epiphany as a path to new perceptions. The interplay that takes place between these worlds creates a kaleidoscopic picture of early modern management of the Horatian profit/pleasure commonplace which takes the shape of an exploration and expansion of pleasure's forms and boundaries.¹²⁶ The central focus for this focus on *Dream*'s reshaping of pleasure has been 'Bottom's Dream'. It has been proposed that

¹²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

this episode presents an unyoking of the concept of virtue from the concept of pleasure and a display of the aesthetic's claim to existence.

Chapter 3

The Revenger and the Decentred Subject: Pleasure vs. Pleasure in *Hamlet*

Only the atoms are immortal.¹

Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuis.²

No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it.³

What if the Sun

Be centre to the World?⁴

Pleasure upon pleasure, pleasure within pleasure, producing pleasure.⁵

Abstract: The discussion I offer on *Hamlet* focuses on interaction between pleasure and subjectivity. Illustrated here is a rethinking of pleasure performed in *Hamlet* that centres upon a collision between the pleasures of revenge and the pleasures of interrogation into an emergent decentred subjectivity. Lucretian and Montaignian thought is referenced throughout. It is suggested that as Hamlet theorises pleasure away from its ties to the old

¹ Stephen Greenblatt describing Lucretian materialism. See Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: The Bodley Head, 2011), 6.

² *The Wisdom of Solomon*, XI.21. 'But thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight'. *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Self-Reliance' in *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. R. Poirier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 134.

⁴ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 8, 122-23. *Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

⁵ Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy," in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 16.

world of Seneca, the supernatural, prescribed duty, virtue and the supernatural in a turn towards self introspection, the very project of selfhood that he takes pleasure in leads him back towards taking pleasure in revenge.

Overview

The picture presented in this stage of the discussion is of early modern performance of *Hamlet* drawing on Lucretian and Montaignian thinking as it rethinks the concept of pleasure in response to an early modern crisis of subjectivity.⁶ Shakespeare's play is illustrated as employing the investigative, communicative and subversive potential of the playhouse to unyoke itself from its own revenge tragedy traditions and present new approaches to pleasure contingent upon a contemporary decentring of the self: a new subjectivity, it is argued, demands

⁶ I am thinking here of the crisis implicit to Dollimore's reading of Marston's *Antonio*: 'Protagonists are not defined by some spiritual or quasi-metaphysical essence, nor, even, a resilient human essence; rather, their identities are shown to be precariously dependent upon the social reality which confronts them. Correspondingly, revenge action is not a working out of divine vengeance, but a strategy of survival resorted to by the alienated and dispossessed. Moreover, in that action is a rejection of the providential scheme which divine vengeance conventionally presupposed.' Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 29. Cited in the first chapter of this thesis. This crisis is also identifiable in the situations and conditions outlined by Kevin Sharpe in *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics*. Contexts covered include the 'the radical implications of Montaigne's assault on the metaphysical universe of the Renaissance', the 'personal turmoil' of Thomas Browne, the challenges made by Separatists to 'the very foundations of society, state and church', 'the great speech on order in *Troilus*...itself undermined by the character's position in the play', and 'the impact of the new cosmology' in that 'the disharmony of the planets is associated with the subversion of all moral order'. Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 60-1.

a new theatre and a rethinking of pleasure's uses, possibilities and parameters.⁷ This recalibration of pleasure, it is proposed, grows out of Hamlet's skeptical reading of the worldview upon which revenge tragedy is built. What is being approached here is a disconnecting of the human experience from a figuring of the cosmos that promotes reward and punishment according to the dictates of the divine. The play, it is argued, bestrides the old and new forms of the *theatrum mundi* topos. To elaborate, the old understanding of the *theatrum mundi* topos presents the divine watching the mortal and speaks of subjection to divine rule, ongoing and judgemental watchedness, the locations (if the Catholic sense is employed) – of heaven, hell, and purgatory and, relatedly, punishment and/or reward according to the fulfilment – or lack thereof – of prescribed duty.⁸ The new understanding of the *theatrum mundi* topos figures the topos as a signifier of a busy world of ever-changing roles, duplicity, and a vanishing sense of a single, secure subjectivity. Through the rejection of the old worldview and the structures that support it, it becomes possible to theorise pleasure away from its virtue-centred conceptual ties to the physiological, the festive, and the damning image of Old Adam dancing, and to re-locate pleasure in an Epicurean world of tranquility and freedom. This would be a world in which salvation has more to do with the secular and the intellect, and less to do

⁷ This new subjectivity is described within Grady's comparison of 'the brave new world of available social identities of early modern London and the older inflexible ideologies of social station'. Hugh Grady, "Falstaff," 611.

⁸ For a full discussion on the *theatrum mundi* topos see Bjorn Quiring, *'If Then the World a Theatre Present...': Revisions of the Theatrum Mundi Metaphor in Early Modern England* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2014).

with the supernatural and its defining and evaluation of acts of virtue. The concept of Purgatory is a useful touchstone here. As Greenblatt explains, 'Purgatory, the middle space of the realm of the dead, was conceived in English texts of the later Middle Ages and then attacked by English Protestants of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. That attack...focused on the imagination.'⁹ Throughout the play the Ghost not only makes an old world demand for revenge, it also carries the old world imagining of Purgatory into *Hamlet's* intellectual terrain. The crisis in subjectivity, and consequent re-birth of the self, that instigates Hamlet's exploration of the concept of pleasure grows out of incongruence between the decentred subject's experience of his/her own self, and the experience of self demanded by the old world order projected by Senecan revenge tragedy, the old understanding of the *theatrum mundi* topos and, in a different, but nonetheless old, conceptual arena, the Catholic imagining of Purgatory. The projection of the old world order encourages, I suggest, a single-voiced subjectivity unable to negotiate beyond the scope of prescribed duty. This is to say that in theatre aligned to the old world order the revenger must seek revenge, the offender must face punishment, the tragic must build into tragedy – hence the concepts of 'essence' and 'nature' enjoy uninterrogated interaction. Prescribed duty must be accepted or punishment will follow. A dilemma for the revenger arises here. The duty of revenge cannot be ignored, but the committing of revenge awakens the threat of damnation. Standing on the cusp of an emergent new world order, and

⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University, Press: 2001), 3.

facing this dilemma, Prince Hamlet finds the mould of single-voiced subjectivity, the subjectivity of the old worldview, an ill-fitting encumbrance – a deceit – and, subsequently, displays repulsion to the old selfhood and the old world order.¹⁰ Rejection of the worldview upon which revenge tragedy is built (the Senecan cosmos emblematised in the old form of the *theatrum mundi* topos) presupposes acceptance of a replacement conceptual framework within which to function and interpret. Here it will be argued that Prince Hamlet finds this replacement conceptual framework by turning inwards and embarking upon an exploration of his own interiority that shows easy community with a Montaignian project of selfhood. Thus, the result of his experience of ill-fittedness is a newly-discovered decentredness. Attendant to this decentredness is the birth of a multi-voiced and changeable subjectivity. The prince simply feels beyond the parameters of the role of revenger and resents the reductive, and deceit-generating, imposition of this single-voiced function on his immersion into what he deems to be a truthful multi-voicedness. The single-role definition of the revenging subject promoted by pre-Shakespearean revenge tragedy (usefully illustrated by John Kerrigan's suggestion that Aeschylus's title character 'would not be Orestes if he did not take revenge') is rejected, then,

¹⁰ In discussing Hamlet, Francis Barker famously suggests that 'in the interior of his mystery, there is, in short, nothing. The promised essence remains beyond the scope of the text's signification'. Barker goes on to say that the play 'gestures towards a place for subjectivity', but this could only be found in an 'historical order whose outline has so far only been sketched out'. See Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 33. It is a rich and useful idea that paints a strong image of a subjectivity continually foiled in its attempts to surface.

in favour of an embracing of a changeable self incompatible with such mono-functionality.¹¹ In turn, Hamlet finds the draw of self-reflexive investigation – a project of selfhood – competing with – and finding fuel in – the drive towards revenge itself. *Hamlet* defines subjectivity, then, as a struggle between the order-opposing veracity of multi-voicedness, contingency and mobility and the order-supporting falsehood of single-voicedness, fixedness and stability. It is in this opposition between contingency and mobility, and fixedness and stability, that the play embraces a referencing of Montaignian thought, Copernicanism's superceding of Ptolemaism and, Epicurean atomism – or materialism. The role and presence of Montaigne, Copernicus and Epicurus (and, relatedly, Lucretius) in *Hamlet* are discussed below.

The falsehood of the single-voiced self, as evaluated – or felt – by Hamlet, registers or presents itself as a truth within the Elsinorian court, the revenge tragedy tradition, and the old worldview. This is to say that the form of revenge tragedy that is shaped by the old form of the *theatrum mundi* topos is inadequate to the multi-voiced self and aesthetic integrity alike.

(Montaigne's suggestion that 'any object can be seen in various lights and from various points of view' stands as a challenge to the teleological must-ness that Aristotle identifies as driving tragedy.¹² As John Kerrigan explains, 'the author of the *Metaphysics* was impressed by the

¹¹ John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 14.

¹² Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1991), 655. Peter Holbrook aligns this phrase of Montaigne's with the pluralism of Isaiah Berlin. The rejection of a yoking of nature to coherence

teleology of revenge plots, by their eye-for-eye attentiveness to lucid causal relations.... He deals with plays as though they were organisms, complexly articulated yet whole'.¹³ Kerrigan also notes that Aristotle's insistence that tragic plots offer 'a beginning, a middle, and an end'¹⁴ 'coincides with the pattern of inquiry, anticipation, and reaction which structures an Ur-revenge action, played out on the open stage'.¹⁵ Thus, what Peter Holbrook terms a 'self-thwarting morality', a morality that supports the old world order, finds an opponent and interrogator in Hamlet.¹⁶ To be a revenger is not to be Hamlet, hence acceptance of the moral economy of the revenge tragedy is defined as serving to reduce the self rather than steer it towards fulfilment: 'authenticity is seen as more important than morality'.¹⁷ A related context is found in the tendency, identified by Holbrook, of Victorian selves incompatible with the moral rigour of the times (selves presenting 'dissidence' in the vocabulary of Jonathan Dollimore),¹⁸ to turn to

communicated here is, I argue, very much part of Hamlet's makeup. Peter Holbrook, *Shakespeare's Individualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6-8.

¹³ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, 5.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. M. E. Hubbard in D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, eds., *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 1450b. Quoted by Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, 5.

¹⁵ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, 5.

¹⁶ Peter Holbrook, *Shakespeare's Individualism*, 152.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁸ See Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). In summarising late twentieth-century theorisation of desire and identity, Dollimore offers related comment on the illusion of a stable subjectivity: 'Desire and identity are not – must not be, can never be – fixed or essentialized. Identity is contingent and mobile, desire is fluid and even more mobile. To try to fix or naturalize things like femininity, masculinity or heterosexuality – to see them as stable, natural categories – was reactionary crap, at best the last throes of an obsolete humanism. For those of us thinking lesbian and gay theory, "nature" and

Shakespeare (one thinks particularly of the sensual excesses of *Antony and Cleopatra*) for comforting impetus towards liberation of the self:

In the nineteenth century men whose sexual identities were at odds with the dominant discourse of Victorian England found in Shakespeare an invitation and challenge to liberate their identities – to become who they are, in Nietzsche’s vocabulary. Such dissidents agree with Wilde that ‘There is no one type of man’ and see Shakespeare as sponsoring a more liberal conception of life than that traditional morality permits.¹⁹

It is important here not to fall into the reductive. The drive towards multi-voiced individualism does constitute a reworking of the pleasure spectrum – as will be illustrated in some detail

below – but does not, *Hamlet* suggests, constitute an overwriting of this spectrum. Pleasure in single-voicedness remains, and stands as a challenge to the success of the project of selfhood.

This is to say the old world revenger is granted the pleasures of heroism, licensed violence, and the security and comfort offered by engagement in a ritual of justice.²⁰ Active within the play and central to the Hamlet condition then, is a face-off between the visceral, empowering, kinetic pleasures of revenge and revenge drama, and an intellectual, cognitive delight in self-reflexive

“essence” were the metaphysics of the heteronormative.’ See Jonathan Dollimore, “Wishful Theory and Sexual Politics,” *Radical Philosophy*, 103 (2000): 18.

¹⁹ Holbrook, *Shakespeare’s Individualism*, 151. The Wilde quotation comes from an 1891 essay titled ‘The Soul of Man Under Socialism’. Oscar Wilde, ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ in *The Soul of Man under Socialism and Selected Critical Prose* (London: Penguin, 2001), 138.

²⁰ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, 3-4. I am trapped within a masculine context. For a discussion on female revenge see Marguerite A. Tassi, *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare: Gender, Genre and Ethics* (Susquehanna University Press, 2011).

subjective theorisation. Blood-lust and the securities offered by the revenge imperative exist alongside luxuriation in exploration into subjectivity as the act of revenge stands in tension with consideration of the connotations of one's subjection to such a task. The one set of pleasures collides with the other. This is discussed in some detail in the section titled 'Revenge, Duty and Pleasure' below.

Here it is useful to briefly consider the tensions in play within Hamlet's third soliloquy as an introduction to the argument:

Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
 Is it not monstrous that this player here,
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
 Could force his soul so to his own conceit
 That from her working all the visage wanned,
 –Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
 With forms to his conceit – and all for nothing –
 For Hecuba?
 What's Hecuba to him, or he to her,
 That he should weep for her? What would he do
 Had he the motive and that for passion
 That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
 And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
 Make mad the guilty and appall the free,
 Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
 The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,
 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
 Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
 And can say nothing. No, not for a king
 Upon whose property and most dear life

A damned defeat was made.

(II.ii.485-506)²¹

As highlighted by A. P. Rossiter, Hamlet here indulges in ‘self-awareness, but of the mind’s own lack of togetherness and coherence’.²² Andrew Fitzmaurice also highlights Hamlet’s self-indulgence: ‘Hamlet...speaks at great length about his inability to express the nature of his problem’.²³ ‘This ‘lack of togetherness’ is signaled by Hamlet’s attraction to the passions attendant on the drive towards revenge. The prince is clearly drawn to the player’s tears, raging eyes, cracked speech and taut, tense musculature, but is equally drawn to his own lack of such physiological display. The soliloquy communicates rupture. Pleasure in revenge and pleasure in self-reflection at unsuitability for revenge stand shoulder-to-shoulder. Staged here is tension between the single-voiced subjectivity of the old world and the multi-voiced subjectivity of the atomic universe of Epicurus and Lucretius.

Grady usefully explains the tensions in subjectivity within *Hamlet* as an illustration of movement from ‘notions of subjectivity wholly determined by power to notions of subjectivity

²¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Methuen, 2006). All quotations hereafter taken from this edition unless indicated otherwise.

²² A. P. Rossiter, *Angel with Horns: Fifteen Lectures on Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1961), 172.

²³ Andrew Fitzmaurice, “The Corruption of *Hamlet*,” in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 150.

as potentially resistant to power'.²⁴ This usefully colours our investigation into *Hamlet's* pleasure dialectic. It seems to me that Grady's definition of 'subjectivity as something of a dialectical negation of power, not a mere effect of its operations' runs parallel to *Hamlet's* foregrounding of the agency of pleasure in the forming of subjectivity.²⁵ To put it simply, the subject is making himself. The prince's criticism of his enjoyment of the role of revenger – a role, as described above, defined by its dialogue of assimilation to (and, paradoxically, resistance against) institutions of power – motivates, I would argue the play's movement towards evocation and consideration of Montaignian and Lucretian understandings of pleasure.

This brings us to consideration of the relationship between turn-of-the century Shakespeare, Montaigne, and Epicurean/Lucretian thought. Lucretius's telling of an Epicurean materialistic view of the universe through his six-book poem *De Rerum Natura*, was introduced to the early modern world following its re-discovery by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417.²⁶ As explained by Stephen Greenblatt in his 2011 publication *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began*, Lucretius's poem offered its Renaissance supporters a foothold on a previously unthinkable liberalism via a remapping of the cosmos that placed the human being everywhere and at one

²⁴ Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The edition cited within this thesis is Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ed. and trans. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

with everything:

The stuff of the universe, Lucretius proposed, is an infinite number of atoms moving randomly through space, like dust motes in a sunbeam, colliding, hooking together, forming complex structures, breaking apart again, in a ceaseless process of creation and destruction. There is no escape from this process. When you look up at the night sky and, feeling unaccountably moved, marvel at numberless stars, you are not seeing the handiwork of the gods or a crystalline sphere detached from our transient world. You are seeing the same material world of which you are a part and from whose elements you are made.²⁷

Thus Lucretius offers humankind removal of the liberty-stealing manacles of superstition via release from the old worldview. This marks a victory over the supernatural:

Quare religio pedibus subiecta vicissim
opteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo.

And so religion in revenge is cast beneath men's feet and trampled,
and victory raises us to heaven.²⁸

Direct consequences of this victory of man over the heavens and attendant decentralisation of the subject are, Greenblatt explains, liberation from unwarranted fears, and a related empowering of worldly beauty and pleasure:

There is no master plan, no divine architect, no intelligent design.²⁹

In a universe so constituted, Lucretius argued, there is no reason to think that the earth or its inhabitants occupy a central place, no reason to set humans apart from all other animals, no hope of

²⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: The Bodley Head, 2011), 5-6.

²⁸ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 1. vv. 78-79.

²⁹ Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 6.

bribing or appeasing the gods, no place for religious fanaticism, no call for ascetic self-denial, no justification for dreams of limitless power or perfect security, no rationale for wars of conquest or self-aggrandizement, no possibility of triumphing over nature, no escape from the constant making and unmaking and remaking of forms. On the other side of anger at those who peddled false visions of security or incited irrational fears of death, Lucretius offered a feeling of liberation and the power to stare down what had once seemed so menacing. What human beings can and should do, he wrote, is to conquer their fears, accept the fact that they themselves and all the things they are encounter are transitory, and embrace the beauty and the pleasure of the world.³⁰

Through its rejection of superstition, theocentricity and the natural privileging of humankind

Lucretian materialism offers, then, the potential for an expansion of the spectrum of pleasure.

Fear of death is conquered as acceptance of the transitory nature of existence and environment allows the subject to ‘embrace the beauty and the pleasure of the world’.³¹

The thread that ties Lucretian thinking to Shakespeare is almost certainly Montaigne’s *Essays* – or, as Greenblatt proposes in *Shakespeare’s Montaigne: The Florio Translation of the Essays* (2014), John Florio’s 1603 English translation of Montaigne’s *Essays*.³² It is generally believed that Shakespeare had access to Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s text at the turn of the century. Of greater relevance, suggests Grady, are ‘discursive’ links; the borrowing of text is surely secondary to the sharing of concept or philosophy. As Grady explains: ‘In the end it

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Stephen Greenblatt, “Shakespeare’s Montaigne,” in Michel de Montaigne, *Shakespeare’s Montaigne: The Florio Translation of the Essays*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt and Peter C. Platt, (New York: New York Review Books, 2014), ix-x.

matters little whether Shakespeare directly read...Montaigne. What matters is that we can observe the discursive parallels among them, parallels which help us to read the plays in new (and sometimes old) ways.³³ In reference to the influence of Montaigne within *The Tempest* and *King Lear*, Greenblatt stresses the borrowing of both text and idea: 'Shakespeare is mining Florio's Montaigne not simply for turns of phrase but for key concepts central to the play in question'.³⁴ One important area of thought approached by Montaigne and Shakespeare concerns points of intersection between self-fashioning, changeability and Epicurean pleasure.³⁵

Montaigne's approach to subjectivity permits a joyous and transparent embracing of changeability, unfixedness and multi-voicedness:

If I speak diversely of myself, it is because I look diversely upon myself.... Shame-faced, bashful, insolent, chaste, luxurious, peevish, prattling, silent, fond, doting, labourious, nice, delicate, ingenious, slow, dull, forward, humorous, debonaire, wise, ignorant, false in words, true-speaking, both liberal, covetous, and prodigal. All these I perceive in some measure or other to be in mine, according as I stir or turn myself.³⁶

This unfixedness is both Montaignian and Hamletian. Consider, Ophelia's illustration of the

³³ Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli and Montaigne*, 29-30.

³⁴ Greenblatt, "Shakespeare's Montaigne," xxviii.

³⁵ Following the suggestion that Montaigne and Shakespeare share 'radical perceptions', Greenblatt contrasts Montaigne's invention of a 'brilliant mode of *non-narrative* self-fashioning to Shakespeare's 'fashioning of narrative selves'. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 252-53.

³⁶ The quotation is taken from 'Of the Inconstancy of Our Actions'. See Montaigne, *Shakespeare's Montaigne: The Florio Translation of the Essays*, 95.

distance between the pre-play Hamlet and the Hamlet of the play proper:

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
 The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
 Th'expectation and rose of the fair state,
 The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
 Th'observed of all observers, quite, quite down.

(III.i.149-53)

Here Ophelia projects Hamlet as an old world ideal of subjectivity transformed. The self of the old world takes its shape from the pre-existent 'mould of form' that Ophelia references (III.i.152). A Lucretian/Montaignian making and remaking, a subjective changeability, falls outside the pattern of comprehension displayed by Ophelia. She cannot conceive of correlation between a 'fair state' and the multi-voiced self (III.i.151). Hamlet, however, finds no correlation between his understanding of subjectivity and state order. He will not 'seem' in ways that the state demands; he finds truth in the flow – as context demands – between 'breach and 'observance' of 'custom' (I.iv.15-16). Unlike Ophelia, Hamlet has embraced a new philosophy. John Donne offers an apposite early modern illustration of the fusion of anxious decentredness and eager interrogation into selfhood contingent to this new philosophy:

And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
 The element of fire is quite put out,
 The sun is lost, and th' earth, and no man's wit
 Can well direct him where to look for it.
 And freely men confess that this world's spent,
 When in the planets and the firmament
 They seek so many new; they see that this

Is crumbled out again to his atomies.
 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone.³⁷

There is a possibility – although the point is controversial – that Hamlet references Copernicus in his love letter to Ophelia (II.ii.119-25), thus further highlighting the fissure between the worldviews of the prince and those of the counsellor's daughter.³⁸ Within this letter, Hamlet pre-empts Milton by daring to ask 'What if the Sun / Be Center to the World?'³⁹ The letter could, then, be a document that hints at Elsinore, and consequently the London playhouse, being home to a divisive clash between the scientific and the theological, and consequently a site of enquiry into the subject's relationship with pleasure:

The letter

To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia' – That's an ill phrase, a

³⁷ John Donne, 'An Anatomy of the World' (1611). John Donne, *The Complete English Poems* (London: Penguin, 1977), 280.

³⁸ Kenneth S. Rothwell also posits the possibility of Hamlet's letter to Ophelia evoking Copernicanism: 'Hamlet's sophomoric verse epistle to Ophelia...though often read as supportive of the old Ptolemaic world view, may echo the theories about Copernicus at Wittenberg'. Kenneth S. Rothwell, "Hamlet's 'Glass of Fashion': Power, Self, and the Reformation," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 84. Numerous other arguments could be made in the attempt to locate the concept of Copernicanism within *Hamlet*. The University of Wittenberg, for example, was a famed home of Ptolemaic learning, Hamlet's uncle shares his first name with Claudius Ptolemy and, in response to Prince Hamlet's request for leave to return to Wittenberg, Claudius says that this would be 'most retrograde to our desire'. Peter Usher suggests that Claudius's use of the word 'retrograde' references the occasional retrograde (meaning western) movement of the planets. See Peter Usher, 'Hamlet's Transformation' in *Elizabethan Review*, v. 7, no. 1, (1999), 48-64.

³⁹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 8, 122-23. For a discussion on Milton's cosmic projection see Catherine Gimelli Martin, "'What if the Sun Be Centre to the World?': Milton's Epistemology, Cosmology, and Paradise of Fools Reconsidered," *Modern Philology*, 99, (2001): 231-65.

vile phrase: ‘beautified’ is a vile phrase. But you shall hear these, ‘in her excellent white bosom’, these—

GERTRUDE Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS Good madam, stay awhile: I will be faithful.

‘Doubt thou the stars are fire,

Doubt that the sun doth move,

Doubt truth to be a liar,

But never doubt I love.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers: I have not art to reckon my groans; but that I love thee best, O, most best, believe it. Adieu. Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, Hamlet’

(II.ii.113-25)

The possible refutation of Ptolemaism, chronologically perfectly possible, is found in the encouragement to doubt ‘truth’ (II.ii.116), by questioning the nature of celestial matter, hence the location of the stars (II.ii.114) and the movement of the sun (II.ii.115). Doubting that stars are fire registers as a doubting of the Ptolemaic order. In Ptolemy’s understanding (and, perhaps more famously, that of Aristotle), stars would be positioned in the great sphere, thus in the outer reaches far from planet earth. Location was determined by matter. The lighter elements – and fire was deemed the lightest – would be located in the spheres most distant to the central, heaviest element, planet earth. Thus, doubting that stars are fire suggests scepticism about the Ptolemaic order. Doubting that the sun moves similarly aligns the doubter with acceptance of Copernican heliocentrism.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ A. Mark Smith offers a fuller explanation of the relationship between weight of element and celestial location in *From Sight to Light: The Passage from Ancient to Modern Optics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 122-23. During the writing of this chapter Professor John Gillies offered invaluable direction in regard to the point made here.

Copernicus published his theory in his *De revolutionibus* in 1543 and the number of extant copies of first and second editions, listed as exceeding 500, suggests that by Shakespeare's lifetime the theory was widely known if not, necessarily, widely accepted.⁴¹ As Owen Gingerich explains, 'nearly every sixteenth-century astronomer accepted Copernicus's *De revolutionibus* as an up-to-date recipe book for computing positions of planets, but definitely not as a description of physical reality'.⁴²

Following the publication of *De revolutionibus*, Copernicus's heliocentrism started to be referenced in texts produced in England. Examples include Robert Recorde's *Castle of Knowledge* of 1556 and John Field's *Ephemeris Anni 1557* (which predicted the positions of planets for the year 1557). Perhaps most influential were two texts produced by Thomas Digges. The first, *Alae seu Scalae Mathematicae* (1573), a text dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I, contained categorical support for Copernican theory. The second was a 1576 text confidently titled *A Perfit Description of the Caelestiall Orbes*. The description in question was that of the heliocentric planetary system.

⁴¹ Owen Gingerich, *The Book Nobody Read* (London: William Heinemann, 2004).

⁴² Owen Gingerich, "Galileo, the Impact of the Telescope, and the Birth of Modern Astronomy", read 12 November 2009, as part of the symposium "Discoveries in Astronomy". See *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, v. 155, 2 (2011): 135.

Hamlet is famously depicted as being unhinged by the death of his father and hasty post-funeral marriage of his mother to his uncle. Reference points (his mother and father) with which he has formed a model of selfhood are swept away in a storm of definition-shattering vice. This has all been well documented throughout the critical history of the play. My suggestion here is this shattering of worldview also takes place in the domain of the cosmic. Hamlet, the love letter suggests, finds his worldview interrogated by developments in scientific knowledge. The threat to the Aristotelian/Christian notion of humankind holding a central position in the universe that Copernicus presents denotes an important stage in the development of western thinking. The focus here is on the possibility of finding delight amongst the anxiety that this threat brings. If humankind does not stand at the centre of the universe, definitions of the self are open to broader negotiation as the ties linking virtue to order weaken. Relatedly, the concept of pleasure can be recalibrated. *Hamlet*, I am arguing, offers Lucretian and Montaignian investigations into pleasure and an endlessly changeable subjectivity.

Shakespeare's staging of a revision of scientific theory carrying connotations for investigation into pleasure and subjectivity is not restricted to the single instance of Ophelia's letter. Lucretian materialism, or atomism, is traceable in both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. Stephen Greenblatt points towards its evocation in *Romeo and Juliet*. Foregrounded is Mercutio's depiction of Queen

Mab:⁴³

She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate stone
On the forefinger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomi
Over men's noses as they lie asleep.

(I.iv.54-58)

The focus on *Romeo and Juliet* that Greenblatt offers here is pertinent to my argument. He suggests that the imagining of 'little atomi' becomes particularly resonant 'in the context of a tragedy that broods upon the compulsive power of desire in a world whose main characters conspicuously abjure any prospect of life after death'.⁴⁴ Romeo's pre-suicide utterance does indeed, communicate a materialistic, non-salvational attitude to the afterlife:

Here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chambermaids. O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest.

(V.iii.108-10)

A related context within *Hamlet* has been identified by Theodora S. Carlile in a short chapter titled 'A Crack in the Surface, 1601: *Hamlet* Reads Lucretian Atomism'.⁴⁵ Carlile's focus is on

⁴³ Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 242-43. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1998), 1007-40.

⁴⁴ Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 243. *Romeo and Juliet*, (I.iv.57).

⁴⁵ See Theodora S. Carlile, "A Crack in the Surface, 1601: *Hamlet* Reads Lucretian Atomism," in *Core Texts in Conversation*, eds. Jane Kelley Rodeheffer, J. Scott Lee and David Sokolowski (Maryland: University Press of America, 2000), 37-42.

atomism as a guiding concept in Gertrude's depiction of the drowning of Ophelia:

There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
 Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
 When down the weedy trophies and herself
 Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
 And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
 Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
 As one incapable of her own distress,
 Or like a creature native and indued
 Unto that element: but long it could not be
 Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
 Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
 To muddy death.

(IV.vi.155-66)

Carlile observes that 'Ophelia's death is...depicted as a gradual melting. Her being is native and indued to the watery element...and she merges passively into it'.⁴⁶ In the same realm of thought lies the disgust-motivated escape from human existence that Prince Hamlet wishes for himself as he considers his incompatibility with the lewd, inconstant environment of Elsinore: 'O, that this too too solid flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!' (I.ii.129-30). Such a fusing of the material of the body with the surrounding natural environment is also, as Carlile highlights, communicated by Laertes at Ophelia's funeral:

Lay her i'th'earth,
 And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
 May violets spring!

(V.i.227-29)

⁴⁶ Ibid., 38.

Carlile then proposes that ‘Ophelia’s passage from life to death suggests a model of mortality which is characterised by a breaking apart and a return of both spirit and the flesh to the world of physical nature’.⁴⁷ According to the tenets of Lucretian materialism, the universe consists of various types of atom, eternally present and eternally unchangeable, which randomly combine to form the identifiable and differing beings and objects that constitute the environment we share. Death merely signals movement from one incidental form to another. ‘In death, then, what ceases to be is the accident, the happenstance arrangement into which the atoms have shaped themselves, the form.’⁴⁸ This, along with the decentring of the self attendant to Copernicanism, has profound connotations for control exercised by the concept of an afterlife on lives lived. In prioritising the subject and the lived-in moment both Copernicanism and Lucretian materialism clearly present alternatives to a life of fear directed by projections of the afterlife. My suggestion here is that the Lucretian dimension of the play, and its partner, the Copernican dimension of the play, unite with Hamlet’s engagement with a Montaignian understanding of selfhood to register a recalibration of the field of pleasure. This embracing of changeability and contingency, and the related escape from fear of death enables ‘a history that must of necessity abjure the highest form of literary ambition that the Renaissance inherited

⁴⁷ Ibid., 39

⁴⁸ Ibid.

from the ancient world, namely, the epic.’⁴⁹ Thus, *Hamlet* presents the possibility of a rupturing away from the ‘overarching design’ that the epic, revenge tragedy, and the old, superstitious form of the *theatrum mundi* topos promote.⁵⁰

Attendant to this rupturing away from the design of the old world is a rupturing away from its pleasures. This allows a rethinking of pleasure within a reassessment of subjectivity. This recalls the promotion of ‘ceaseless vicissitudes’ to the status of central existential concern within the Montaignian essay.⁵¹

I cannot settle my object. It goeth so unquietly and staggering, with a natural drunkenness. I take it in this plight, as it is at the instant I amuse myself about it. I describe not the essence but the passage. Not a passage from age to age, or, as the people reckon, from seven years to seven, but from day to day, from minute to minute. My history must be fitted to the present.⁵²

As Rhodri Lewis argues, ‘it is not hard to identify a congruity between Montaigne’s essay writing and Hamlet’s digressive and philosophically vaulting manner of talking to himself...Hamlet’s eloquent and self-consciously inward-looking gestures at existential, moral, and personal understanding do have a great deal in common with Montaigne’s literary novelty.’⁵³

⁴⁹ Greenblatt, “Shakespeare’s Montaigne,” xv.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., xiv.

⁵² Montaigne, *Shakespeare’s Montaigne: The Florio Translation of the Essays*, 196.

⁵³ Rhodri Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 36. Lewis

Hamlet, I am suggesting is fully engaged in an expansive investigation into early modern understanding of a new subjectivity and its pleasures and anxieties.⁵⁴ This investigation stands as a partner to the Montaignian interrogation of subjectivity through the creation and re-creation of the essay writing format. Where Montaigne finds purchase within his project of selfhood in the essay format, Hamlet finds purchase in theatricality. A focus on the play's figuring of the concept of theatricality thus leads further into the picture of pleasure generated by the tension between Hamlet's role as old world revenger and his exploration into an emergent project of selfhood resembling that championed by Montaigne. The next area for consideration, then, is the role and figuring of the theatrical within *Hamlet's* figuring of pleasure.

Pleasure, the Theatre of Revenge, and Selfhood

Man, in fact, can be revealed only when bound to a previously existing historicity: he is never contemporaneous with that origin which is outlined through the time of things even as it eludes the gaze; when he tries to define himself as a living being, he can uncover his own beginning only against the background of a life which itself began long before him; when he attempts to re-apprehend himself as a laboring being, he cannot bring even the most rudimentary forms of such a being to light except within a human time and space which have been previously institutionalized, and previously subjugated by society; and when he attempts to define his essence as a speaking subject, prior to any effectively constituted

identifies rhetorical and philosophical similarities between Hamlet and Montaigne, but registers these similarities as being the result of 'Hamlet's soliloquies' being 'designed to *look like* they have some share in the Montaignian moment. The essayist is another *persona* that Hamlet attempts to put on, and that does not fit him'. Thus, while I see optimism in Hamlet's Montaignian sway, Lewis adjudges the 'circuitous individualism' of Montaigne to offer 'no viable alternative' to the old metaphysical episteme. See Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*, 36.

⁵⁴ Lewis would disagree. For Lewis, Hamlet is the finely drawn embodiment of a moral order that is collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions. *Ibid.*, 39.

language, all he ever finds is the previously unfolded possibility of language, and not the stumbling sound, the first word upon the basis of which all languages and even language itself became possible. It is always against a background of the already begun that man is able to reflect on what may serve for him as origin.⁵⁵

O world, no world, but mass of public wrongs,
 Confused and filled with murder and misdeeds!
 Oh sacred heavens, if this unhallowed deed,
 ...
 Shall unrevealed and unrevenged pass,
 How should we term your dealings to be just
 If you unjustly deal with those that in your justice trust?

(III.ii.3-11)⁵⁶

This is most brave,
 That I, the son of a dear murdered,
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
 Must like a whore unpack my heart with words
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
 A stallion!

(II.ii.517-22)⁵⁷

Hamlet, it will be argued, is and is not a revenger.⁵⁸ Herein lies the rub – and a central point of interest. As discussed above, Hamlet’s movement towards the interrogation of his own

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. A. M. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 330.

⁵⁶ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, eds. Clara Calvo and Jesús Tronch (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁵⁷ *Hamlet* (II.ii.517-22).

⁵⁸ We should not oversimplify what revenge is here. As Martin Dodsworth points out in his focus on honour in *Hamlet*: “Revenge” is not exclusively associated with the obligations of kinship; in Shakespeare’s time it might be used for ‘punishment’ or ‘chastisement’ without the least implication of personal animus’. The idea of the son being the sole candidate to avenge the father’s murder is a little too neat. See Martin Dodsworth, *Hamlet Closely Observed*

interiority finds both resistance and encouragement in the demand made upon him to revenge his father's death. This tension can be understood as a collision between various areas of pleasure. Hamlet's enjoyment of self-exploration, essentially interior-focused thought, serves to obstruct his movement towards revenge. Inversely, the drive towards revenge pushes Hamlet deeper into the interrogation of his own interiority as it provokes an experiencing of theatricality which, in turn, engenders enjoyment in theatricality and disgust at enjoyment taken. This union of delight and self-loathing requires Hamlet's consideration and management. He interrogates his own tendency to, 'like a whore', 'unpack' his 'heart with words' when 'prompted to...revenge by heaven and hell' (II.ii.519-20).⁵⁹ Hamlet is, thus, asked to manage various pleasures that can both feed into each other and register as opposing forces. The intellectual pleasures of performed exploration into selfhood (Hamlet as a stagestruck Montaigne) co-exist with, and respond to, the aesthetic and visceral pleasures inherent to the imperative of revenge. Let us then sharpen the focus on the threads of theatricality that colour the weave of Hamlet's histrionic project of selfhood.

As discussed above, *Hamlet* projects a thematic interest in the decentring of the self and the causative ideological/environmental conditions that provoke and direct this decentring. Here the

(London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 63.

⁵⁹ This soliloquy is discussed in greater detail below.

subject's interaction with an environment in transition from the old worldview to a secular modern emptiness is central.⁶⁰ The prince's rejection of Elsinorian Machiavellianism – the 'seeming' one's way to success displayed by Claudius and Polonius, and identifiable throughout the machinations of the new court, leaves him facing the fashioning of selfhood without paradigmatic guidance. This situation is compounded by the dissolution of the old world, as discussed above. Furthermore, this struggle with selfhood takes place in an environment inhospitable to resistance to ideology prescribing a sense of self, a process now understood as Althusserian interpellation, or the related Foucauldian subjection.⁶¹

This subjective crisis drives Hamlet to search for sanctuary and intellectual purchase in the world of theatre, and this permits a problematising and rethinking of the concept of pleasure. The playhouse promises identity and display of the divine power of creation, whilst simultaneously projecting all as deceitful and ephemeral. Prince Hamlet's luxuriation in things theatrical is accompanied by acute self-loathing. Within Prince Hamlet dwells the Adam of

⁶⁰ A qualifying note here. The old variant of the *theatrum mundi* topos communicates a judgmental, hierarchical figuring of metaphysical order and hence carries strong resonances of the earliest of early modern thought. It carries the tendency, however, to interrogate itself and, therefore, retains potency within the arena of postmodern existentialism. For a full discussion see Ruby Cohn, "'Theatrum Mundi' and Contemporary Theater," *Comparative Drama*, 1.1 (1967), 28-35.

⁶¹ Key relevant texts are Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 127-86 and Foucault, *The Order of Things*. Consider Elsinore's moulding of its people into spies. *Hamlet* is full of scenes of court members watching, or spying on, peers and comrades.

Pico's *Oration*, a creature whom God addresses as follows:

Thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine.⁶²

This Renaissance humanist, in tune with Sidneyan liberation and transcendence through poetic feigning, carries, however, a philosophic reaction to playing that is antagonistic to this definition of actors 'as creating gods'. In expressing his disgust at his own drive towards the histrionic – his inability to 'reform...altogether' (III.ii.36) his tendency to indulge in the playing and overplaying of the role of another ('what an ass am I...like a whore...fall a-cursing like a very drab, / A stallion! Fie upon 't, foh! (II.ii.517-22)), Hamlet is edging towards the same soapbox as that used by the vehement antitheatricalist and writer of *Histrion-Mastix* (1633), William Prynne.⁶³ Prynne famously and violently damns the 'hypocrisie...obscenitie and lasciviousnesse...the grosse effeminacy...the extreame vanitie and follie, which necessarily attends the acting of Playes'.⁶⁴ Here, once again, enquiry into subjectivity intersects with the concept of pleasure and playing as, in *Hamlet*, the early modern theatre presents itself as sharpened, honed and ready to interrogate the connotations of pleasure taken in its wares and

⁶² Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, translated by Elizabeth Livermore Forbes in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer, et al. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1948), 224-25. Quoted by William B. Worthen in *The Idea of the Actor: Drama and the Ethics of Performance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 17.

⁶³ William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix* (London: 1633).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, X2r. Prynne's italics omitted.

processes. In lacing Elsinore's duplicitous, Machiavellian world with references to delight in theatre ('He that plays the King shall be welcome' (II.ii.285)), *Hamlet* asks what playing a role means. At the centre is consideration of 'the meaning of moral action in a theatricalized world' and the inflection of pleasure within such consideration.⁶⁵

BARNARDO

Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

(I.i.1-2)

This opening two-line exchange might be read as a foregrounding of the thematic central to the figuring of pleasure in *Hamlet* under discussion here. This thematic might be termed the early modern conceptualisation of subjectivity.⁶⁶ The suggestion is that the question asked by Barnardo that opens the play, 'Who's there?', and the contestatory, aggressive response offered by Francisco, when released from the specific context of stage locale and set free to roam around the interpretative space of the auditorium, serve as a call to the audience implied by the

⁶⁵ Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*, 11.

⁶⁶ John Lee suggests that "'Who's there?'" never becomes a simple question within *Hamlet*; identity, from the first line, is problematic'. John Lee, *Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and the Controversies of Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5. Leo Salingar proposes that the opening moment's focus on the identity of the subject serves as a paradigm for enquiries into subjective status that punctuate the remaining scenes of the play. Leo Salingar, "Shakespeare and the Ventriloquists," *Shakespeare Survey*, 34 (1981).

enactment of the play to engage in – or with – exploration into human subjectivity.

Barnardo functions as both anxious sentinel and stimulus towards consideration of human interiority as his concise, cautious, commanding question signals the concept of subjectivity as a central point of concern. While Francisco's response serves as a challenge to Barnardo's question, the foregrounding of subjectivity continues and is strengthened. The play's opening exchange suggests that this revenge tragedy will take pause, will present delays within the familiar narrative drive of revenge tragedy, will 'stand' to 'unfold', or unpack, the self (I.i.2).

Prince Hamlet, standing alone at a royal post-nuptial gathering of courtiers and the elite, and identifiable as the only attendee to be dressed in the black garb of mourning, brings the theme of subjectivity to the centre of the stage in the play upon words that constitutes his opening line.⁶⁷ When labelled a son by his uncle and step-father, Hamlet famously responds as follows:

A little more than kin, and less than kind. (I.ii.65)

⁶⁷ Implicit here and throughout the analysis I offer is a sense of Hamlet being 'the best guide to interpretation of the events he is caught up in'. Robin Headlem Wells suggests that this reading 'would not necessarily have been shared by contemporary playgoers'. Robin Headlem Wells, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 80.

This darkly playful expression of discontent at the status quo and opposition to the identity the monarch, his court, and his society ask him to adopt is reiterated in the prince's next utterance.

The King asks Hamlet to explain why 'the clouds still hang on' him (I.ii.66). Hamlet puns again:

Not so much, my lord, I am too much in the 'son'. (I.ii.67)

This second rejection of the imposition of identity registers extreme discomfort at membership of Claudius's Elsinorian court and unwillingness to accept the new shape of his family.⁶⁸

Hamlet, desiring a Montaigne-like retreat into privacy, wishes to withdraw from the glare of public view, the 'sun', and also wishes to revoke familial connections with the new king.

Subjectivity is opened up for presentation and analysis by the crisis-rendering transition from the old, glorified, Machiavellianism-aware environment of the Elsinore ruled over by King Hamlet to the new Machiavellianism-engendering kingdom of King Claudius. This transition is neatly figured by Hamlet himself in the comparison of the two ruler-brothers offered in his first soliloquy: 'So excellent a king, that was to this / Hyperion to a satyr' (I.ii.139-40). Hyperion, the Titan god of heavenly light (thus offering a return to the 'sun' motif), is associated with the

⁶⁸ The pun on 'son' and 'sun' commonly appeared in early modern drama. Consider, for example, Ben Jonson, George Chapman and John Marston, *Eastward Ho!*, ed. C. G. Potter (London: Bloomsbury, 1974), (III.ii.112-15).

maintaining of the old cosmic order and, relatedly, watching from above – hence neatly recalls the old hierarchical world structure of watchers above and actors/doers below imaged within the old model of the *theatrum mundi* topos. (The relevance of this topos to subjectivity and pleasure in *Hamlet* is discussed above.) The ever-erect satyr is associated with Dionysian excess and lewdness, hence unsuited to a position within the upper echelons of the old world order. Here I agree with Grady in his suggestion that ‘the tragedy begins in a kind of “disinterpellation”, when Prince Hamlet has been severed from the Symbolic order by the death of his father and his failure to succeed him. A fallen world, “the unweeded garden” of the first soliloquy, has succeeded a now lost, idealised one in which Hamlet had a preconceived place and role’.⁶⁹ The picture is of Hamlet being transferred from an identity-providing environment in which interpellation – or subjection – are functional, to an environment so devalued as to generate severance from – or resistance to – the ‘array of ideologically possible roles’.⁷⁰ Also important, and also noted by Grady, is the medium through which this transition from idealised world to rotten state is explained:

The situation is complicated and made even more uncannily psychoanalytic when it turns out that the interpreter and explainer of the world’s fallen state is none other than an ambiguous, mysterious, never fully explained Ghost in the image of Hamlet’s dead father, who not only evokes (embodies and disembodies) the lost world, episteme, and identity of his (presumed) son, but also defines a new role and identity for the young Hamlet that, he and we begin to realize as the play develops, simply

⁶⁹ Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli and Montaigne*, 262-63.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 263.

does not ‘fit’.⁷¹

To relate this – as the play demands – to the domain of things theatrical, following the change of ruler/father, the actor prince resists the role(s) offered by the old model of the theatrum mundi topos and, paradigms and points of reference negated, finds himself engaged in a project of selfhood that directly opposes the imperative of revenge. Importantly, Hamlet’s project of selfhood is undertaken within the conceptual domain of theatre; the concepts of person as role-changing player and event as ever-changing scene – constitute the prince’s entrance point to – and handle on – his crisis of subjectivity. This leads us to the prince’s first speech of any length. Here the currency of outward signalling upon which Elsinorian subjectivity is built is devalued as the prince stakes a claim for the primacy of interiority. Gertrude lights the firepaper by asking why human mortality ‘seems’ ‘so particular with’ Hamlet (I.ii.75). The reply she receives figures Hamlet as isolated, willingly unyoked from the sociopolitical customs of new Elsinore, and trenchantly responsive to comprehension of human behavior through theatrical terminology and concepts.⁷²

‘Seems’, madam – nay it is, I know not ‘seems’.
 ‘Tis not alone my inky cloak, cold mother,
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² The prevalence of theatrical terminology in *Hamlet* is widely and well documented. Key studies include Ann Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Play* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962) and Charles R. Forker, “Shakespeare’s Theatrical Symbolism and Its Function in *Hamlet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 14, 3 (1963).

Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
 Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
 Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
 That can denote me truly. These indeed 'seem',
 For they are actions that a man might play,
 But I have that within which passes show,
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

(I.ii.76-86)

Hamlet's distrust of outer appearance constitutes an antitheatrical plea for authenticity. This signals a favouring of a 'unified moral being' over the Machiavellian role-playing that grows out of antisocial self-interest.⁷³ An excerpt from Montaigne's 'Of Presumption' is a useful touchstone here:

For, touching this new-found vertue of faining and dissimulation, which now is so much in credit, I hate it to the death: and of all vices, I finde none that so much witnesseth demissenesse and basenesse of heart. It is a coward and servile humour, for a man to disguise and hide himselfe under a maske, and not dare to shew himselfe as he is ... A generous minde ought not to belie his thoughts, but make shew of his inmost parts: There al is good, or at least all is humane.⁷⁴

Katharine Eisaman Maus also offers relevant insight through a highlighting of the actor's disgust at any incoherence between signifier and signified:

In his reply to his mother...Hamlet distinguishes between the elaborate external rituals of mourning

⁷³ Joan Lord Hall, "'To Play the Man Well and Duely': Role-Playing in Montaigne and Jacobean Drama," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 22, 2 (1985), 173.

⁷⁴ Montaigne, *The Essayes of Michel Lord of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio, v. 2 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910), 373. I have used this edition of Montaigne here as 'Of Presumption' is not included in Greenblatt's collection.

and an inner, invisible anguish. His black attire, his sigh, his tear fail to denote him truly not because they are false – Hamlet’s sorrow for his father is sincere – but because they *might* be false, because some other person might conceivably employ them deceitfully.⁷⁵

Hamlet, as suggested below, is signaled as enjoying this moment of interaction with his mother. His speech is very much *performed*, as betrayed by the four sequential uses of ‘nor’ within structurally similar lines – a rhetorical device known as syndeton. As mentioned above, however, the content of the speech suggests that the actor/rhetorician is denigrating the sign or indicator simply because the gap between signifier and signified *might* permit the emergence of falsehood.⁷⁶ What is communicated is a profound rejection of Machiavellian persuasion through outer show. This, a context typical of early modern theatre, constitutes a profoundly antitheatrical sentiment presented in a profoundly theatrical mode; antitheatricality is persuasively performed. As Jonas Barish explains:

It is above all in the fictive domain of the drama itself, and notably in Shakespeare, that we find

⁷⁵ Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1. Maus’s central argument functions to repudiate the suggestion made by a series of influential new historicist and cultural materialist critics, including Francis Barker, Catherine Belsey, and Jean Howard that ‘a conception of personal inwardness hardly existed at all in Renaissance England’. See Maus, *Inwardness and Theater*, 2. Maus builds a convincing picture of early modern interiority as commonplace through reference to – and interpretation of – a vast array of theatrical and non-theatrical early modern texts. See also Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body* (New York: Methuen, 1984), 31, 58; Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Methuen, 1958), 48; and, Jean Howard, “The New Historicism of Renaissance Studies,” *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1985), 15.

⁷⁶ John Lee, prompted by C.S. Lewis, offers a useful discussion on early modern employment of the concept of rhetoric in comprehending the world. See John Lee, *Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” and the Controversies of Self*, 209-27.

theatricality not only criticized, but explored and championed.⁷⁷

The inky-cloaked, mourning Hamlet railing against ‘seeming’ hits all three of the marks listed by Barish. The continuation of Barish’s argument offers hints at the nature of the relationship between early modern subjectivity and playhouse pleasure:

Shakespeare, with his astounding comprehensiveness, gives us not only the theatrical or histrionic villain, as in Richard III, but the theatrical hero, and the nontheatrical protagonist as well – plenitude and rectitude both. In the latter category we may reckon figures like Desdemona, Cordelia, and Horatio, who do not change, and in whom change would be a denial of their beings; each exemplifies the total sincerity desiderated by the moralists, the unswerving adherence to a single standard of behavior. Looming above them are figures of another sort – Falstaff, Hamlet, Cleopatra – who are conceived as flickering, as multiple, as forever in change, as endlessly engaged in mimicry and metamorphosis: in them multiplicity seems an enlarging and liberating principle, conferring something like heroic stature...All are gifted impresarios, not only improvising theatrical performances, but enlisting others in them.⁷⁸

Hamlet can be located in both the former and the latter groups. He is a theatrical hero in his multiplicity (prince, clown, lover, friend, philosopher, madman, man laid bare as actor, actor laid bare as man) and in his improvisatory and directorial modes (thus he can be grouped with the likes of Falstaff and Cleopatra). He is a non-theatrical hero in his withdrawal from the old world role of revenger. He thus presents contradiction aplenty – perhaps even a Montaignian defence of contradiction – and something of an expansive menagerie of pleasures.

⁷⁷ Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 127.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

The transition between the ‘seeming’ speech and the third soliloquy is suggestive. The opening section of the soliloquy presents a contradictory evaluation of the passions and their employment by the protean actor. In the very midst of his self-disgust, Hamlet, I would argue, takes pleasure in the actor’s godlike ability to call a self into being; the extraordinary detail contained within the description of the performance is suggestive of the magnetised spectator greedily and intelligently consuming the spectacle. The speech in question has been cited above, but I will include it here again for the reader’s convenience:

Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
 Is it not monstrous that this player here,
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
 Could force his soul so to his own conceit
 That from her working all his visage wanned,
 – Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
 With forms to his conceit – and all for nothing – .
 For Hecuba?
 What’s Hecuba to him or he to her,
 That he should weep for her?

(II.ii.485-95)

The space reserved for praise in the second line of this soliloquy is, however, filled with the word ‘monstrous’. The performance and the attendant pleasure is thus problematised. A threat to subjectivity and an undertow of the indecorous is carried within the pleasure of the theatrical

calling into being of a subject. Furthermore, the instigator of impersonation and pleasure here is not passion, but merely a ‘dream of passion’ – hence a sense of the indecorous, or extreme, is coupled with intimations of the transformative potency of forces – or passions – that constitute, in Platonic terms, a lie – something unreal; the player’s passions carry considerable agency but are threateningly rooted in an immoral feigning. Joseph Roach’s description of the communicability and effect of such pneuma-generated passions (‘These inspiring forces came literally out of thin air’) highlights the pleasure of subjective alteration they offer, and their contingent threat.⁷⁹ The topic of pneumatism referenced here is discussed in regard to Titania’s seduction of Bottom in chapter 2 of this thesis.

In uniting breath and emotion, pneumatism can be understood as a process that engages with the transformative within the fields of natural and moral philosophy. Questions regarding the passions are, thus, ontologically tied to questions regarding subjectivity. Hamlet’s interest in the communicability of passions and the opportunity this process presents for a longed-for transformation into a new self motivates contemplation of his troubling failure to perform (the verb is important) the role of revenger. Montaigne’s telling of momentary self following momentary self as conditions or intentions change seeks to license changeability:

⁷⁹ Roach, *The Player’s Passion*, 27.

I cannot settle my object. It goeth so unquietly and staggering, with a natural drunkenness. I take it in this plight, as it is at the instant I amuse myself about it. I describe not the essence but the passage...I may soon change, not only fortune but intention. It is a counter-rule of diverse and variable accidents and irresolute imaginations, and sometimes contrary: whether it be that myself am other, or that I apprehend subjects by other circumstances and considerations. Howsoever, I may perhaps gainsay myself, but truth (as *Demades* said), I never gainsay.⁸⁰

Hamlet cannot become an old world single-voiced revenger. He is too entertained by the process of theorising himself out of this very job. The multi-voiced self seeks pleasures different to the single-voiced self. There is a disjunct between revenger and the self that must revenge that is caused by a troubling, but addictive, engagement with a project of selfhood. This is usefully highlighted by Hamlet's failure to kill Claudius when the murderous uncle is praying for forgiveness:⁸¹

Now might I do it. But now 'a is a-praying.
And now I'll do it [Draws sword.] – and so 'a goes to
heaven.
And so am I revenged! That would be scanned:
A villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
Why, this is base and silly, not revenge.
'A took my father grossly full of bread
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May,

⁸⁰ Montaigne, *Shakespeare's Montaigne: The Florio Translation of the Essays*, 196.

⁸¹ Targoff offers an excellent discussion on how early modern England bore witness to encouragement of the performance of prayer. Targoff foregrounds the idea that praying was important, even if soul and intention were not aligned to the divine in the moment of prayer, as practice – or repeated action – was considered to be a means to drawing closer to one's God. See Targoff, *Common Prayer*.

And how his audit stands who knows, save heaven,
 But in our circumstance and course of thought
 'Tis heavy with him. And am I then revenged
 To take him in the purging of his soul
 When he is fit and seasoned for passage?
 No. [Sheathes sword.]
 Up sword, and know thou a more horrid hent
 When he is drunk, asleep or in his rage,
 Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,
 At game a-swearing, or about some act
 That has no relish of salvation in't.
 Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven
 And that his soul may be as damned and black
 As hell whereto it goes.

(III.iii.73-95)

What we see here is a palimpsest. A Montaignian project of selfhood is superimposed over a pre-Shakespearean revenge tragedy. There is pleasure to be taken in intellectual enquiry, theorising interaction between self and situational context, in poetic expression of a mind troubled by disjunct between telos and machine, in the suspense of insecurity as to the play's progress as the audience gradually becomes aware that the revenger might not be able to 'drive' along the tracks towards the act of revenge. Coupled with this interiority-focused theorising, however, is a glimpse of the Senecan mould. There is delight to be harvested in the revenger's controlled manipulations. These manipulations are designed to direct the aesthetic and, relatedly, meaning of the climactic revenge killing.⁸² To explain more clearly, built into

⁸² Roland Mushat Frye usefully lists three kinds of suspense identifiable within *Hamlet*: 'Shakespeare had given us suspense of three kinds: the suspense inherent in the tradition of the revenge play itself, plus the suspense of

Hamlet's failure to kill Claudius is a chilling plan to wait for a moment at which condign punishment can be issued.⁸³ Hamlet darkly, deliciously, voices a plot to kill Claudius when he is drunk, asleep, angry, fornicating, gambling, or swearing. The prince wants to take his uncle's soul along with his life. In this moment, Hamlet has his feet in two worlds. He delights in the theatricality of revenge whilst engaging his interrogative skills to resist the act of revenge itself. Pleasure taken in the multi-voiced subject's performance of a project of selfhood is performed alongside the pleasures offered by foundational revenge tragedy: Pleasure colours, fuels, and collides with pleasure.⁸⁴ Delight and self-loathing intertwine. The final discussion within this chapter will seek to explore further *Hamlet's* unpacking of the interaction between an emergent selfhood, the duty of revenge and theatrical management of the concept of pleasure through a closer look at the concept of revenge, and its figuring within *Hamlet*.

Revenge, Duty and Pleasure

The stage is filled with corpses / crowns / scepters / swords, etc.

variations upon that form so that the audience was often kept wondering whether the prince would achieve revenge at all, and (of far more lasting interest) the suspense of probing the ultimate mysteries of human nature and destiny.' Roland Mushat Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 168.

⁸³ Discussed briefly below is Othello's killing of Desdemona in her adulterous (or so he believes) bed. Hamlet's imagining of the killing of Claudius in his lascivious bed offers similar focus on the drive of the revenge tragedy towards condign justice (the punishment fitting the crime).

⁸⁴ For a useful listing of – and discussion on – the pleasures associated with revenge tragedy, see Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, 168-76.

The heavens open up over the stage and hell lies below.⁸⁵

Anger increases in the mortal breast,
Sweeter than trickling honey to the taste.⁸⁶

Every human is a one-time miracle... The human who does not want to belong to the mass need only cease to be comfortable with himself: let him follow his conscience, which calls out to him: "Be yourself! What you're doing, supposing, desiring now – that's not you at all... Each one carries a productive uniqueness within himself as the core of his being; and when he becomes conscious of this uniqueness, a strange radiance appears about him, that of the unusual."⁸⁷

The concepts of revenge, duty and pleasure form a problematic alliance. Each infiltrates and colours the other. This is reflected in Sir Francis Bacon's defining of revenge as 'wild justice...which man's nature runs to'.⁸⁸ The term 'wild justice' carries an oxymoronic tone to ears attuned to the western ideal of legal reasoning within the field of jurisprudence; 'wild' is an uncomfortable – if alluring – modifier to the concept of justice and the duty that serves it. This

⁸⁵ Andreas Gryphius, *Catharina von Georgien* (1657). Opening set description. My translation.

⁸⁶ Aristotle quoting Achilles (*The Iliad*, 18). See "The Art of Rhetoric," II in *The Rhetoric, Poetic, and Nicomachean Ethics: Of Aristotle*, A. J. Valpy (1818), 100.

⁸⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. K Schlechta, I, 287-88, 306 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1966). Translated by Jeffrey S. Librett and cited by Werner Hamacher in "Disgregation of the Will": Nietzsche on the Individual and Individuality" in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* eds. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 113.

⁸⁸ Sir Francis Bacon, "On Revenge," in Francis Bacon, *The Essays* (London: Penguin, 1985), 72. The theatrical instrumentality offered by the ethical and social conundrums attendant to the concept of revenge are discussed by Linda Anderson in *A Kind of Wild Justice: Revenge in Shakespeare's Comedies* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987).

sense of a potentially ethical response to harm running ‘out of control’ is aligned with the human drive towards pleasure. Bacon’s theorization suggests that humans, by their very nature, find revenge irresistibly alluring. The pleasure element of the equation is supported by dictionary definitions of revenge. The following are taken from the OED (my emphasis):

- a. The action of hurting, harming, or otherwise *obtaining satisfaction* from someone in return for an injury or wrong suffered at his or her hands; *satisfaction obtained* by repaying an injury or wrong.
- b. The *desire* to repay or *obtain satisfaction* for an injury or wrong; vengefulness.
- c. A person's *desire* for vengeance; the action of *gratifying* this.⁸⁹

Thus Truewit’s cry of ‘O revenge, how sweet art thou!’ in Ben Jonson’s *Epicæne* (1616) finds a tempering attitude in John Norris’s wish for ‘private Revenge...universally to be condemn’d as utterly unlawful’ (1690).⁹⁰ These citations are not, of course, a natural pair in terms of literary or narrative context – but they do work together to highlight what is perceived as the potentially corrosive influence of the drive towards the pleasurable on acts of retribution. To reiterate somewhat, alive within both citations is a *tendency* towards pleasure in revenge; joy in revenge is a commonplace that the law court’s would withhold.

The initial question here concerns the extent to which Prince Hamlet finds pleasure in revenge.

⁸⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "revenge, (n.)", (accessed 22 December 2018).

⁹⁰ Ben Jonson, *Epicæne* (4, 5) in *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, v. 1 (London: 1616), 579. John Norris, *Christian blessedness; or, Discourses upon the beatitudes of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (London: 1690), 78.

In what ways does he present enjoyment of the release from the reformatory didacticism of controlled justice? Relatedly, what are the connotations for pleasure in *Hamlet* of Hamlet's 'conception of justice against Claudius' being '*dramatic* revenge'.⁹¹ To expand and clarify here, '*dramatic* revenge' is the theatrical counterpart to the condign penalties that defined Tudor law. In explaining the concept of condign punishment, Linda Woodbridge presents the examples of the removal of the hands of a thief, or the bridling of a scold's tongue, from the domain of Tudor law, and, from the world of Shakespearean theatre, Othello's smothering of Desdemona in the bed in which he believes she has committed adultery (V.ii).⁹² The focus falls, thus, on the aligning of the device of poetic justice with the act of revenge itself, and the aesthetics of the preludes to the kill. Hamlet's aestheticising performance of wild attraction to the bloody violence involved in revenge, and the source of this violence's license, the depravity of Claudius, stands, I would suggest, as a verbal partner to Macbeth's imagined bloody dagger – an aesthetic image that tempts as it horrifies. (Macbeth presents intense fear whilst Hamlet presents a distanced aesthetic enjoyment of this aspect of life's hellish underbelly. The central reason for this difference would be that Macbeth deems ambition-motivated murder morally reprehensible whilst Hamlet is drawn to the theatricality of revenge.) Whilst Macbeth tortures

⁹¹ Jennifer Ann Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 70.

⁹² Linda Woodbridge, *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6. William Shakespeare, *Othello* in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1998), 941-77.

himself with pre-murder imaginings, the prince therapeutically enjoys his own verbalizing of both the gory viscosity of the theatre of revenge and the damning, unvirtuous character traits of Claudius:

I should 'a' fatted all the region kites
 With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
 O vengeance! —

(II.ii.556-59)⁹³

The climactic cry of 'Oh vengeance' marks an orgasmic peak to a moment spent in creating and consuming a pleasurable revenge aesthetic.⁹⁴ It is a cry of pleasure that finds echoes through other moments in the play in which Hamlet presents delight in revenge (or, rather, the aesthetic of revenge). A good example of this is Hamlet's indulgent and opportunistic luxuriation in the commonplace of oneness between the dead of night and an upsurge of evil forces:

'Tis now the very witching time of night
 When churchyards yawn and hell itself breaks out
 Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood

⁹³ The quotation from *Hamlet* is taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997) as the 2006 Methuen edition used elsewhere in this chapter does not contain F's 'Oh Vengeance!'.

⁹⁴ The concept of vengeance has an influential position in the arena of Western literature. *Mênis*, the first word of *The Iliad*, describes the anger of Achilles, and positions the concept of vengeance at the forefront of literary/dramatic investigation into the subject's interaction with the metaphysical episteme. See Leonard Muellner, *The Anger of Achilles: Mênis in Greek Epic* (Cornell University Press, 2005) and Charles L. Griswold, 'The Nature and Ethics of Vengeful Anger', *Nomos*, 53 (2013).

And do such business as the bitter day
Would quake to look on.

(III.ii.378-82)

These moments in soliloquy, depicting a Hamlet taking pleasure in moments of alignment with the ‘wild justice’ of revenge, represent a performed verbalization of Hamlet’s pleasure at an interior consumption of revenge tragedy. They resonate beautifully with Amélie Oksenberg Rorty’s richly playful description of pleasure in tragedy, itself serving as an unpacking of Sidney’s famed claim for the irresistibility of ‘the sweet violence of a tragedy’:⁹⁵

Tragedy conjoins sensory, therapeutic and intellectual pleasures. Pleasure upon pleasure, pleasure within pleasure, producing pleasure.⁹⁶

Rorty’s listing of pleasures in tragedy asks to be unpacked further. What shape might the sensory, therapeutic and intellectual pleasures accessed by Hamlet during his performance of his own enjoyment of an imagining (the domain remains aesthetic at this stage) of the visceral and transgressive aspects of revenge take? A form of Aristotelian catharsis is certainly in play here. Surely Hamlet, in emoting within the aesthetic arena of revenge that he has formed for himself is finding pleasure in the purging of excessive emotion. (I should stress again that – prompted by the dominant mode of self-reflexivity within *Hamlet* – I am casting Hamlet here as

⁹⁵ Sir Philip Sidney, ‘The Defence of Poesy’ in *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 230.

⁹⁶ Rorty, “The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy,” 16.

a spectator within his own drama.) Cries of ‘Oh vengeance!’ and talk of drinking ‘hot blood’ smack of pleasure-producing emotional release. Pleasurable indulgence in self-pity might also be in play – and, I would argue, clearly is if one connects the cry for vengeance with Hamlet’s self-absorbed and despondent reaction to his first interaction with the Ghost: ‘The time is out of joint; O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right’ (II.i.186-87).⁹⁷ Further pleasure might be taken in ‘moral and intellectual fulfilment’ at progression towards ‘cosmic justice’ being ‘harmoniously restored’.⁹⁸ This would mean taking joy in forms of violence that offer ‘satisfactions which are, at least in prospect, bound up with form and signification, and so with the aesthetic as well as the ethical’.⁹⁹ This returns the argument to pleasure taken in poetic justice. This Aristotelian sense of ‘unity of action in tragedy’ that demands that ‘savage deeds can be the stuff of shapeliness’ is built into Hamlet’s field of awareness.¹⁰⁰ His decision to expose the player (Claudius) with a play (*The Mousetrap*) provides proof enough of this – as does his connoisseurship of plays and theatre (II.ii.372-85) and, perhaps most overtly, his method of outwitting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: ‘tis the sport to have the engineer / Hoist with his own petard’ (III.iv.204-5). Related is a pleasure intimated by Jean Genet in the

⁹⁷ Kevin Curran considers the Ghost’s level of commitment to the act of revenge: ‘Does Hamlet Sr. seriously care about the magnitude and style of his son’s revenge? Would some hypothetical satisfying revenge really benefit him in the afterlife?’. *Hamlet, Protestantism, and the Mourning of Contingency* (London: Routledge, 2016), 132.

⁹⁸ Eagleton, *Sweet Violence*, 169.

⁹⁹ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, 19.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

immediately followed by a reeling in of wrath and threat so as to avoid treating his mother with an intemperate unjustness:

Soft, now to my mother.
 O heart, lose not thy nature. Let not ever
 The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom –
 Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
 I will speak daggers to her but use none.
 My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites

(III.ii.382-87)

These two examples of luxuriating in thoughts of revenge followed by movement into a more reflective mode do not constitute an entirely comfortable pairing: following the taking of pleasure in motivation toward violent aggression with self-chastisement is not precisely the same process as following said pleasure with a rationalised re-directing and downsizing of this aggression. What is represented, however, is an ebb and flow between pleasure and the need to rein in pleasure – between pleasure and self-loathing in the first example above and pleasure and temperance in the second. In both instances, to a greater and lesser degree, Hamlet displays incompatibility between enjoyment taken in the fulfilling of the duty of revenge – a savouring of the thought of a required revenge killing as a real and imminent act – and enjoyment taken in the investigation into his own selfhood that his current context instigates.

This return to the idea of *Hamlet's* 'context', meaning the clash of secure old world and mutable new world subjectivities that I see as being central to the play, presents the opportunity to

introduce the next – and related – discussion on *Twelfth Night* before briefly reviewing the content covered in this chapter.

I would like to introduce the next discussion – an investigation of the figuring of pleasure offered by *Twelfth Night* – at the head of this closing section as I wish to stress the idea that, in regard to playhouse management of the concept of pleasure, these plays represent something of a pairing. Written during the same period of Shakespeare's career at the close of the sixteenth century/beginning of the seventeenth century, both plays, I suggest, tap into Epicurean/Lucretian and Montaignian thought as they explore the possibilities for a shaping of pleasure contingent to a perceptible decay in the worldview of the old world. Here, then, I am signposting a return to similar themes, albeit in a different register, in the chapter that follows.

This chapter has defined Hamlet as existing at two levels. Firstly, at the local level, Hamlet finds himself analyzing his own selfhood in reaction to a father's untimely death, and a mother's untimely marriage to an unworthy husband: 'O that this too too sallied flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew...That it should come thus: / But two months dead – nay not so much, not two –...married with my uncle, / My father's brother (but no more like my father / Than I to Hercules)' (I.ii.129-30, I.ii.137-38, I.ii.151-53). The second level is located within the domain of the cosmic. As is illustrated above, alive within Elsinore are the concepts

of Copernicanism and Epicurean materialism. These concepts present opposition to the old worldview, and, hence, encourage a decentring of the self. It is this decentring, I suggest, that pulls Hamlet away from the act of revenge (an act supported by the imperative of revenge contingent to the old cosmos and the aesthetic it generates) and pushes him towards investigation into his own subjectivity, or a project of selfhood. Pleasure is taken and interrogated as this process unfolds. An early modern rethinking of pleasure is thus enabled by Shakespeare's embedding of Copernicanism and Epicurean materialism into his version of the tale of *Hamlet*. The picture drawn is of the playhouse drawing on its own structures and practices alongside Copernican, Epicurean/Lucretian and Montaignian thinking in an expansive exploration of: a) the status of pleasures available to the subject; b) the controlling ideological forces human pleasure is subjected to; and, c) the possibilities for pleasure that acceptance and rejection of these ideological forces engenders.

Chapter 4

Twelfth Night's Rethinking of Pleasure

What country, friends, is this?¹

ἀταραξία (a-taraxia), usually translated as “tranquillity” by the Latins, is for Epicurus and Epicureans the end or goal of all philosophy, as health is the end or goal of medicine. It is, in the profoundest sense we might imagine for our common phrase, one’s “peace of mind.” Also note that, in Greek, the root word – that is, the word without the negative ἀ-prefix – is also the word for “disturbance of the seas” or other such bodies and frequently means “tempest”.²

What, sloth and self-indulgence?

He who drove all these evils from our hearts –
Purged them with words, not weapons – should not he
Be deemed one man meet to be counted god?³

Abstract: The central thesis of this chapter is that *Twelfth Night* locates pleasure in imaginative acceptance and management of changeability of self and changeability of environment. It is argued that Shakespeare, at a subtle pitch, offers focus on a pleasure within mutability via engagement with Lucretian/Epicurean materialism throughout the comedy. The imaginative actions and reactions of Viola-Cesario as s/he negotiates the mutable world of Illyria provide the central focus and grounding point for the discussion. The play takes place, it is claimed, within an Illyria that is defined as an ever mutable, changeable environment – and asks what forms pleasure might take amidst such

¹ *Twelfth Night* (I.ii.1). The edition used here and throughout is *Twelfth Night*, J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik (eds.) in *The Arden Shakespeare: Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998, repr. 2017), 1191-217.

² R. Allen Shoaf, *Lucretius and Shakespeare on the Nature of Things* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 8.

³ Lucretius, *The Nature of Things*, trans. Frank O. Copley (London: W. W. Norton, 1977), Book 5, 48-51.

changeability. It is suggested that the raft of marine references that the play employs point attention to the concept of mutability, and the need to discover a means of navigation amongst what might metaphorically be termed ever-changing waters.

It will be argued that *Twelfth Night*, amongst its projection of the joy and shame of a rich, dark, self-indulgent revelry, finds purchase in investigating the potentialities attendant to achieving a calm contentment supportive of awareness of human experience, or an early modern re-figuring of *ataraxia*.⁴ The concept of *ataraxia* is employed here as, at the turn of the seventeenth century, it developed associations with contentment achieved through untroubled awareness of the self as a changeable entity, and a reading of the universe as housing an ongoing and unreadable changeability. Following a brief introduction and contextualization of the concept of *ataraxia*, the discussion moves through two stages. The first stage explores the possibility that Viola/Cesario can be interpreted as a theatrical representation of the Lucretian *clinamen*, or swerve. The second stage foregrounds the shipwreck motif evoked in *Twelfth Night* and unpacks the ties that this motif, and nautical metaphors, have with the concept of pleasure.

Ataraxia

Relevant to this discussion are associations, voiced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,

⁴ For a discussion on the concept of *ataraxia*, see Gisela Striker, 'Ataraxia: Happiness as Tranquility', *The Monist*, 73, 1 (1990). A qualifying comment is necessary here. I do not wish to suggest that Shakespeare is strictly bound to promotion of a Pyrrhonic stoical impassiveness that the term *ataraxia* adverts. As this thesis aims to illustrate I understand Shakespeare to regard the concept of pleasure as a problematic worthy of ongoing investigation.

between *ataraxia* and investigation into subjectivity enabled by an active skepticism. A key text here would be John Florio's translation of the essays of Michel de Montaigne.⁵ Montaigne defines 'Ataraxie' as... 'the condition of a quiet and settled life, exempted from the agitations, which we receive by the impression of the opinion and knowledge, we imagine to have of things. Whence proceed fear, avarice, envy, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, love of novelties, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy, and the greatest number of corporal evils.'⁶ This Montaignian ataraxic contentment does not correlate to the passivity of resignation. (This is extraordinarily pertinent to understanding the role of pleasure in *Twelfth Night*.) Consider Montaigne's exposition of the non-reductive energy, licensed by ataraxia, that skeptics are able to tap into:

Yea, by that means [embracing the state of ataraxia] they are exempted from the jealousy of their own discipline, for they contend but faintly. They fear not revenge nor contradiction in their disputations. When they say that heavy things descend downward, they would be loath to be believed but desire to be contradicted, thereby to engender doubt and suspense of judgement, which

⁵ Michel De Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. J. Florio (London, 1613, first publ. 1603). It should be noted that *Twelfth Night* was probably written in 1601, thus two years prior to the release of the first English translation of Montaigne's *Essayes*. The first recorded performance took place in the hall of the Middle Temple on February 2, 1602 – a date suggestive of the closing of Christmas festivities. Given the impact of Montaigne's thinking in continental Europe following their publishing from 1580 to 1588 I would suggest that the Montaignian understanding of ataraxia was likely alive in turn-of-the-century London as a discursive context. See Stephen Greenblatt and Peter G. Platt, eds., *Shakespeare's Montaigne*, ix-xxxiii.

⁶ Montaigne, *Shakespeare's Montaigne: The Florio Translation of the Essays*, 281. It should be noted that Montaigne's list of the results of 'agitations' ('fear, avarice, envy, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, love of novelties, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy, and the greatest number of corporal evils) includes pleasures that Epicurus might identify as entailing 'disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves'. Taken from Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*. See <<http://www.epicurus.net/en/principal.html>> (accessed 30 December 2017).

is their end and drift. They put forth their proposition but to contend with those they imagine we hold in our concept....Why shall it not be granted then...as to Dogmatists, or doctrine teachers, for one to say green and another yellow, so for them to doubt? *Is there anything can be proposed unto you, either to allow or refuse, which may not lawfully be considered as ambiguous and doubtful?* And whereas others be carried either by the custom of their country or by the institution of their parents or by chance – as by a tempest, without choice or judgement, yea sometimes before the age of discretion, to such and such another opinion, to the Stoic or Epicurean sect, to which they find themselves more engaged, subjected or fast-tied, as to a prize they cannot let go: *Ad quamcumque disciplinam, velut tempestate, delati, ad eam tanquam ad saxum, adhærescunt. Being carried as it were by a tempest, to any kind of doctrine, they stick close to it, as it were to a rock.*⁷

Montaigne's reading of *ataraxia* embraces, then, the concepts of acceptance of not-knowingness, and adaptability, as correlatives. The more accepting of change, mutability, or uncertainty the self is, the better positioned it is to experience the pleasures available to human life. Of interest are the resonances this carries with *Twelfth Night* and, in particular, Viola's adoption of her second self, Cesario, as she enters the watery, malleable world of Illyria.

As briefly noted above, this focus on the relationship between the concepts of mutability and pleasure leads the discussion into consideration of *Twelfth Night*'s engagement with Lucretian materialism. Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* (commonly translated as *On the Nature of Things* or *The Nature of Things*), offering a richly imaginative exposition of Epicurean materialism, is

⁷ Ibid., 281-82. The Latin is from Cicero, *Academica*, 1.7.45. Peter Dawkins notes that 'in many respects it appears that Sebastian and Viola enter a mad world when they arrive in Illyria'. Dawkins then notes that this is not the madness of Shakespeare's tragedies, but 'more subtle', or 'more inverted than real'. However the madness might be described, its presence speaks of an inability to find the tranquillity central to *ataraxia*. Peter Dawkins, *Twelfth Night: The Wisdom of Shakespeare* (Oxfordshire: The Francis Bacon Research Trust, 2015), chap. 5, Kindle.

now considered to have been a highly influential text during Shakespeare's lifetime. As explained by Stephen Greenblatt, it is probable that Shakespeare would have read or discussed Lucretius's poem, and certainly would have encountered extracts from *De Rerum Natura* via Florio's translation of Montaigne:

The author of *Romeo and Juliet* shared his interest in Lucretian materialism with Spenser, Donne, Bacon, and others. Though Shakespeare had not attended either Oxford or Cambridge, his Latin was good enough to have enabled him to read Lucretius' poem for himself....and he could also have discussed Lucretius with his fellow playwright Ben Jonson, whose own signed copy of *On the Nature of Things* has survived and is today in the Houghton Library at Harvard.⁸

The key areas that demand consideration – areas of fusion between Shakespeare's play and Lucretian thought – are the play's management of the concept termed 'clinamen' by Lucretius, 'the swerve' by Stephen Greenblatt and 'flow' by R. Allen Shoaf, and the play's re-figuring of the shipwreck with spectator topos, famously employed by Lucretius in the Proem to Book 2 of *De Rerum Natura*.⁹ Let us begin by considering the role of the Lucretian *clinamen* in *Twelfth Night*.

Viola / Venus / Clinamen

As the atomic concept of '*clinamen*' is, I propose, central to *Twelfth Night*'s interrogation of pleasure, I should begin by considering its currency in regard to pleasure, and its manifestation

⁸ Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 243.

⁹ Ibid., p. 188. Shoaf, *Lucretius and Shakespeare on the Nature of Things*, 85-86.

in the play. An appropriate starting point is Lucretius's stressing of the presence of randomness, or uncertainty, in his telling of the Epicurean picture of the atomic natural world:

If atoms, you think, can cease to move, and ceasing
can then set matter to moving in new ways,
you've wandered away from truth, far from the road.
for atoms, since they wander the void, must all
be driven along either by their own weight
or perhaps by striking another. They often meet,
colliding at high speed and then at once
spring wide apart. No wonder! They're very hard,
heavy and solid, with nothing to block them.
All atoms of matter are constantly in motion.¹⁰

Shoaf offers clarification:

For Epicurean physics, especially as reported in Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, the simplification of existence to the flow of atoms ("primordia" or "semina") in the void ("inane") is the foundation of human freedom, understood, negatively, as the absence of compulsion – everywhere only randomness, and the famous swerve ("clinamen") which accounts for contact among atoms ("ictu forte").¹¹

As explained by Stephen Greenblatt in *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began*, it is the random collisions contingent to the Lucretian idea of clinamen that shape the universe:

The swerve—which Lucretius called *declinatio*, *inclinatio*, or *clinamen*—is only the most minimal of motions...but it is enough to set off a ceaseless chain of collisions. Whatever exists in the universe exists because of these random collisions of minute particles.¹²

¹⁰ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. Frank O. Copley (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011) 2, 80-89.

¹¹ Shoaf, *Lucretius and Shakespeare on the Nature of Things*, 6.

¹² Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 188.

Here I am interpreting Viola's chance arrival in Illyria as a theatrical 'demonstration of the randomness of the swerve within the flow in the void'. She is human salvage, shipwrecked by chance and, in turn, finding the Illyrian coast by chance.¹³ Nature's never-ending energy – simultaneously creative and destructive, not a map, has delivered Viola to this particular piece of coast:

VIOLA What country, friends, is this?

CAPTAIN This is Illyria, lady.

VIOLA And what should I do in Illyria?

My brother he is in Elysium.

Perchance he is not drown'd: what think you, sailors?

CAPTAIN It is *perchance* that you yourself were sav'd.

VIOLA

O my poor brother! and so *perchance* may he be.

CAPTAIN

True, madam, and to comfort you with *chance*,
Assure yourself, after our ship did split,
When you and those poor number saved with you
Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother,
Most provident in peril, bind himself
(Courage and hope both teaching him the practice)
To a strong mast that liv'd upon the sea.

(I.ii.1-14, my emphasis)

¹³ In his analysis of Trevor Nunn's 1996 film version of *Twelfth Night*, Randall Martin notes a connection between Feste and Viola: 'Feste observes the survivors washing up on the beach and hiding from Orsino's approaching calvary. When all are gone, Feste descends to recover a gold necklace Viola has left behind that he will later enigmatically return to her during her reunion with Sebastian. In that closing moment, if not before, there is a sense that Feste has recognized something of himself in Viola's responses to shipwreck and survival. Randall Martin, "New Directions: Shipwreck and the Hermeneutics of Transience in *Twelfth Night*," in *Twelfth Night: A Critical Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 123-43, 123.

This aligning of Viola with the concept of chance is strengthened by consideration of Viola's swerving into the presence of Olivia, via Orsino, in the mode of wooer. Viola first expresses a desire to serve Olivia, but is directed towards Orsino via a brief snippet of information received from the Captain, and a spontaneous reading of synchronicity between the Captain's outward appearance and his interiority that serves to confirm, in Viola's mind, the accuracy of the Captain's words. Notably, this synchronicity between exterior appearance and interiority is embraced despite Viola's Iago-like foregrounding of the likelihood of a virtuous appearance camouflaging a less than virtuous mind:

VIOLA O that I serv'd that lady [Olivia],
 And might not be deliver'd to the world,
 Till I had made mine own occasion mellow,
 What my estate is.

CAPTAIN That were hard to compass,
 Because she will admit no kind of suit,
 No, not the Duke's.

VIOLA There is a fair behaviour in thee, Captain;
 And though that nature with a beauteous wall
 Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
 I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
 With this thy fair and outward character...

I'll serve this duke.

(I.ii.42-55)

The argument here is, I feel, subtle – but telling. Viola's motivations are, to a degree,

mysterious.¹⁴ This is to say that a clear path from cause to effect (a path characteristic of the Platonic / Aristotelian worldview) is not distinct. There is something of the Epicurean imaging of free will – an imaging with resignation to not-knowingness at its centre – built into Viola. Her decisions prioritise impulse over staged planning. A Lucretian reading would suggest that the beautiful, and ultimately resolved, chaos of love and attraction between Viola, Orsino, and Olivia that ensues as a result of this prioritisation is a trait of employment of natural impulse.¹⁵

Acceptance of natural impulse is coupled with an unyielding Lucretian/Epicurean creativity;

Viola carries the relentlessness of nature's erotic drive into every scene she enters.

Foregrounding Viola's Lucretian colouring are the questions her interaction with the Captain evokes. Why does she choose to adopt the appearance of her brother ('present me as an

¹⁴ At this juncture I should explain that I do not wish to contend that Shakespeare was a Lucretian or that Shakespeare's plays are Lucretian. My stance is that Shakespeare in various ways – some subtle, some direct and clear – presents a response to Lucretian thought. Shoaf offers a relevant comment: 'Lucretius, more distantly Epicurus, and atomic materialism challenged Shakespeare, and he understood that he could not ignore the challenge. What he made of it, however, is not a discipleship but a poetics of man's free will – emerging from the struggles between the senses and the mind – operating in a nature above all erotic, a Mother of relentless, unstoppable reproduction'. Shoaf, *Lucretius and Shakespeare on the Nature of Things*, 40.

¹⁵ Here I am suggesting that the chaos of misunderstanding, instigated by the arrival of Cesario, that energises Orsino's court and Olivia's household correlates to a Lucretian chaos of erotic nature. Consider: 'The trope of nature responsively enlivened by Venus ultimately derives from Lucretius, who avers in *De rerum natura* that the earth – *Daedala tellus* – becomes Daedalic in the goddess' presence, its powers of artifice heightened by her animating spirit'. See, Walter S. Melion, 'The Trope of Anthropomorphosis in Hendrick Goltzius's *Venus and Cupid* (1590), *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* (1593), and *Portrait of Frederick de Vries* (1597)' in *Ut pictura amor: The Reflexive Imagery of Love in Artistic Theory and Practice, 1500-1700*, eds. Walter Melion, Michael Zell and Joanna Woodall (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 165.

eunuch')?¹⁶ Why swerve from her plan to serve Olivia to a plan to serve Orsino with such abruptness? Perhaps the key question is: What is Viola counting on? Here it is useful to

Consider Shoaf's *Hamlet*-focused exposition of the Lucretian/Epicurean universe:

If I were asked...to name the one sentence in Shakespeare's works that sounds like Lucretius, I would not hesitate to reply, "The readiness is all"...No stance could be truer to the world as Lucretius understands the world from his master, Epicurus, than this stance of observant resignation....In a world of atoms and void where everything – literally *every* thing – is a consequence of the swerve (*clinamen*) of atoms within the flow through the void, colliding into each other to form entities or happenings, any pre-script(ion) as to "what's next" is folly born of ignorance, or worse, self-deception...All that anyone can do is understand his or her circumstance for what it is, as heart-breakingly difficult to do as this usually is...and be ready.¹⁷

I am arguing that Viola's performance – her choices and actions – smack of an instinctive, feeling response to the moment of predicament. She is a theatricalised re-forming of the Lucretian human using the powers bestowed upon her by nature to fashion a response. Viola projects a Lucretian understanding of free will:

Whatever prize fortune gave to earth, they he carried off,
Every man taught to live and be strong for themselves.

(Book 5, 960-61)¹⁸

¹⁶ (1.2.56). Also, Denis Lambin notes that Venus is powerful enough to cause inanimate objects to smile. See Denis Lambin (editor and translator), *Titi Lucretii Cari De rerum natura libri sex* (Paris: Guillaume Rouilli & Philippe Rouillij, 1564), 3. In discussing the anthropomorphic faces present in Goltzuis's *Venus and Cupid* (1590), Melion suggests that 'the grinning and leering faces adduced by Goltzuis as signs of Love's potency, descend from...Lucretian imagery of mighty Venus'. See Melion, 165. There are strong resonances here with Malvolio's post-letter tendency to grin (III.ii., III.iv).

¹⁷ Shoaf, *Lucretius and Shakespeare on the Nature of Things*, 39.

¹⁸ Here I use Cyril Bailey's translation as it better communicates the Lucretian link between natural gifts and free

Also highlighted is the role of the unpredictable swerve in the mourning Olivia falling in love with Viola as Cesario. Here, then, we find a further foregrounding of the eyebrow-raising Lucretian *clinamen*:

OLIVIA What is your parentage?
 VIOLA Above my fortunes, yet my state is well:
 I am a gentleman.
 OLIVIA Get you to my lord:
 I cannot love him: let him send no more,
 Unless, *perchance*, you come to me again,
 To tell me how he takes it. Fare you well:
 I thank you for your pains: spend this for me.

‘What is your parentage?’
 ‘Above my fortunes, yet my state is well;
 I am a gentleman.’ I’ll be sworn thou art:
 Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit
 Do give thee five-fold blazon. *Not too fast: soft! soft!*
 Unless the master were the man. How now?
Even so quickly may one catch the plague?

(1.5.271-89)

Olivia describes the sudden and powerful onset of her sexual attraction to Viola as being a touch frightening (*Not too fast: soft! soft!*) and, given that the final sentence is a question, somewhat mysterious. Viola, awakening lust in Olivia whilst playing the role of Cesario, is,

will than that offered by Copley. See Titus Lucretius Carus, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. Cyril Bailey, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947).

thus, associated with a Venus-like enabling of ‘the generative potency of art and nature’ which is yoked to the celebration of ‘the power of erotic love, bodied forth by Venus and Cupid’ in the poetic fable of their coupling.¹⁹ As Cesario, then, Viola is translated from one of Lucretius’s men, ‘taught to live and be strong for themselves’, to a placeholder for the Lucretian Venus figure.

Olivia’s use of the word ‘plague’ as a metaphor for erotic love further emphasises Viola’s assimilation of the Venus role. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries syphilis started to spread throughout Europe. The disease, termed at the time the ‘new plague’, is believed to have been part of ‘The Columbian Exchange’ – the name given to the transfer of diseases from continent to continent that resulted from Christopher Columbus’s 1492 expedition to the New world. The modern term ‘venereal disease’ was coined due to syphilis’s associations with ‘the act of Venus’.²⁰

This suggestion that Viola is a figuring of the Lucretian Venus is supported by Lucretius’s

¹⁹ Melion, ‘The Trope of Anthropomorphosis,’ 158-59.

²⁰ See Christopher Cook, ‘An Allegory with Venus and Cupid: A Story of Syphilis’, *JRSM*, 103 (11) (2010), 458-60. Also see R. Davidson, *Dangerous Liaisons: A Social History of Venereal Diseases in Scotland* (London: Rodolphi, 2000); A. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972); and, M. Healy, ‘M. Bronzino's London Allegory and the Art of Syphilis’, *Oxford Art*, 20 (1997).

opening to *De Rerum Natura*.²¹ The poet calls for Venus to aid him in his artistic project, and depicts his muse as the personification of pleasure, a bringer of love, procreative, generative, a sea-farer, a land traveller, and an exciter of hearts. Here, the worshipful energy of the verse calls for quotation at some length:

Mother of Romans, joy of gods and men,
 Venus, life-giver, who under planet and star
 visits the ship-clad sea, the grain-clothed land
 always, for through you all that's born and breathes
 is gotten, created, brought forth to see the sun,
 Lady, the storms and clouds of heaven shun you,
 You and your advent; Earth, sweet magic-maker,
 sends up her flowers for you, broad Ocean smiles,
 and peace glows in the light that fills the sky.

For soon as the year has bared her springtime face,
 and bars are down for the breeze of growth and birth,
 in heaven the birds first mark your passage, Lady,
 and you; your power pulses in their hearts.
 Then wild beasts, too, leap over rich, lush lands
 and swim swift streams; so prisoned by your charms
 they follow lustily where you lead them on.
 Last, over sea and hill and greedy river,
 through leaf-clad homes of birds, through fresh green fields,
 in every creature you sink love's tingling dart,
 luring them lustily to create their kind.
 Since you, and you only, rule the world of nature,
 and nothing, without you, comes forth to the coasts
 of holy light, or makes for joy and love,
 I pray you be with me as I write these verses
 that I compose about the world of nature,

²¹ It should be noted that Venus was washed ashore: 'Viola is washed up on the shores of Illyria, like Venus created from the foam of the ocean'. Graham Atkin, *Twelfth Night: Character Studies* (London: Continuum, 2008), 31.

for my friend Memmius, whom, in every hour,
 Lady, you wish in all things blessed and great.
 Grant then to my words, Lady, a deathless charm.
 Cause meanwhile that all savage works of war
 by land and sea drop off to sleep and rest.
 For you alone can bless our mortal race
 with peace and calm: though Mars the War Lord rules
 war's savage works, yet often he throws himself
 into your arms, faint with love's deathless wound,
 and there, with arching neck bent back, looks up
 and sighs, and feeds a lustful eye on you
 and, pillowed, dangles his life's breath from your lips.
 Then, as he falls back on your sacred body,
 Lady, lean over and let sweet utterance pour
 from your holy lips – a plea of peace for Rome.
 For in my country's hour of trial I cannot
 Sit calmly writing, nor can Lord Memmius
 In such a season fail the common weal.²²

Viola carries something of this Lucretian Venus throughout the play. This enables the play to fashion a rethinking of pleasure as it proceeds. As Viola ebbs and flows between Orsino's court and Olivia's household she manages change whilst causing chaos. This foregrounds the grasping for pleasure amidst epistemic uncertainty that the play presents. Relevant, and recalling early modern Protestant anxiety about the power of the image to corrupt, Viola exercises watchfulness as chaos ensues.²³ She observes Olivia as perceptively as she observes

²² Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 1, 1-43.

²³ The role of watchfulness in Protestant faith practice is discussed in relation to *Macbeth* in the final chapter of this thesis. One of the key traits of Malvolio, Olivia's puritanical steward, is his ill-judged misdirection of Protestant watchfulness. Malvolio chooses to watch for faults in others and famously misinterprets signs pertinent to him. Consider his comical, arrogant interpretation of Maria's letter (II.v.103-73).

both the exteriority and interiority of her own doubled self:

Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her.

(II.ii.18)

It is this reading of the swerve, built upon Viola's awareness that 'illusion is perhaps too deeply embedded in human experience to be ever completely separated from reality' that drives the play – albeit chaotically – to its comedic ending.²⁴ Viola/Cesario is profoundly self-aware. In this respect s/he stands apart from the predominantly self-indulgent population of Illyria. While the Illyrians grasp at pleasure, Viola manages it. Orsino is in love with the idea of love, Olivia is excessively devoted to mourning. Belch and Aguecheek fashion and luxuriate in the engorged festivities that Malvolio proudly delights in quoshing. All is pleasure. But all Illyrian pleasure is a partner to misrepresentation.

Illyria, then, is home to a pleasure thematic. The kaleidoscopic imaging of pleasure offered includes the play's famous presentation of an engorged, insatiable festivity; cakes, ale and time are in plentiful supply as money can be sent for (II.iii.179-80, II.iii.183), and employment is not a concern for the aristocratic and self-absorbed Orsino and Olivia, or the wealthy revelling partnership of Belch and Aguecheek. As mentioned above, the troubled pleasure of self-

²⁴ Karen Greif, "Plays and Playing in *Twelfth Night*" in *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells (London: Routledge, 1986), 261.

indulgence is highlighted in the figurings of Orsino and Olivia. Orsino luxuriates in his love of being in love. Replacing human interaction with artificial stimulation (music), the Duke devotes himself to a fashioning of his own closed world of stimulation and response.²⁵ Olivia seeks to luxuriate in mourning. There is surely a taste of indecorous pleasure in her plan to grieve the death of her brother for seven long years. It should be noted that Olivia's method of mourning is relayed to the audience third-hand; Valentine presents images of the Lady's behavior to Orsino as reported by the Lady's handmaid. Foregrounded, however, is Olivia's self-indulgent pleasure in her own aesthetic. Olivia is not mourning, she is performing mourning for her own delight:

So please my lord, I might not be admitted,
 But from her handmaid do return this answer;
 The element itself, till seven years' heat,
 Shall not behold her face at ample view;
 But like a cloistress she will veiled walk,
 And water once a day her chamber round
 With eye-offending brine: all this to season
 A brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh
 And lasting, in her sad remembrance.

(1.1.24-32)

A similar control of the aesthetic that betrays pride (indeed, Viola tells Olivia that she is 'too proud' immediately after the spiel, (I.v.244) is found in Olivia's listing of the features of her face:

²⁵ I.i.1-15.

I will give
 out divers schedules of my beauty: it shall be
 inventoried, and every particle and utensil labelled to
 my will: as, item, two lips, indifferent red; item, two
 grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one neck, one chin,
 and so forth.

(I.v.238-43)

Overseeing all is Feste. The play's Fool is profoundly self-reflexive; a pleasure theorizing provider of pleasure.

Truly sir, and pleasure will be paid, one time or another.

Lucretius offers a theorisation of pleasure that is deeply relevant here. It serves as a richly erotic warning to the pleasure seekers of Illyria:

In the very moment of possession, the hot passion of lovers fluctuates with uncertain wanderings and they are undecided what to enjoy first with eyes and hands. They tightly press what they have sought and cause bodily pain, and often drive their teeth into little lips and give crushing kisses, because the pleasure is not pure and there are goads underneath which prod them to hurt the very thing, whatever it is, from which those torments of frenzy spring.²⁶

Subtly presented in the performance moments noted above is tension between the

Platonic/Aristotelian and the Epicurean. (The rehearsed performance of chance encounters

²⁶ This translation of *De Rerum Natura* 4, 1073-83 is offered by Robert D. Brown. See *Lucretius on Love and Sex: A Commentary on "De Rerum Natura" IV.1030-1287, With Prolegomena, Text, and Translation* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1988), 150-51.

cannot fail to fashion metaphysical tensions.) Performed is what Althusser termed a 'materialism of the encounter',²⁷ and evoked within this performance is a metaphysical episteme largely suppressed by the embracing of Platonic and Aristotelian acceptance of 'reason..meaning...necessity and teleology'.²⁸ To clarify, Shakespeare foregrounds the role of contingency in Viola's movement from her sea journey to Illyria, to Olivia's household, and, in turn to Olivia's heart. This Epicurean swerving from encounter to encounter points towards *Twelfth Night* as a play intrigued by the random, chaotic and changeable in life – and, importantly for this thesis, the management of pleasure in such an environment. My suggestion is that included within the kaleidoscopic portrait of pleasure presented within *Twelfth Night* is a Shakespearean exploration of, via Lucretius, an Epicurean approach to the conceptualisation of pleasure. At the centre of this conceptualisation is contented management of the unknowable and uncontrollable. The Lucretian erotic warning cited above is in league with this philosophy of chaos, uncertainty, randomness and physical drives incompatible with a metaphysical episteme that speaks of single truths and a knowable cosmos. The tension between watchfulness

²⁷ Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87* (London: Verso, 2006), 167.

²⁸ The list of qualities attendant to Platonic and Aristotelian trajectories of thought is offered by Marc Botha in *A Theory of Minimalism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). Botha also offers a concise exposition of the atomic chance encounter: 'Epicurean cosmology asserts the pre-eminence of chance and contingency. It asserts that there is no essence prior to the emergence of a real world, only a void in which a parallel fall, a laminar flow, of isolated elements exists. Within this disordered situation, for unknowable reasons, a fundamentally indeterminate event arises. Emerging from within the void, this event constitutes...an absolutely minimal swerve within invariant flow, which Lucretius terms *clinamen*'. Botha continues the discussion to explain that this Epicurean swerve 'brings some of these undefined elements into minimal contact, constituting an *encounter*'. See Botha, *A Theory of Minimalism*, 32.

and chaos that is contained within Lucretius's depiction of the over-eager lovers on the path to disappointment is the tension that drives *Twelfth Night*'s interrogation of pleasure. Here, to strengthen and develop the discussion, it becomes apposite to consider the play's refiguring of the shipwreck with spectator topos.

From Shipwreck and Spectator to Shipwrecked Spectator: Pleasure and Distance

'On a Thunderstorm by Porcellis'

The wind rises higher, the sail swells the rounder with it; Be careful, helmsman, of the sheet; boasting brought many to submission, who, with their hearts full of pride, were ashamed to take in a reef when in distress. Here the waves are rough. Sailor and master's guest toil so hard they labor at the rudder and on the deck in order to break the beating waves on the bows if one could. The helmsman's pea jacket drowns, while a billow that beats on the stem leaps backwards and falls in round droplets, and makes the sailor's hair like the heads of water-dogs. A cloud comes from above, which, driven on and on by a beam wind, begins suddenly to pour; it splashes on board and pierces so much the more severely through the blue sailor's cap, through boots and rain jackets soaking to the sin. To which he [the helmsman] pays no heed, but cries (while the wind roars out so that it booms) the strength. Yet a cool fellow usually sits on the main deck and watches the game although wind punishes and rainshowers beat; Porcellis likewise does not creep into the forecabin, but considers the storm calmly (in spite of water, rain, hail, and thunder), in order to examine in life this raging element, [an example] which you engrave in [your] thoughts.²⁹

²⁹ Joachim Oudaan, 'On a Thunderstorm by Porcellis', *Poezy*, (Amsterdam, 1712), II, 115-16. Quoted and translated by Lawrence Otto Goedde in *Tempest and Shipwreck in Dutch and Flemish Art: Convention, Rhetoric, and Interpretation* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 120. The explanatory inclusions are also offered by Goedde.

It's sweet, when winds blow wild on open seas,
 to watch from land your neighbor's vast travail,
 not that men's miseries bring us dear delight
 but that to see what ills we're spared is sweet.³⁰

[Y]et death is much too violent, coming as it does upon us by strange and violent means... That is still a violence to ships: although far away from the Capharean rocks, assailed by no storms, without a billow to shatter them, with favouring gale, in gliding course, with many crews, they founder amidst entire security, suddenly owing to some internal shock. Not dissimilar are the shipwrecks of life.³¹

There is no sea in the Garden of Eden.³²

The depiction of seafaring and shipwreck – a directing fusion of narrative and metaphors – has been a common ever-present throughout the history of Western literature. Touchstone texts would include Homer's *Odyssey*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and, in the world of early modern theatre, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Shakespeare foregrounds the shipwreck topos in *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1594) *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1596), *Twelfth Night* (c. 1601), *Othello* (c. 1604), *Pericles* (c. 1608) and *The Winter's Tale* (c.1609) before offering his fullest

³⁰ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 2, 1-4.

³¹ Tertullian, *De Anima*, 52

³² Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750-1840*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (London: Penguin, 1995), 2.

investigation of this literary ingredient in *The Tempest* (c.1611).³³ The discussion here will aim to unpack the shipwreck episode in *Twelfth Night* whilst driving towards an interrogation of the shaping of the concept of pleasure that the episode demands. Following a brief outline of changing readings of things marine that begins with the Book of Genesis and ends with the birth of the coastal holiday resort, the focus will turn to discussion on shipwreck's function as narreme, or identifiable narrative-driving moment. Thereafter the discussion will consider the recalibration of understanding of pleasure caused by the translation of the safely distant spectator into a seafarer required to manage the surrounding, and engulfing, mutable environment. The argument centres upon the recalibration of pleasure demanded by the re-positioning of the spectator of the shipwreck. The Lucretian spectator's pleasure is guaranteed by distance from the disaster. In Illyria, however, the spectator is rendered participant within an ever-changing, mutable world.

As *Twelfth Night* begins, Orsino employs metaphors of music to express the agitations he is caused by love's changeabilities:

If music be the food of love, play on,

³³ I list the plays that include shipwrecks as narremes, or basic units of narrative structure. Shipwreck references/imagery exterior to the main narrative flow are also numerous. Notable examples include Aaron's expression of support for Tamora and her dream of revenge in *Titus Andronicus* (II.i.1-25), Henry VI's expression of his love for Margaret in *Henry VI, Part I* (V.vii.1-9) and, perhaps most vividly, Clarence's in-dream premonition of death by drowning in *Richard III* (I.iv.9-63).

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 odour.

(I.i.1-7)

Paul Edmondson accurately suggests that Orsino's 'words signify an artistic as well as a sexual encounter'.³⁴ Both music and lust reach for 'excess', then, in a post-climactic withdrawal fade and 'die'. When the sweetness ends, the metaphors turn from the musical to the nautical:

Enough, no more;
 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
 O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
 That notwithstanding thy capacity
 Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
 Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
 But falls into abatement and low price,
 Even in a minute! So full of shapes is fancy,
 That it alone is high fantastical.

(I.i.8-15)

Love, like the ocean, overpowers and is able to consume endlessly. Neither are ever full.

Here Orsino is expressing a loss of control, a loss of tranquility, in a mutable sea of love.³⁵

Performed here is the 'chafing', that Stephen Greenblatt brilliantly identifies as being a source

³⁴ Paul Edmondson, *The Shakespeare Handbook: Twelfth Night* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 82.

³⁵ Consider Steve Mentz's comment: 'The ocean's capacity for rupture, disorder, and rebirth undergirds *Twelfth Night*'. Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 51.

of erotic energy in *Twelfth Night* having such a hold on Orsino that his language can only be used in an endlessly failing attempt to ‘relieve...passion’.³⁶ The repetition of ‘Now’, ‘good’ and ‘song’ carry a desperate reaching for immediate satisfaction as the duke continues to grasp and consume:

ORSINO

Give me some music. Now good morrow friends.
Now, good Cesario, but that piece of song,
That old and antic song we heard last night;
Methought it did relieve my passion much,
More than light airs and recollected terms
Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times.
Come, but one verse.

(II.iv.1-7)

Orsino’s failure to navigate through the changeable seas that his passions present runs in parallel to the navigational task faced by Viola and Sebastian. The second scene of *Twelfth Night* offers a depiction of the storm and shipwreck that jettisons Viola and Sebastian, a pair of twins entering into the throes of adulthood, into the raging ocean and, ultimately, onto the coast of festive Illyria.³⁷ The scene opens with two ingredients central to the shipwreck topos – dislocation and loss:

³⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 89. II.iv.4.

³⁷ Reversing the order of the opening scenes so as to open the play with the drama of shipwreck is common practice. See Laurie E. Osborne, *The Trick of Singularity: Twelfth Night and the Performance Editions* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1996).

VIOLA

What country, friends, is this?

CAPTAIN

This is Illyria, lady.

VIOLA

And what should I do in Illyria?

My brother is in Elysium.

(I.ii.1-3)³⁸

The scene develops into a spectator's description of the events of the shipwreck with a particular focus on Sebastian's adaptability as he strives to survive the catastrophe. The male twin defies contingency and the related price of human hubris (a quality that the shipwreck topos warns against) by adapting to the situation – or life-endangering environment – that he finds himself in:

CAPTAIN

I saw your brother,
Most provident in peril, bind himself –
Courage and hope both teaching him the practice –
To a strong mast that lived upon the sea,
Where, like Arion on the dolphin's back,
I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves
So long as I could see.

(I.ii.10-16)

³⁸ Barbara K. Lewalski suggests that 'Illyria is related to Elysium through the melodic, romantic sound of the two words and their identical syntactical positions' Barbara K. Lewalski, "Thematic Patterns in *Twelfth Night*," *Shakespeare Studies* v. 1 (January 1965): 168-81, 170. She expands on this sister-location theme by proposing that 'the dominant Illyrian concern with song, music, poetry, good cheer, and love gives the place an idyllic, Elysium-like atmosphere' (p. 170). I adopt a more cynical stance as I read Illyrian festivity as being engorged, enervated, and self-indulgent. As discussed below, I feel that more purchase can be gained on the play's performance of pleasure if Illyria is defined as being more thelassic than heavenly.

The Captain's description of this dexterous, accomplished fight for survival denotes Sebastian as a re-imagining of Odysseus: both figures are tied to a mast, and both register associations with the agency of music. Odysseus is drawn to the song of the sirens whilst Sebastian is imaged as the musical Arion astride a dolphin attracted by song. Homer's *Odyssey* serves, thus, as an informing locus classicus.³⁹ The narrative built around Odysseus foregrounds sea travel leading to adjustment to a paradisaical location, marriage, and divine epiphany as it displays the natural world's (here directed by deific forces) transformative impact on the course of a life. It is useful here to consider at some length one of the shipwreck episodes found in Homer's *Odyssey*. The focus, a focus also deeply relevant to *Twelfth Night*, is on the interrogation of subjectivity (anachronism noted) and pleasure housed by Odysseus within the journey from the onset of Poseidon's storm through decision, evacuation and the reaching of dry land. On noting Odysseus in peril on a raft in a storm Leukothea, daughter of Kadmos, shaped as a 'winged gannet' offers him advice borne of pity:

'Poor man, why is Poseidon the shaker of the earth so bitterly
cankered against you, to give you such a harvest of evils?
And yet he will not do away with you, for all his anger.
But do as I say, since you seem to me not lacking in good sense.
Take off these clothes, and leave the raft to drift at the winds' will,
and then strike out and swim with your hands and make for a landfall
on the Phaiakian country, where your escape is destined.'

(5.339-44)

³⁹ Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. Richard Lattimore (New York: HarperCollins, 1975). Of particular relevance is book 5, 339-99.

Odysseus, unable to identify the interiority of the gannet figure, reflects resolve coloured with a degree of resignation within a stubbornly human-centred grasping for control as he soliloquises on the action he should take:

‘Ah me, which of the immortals is weaving deception
against me, and tells me to put off from the raft? But no,
I will not do it yet, since I have seen with my own eyes
That the shore, where she said I could escape, is still far from me.
But here is what I will do, and this seems to me the best way.
As long as the timbers hold together and the construction
Remains, I will stay with it and endure though suffering hardships.

(5.356-62)

Once Poseidon has destroyed the raft with a ‘great wave’ Odysseus chooses to leave the wreckage and swim for his life. His eventual approach to dry land smacks of rejuvenative joy and release from the chaos of life in peril:

And as welcome as the show of life again in a father
is to his children, when he has lain sick, suffering strong pains,
and wasting long away, and the hateful death spirit has brushed him,
but then, and it is welcome, the gods set him free of his sickness,
so welcome appeared land and forest now to Odysseus,
and he swam, pressing on, so as to set foot on the mainland.

(5.394-99)

Following a second struggle against (and with) gods, rocks, sea and wind, Odysseus finally reaches dry land:

Odysseus staggered from the river
And lay down again in the rushes and kissed the grain-giving soil.
Then deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:
‘What will happen now, and what in the long outcome will befall me?’

(5.462-65)

I have quoted from Homer at such length as this Odyssean episode serves as a memorable paradigm of a pleasure-producing shipwreck narrative that precedes the pleasure-interrogating nautical metaphors of Lucretius – a metaphors that, I propose, reached Shakespeare via Montaigne.⁴⁰ Philosophical management of transience is key here – to which end the vital role of the spectator, present but not foregrounded in the Homer, is to be focused upon by Lucretius and, in turn, Montaigne and Shakespeare. What I am suggesting is that Shakespeare's depiction of Sebastian's survival at sea serves as a re-working of the Odysseus episode in which the foregrounding of the spectator permits an embedding of a Lucretian reading of the concept of pleasure into the play. As noted by Bram van Oostveldt, it is the presence of the spectator that allows the fashioning of a moral perspective:

Shipwreck is only useful with someone witnessing it. In that case, the spectator in question becomes the locus determining and historicizing the moral dimensions of man's natural boundaries.⁴¹

When considering Shakespeare's employment of the shipwreck topos it is important not to understate the threat to life and soul alive within the pre-eighteenth-century collective

⁴⁰ For discussion on the Lucretius, Montaigne, Shakespeare connection see Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 242-63.

⁴¹ Bram van Oostveldt, "Spectatorship and Involvement in Gluck's *Iphigénie En Tauride*," in *(Dis)embodying Myths in Ancien Régime Opera: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Bruno Forment (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 141.

understanding of vast bodies of water. Alain Corbin offers a rich description of Biblical influence on culture-wide understanding of oceanic masses of water:

Both the story of the Creation and that of the Flood coloured the world of collective imagination with their own specific features. Genesis imposed the vision of the ‘great abyss’, a place of unfathomable mysteries, an uncharted liquid mass, the image of the infinite and the unimaginable over which the Spirit of God moved at the dawn of Creation. This quivering expanse, which symbolized, and actually was, the unknowable, was frightful in itself. There is no sea in the Garden of Eden. There is no place within the enclosed landscape of the Paradise for the watery horizon whose surface extends as far as the eye can see. To attempt to fathom the mysteries of the ocean bordered on sacrilege, like an attempt to penetrate the impenetrable nature of God.⁴²

The oceans then are forbidding, mysterious realms that present both a literal and a metaphysical threat. Seafarers challenge their god by seeking to navigate and traverse the ‘unfathomable...uncharted liquid mass’ of the ocean; the sea journey denotes a risk-rich attempt to know the unknowable. As Corbin extends his depiction of the pre-eighteenth century ocean, something of the sea’s threat to the human grasp on the epistemological and, relatedly, the Aristotelian / Platonic sense of order and teleology is communicated:

The ocean was ...the remnant of that undifferentiated primordial substance on which form had to be imposed so that it might become part of Creation. This realm of the unfinished, a vibrating, vague extension of chaos, symbolized the disorder that preceded civilization. A firm belief began to appear which held that already in antediluvian times, it was only with difficulty that the raging ocean could be contained within its bounds. Consequently, the ocean inspired a deep sense of repulsion.⁴³

⁴² Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750-1840*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (London: Penguin, 1995), 1-2.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

Hans Blumenberg takes note of “the ancient suspicion that underlies the metaphors of shipwreck: that there is a frivolous, if not blasphemous, moment inherent in all human seafaring, on a par with offense against the invulnerability of the earth, the law of terra inviolata, which seemed to forbid cutting through isthmuses or building artificial harbors – in other words, radical alterations of the relationship between land and sea’.⁴⁴

If we are to accept Corbin’s assessment – and it seems to me to be fairly and intelligently deduced from his sources (the words of St. Augustine, St Ambrose, St. Basil, numerous seventeenth-century priests, and the Bible) – surely something of an eyes-open, aware, biting of the apple of Eden was held within the image set that controlled the collective understanding of the connotations of seafaring.⁴⁵ Perhaps this image was gradually tempered by pragmatic consideration of the financial and exploratory gains that partnered cross-sea voyages. Viola and Sebastian, initially defined as seafaring siblings, surely carry something, however, of the spiritual and physical derring-do inherent to the sailor – a derring-do identifiably absent from

⁴⁴ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 10-11.

⁴⁵ Corbin’s sources include: Father Dominique Bouhours, *Les Entretiens d’Ariste et d’Eugène* (Amsterdam, 1671); Father Georges Fournier, *Hydrographie contenant la théorie et la pratique de toutes les parties de la navigation* (1643, 2nd ediont., Paris, 1667); Johann Albert Fabricius, *Hydrothéologie oder Versuch, durch aufmerksame Betrachtung der Eigenschaften, reichen Austheilung und Bewegung der Wasser die Menschen zur Liebe und Bewunderung ihres Schöpfers zu ermuntern* (Hamburg, 1734).

the population of Illyria. (Until the arrival of Viola, the leading Illyrian figures (Orsino, Olivia, Malvolio, Belch and Aguecheek) are locked into the stasis of self-indulgence.) This brother and sister are defined as empowered to negotiate the changeable oceans, to seek out and embrace new philosophies – new relationships between subject and cosmos – from the play’s opening moments. The unknowable mutable is within their realm of experience – Sebastian is able to ‘hold acquaintance with the waves’ (I.ii.16) and Viola will later prove to master the mutable world of Illyria. Both brother and sister are able to act and react in the ever-changing universe of Epicurean materialism. The shipwreck narreme is, thus, survivable for Sebastian and Viola.

Differentiation between shipwreck’s functionality as narreme and its functionality as a material focus for philosophical consideration is highly relevant to the interrogation of pleasure offered by *Twelfth Night*. As a narreme, a shipwreck offers the narrative it finds itself within a rich array of possibilities for development. Here analysis is the weaker cousin of intuition. As Josiah Blackmore explains in reference to Bernardo Gomes de Brito’s early eighteenth-century collection of mid fifteenth-century Portuguese shipwreck narratives, ‘Affectively, the appeal of the shipwreck stories is obvious, accessible to readers across the generations.’⁴⁶ A pleasure-inducing sense of drama, dis-location, mutability, human frailty and human strength is clearly

⁴⁶ Josiah Blackmore, *Manifest Perdition: Shipwreck Narrative and the Disruption of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xx.

communicated within the following extract offered by the unknown author of the *Account of the very remarkable loss of the Great Galleon São João*. The author explains that the vessel:

Broke in two, one half from the mast forward and the other from the mast to the stern. In about one hour these two pieces became four. The decks were broken open, so the merchandise and crates came to the surface. Many of these on board struggled to cling to the boxes and pieces of wood in order to get to land. More than forty Portuguese and seventy slaves died this way. The rest came to land as God pleased: some on top of the waves, and some under, and many were wounded by the nails and wood. In about four hours the galleon was completely destroyed. Not a single piece of it any longer than a couple of feet could be found. The sea delivered all the pieces onto the beach in a great fury.⁴⁷

Involved and central are loss of life, material wealth, alidade, cartographical security, and journey ontology. Such losses – as any listener to any tale of peril at sea can vouch – generate attractive narrative progression incorporating various pleasures including suspense and empathy. Shakespeare ruthlessly taps into this shipwreck-related reservoir of narrative potential when presenting interaction between the political Gonzalo and the Boatswain during the opening moments of *The Tempest*:

GONZALO Nay, good, be patient.
 BOATSWAIN When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers
 For the name of king? To cabin! Silence; trouble us not.
 GONZALO Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.
 BOATSWAIN None that I more love than myself. You are a coun-

⁴⁷ Bernardo Gomes de Brito. *História trágico-marítima*, (1735-36).

cillor; if you can command these elements to silence and work
 peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your
 authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long and
 make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the
 hour, if it so hap.

(I.i.15-26)

On reaching land, shipwreck survivors face separation leading to isolation and, relatedly, alterity leading to fear and the need for improvisation. Once again, fuel for narrative progression and the related generation of pleasure is available in abundance. Viola is the product of – and central figure in – such a narreme. She carries enormous potency as an element in narrative progression and, consequently, is a focus and seed of playgoer pleasure. What we are approaching here is a Shakespearean uniting of aesthetic form and metaphorical potential. It is within this unity that pleasure can be interrogated.

Before carrying this argument further I would like to return to Corbin's discussion on our changing relationship with sea and coast. As explained by Michael Pye, it was not until the early-to-mid eighteenth century that a coastal leisure industry started to develop in Britain. At this point a reassessment of pleasure and things marine, perhaps unimaginable to Shakespeare, took place:

The seaside was becoming a destination, not a harbor on the way to somewhere else over the water; and it was a playground, not a place of work and war. It was hard to imagine that there had once been a world that centred on the sea itself. Over the years even the coastline was fixed in place as it never used to be when high winds could make a storm out of the sand, and high tides could break deep into land. Stone and then concrete made sea walls, promenades, esplanades, a definite squared-off

boundary between man and sea. Behind them, seafront hotels and villas could stare out with perfect indifference at the sea, which had made them so desirable in the first place.⁴⁸

Communicated here is a sanitization, a taming of the oceans – or at least those areas of ocean that meet land mass. Immersion into the sea is minimal. Quest has become rest, the focus leisure, not treasure. The fearsome drive of mutability of the oceans is bypassed as the touching ground of sea and land is refashioned. When considering the kaleidoscopic picture of pleasure presented by *Twelfth Night* it is important to steer far from this tamed image of human interaction with the oceans. Viola and Sebastian precede the coastal resort; the unknowable changeability of the seas of Illyria present a considerable metaphysical and literal threat – and this understanding of the seas enables the play's investigation into the relationship between distance and pleasure. In insisting on the need to accept change as reality and stasis as fiction, Heraclitus and Lucretius point towards the rethinking of pleasure that this aspect of *Twelfth Night* demands.⁴⁹ A useful paraphrasing of the relevant understanding of the natural world is offered by Steve Mentz: 'the essence of all systems is change. Stasis is a fiction'.⁵⁰ Change can be managed – perhaps enjoyed – by maintaining distance from it. (Is there not a tinge of

⁴⁸ Michael Pye, *The Edge of the World: How the North Sea Made Us Who We Are* (London: Penguin, 2014), Introduction, Kindle.

⁴⁹ Consider, for example, the discussions on gold becoming more valuable than copper (book 5, 1273-80) and the foolishness of seeking security in the conceptually impermanent fields of wealth and power (book 5, 1120-30) offered by Lucretius in *On the Nature of Things*.

⁵⁰ See Steve Mentz, "'Making the green one red": Dynamic Ecologies in *Macbeth*, Edward Barlow's Journal, and *Robinson Crusoe*', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 23, 3 (2013): 70.

Montaignian *volupté maligne* (see directly below) in the Captain's viewing of Sebastian's fight for survival from a position of relative safety? There is certainly a deliciousness to his poetic turn of phrase and this, when coupled with his evocation of Arion and the dolphins, is suggestive of a self-focused aesthetic enjoyment over, or perhaps alongside, moral concern.) Here – as suggested directly above – we are in the realm of a Montaignian valuing of spectatorship. Hans Blumenberg provides an apposite exposition of the relevant area of Montaignian thought:

Montaigne does not justify the spectator of shipwreck by his right to enjoyment; rather, he justifies his pleasure, positively described as malicious (*volupté maligne*), by his successful self-preservation. By virtue of his capacity for this distance, he stands unimpaired on the solid ground of the shore. He survives through one of his useless qualities: the ability to be a spectator. The spectator's enjoyment no longer has the existential success it had in ancient theory, where it led to happiness (*eudaemonia*) as the pure form of the relationship to the world. Rather its comfort is something like the cunning of nature, in that it sets a premium on taking as little risk as possible with one's life and rewards distance with enjoyment.⁵¹

Compare this to Arthur Schopenhauer's figuring of the shipwreck with spectator topos. For Schopenhauer there is no opportunity to spectate as all are at sea in a world of the unknowable:

Just as the boatman sits in his small boat, trusting his frail craft in a stormy sea that is boundless in every direction, rising and falling with the howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering and misery the individual man calmly sits, supported by and trusting the *principium individuationis*, or the way in which the individual knows things as phenomenon. The boundless world, everywhere full of suffering in the infinite past, in the infinite future, is strange to

⁵¹ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 17.

him, is indeed a fiction. His vanishing person, his extensionless present, his momentary gratification, these alone have reality for him; and he does everything to maintain them, so long as his eyes are not opened by a better knowledge. Till then, there lives only in the innermost depths of his consciousness the wholly obscure presentiment that all this is indeed not really so strange to him, but has a connexion with him from which the *principium individuationis* cannot protect him. From this presentiment arises that ineradicable *dread*, common to all human beings (and possibly even to the more intelligent animals), which suddenly seizes them, when by any chance they become puzzled over the *principium individuationis*, in that the principle of sufficient reason in one or other of its forms seems to undergo an exception. For example, when it appears that some change has occurred without a cause, or a deceased person exists again; or when in any other way the past or the future is present, or the distant is near. The fearful terror at anything of this kind is based on the fact that they suddenly become puzzled over the forms of knowledge of the phenomenon which alone hold their own individuality separate from the rest of the world.⁵²

Useful here is Thomas Pfau's discussion of Schopenhauer's 'boatman' passage:

Working with what became a key trope of Gnosis in modern times – that of a man's perilous nautical venture into the unknown – the...passage...powerfully conjures up the intrinsically "anxious" psyche of the modern individual. Throughout its entire uncertain existence, the latter must cope with the anxious intuition that the institutional, professional, and conceptual architecture of modernity amounts but to a desperate and precarious makeshift solution aimed at stabilizing and legitimizing a state of affairs permanently devoid of metaphysical guarantees. Skillfully enjamming infinity and anxiety as the joint epistemological and affective dimensions of modern existence, the passage ultimately refuses to answer the question also faced by Coleridge's Mariner: namely, whether the terror of infinity or that of apocalypse is ultimately worse.⁵³

Pfau's assessment, distant from the early modern context as it is, speaks to *Twelfth Night's*

rethinking of pleasure. Illyria is populated by pleasure seekers, but, in its mutability, presents

⁵² Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), vol. I, 35.

⁵³ Thomas Pfau, "The Philosophy of Shipwreck: Gnosticism, Skepticism, and Coleridge's Catastrophic Modernity," *MLN*, v. 122, no. 5 (2007): 974

itself as being ‘devoid of metaphysical guarantees’.⁵⁴ There is a terrifying grasping at nothing in a land displaying neither stability nor legitimization. All is uncertain.

We now reach the concluding point in this discussion of the rethinking of pleasure offered by *Twelfth Night*: What happens to pleasure in spectatorship of the human struggle with forces of mutability when distance from the event is reduced to zero? I am arguing that Illyria is defined as a kind of ‘floating world’ – a paradox made up of dry land defined through a nautical metaphors. Relatedly, the play employs the concept of theatricality (in terms of playing loose with the relationship between signifier and meaning) to investigate the connotations of management of the changeable or unstable. Mutability is, thus, ingrained into the Illyrian aesthetic; in Illyria, all are always all at sea.

My proposal here is that nautical metaphors, as figured in the shipwreck and spectator topos, translate their presence and energy on to the dry land of Illyria, thus washing away security from under the feet of the spectator and, crucially removing the distance between spectator and event; the spectator becomes the afflicted participant. A changeable world is a world in which all face shipwreck at all times and Illyria, as described below, is signalled as changeable. Viola, initially reassured by reaching the dry land of the Illyrian coast, finds herself still in a world of

⁵⁴ Ibid.

epistemic crisis. Our task, and the task of *Twelfth Night*, is to locate pleasure in an indeterminate universe. It will be argued that *Twelfth Night* approaches this suggestion by unpacking the knotty problem of illusion's role in reality and promoting the Montaignian concept of the ever-changing self.

Let us begin with the language used to describe Viola and Sebastian. The siblings are figured as human salvage washed up onto the Illyrian coast via a second baptism demanding the adoption of a new identity. All smacks of a fusion of changeable selfhood, sailing and seafaring. Viola never quite escapes from the marine background that the play gives her. Consider, for example, the following exchange between Maria and Viola:

Maria: Will you hoist sail, sir? Here lies your way.

Viola: No, good swabber, I am to hull here a little longer. (I.v.197-98)

And this interaction between Olivia and Viola:

Olivia: There lies your way, due west.

Viola: Then westward ho. (III.i.132)

This reinforcing of a marine identity ensures that the feet of Viola never reach dry land. She is required to dissemble – or role-play – so as to stay afloat in the watery world of Illyria.

Now consider the language of Feste:

Now, the melancholy god protect thee; and the
tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for
thy mind is a very opal. I would have men of such
constancy put to sea.

(II.iv.72-75)

Feste has identified the changeable as being an Illyrian quality. He speaks of dress being
‘changeable taffeta, the ‘mind’ being an ‘opal’, The opal is, of course, associated with
changeability:

In the Opal you shal see the burning fire of the Carbuncle or Ruby, the glorious purple of the
Amethyst, the greene sea of the Emeraud, and all glittering together.⁵⁵

The nature of the Captain’s watching of Sebastian’s dexterous fight for survival warrants further
consideration. This condition of spectatorship within the shipwreck narreme is highlighted by
the Captain’s usage of the verb ‘to see’ (in past tense and modal forms) three times in a seven-
line description (I saw...I saw...I could see) (I.ii.10-16). As spectator of Sebastian’s struggle at
sea from a position of security he is granted a Lucretian opportunity to grasp ‘the enjoyment of
knowing the world and his own position within it’.⁵⁶ It is tempting, therefore, to regard the
Captain as a placeholder for the paying spectator safely located in the auditorium – but the
neatness feels insufficient to the task. The whole drive of *Twelfth Night* is towards the
interrogation of pleasure rather than its capture. We are reminded again of the Captain’s self-

⁵⁵ Gaius Plinius Secundus, *The historie of the world, commonly called the Naturall Historie of C*, trans. Philemon
Holland, 2 vols. 1, (London: A. Islip, 1601)

⁵⁶ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 17.

focused aesthetic enjoyment of the shipwreck, and the collision between distance, pleasure and morality that play and playhouse seek to unpack, interrogate and perform.

The central thesis of this chapter has been that *Twelfth Night* locates pleasure in imaginative acceptance and management of changeability of self and changeability of environment. It has been argued that throughout the comedy Shakespeare offers focus on pleasure within mutability via engagement with Lucretian/Epicurean materialism. The imaginative actions and reactions of Viola-Cesario as s/he negotiates the mutable world of Illyria have provided the central focus and grounding point for the discussion. The key point throughout has been that Illyria is defined as an ever mutable, changeable environment, and adaptability is required if pleasure is to be approached.

Amongst its projection of the joy and shame of a rich, dark, self-indulgent revelry, *Twelfth Night*, it has been suggested, finds purchase in investigating the potentialities attendant to achieving a calm contentment supportive of awareness of human experience, or an early modern re-figuring of ataraxia. The concept of ataraxia has been approached as, at the turn of the seventeenth century, it developed associations with contentment achieved through untroubled awareness of the self as a changeable entity, and a reading of the universe as housing an ongoing and unreadable changeability. The chapter closed with a discussion on

nautical metaphors and the shipwreck/spectator topos. It was suggested that this discursive terrain has been employed by Shakespeare in the enabling of an investigation into the possibilities for pleasure in a mutable environment.

Chapter 5

‘Reason and Vertue’ v. a ‘Gunshotte of Affection’: *Macbeth* and the Problematisation of Pleasure

When morality is no more taught, religion no longer received, or laws exist, Medea would still terrify us with her infanticide. The sight of Lady Macbeth, while it makes us shudder, will also make us rejoice in a good conscience, when we see her, the sleep-walker, washing her hands and seeking to destroy the awful smell of murder. Sight is always more powerful to man than description; hence the stage acts more powerfully than morality or law.¹

Thoughts of the Imagination are all naturally wicked.²

It is not an exaggeration to say that art perhaps never would have come into being if pleasure were not an important, even vital, social constituent of the life of man. Man's habit of responding to certain phenomena of life positively or negatively within the outlines of pleasure is a crucial factor in the origin of every art.³

Abstract: This chapter will argue that the registers of pleasure are interrogated and expanded within an evolution of the aesthetic offered by Jacobean performance of *Macbeth*. This broadening of the aesthetic palate displayed by *Macbeth* will be discussed via reference to the aestheticisation of violence, Renaissance understanding of the function, nature and effect of the imagination, and the play's resonance with the

¹ Friedrich Schiller, "The Stage as Moral Institution", trans. anonymous, in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), 441.

² William Perkins and Thomas Pierson, *A Treatise of Man's Imaginations. Shewing His Naturall Euill Thoughts: His Want of Good Thoughts: The Way to Reforme Them, Etc. [the Epistle Signed: Thomas Piersonn.]*, (Cambridge: John Legat, 1607), 22.

³ György Lukács, *Az esztikum sajátossága* [The Condition of Aesthetics] (Budapest, 1969), 516. Quoted by Bela Kiralyfalvi in "Lukács: A Marxist Theory of the Aesthetic Effect," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 26 (1974): 506.

Elizabethan/Jacobean clash between the emergent humanist universe and the providentialist teleology central to the doctrine of election.⁴ Moments in performance discussed will be Macbeth's heightened sensual receptivity following the murder of Duncan (II.ii.15-34), the first meeting of the witches (I.i.1-10), the dagger scene (II.i.33-64), Ross's relayal of the murder of Macduff's family to Macduff and Malcolm (IV.iii.193-238), Macbeth's pre-murder rapt soliloquizing (I.iii.132-44, I.vii.1-12), and the dark awakening of the theatrum mundi topos within the 'To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow' deconstruction of human existence (V.v.18-27).⁵ Shakespeare is cast as theatre practitioner and informal proto-theorist of the aesthetic exploring possibilities for theatre performance which would later be investigated by Friedrich Schiller in his theorizing of the aesthetic as a moralising force that can serve as 'the hinge or transitional stage between the brutally sensual and the sublimely rational'.⁶ Presented then is the violent aesthetic as a means to edification. *Macbeth* is, however, categorised as a moral fable necessarily and richly challenged by the immoralities awakened and investigated at its showing. The study will close with a focus on Cynthia Marshall's theory of self-shattering – an important and often overlooked theorization of playgoing pleasure which stands in negotiation with Stephen Greenblatt's still influential theory of self-fashioning.⁷ The suggestion here will be that Macbeth's rapt wrestling with the concepts of pre-destination, free will, ambition, morality and the connotations for subjectivity implicated by the theatrum mundi topos presents the playgoer with the

⁴ Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election*.

⁵ The edition of the play used throughout the chapter is Shakespeare, William, *Macbeth*, ed. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁶ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 103. Also see Schiller, "The Stage as Moral Institution," and Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2004).

⁷ Cynthia Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

opportunity for jouissance through self-dissolution.

It is perhaps remarkable that the first recorded usage of the word ‘aesthetically’ in the English language occurs with the labelling of a neoteric and divergent approach to the appraisal of murder, thus signalling the possibility of validation for a Kantian disinterested pleasure in transgression. In his 1827 essay titled ‘On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts’ Thomas De Quincey proposes that the act of murder, habitually, of course, evaluated according to moral standards could also be considered in terms of taste.⁸ Amongst the wit, satire and irony of De Quincey’s essay lies gentle movement towards a recalibration of the relationship between the aesthetic, pleasure and morality:

Everything in this world has two handles. Murder, for instance, may be laid hold of by its moral handle (as it generally is in the pulpit and at the Old Bailey), and *that*, I confess, is its weak side; or it may also be treated, *aesthetically*, as the Germans call it - that is, in relation to good taste.⁹

Crucial here is a sense of these ‘two handles’ to murder – the moral and the aesthetic – being available as approaches to be chosen according to the mindset of the person making the evaluation. Initially, of course, one might feel that one is selecting between opposites, and

⁸ Thomas De Quincey, “On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts,” (First Paper) in Thomas De Quincey, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, 8, ed. David Masson (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), 13.

⁹ Ibid.

aesthetic judgement would, therefore, be immoral. This simplified approach to the spectacle of crime is, however, challenged by the aesthetic generated by mimetic display. Let us, like De Quincey in his essay ‘On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*’ (1823), consider how an adjustment in focus from fictional victim’s loss to fictional murderer’s altered state can translate the demeaning, base horror contingent to the spectacle of man at his most ignoble – deemed unworthy of poetry – into pleasure in cognitive partnership with a murderer in hellish rapture:

Murder in ordinary cases, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror; and for this reason, that it flings the interest exclusively upon the natural but ignoble instinct by which we cleave to life; an instinct, which, as being indispensable to the primal law of self-preservation, is the same in kind, (though different in degree,) amongst all living creatures; this instinct therefore, because it annihilates all distinctions, and degrades the greatest of men to the level of "the poor beetle that we tread on," exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude. Such an attitude would little suit the purposes of the poet. What then must he do? He must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with him; (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them, - not a sympathy of pity or approbation.) In the murdered person all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him "with its petrific mace." But in the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion, -- jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred, -- which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.¹⁰

Here, then, the crime of murder is positioned within the realm of the aesthetic resulting in a vast extension to the domain of the pleasurable. De Quincey’s analysis is pertinent and rich. The suggestion is that ‘the purposes of the poet’ are best reached if the focus is on the murderer, not

¹⁰ Thomas De Quincey, “On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*,” in *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, 10, ed. David Masson (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), 390-91.

the victim. The attitude of the victim – desperately and ignobly clinging to life whilst facing ‘fear of instant death’ – is deemed to be ‘ignoble’ and ‘vulgar’ and, consequently, ill-suited to aesthetic attention. The ‘great storm of passion’ of the murderer, however, offers richer fuel for aesthetic fires. By engaging with this aesthetic and ‘entering into his feelings’ – which means entering into his hell – the poet’s audience can access pleasures undiscoverable outside of the poetic context. These pleasures are granted, of course, by a distancing from the act presented – a distancing implicit to the inherent self-referentiality of theatre presented in a professional, secular playhouse beyond London’s city walls. The playgoer can enjoy an experiencing of Macbeth’s altered – or heightened – mental state, because theatre performance defines this experiencing as play and thus separate from real life. The assumption, however, that this self-referential aesthetic realm exists ‘outside’ of – or in a state of disjuncture to – our non-aesthetic moral reality is contestable. Whilst De Quincey proposes that the moral and the aesthetic constitute opposing and distinct approaches to the judgement or valuing of human behaviour, the antitheatricalists of early modern London insisted upon interaction between the aesthetic and the moral. Stephen Gosson famously theorised the potency of theatre as virtue’s silent assassin – gently corrupting the soul as it pleasurably stimulates the senses:

There set they a broche straunge consortes of melodie, to tickle the eare, costly apparell to flatter the sight, effeminate gesture to ravish the sence, and wanton speache, to whette desire to inordinate lust. Therefore of both barrells I judge Cookes and Painters the better hearing, for the one extendeth his art no farther then to the tongue, palate and nose, the other to the eye, and both are ended in outward sense, which is common to us with brute beastes. But these, by the privy entries of the eare slip downe into the heart, and with gunshotte of affection gaule the minde, where reason and vertue

shoulde rule the roste.¹¹

Thus the notion of separation between the moral and the aesthetic is challenged. Here, of course, the threat is found in the processes of theatre; the music, poetry and dazzling visuals that, in Gosson's mind, constitute theatrical performance render 'reason and vertue' subservient to worldly pleasure. This is to say that in Gosson's world the nature of pleasure in the aestheticisation of violence found in *Macbeth* is imbricated with and not disparate to moral concerns. Gosson proposes pollution; engagement with the aesthetic infects the playgoer, driving the soul's owner towards immorality and society towards decay:

But the exercise that is nowe among us is banquetting, playing, pyping, and dauncing and all suche delightes as may win us to pleasure, or rocke us in sleepe. Quantum mytatus ab illo. Oh, what a woonderfull change is this! Our wreastling at armes is turned to wallowing in Ladies lappes, our courage, to cowardice, our running to riot, our bowes into Bolles, and our dartes to dishes. Wee haue robbed *Greece* of gluttony, *Italy* of wantonnes, *Spayne* of pride, *France* of deceite, and *Duchland* of quaffing. Compare *London* to *Rome* and *England* to *Italy*, you shall finde the Theaters of the one, the abuses of the other, to bee rife among us.¹²

Gosson's comment here is, of course somewhat unspecific – attacking the frivolity of playing rather than specific instances of the aestheticisation of violence. The point (here communicated with humorously nationalistic fervour), however, is clear: Taking pleasure in sensual response –

¹¹ Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse: Containing a Pleasant Invective Against Poets, Pipers...* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1579), 14v-15r.

¹² Ibid, 16v-17r. 'Quantum mutates ab illo' can be understood as 'how changed from what he once was'.

and I am proposing that Shakespeare's aestheticisation of violence in *Macbeth* is designed to encourage sensual response in the playgoer – is detrimental to the moral fibre of society.

In *The Aesthetics of Murder* (1991) Joel Black approaches aesthetic reception from a starkly different angle. His suggestion is deeply pertinent to the aesthetic realm created and inhabited by *Macbeth*:

Because our aesthetic sensibility often conflicts with our moral sense, we are tempted to subordinate the former as deceit and illusion to the "truth" of the latter. By suppressing or denying our aesthetic experiences we create a moral "reality" that is, in fact, our supreme fiction. This grand artifice or ideology of moral reason can only maintain itself as Truth at the continued expense of the individual's own subjective feelings, his or her aesthetic and erotic responses to the world. In societies governed by moral-rational values, these responses, and their objective embodiments as artifacts (or art-facts), are periodically stigmatized – either for being deceptive, as in Plato's attack on poetry, or for being decadent, as in the social realists' condemnation of abstract art, or as in the more recent criticism of brutality in Brian De Palma's films and of "sodomasochistic" imagery in Robert Mapplethorpe's photography.¹³

In proposing that aesthetic pleasure is necessarily subordinated to a 'grand artifice or ideology of moral reason' Black grants the aesthetic a status, or agency, which runs contradirectionally to Gosson's theorization. For Black, aesthetic pleasure in conflict with moral value leads to a reassertion of morality via the tendency to suppress the aforementioned aesthetic response. (It should be noted that whilst explaining that traditional theorisations of the aesthetic response/morality conflict paint a picture of art supporting the ideology of moral reason or

¹³ Joel Black, *The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 4.

LADY

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH

There's one did laugh in's sleep,

And one cried, 'Murder', that they did wake each other.

I stood and heard them; but they did say their prayers

And address'd them again to sleep.

LADY

There are two lodged together.

MACBETH

One cried, 'God bless us', and 'Amen,' the other,

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.

Listening their fear, I could not say, 'Amen'

When they did say, 'God bless us'.

LADY

Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH

But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?

I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'

Stuck in my throat.

(II.ii.15-34)¹⁴

Close analysis of this stichomythic interaction between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth directly after Duncan's murder supports De Quincey's proposal that Macbeth enters something

¹⁴ My emphasis. I would like to add a note here on theatre history. It should not be forgotten that in early-sixteenth century London, Lady Macbeth would have been played by a boy-actor. This is relevant here as my reading of *Macbeth* assumes a high degree of audience engagement with the play – and it might be thought that the performance of a boy-actor could somehow lessen the dramatic moment. Simon Forman – an astrologer and playgoer – noted down his thoughts on a 1611 Globe performance of *Macbeth*: 'Mackbetes quen did Rise in the night in her slepe, and walke, and talked and confessed all, and the doctor noted he wordes'. Simon Forman, *The Booke of Plaies and Notes therof per formane for Common Pollicie*, MS. 208, fols. 200-207v, Bodleian Ashm. (1611). Cited by Dennis Bartholomeusz in *Macbeth and the Players* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 12. Bartholomeusz suggests that Shakespeare worked with a 'theatre in which there was intimate contact between actors and audience...due to the special immediacy of effect obtainable on the apron-stage'. Bartholomeusz, *Macbeth*, 12.

resembling a drug-enhanced, heightened state of awareness following the killing of Duncan (see above). Macbeth's profound openness to sensation, displayed as extreme sensitivity to sight and sound is, indeed, paramount; insistent references to what Macbeth hears and sees/visualises are employed in communicating his restlessly over-reaching post-murder state of mind.

Black accurately notes that implicit to De Quincey's reading of this scene is the transformation (perhaps De Quincey would prefer the term 'beautification') of Macbeth 'into a kind of aesthetic spectator in his own right' and this 'creates a profound sense of communion between the audience and the murderous protagonist of Shakespeare's play': Macbeth becomes audience member to his own play as his focus turns to all that can be sensed around him.¹⁵ The audience are thus asked to unite – or exercise complicity – with Macbeth as he displays a guilt-ridden reaction to judgement and, consequently, is haunted by his own moral sensibilities as he considers (regrets?) this first murder.¹⁶ This situation is unusual in the Shakespearean canon.¹⁷ Iago, for example, is willingly, knowingly, and confessedly immoral, and the playgoer takes

¹⁵ Black, *The Aesthetics of Murder*, 50.

¹⁶ Thomas Cartelli offers a perceptive study on the impact of spectator-visible presentation of Banquo's ghost on audience complicity with Macbeth. Cartelli suggests that allowing the spectator to see what Macbeth sees (i.e. a present and visible bloody ghost of Banquo) promotes a necessary (in theatrical terms) union between the audience and Macbeth. Thomas Cartelli, *Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 96-118.

¹⁷ It is tempting, however, to consider Macbeth as a version of Claudius. Both figures display ambition-related criminality traumatically untempered by a strong and self-focused moral awareness.

pleasure in his reprobacy.¹⁸ In this regard, Shakespeare's Richard III and the plotting bastards Don John and Edmund are Iago's bedfellows. The aesthetic can, thus, broaden the field of pleasure to allow delight in the repugnant. Macbeth, however, is not morally repugnant. He is, rather, an unwilling yet active participant in his own immorality. The suggestion is that playgoer complicity with a murderous figure in a state of *akrasia* facilitates a theatre rich in the currencies found within antitheatrical v. defenders of the theatre antithesis (equivocation?). It also engenders an aesthetic domain armed to investigate the ideology of morality via the generation of pleasure at the akratic crisis. It should be stressed that the play's demand for complicity between spectator and protagonist at a moment when the protagonist is displaying heightened sensory reception signalling a state of guilt-ridden post-murder rapture is central here. Macbeth's rapture is not merely presented – it is sensorially accessible to the playgoer. De Quincey finds aesthetic value in the post-transgression imaginings and emotional responses of the murderer whilst *Macbeth* finds theatricality in allowing the killer's heightened imaginative powers to be rendered sensible to the playgoer. This begs questions regarding the early modern conception of the imagination and the playwright's harnessing of this conception to enable pleasure in theatricality.

The early modern imagination appears to have been an ambivalent beast – deemed capable of

¹⁸ Michael Neill proposes that 'Iago lets horrible things loose and delights in watching them run; and the play seems to share that narcissistic fascination – or perhaps, better, Iago is the voice of its own fascinated self-regard'. Michael Neill, "Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40, no. 4 (1989): 395.

inviting delightful creation whilst always threatening openness to the persuasions of the diabolical. The Neoplatonist's embracing of man's godlike ability to create from the imaginative spur is countered by the protestant wariness of the imagination as the gate through which the devil might enter the human soul – a wariness which lies central to protestant opposition to the artistic visual image. George Puttenham, for example, proposes that 'the phantasticall part of man' offers the possibility of presentation of 'the best, the most comely, and bewtifull images or apparances of thinges to the soule and according to their very truth' whilst the Calvinist William Perkins suggests that the 'thoughts of the Imagination are all naturally wicked'.¹⁹ References to the 'bewtifull', 'truth' and the 'wicked' point towards the centrality of the aesthetic pleasure/morality contestation that is so active within *Macbeth*.

Renaissance thought placed the imagination within the 'soule sensible that giveth feeling' thus granting it status above the faculties of the vegetable soul – encompassing the aspects of inner life that humans have in common with animals (e.g. the drive towards reproduction, nourishment and growth) – but below "the soule Rationalis, that giveth reason".²⁰ The implication of this is that the imagination was considered to be dichotomic. It enabled feeling,

¹⁹ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589; repr. London: Alex Murray & Son, 1869), 15, and William Perkins and Thomas Pierson, *A Treatise of Man's Imaginations. Shewing His Naturall Euill Thoughts: His Want of Good Thoughts: The Way to Reforme Them, Etc. [the Epistle Signed: Thomas Piersonn.]*, (Cambridge: John Legat, 1607), 22, EEBO-TCP.

²⁰ *Batman upon Bartholome, his Booke De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1582), fol. 15r. Cited in Paul A. Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties: Sensational Art and Meaning in Macbeth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 16.

enhanced understanding and “printeth in the body, the images of those things which it doeth vehemently thinke of and apprehend”, but also opened the door to sensuality, the passions and, relatedly and perhaps most importantly, the Renaissance devil (still an evil force negotiating an identity between the horrific/comical horned aggressor of medieval times and the less easily identifiable, all-pervading, evil presence central to Calvinist ideology).²¹ Human reliance on the imagination without engaging reason could, therefore, lead to tragic erring and, consequently, the imagination could not be trusted. The relevance of this to Macbeth’s plight is clear. If the focus turns from Macbeth to playgoers attending a Jacobean performance of *Macbeth*, however, questions central to the theatrical drive of the play arise. Apposite here is consideration of Paul A. Jorgensen’s investigation into why ‘Shakespeare would produce a greatly moral work which depends so constantly for its power upon this faculty [imagination] linked to the body’.²² Jorgensen finds an answer within William Rossky’s illustration of what he deems to be the dominant Renaissance conceptualisation of the imagination.²³ Recalling the core argument between antitheatricalists and defenders of poetry, as discussed in the previous chapter, Rossky depicts the Renaissance imagination as a faculty of great emotional power

²¹ Pierre de Le Primaudaye, *The French Academie*, trans. T. B[owes] (1594), II, 157. Cited in Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties*, 18. For an overview of early modern conceptions of the devil, see Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Tudor and Stuart England* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2007).

²² Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties*, 17.

²³ William Rossky, “Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, V (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

which could dangerously awaken the passions but could, conversely, also be employed as a conduit through which the sinner might be persuaded to tread the path of virtue (one recalls Schiller's assessment of audience response to Medea and the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth here). Having adopted Rossky's suggestion, Jorgensen proposes that within Elizabethan and Jacobean literature the imagination is primarily in evidence as a route to salvation. Interestingly, Jorgensen also suggests that 'moral purpose' can boost sensationalism and the appeal to the imagination:

Most of what I have found generally in sensational works of the age shows that they were valued primarily, or at least ostensibly, for their moral purpose. But I hope that "moral purpose" will not be here interpreted too narrowly or too somberly. I am obviously pointing toward *Macbeth*, and I recognize not only that there is much sensation in the play which is, at best, amoral (or such that I have not been able to find a moral meaning in it) but that moral purpose in tragic drama can be an enlargement of the sensibilities so as to make us more humanly and universally aware of man's plight. Moreover, agents of literary power, such as metaphor and the imagination, howsoever they came to be defended, were obviously accepted, and with them was accepted for literary purposes the value of the bodily senses in emotional response.²⁴

The implications for the playgoer's pleasure here are fascinating. *Macbeth* is morally persuasive because of its immorality/amorality. The sensational aesthetic propagates transgressive pleasures whilst simultaneously offering moral instruction. The pleasure of transgression is accompanied by pleasure felt in entering the embrace of transgression's moralistic antidote. Pleasure is thus experienced in force and counterforce.

²⁴ Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties*, 18.

The employment of visceral sensationalism within moral instruction can be also be seen in the textual and graphic descriptions of religious persecution that constitute John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, also commonly known as *Acts and Monuments*.²⁵ Here horrific depictions of grisly executions are displayed to the viewer in a graphic form that seems to demand the processing of the theme of 'the torment but ultimate triumph of Innocence' within the imagination.²⁶ In its foregrounding of the horrific treatment of those deemed Protestant martyrs the woodcut below, depicting the 'burning of Master John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester. Anno 1550. February 9', is typical of those found in the numerous editions of the text:



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²⁵ John Foxe, *The Volume of the Ecclesiastical Historie, Containing the Acts and Monuments of Martyrs* (London: John Day, 1563), EEBO-TCP, and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: Select Narratives* ed., John N. King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Cynthia Marshall explains that this text 'was from the beginning a quintessentially popular text, widely read, noted, and remembered by all sorts of readers. Furthermore, the illustrations in the numerous reprintings furnished the visual imaginations of sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century minds'. Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*, 88.

²⁶ Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties*, 21.

²⁷ Foxe, *Book of Martyrs*, 71.

The gruesome picture of dismemberment and fire-devoured flesh central to the agency of the woodcut is accompanied by a detailed textual description of the body's breakdown as it is consumed:

The third fire was kindled within a while after, which was more extreme than the other two: and then the bladders of gunpowder brake, which did him small good, they were so placed, and the wind had such power. In the which fire he prayed with somewhat a loud voice: 'Lord Jesu have mercy upon me: Lord Jesu have mercy upon me: Lord Jesus receive my spirit.' And these were the last words he was heard to utter. But when he was black in the mouth, and his tongue swollen, that he could not speak, yet his lips went till they were shrunk to the gums: and he knocked his breast with his hands, until one of his arms fell off, and then knocked still with the other, what time the fat, water, and blood dropped out at his fingers' ends, until by renewing of the fire, his strength was gone, and his hand did cleave fast in knocking to the iron upon his breast. So immediately bowing forwards, he yielded up his spirit...

Thus was he three quarters of an hour or more in the fire. Even as a lamb, patiently he abode the extremity thereof, neither moving forwards, backwards, or to any side, but having his nether parts burned, and his bowels fallen out, he died as quietly as a child in his bed: and now he reigneth as a blessed martyr in the joys of heaven prepared for the faithful in Christ, before the foundations of the world: for whose constancy all Christians are bound to praise God.²⁸

The conscious recourse to sensationalism here is clear. It should be re-emphasised, however, that the recognised aim of presenting such images to the viewer's imagination was to educate and persuade. This is not violent gore presented solely for momentary transgressive pleasure, but rather anti-Catholic propaganda to be activated by and within the viewer's imagination.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., 69-70.

²⁹ It should be noted that while the context here is the Protestant martyr, finding power in the face of oppression and defeat is a trait running through all Christian faith practices. For a book-length study covering Protestant, Catholic and Anabaptist martyrs see Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

In the eyes of the artist, then, the viewer's imagination can be employed for the good of the soul. As with *Macbeth*, however, the role of pleasure within the spectrum of audience/reader-response presents problems central to the developing of an understanding of the relationship between the moral and the aesthetic in early modern England. Cynthia Marshall initially proposes that 'Foxe organizes his presentation of events to stress the way martyrs outsmart and triumph over their prosecution, at least from the perspective of sympathetic Protestant readers.'³⁰ The suggestion here is that the *Book of Martyrs* offers subversive pleasures related to the welcoming and acceptance of power through subordination:

In a hierarchical society structured according to relations of domination and subordination, textual images of the interplay of power relations could grant a subversive pleasure, allowing the embrace of subordination, as an emotionally rich or even potentially powerful position.³¹

The form of pleasure taken here – that of associating with the oppressed Protestant martyr as s/he experiences a spiritual victory marked by displays of faith whilst in the throes of a lengthy and tortuous execution instigated and managed by catholic persecutors – is, perhaps, of a familiar pattern if not, for those living in the twenty-first century, localised within a familiar context: Strength found in innocence engenders a new power system in which the concept of morality supercedes the hierarchical constructions inherent to social manifestations of sovereign, political, or religious power. There is pleasure to be had in becoming the cognitive

³⁰ Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*, 91.

³¹ Ibid., 90-91.

surrogate of the oppressed martyr.

Marshall also suggests that this pro-Protestant pleasure in surrogate martyrdom might be accompanied by ‘pleasure through what we can understand as psychological means’:

Foxe assumes that readers will share in the sufferings of martyrs, through sympathetic imagination, and he provokes this imaginative link with vivid details, dramatic scene painting, and memorable dialogue.³²

Here, so to speak, lies the rub. As is the case in *Macbeth*, the fashioning of an aesthetic which attempts to align the imagination of the reader/spectator with the sensory perceptions of the protagonist leads to the engendering of a ‘scandalous pleasure’ – ‘a pleasure in...violent acts of torture’.³³ As Marshall suggests, ‘unlike more strictly informative propagandistic texts, *Acts and Monuments* aims to incite or inspire its readers by encouraging them to share the experience of the martyrs’.³⁴ While it must be admitted that the protagonists in question lie in what might be termed ‘moral opposition’ to each other (the Protestant martyrs of Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* clearly and unequivocally define their own innocence whilst *Macbeth* defines his own guilt), the pleasures on offer are comparable in that the text, or play, directs its reader or audience to take pleasure in a sensational sensing of anti-life, or evil. Of interest is the paradox

³² Ibid., 91.

³³ Ibid., 90.

³⁴ Ibid., 91.

presented by the moralistic narrative thread's denial of the transgressive pleasure taken by the voyeur of horrific violence.

A similar stimulation of the imagination via the sensationalism of horror was employed by Protestant preachers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a tool for instruction. The extract below fully illustrates Lloyd Davis' suggestion (via, of course, Cicero and St. Augustine) that 'the aim of preaching was to teach, to delight, and to move the audience':³⁵

We read again that for the filthy sin of uncleanness, "Sodom and Gomorrah, and other Cities nigh unto them, were destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven, so that there was neither man, woman, child, nor beast, nor yet anything that grew upon the earth there left undestroyed" (Gen. 19.28-29). Whose heart trembleth not at the hearing of this history? Who is so drowned in whoredom and uncleanness that will not now forever after leave this abominable living, seeing that GOD so grievously punisheth uncleanness, to rain fire and brimstone from heaven, to destroy whole Cities, to kill man, woman, and child, and all other living creatures there abiding, to consume with fire all that ever grew?³⁶

In opening an examination into the role of horror in English art, Peter Ackroyd suggests that 'one of the delights of the English theatre has always been its morbid sensationalism, not unconnected with a fascination for the 'Gothic' and the grotesque.'³⁷ Ackroyd then offers a short list of texts, from *Beowulf*, through *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Atheist's*

³⁵ Lloyd Davis, *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance: An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1998), 3.

³⁶ Thomas Becon, "The Third Part of the Sermon against Adultery" (1623 edition) in Lloyd Davis, *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance*, 13.

³⁷ Peter Ackroyd, *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2002), 371.

Tragedy to *The Spanish Tragedy*, which are deemed notable for their marriage of grotesquerie with philosophical comment on this grotesquerie. Key, here, according to Ackroyd, is John Locke's suggestion that all knowledge derives from sensation. Whilst going some way to dignifying the populist elements of Elizabethan/Jacobean tragedy, this empiricist tenet might offer a further in-road into understanding the extraordinary centrality of sensationalism to *Macbeth*.

The opening moments of *Macbeth* signal that the play unfolding onstage is to be relentlessly sensational, that is to say aggressively active on the senses of the playgoer. The playgoer is bombarded with otherworldly sights and sounds that generate a suffocating teleology to support an elemental wickedness:

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

1 WITCH

When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

2 WITCH

When the hurly-burly's done,

When the battle's lost, and won.

3 WITCH

That will be ere the set of sun.

1 WITCH

Where the place?

2 WITCH Upon the heath.

3 WITCH

There to meet with Macbeth.

1 WITCH

I come, Gray-Malkin.
 2 WITCH Paddock calls.
 3 WITCH Anon.
 ALL
 Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
 Hover through the fog and filthy air.

(I.i.1-10)

Jorgensen proposes that this particular play offers an ‘almost uniquely tangible impact’ because ‘the function of sensation in the play is organic in a way that it is not in any other Shakespearean tragedy’.³⁸ He then elaborates on this insightful proposal by suggesting that ‘in *Macbeth* Shakespeare disturbs us throughout our nervous system, by exposing to each of us what is within us, by exposing what Banquo calls our “naked frailties”,...and...does so not by techniques alone’.³⁹ Having stated his belief that ‘the *meaning* of the play dictated for Shakespeare the texture which his most sensational play would take’, Jorgensen then suggests that ‘*Macbeth* is a very difficult play and...perhaps we are in need of a new approach more germane to its peculiar nature’.⁴⁰ Is it possible that a focus on the pleasure of the playgoer could serve efficaciously in opening doors to *Macbeth* that have, until now, remained closed? The focus here turns to the notion of theatrical entertainment dilating the realm of pleasure through interaction – often paradoxical interaction – between morality and the aesthetic.

³⁸ Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties*, 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

In suggesting that when watching a tragedy ‘we reap moral and intellectual fulfilment from seeing the balance of cosmic justice harmoniously restored, though we also enjoy identifying with the rogues and rebels who disrupt it’ Eagleton communicates something of this paradox.⁴¹ It is a paradox investigated and sensibly (i.e. so as to be experienced as sensation) staged in the opening of Macbeth’s dagger soliloquy:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
 The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch
 Thee.
 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable
 As this which now I draw.
 Thou marshall’st me the way that I was going,
 And such an instrument I was to use.

(II.i.33-43)

Here Macbeth asks the wrong questions. Instead of entering the conceptual domain that drove the debate between the early modern antitheatricalists and the defenders of the theatre by asking whether the agency of the aestheticised violent image (here, a bloody dagger) drives towards morality or immorality, towards crime or redemption, he restricts his focus to a questioning of the physical tangibility of the dagger. Macbeth’s failure is in determining that the dagger

⁴¹ Eagleton, *Sweet Violence*, 169. The closed circularity of this statement (it is pleasurable because it is enjoyable) is indicative of the central difficulty that this thesis is attempting to address.

‘marshall’st’ him to murder without first considering other possibilities for its teleological status. Macbeth’s question (Is this a dagger which I see before me, / The handle toward my hand?) is, therefore, ill-conceived and symptomatic of an ill-directed watchfulness.⁴² The ‘degree of realness’ of the dagger is less important than its agency.⁴³ The more pertinent question might be: Is this aestheticised violent image/object an impetus towards murder or a warning against? Here lies a connection between Macbeth’s reading of the dagger with an immoral reading of Foxe’s descriptions of violent martyrdom: Macbeth’s flawed watchfulness leads him to embrace immorality rather than morality and he draws his weapon rather than keeping it sheathed. A heightening in the violence of the image – signalled by the appearance of blood on blade and hilt– prompts Macbeth, however, to reconsider his path of action:

I see thee still;
And on thy blade, and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. – There’s no such thing.
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.

(II.i.45-49)

Here the aesthetic, the image of a bloody dagger, presents Macbeth with an opportunity to reconsider his choice. (To reiterate, the ability of this gory aesthetic to awaken immoral

⁴² ‘Watchfulness’ is key here. The centrality of watchfulness to the resonance between Calvinism and *Macbeth* is discussed below.

⁴³ The ability – or lack thereof – of the imagination to generate tangible objects was a point of controversy and theorization during the early seventeenth century. James I is recorded as having attended a debate on this very subject.

pleasures whilst serving as a stimulus towards moral redemption recalls the conflicting agencies active in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.) This opportunity for redemption, however, is lost as Macbeth unites with the dagger and locates himself within the aesthetics of murder by speaking 'as if watching himself in a dream':⁴⁴

– Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep: Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's off'rings; and wither'd Murther,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost.—Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my where-about,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it.

(II.ii.49-60)

Macbeth employs the aesthetic to watch himself stride towards immorality and, thus, evil is embraced.⁴⁵ (The playgoer, of course, also 'grabs the bloody dagger's hilt' in willing the

⁴⁴ See *Macbeth*, ed, John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 120. Tellingly, in his review for Kenneth Branagh's 2014 production of *Macbeth* at the Manchester International Festival, Dominic Cavendish suggests that 'it becomes impossible for him [Macbeth] to discern where his inner perturbations end and the outer nightmare begins'. See "Macbeth, Manchester International Festival, Review" in *The Telegraph*, 6 June 2014, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/10162929/Macbeth-Manchester-International-Festival-review.html>> (accessed 6 June 2014).

⁴⁵ Kevin Curran suggests that 'Macbeth's murder of Duncan is a sensible crime' in that 'it's born of the senses and experienced as sensation. This is not to say that Macbeth does not *think* himself into the criminal event, but that the thinking he does he does with his body. *Macbeth* presents criminal thoughts not as ontologically distinct products of the intellect or soul, but as secretions of the senses, properties of active receptive bodies moving through a world of

drawing of Duncan's blood for his/her aesthetic pleasure.) Tellingly, however, *akrasia* remains within Macbeth as evidenced by his performance of moral opposition to the deed: Murder for Macbeth constitutes a nightmarish, fear-filled journey which must go undetected by moral forces (in this instance sentinels, and the very ground upon which the murderer walks) that watch against evil. Here the notion of *taking* 'the present horror from the time' (2.2.59) is problematic. In his 1765 edition of the play, Samuel Johnson states: 'Whether to *take horror from the time* means not rather to *catch it* as communicated, than to *deprive the time of horror*, deserves to be considered'.⁴⁶ L. C. Knights, however, suggests that 'Macbeth asks that the earth...shall not hear his steps, for if it does so the very stones will speak and betray him – thereby breaking the silence and so lessening the horror. "Take" combines two constructions. On the one hand, "for fear they take the present horror from the time" expresses attraction, identification with the appropriate setting of his time. But "take" is also an imperative, expressing anguish and repulsion'.⁴⁷ Knights' comment is highly pertinent. Prior to the killing, is Macbeth becoming attracted to the aesthetics of the murder and therefore undesirous of any rupturing of this horror or, contrastingly, does Macbeth wish this dreamlike horror to dissipate away? This resonates with the role of the playgoer as s/he responds to the horrors unfolding

things.' Kevin Curran, "Feeling Criminal in *Macbeth*," *Criticism* 54, no. 3 (Summer, 2012): 391.

⁴⁶ Samuel Johnson, ed. *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 7 (London: 1765), 88.

⁴⁷ L. C. Knights, *Explorations: Essays in Criticism Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), 23.

onstage. Is this horror to be embraced and enjoyed by the audience member? If so, can this experience be sanctioned by one's moral awareness? The very asking of this question brings, of course, the moral into existence and supports the dominant moral ideology. In their self-conscious and reflexive wedding together of 'amusement with instruction' and 'rest with exertion', Macbeth's ruminations on his journey towards murder denote, perhaps, a proto-theoretical investigation into a Schillerian coup de theatre (here in the sense of an aesthetic moment that constitutes a legitimate and moral stage success).⁴⁸

Human nature cannot bear to be always on the rack of business, and the charms of sense die out with their gratification. Man, oppressed by appetites, weary of long exertion, thirsts for refined pleasure, or rushes into dissipations that hasten his fall and ruin, and disturb social order. Bacchanal joys, gambling, follies of all sorts to disturb ennui, are unavoidable if the lawgiver produces nothing better. A man of public business, who has made noble sacrifices to the state, is apt to pay for them with melancholy, the scholar to become a pedant, and the people brutish, without the stage. The stage is an institution combining amusement with instruction, rest with exertion, where no faculty of the mind is overstrained, no pleasure enjoyed at the cost of the whole. When melancholy gnaws the heart, when trouble poisons our solitude; when we are disgusted with the world, and a thousand worries oppress us, or when our energies are destroyed by over-exercise, the stage revives us, we dream of another sphere, we recover ourselves, our torpid nature is roused by noble passions, our blood circulates more healthily. The unhappy man forgets his tears in weeping for another. The happy man is calmed, the secure made provident. Effeminate natures are steeled, savages made man, and, as the supreme triumph of nature, men of all ranks, zones and conditions, emancipated from the chains of conventionality and fashion, fraternize here in a universal sympathy, forget the world, and come nearer to their heavenly destination. The individual shares in the general ecstasy, and his breast has now only space for an emotion: he is a *man*.⁴⁹

My suggestion here is that Schiller's notion of aesthetic education, offered within the discursive

⁴⁸ Friedrich Schiller, "The Stage as Moral Institution," 441.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

terrain of eighteenth-century German theatre, is informally explored by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, offered within Jacobean performance of the play. The notion of aspects of Schiller's critical theory finding a roughhewn predecessor in *Macbeth* leads to the possibility of correlation between Schiller's critical theory and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* offering useful insight into critical understanding of theatre performance in Jacobean London.⁵⁰

Schiller's theory of aesthetic education might be deemed an attempt to answer a question.⁵¹ Concerned by the failure of the French Revolution to evolve into a free and humane society, Schiller asks why the uprising has not resulted in peace. (Or, in Grossman's words: 'What was the vital factor which was lacking in France? – how can the evolutionary program be attained?')⁵² In considering and addressing this lack, Schiller, believing a solution lies in the education of mankind, seeks to find a means to translate the hazardousness of nature (here defined as all aspects of man ungoverned by free intelligence) into a balanced relationship between sensuousness and reason.⁵³ As mentioned above, Schiller suggests that a bridging step

⁵⁰ A comprehensive study of Schiller's treatises on the role of art in societal development is, of course, beyond the scope of this study.

⁵¹ The notion that Schiller's theory of aesthetic education is an attempt to understand why the French Revolution is supported by Walter Grossman. See Walter Grossman, "Schiller's Aesthetic Education," in *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 2, no. 1 (January, 1968): 31-41.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵³ Grossman suggests that in this context 'nature' for Schiller describes 'a state built upon hazard, necessity, and force rather than upon reason'. Consequently, Schiller's appraisal of nature stands in direct opposition to that of Rousseau who defines nature as a gloriously free pre-societal state. *Ibid.*, 35.

is required to fill the void between sensation and thought as ‘man cannot pass directly’ from the former to the latter:⁵⁴

The mind...passes from sensation to thought through a middle disposition in which sensuousness and reason are active *at the same time*, but just because of this they are mutually destroying their determining power and through their opposition producing negation. This middle disposition, in which our nature is constrained neither physically nor morally and yet is active in both ways, pre-eminently deserves to be called free disposition; and if we call the condition of sensuous determination the physical, and that of rational determination the logical and moral, we must call this condition of real and active determinacy the *aesthetic*.⁵⁵

Schiller’s ideal, then, is to create art forms that permit engagement with the ‘condition of real and active determinacy’ resulting in ‘the dualistic individual’ achieving ‘a harmonious ideal self’.⁵⁶ If we adjust the focus from the individual to society, the aim becomes the allowing of mankind to ‘grow into a state of moral freedom’.⁵⁷ Crucial, and deeply relevant to *Macbeth* is Schiller’s insistence that whilst ‘entertainment must enhance moral understanding without being moralistic’ the ‘highest purpose of art is to entertain’.⁵⁸ For Schiller there is no incompatibility between these concepts:

⁵⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Letter 20, 98.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 98-99. Schiller offers his definition of the aesthetic here: ‘Every phenomenon whatsoever may be thought of in four different connections. A thing may relate directly to our sensuous condition (our being and well-being); that is its *physical* character. Or it can relate to our reason, and furnish us with knowledge; that is its *logical* character. Or it can relate to our will, and be regarded as an object of choice for a rational being; that is its *moral* character. Or finally, it can relate to the totality of our various powers, without being a specific object for any single one of them; that is its *aesthetic* character.’

⁵⁶ Grossman, “Schiller’s Aesthetic Education,” 34.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Curran, “Feeling Criminal in *Macbeth*,” 43-44.

A free pleasure, as that which the fine arts procure for us, rests wholly upon moral conditions, and all the moral faculties of man are exercised in it. It would further result that this pleasure is an aim which can never be attained but by moral means, and consequently that art, to tend and perfectly attain to pleasure, as to a real aim, must follow the road of healthy morals. Thus it is perfectly indifferent for the dignity of art whether its aim should be a moral aim, or whether it should reach only through moral means; for in both cases it has always to do with the morality, and must be rigorously in unison with the sentiment of duty; but for the perfection of art, it is by no means indifferent which of the two should be the aim and which the means. If it is the aim that is moral, art loses all that by which it is powerful,--I mean its freedom, and that which gives it so much influence over us--the charm of pleasure. The play which recreates is changed into serious occupation, and yet it is precisely in recreating us that art can the better complete the great affair--the moral work. It cannot have a salutary influence upon the morals but in exercising its highest esthetic action, and it can only produce the esthetic effect in its highest degree in fully exercising its liberty.

It is certain, besides, that all pleasure, the moment it flows from a moral source, renders man morally better, and then the effect in its turn becomes cause.⁵⁹

Implicit here is the concept of a sensual/rational dichotomy shaping human behaviour. ‘The “right” kinds of entertainment and pleasure are for Schiller those that reconcile this dichotomy by addressing both parts of the human being. This art appeals to our rational faculties in that we appreciate its formal and intellectual qualities, but at the same time it appeals to our senses and provides physical gratification.’⁶⁰ The goal is for man [sic] to reach a state whereby he ‘is neither a slave of his physical desires nor of his reason’.⁶¹ I would like to propose that there are key moments in *Macbeth* which are deeply resonant of Schiller’s critical approach. An example of one such moment, as implied by Tzachi Zamir’s comment in *Double Vision: Moral*

⁵⁹ Friedrich Schiller, ‘On the Cause of the Pleasure We Derive from Tragic Objects’ in Bernard F. Dukore, *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), 446-47.

⁶⁰ Curran, “Feeling Criminal in *Macbeth*,” 44.

⁶¹ Grossman, “Schiller’s Aesthetic Education,” 39.

Philosophy and Shakespearean Drama, is Ross's relay of the murder of Macduff's family to Macduff and Malcolm, and their contingent responses. The contrast that Zachi refers to is that 'between circumventing one's time and meeting it. Through *Macbeth*, Shakespeare captures an intellectual nihilism that emerges from a psychological and existential context. Through Macduff, he embodies an opposite capacity for allowing the present to speak'.⁶²

Macbeth meets philosophy through this contrast. Embedded within an overall nihilistic context — a setting in which all is instrumentalized and deferred, within a gory, selfish, indeed hellish universe — is a moment that makes reading stop. Nothing less than feminizing a general is needed in order for us to catch the different voice. Only then do we perceive the alternative metaphysics of time and commitment to value by which long before they fight, *Macbeth* and *Macduff* oppose each other through the philosophies they embody.⁶³

Zachi's sophisticated theorization of the opposition between *Macbeth* and *Macduff* can be 'retuned' and, through also embracing Malcolm's role in the scene, the ending of act 4, scene 3 can be read as a pre-Schillerian investigation into the balancing of the sensuousness and the rational within man. Here 'circumventing one's time' might be attached to 'the sensuous' and 'meeting it' attached to 'the rational'. Grossman paints a clear picture of Schiller's definition of 'Man' as an amalgamation of the sensuous and the rational:

To Schiller...Man appears as a sensuous-rational creature. Three possibilities result from this interpretation of Man: the first is that reason may suppress the demands of Man's sensuous nature;

⁶² Tzachi Zamir, *Double Vision: Moral Philosophy and Shakespearean Drama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 108.

⁶³ Ibid.

necessarily measured according to a scale of morality. (Being overly sensual or overly rational is understood to have moral implications.) Schiller's optimum of appropriate balance between the sensuous and the rational leads to the most moral outcome. This is not Malcolm's rational, but unfeeling hijacking of Macduff's grief to achieve self-serving objectives. It is, rather, Macduff's placing of his actions in line with the will of the Heavens:

But, gentle Heavens,
Cut short all intermission; front to front,
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland, and myself;
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,
Heaven forgive him too!

(IV.iii.231-35)

Macduff's evoking of a world-influencing agency of the will of God resonates strongly with Calvinist ideology. (It should be noted, however, that while Calvinism has been deemed the 'predominant religious and doctrinal movement' of the time, the spectrum of early modern religious belief was broad; Catholicism and Lutheranism, for example, fundamentally oppose the doctrine of predestination.)⁶⁵ Key here is a contrast between an appropriate watchfulness in the face of divine will displayed by Macduff and an ill-directed watchfulness displayed by Macbeth. Macduff paradoxically maintains his own agency whilst sharing his undertaking with the Heavens whilst Macbeth seeks through his killings to become the agent of providence

⁶⁵ Adrian Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*, 9. For a brief overview of theological reasoning behind the acceptance or rejection of predestination see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 1998), 922-34.

himself. The theme of watchfulness within the Calvinistic need to accept the symbiosis of free will and God's will is embedded within Calvin's teachings:

As regards future events, Solomon easily reconciles human deliberation with divine providence. For while he derides the stupidity of those who presume to undertake anything without God, as if they were not ruled by his hand, he elsewhere thus expresses himself: "A man's heart deviseth his ways but the Lord directeth his steps," (Prov. 16:9); intimating, that the eternal decrees of God by no means prevent us from proceeding, under his will, to provide for ourselves, and arrange all our affairs. And the reason for this is clear. For he who has fixed the boundaries of our life, has at the same time entrusted us with the care of it, provided us with the means of preserving it, forewarned us of the dangers to which we are exposed, and supplied cautions and remedies, that we may not be overwhelmed unawares. Now, our duty is clear, namely, since the Lord has committed to us the defence of our life, — to defend it; since he offers assistance, — to use it; since he forewarns us of danger, — not to rush on heedless; since he supplies remedies, — not to neglect them. But it is said, a danger that is not fatal will not hurt us, and one that is fatal cannot be resisted by any precaution. But what if dangers are not fatal, merely because the Lord has furnished you with the means of warding them off, and surmounting them? See how far your reasoning accords with the order of divine procedure: You infer that danger is not to be guarded against, because, if it is not fatal, you shall escape without precaution; whereas the Lord enjoins you to guard against its just because he wills it not to be fatal. These insane cavillers overlook what is plainly before their eyes, viz., that the Lord has furnished men with the artful of deliberation and caution, that they may employ them in subservience to his providence, in the preservation of their life; while, on the contrary, by neglect and sloth, they bring upon themselves the evils which he has annexed to them. How comes it that a provident man, while he consults for his safety, disentangles himself from impending evils; while a foolish man, through unadvised temerity, perishes, unless it be that prudence and folly are, in either case, instruments of divine dispensation? God has been pleased to conceal from us all future events that we may prepare for them as doubtful, and cease not to apply the provided remedies until they have either been overcome, or have proved too much for all our care. Hence, I formerly observed, that the Providence of God does not interpose simply; but, by employing means, assumes, as it were, a visible form.⁶⁶

The centrality of watchfulness is clear. The duty of man, as defined here, is to act according to

⁶⁶ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge [1845] (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 1.17.4.

God's will through astute employment of the provisions (here collectivised into a prudent watchfulness) received from Him. 'Means', here referring to worldly actions, are employed to give the Providence of God 'a visible form'.⁶⁷ If we recall the fallibility of the Renaissance imagination as highlighted by Jorgensen and Rossky, the problems inherent to being successfully watchful become apparent: moral images can provoke an immoral reaction. One of the tasks of the watchful is to differentiate between the moral and immoral whilst maintaining the self-scrutiny needed to defend against such an outcome. Macbeth is aware of the difficulty, and watchful. He is unable, however, to thwart his own ambitions:

This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill; cannot be good. If ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
 Against the use of nature?

(I.iii.132-39)

I am settled, and bend up
 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
 Away, and mock the time with fairest show:
 False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

(I.vii.80-83)

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Macbeth exercises self-scrutiny, but still embarks on the path he deems immoral, and finds horrific.

If ‘literature occupies an oblique position in relation to a culture’s public image’⁶⁸ and if, as Jonathan Dollimore suggests, early modern tragedy permits and offers ‘a critique of ideology, the demystification of political and power relations and the “decentring” of man’, the notion of Calvinistic self-scrutiny as a means to negotiate the doctrine of election presents a fascinating arena for expansion of pleasure through the aesthetic.⁶⁹ The conclusion to Rozett’s outline of Calvinist doctrine intimates at the dramatic agency I am thinking of here:

Emphasized by St. Augustine and again by Calvin, the doctrine of election taught that all men and women are by nature sinners but that God’s free gift of grace has conferred righteousness upon a chosen few, who would come to recognize the signs of election in themselves through a process involving intense self-scrutiny, repentance, and gradual regeneration. The widespread influence of Calvin on sixteenth-century English Protestantism led to an adherence to the doctrine of election that transcended the political differences between the reformers and moderate Protestants. This is not to say that the Elizabethans were strict believers in absolute and unchangeable predestination; inherent in Elizabethan Calvinism...was a politic ambiguity on this score.⁷⁰

The ‘politic ambiguity’ that Rozett highlights denotes a locale of crisis and, therefore, a possible context for theatrical investigation and attendant theatrical pleasure.⁷¹ The reformed Protestant

⁶⁸ Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*, 8.

⁶⁹ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 4.

⁷⁰ Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election*, 4-5.

⁷¹ When considering this context of ambiguity in the face of the concept of predestination, the presence of the Porter and his adverting of equivocation should not be forgotten (II.ii.1-42). Frank L. Huntley discusses the role and Jesuit status of the Porter in “Macbeth and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation,” *PMLA*, 79, no. 4 (September 1964). Harald William Fawcner suggests that ‘the Porter...was crucially involved with the ideological purist (the Jesuit) as

has ‘to grapple with the uncompromising message found in Calvin: the world is divided into the elect and the reprobate and saving grace can only fully extend to the elect.’⁷² This has strong implications for early modern performance of tragedy. The crisis of subjectivity generated by the dominant religious ideology – the ongoing concern about, and management of, one’s status as granted by God – is efficaciously partnered by the focus on subjectivity enabled by the process of theatre performance. During the course of dramatic performance, of course, identity can be negotiated, moulded and re-moulded as the situation demands. (Consider, for example, the multiple subjectivities of Falstaff, Iago, Rosalind and Viola.) The role of the theatre, and, in particular, *Macbeth* in interrogating the defiantly paradoxical relationship between subjectivity and Calvinistic doctrine is discussed by Rozett:

More than any other play of its age, *Macbeth* is about the paradox of predestination. Ostensibly the doctrine of election would seem to deny the possibility of the tragic choice. But, as Milton would make clear in *Paradise Lost*, God’s foreknowledge of an event does not make agents thereof any less responsible for their actions. Adam and Eve deliberately choose a course of action to which they are predestined by a God whose motives are veiled in mystery. Much like tragic protagonists, they are at

one who was prepared to soil himself utterly in order to reach his final purity of purpose’. Harald William Fawcner, *Deconstructing Macbeth: The Hyperontological View* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 153.

⁷² Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*, 10. Also note that Roy W. Battenhouse suggests that Calvin’s three-way categorising of the states of man (the innocent, the fallen, and the saved) recalls Renaissance neoplatonist theorizations of levels of human existence. Battenhouse then states that ‘Calvin’s doctrine of man may have a subterranean dependence on the very Renaissance optimism and rationalism which Calvin sought to reprove and chasten’. Roy W. Battenhouse, “The Doctrine of Man in Calvin and in Renaissance Platonism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 10 (1948): 470. Charles Trinkaus offers a related discussion on Calvin’s approach to the problematic nature of the relationship between human beings and the world they live in. Charles Trinkaus, “Renaissance Problems in Calvin’s Theology,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, 1 (1954).

once victims of fate and responsible characters who knowingly commit a deed which will recoil upon them.

In writing *Macbeth*, Shakespeare probed the ambiguities inherent in the concept of predestination through the dramatic device of the witches...The witches prophesy that Macbeth *will* become King but not *how* he will become King – therein lies the tragic autonomy he shares with the morality play Mankind figures and earlier tragic protagonists. As soon as he hears the prophecy, Macbeth realizes that he has two alternatives: he can wait for providence to act on his behalf or he can take action. In a society where the godly were told to make their election sure, and aspiring minds were esteemed, to wait was not necessarily the right choice.⁷³

Indeed, Calvin's depiction of God defines focused action as being deific whilst the passive is discredited:

And truly God claims omnipotence to himself, and would have us to acknowledge it, — not the vain, indolent, slumbering omnipotence which sophists feign, but vigilant, efficacious, energetic, and ever active, — not an omnipotence which may only act as a general principle of confused motion, as in ordering a stream to keep within the channel once prescribed to it, but one which is intent on individual and special movements.⁷⁴

⁷³ Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election*, 292-93. It is useful to consider the early modern understanding of prophecy here. As William C. Carroll explains: In early modern England, prophecy was not inherently something wicked, or necessarily associated with witchcraft; indeed, prophecy is an essential aspect of Biblical history...But just as miracles were said to have ceased with the coming of Christ, so too were prophecies supposed to have ceased...Thus, the prophecies made in the present time were understood either as generated by the devil (usually through witches), or were lucky guesses by ordinary men, or were a simply a species of fraud perpetrated upon the gullible. William C. Carroll, *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts* (Boston: Boston University, 1999), 330. When considering prophecy it should not be forgotten that *Macbeth* carries numerous references to England's new monarch James. The most prominent is the fact that King James's lineage could be traced to Banquo. Debapriya Sarkar stresses the central role of prophecy in 'examining concerns about sovereignty that lie at the heart of *Macbeth*'. Thus, the theme of prophecy is relevant to individual faith practice and interrogates the politics and processes of the line of succession. Debapriya Sarkar, "'To crown my thoughts with acts': Prophecy and Prescription in *Macbeth*,'" in *Macbeth: The State of Play*, ed. Ann Thompson (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 83-4.

⁷⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.16.3.

This resonates richly with Macbeth as he grapples with selection between action and inaction.

Having confessed that the mere thought of committing murder ‘doth unfix my hair, / And make my seated heart knock at my ribs’ (I.iii.135-36), Macbeth considers a second course of action (or, more accurately, inaction):

If chance will have me king, why chance may
crown me,
Without my stir.

(I.iii.146-47)

Here Macbeth’s tragedy is sealed. He will either commit murder – thus ignoring what his watchfulness tells him about the hellish fate of the murderer – or do nothing, thus failing to employ the provisions for action supplied to him by God. The subject sentences himself to a downward nihilistic spiralling into hollowness. The irony is clear; in accepting his destiny as delivered by the prophetic witches, Macbeth seals his own fate.

In questioning the relationship between free will, action and punishment Macbeth awakens that which terrifies him most – a condign punishment for his failure to embrace moral accountability rather than ambition:

If it were done, when ’tis done, then ’twere well
It were done quickly: If th’assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease, success: that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all, here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We’d jump the life to come. But in these cases,

We still have judgement here, that we but teach
 Bloody instructions, which being taught, return
 To plague th'inventor. This even-handed justice
 Commends th'ingredience of our poisoned chalice
 To our own lips.

(I.vii.1-12)

This is a field of accountability which, incidentally, Macbeth appears to avail himself of within the atheistic theorizing of the 'To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow' speech:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
 To the last syllable of recorded time;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,
 Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
 Signifying nothing.

(V.v.18-27)

Here, Macbeth's evocation of the *theatrum mundi* topos configures the human as a role-playing fool with a resounding nothingness at his/her centre. The self is lost in deconstruction. This state recalls Marshall's theory of pleasure in self-shattering:

Although in many eras extreme forms of art have offered what Nietzsche theorized as Dionysian release, a conjunction of forces led to the proliferation of such works in England during the Renaissance. An emergent sense of the autonomous self, individually operative as never before in the spheres of politics, religion, and commerce, existed in tension with an established popular sense of the self as fluid, unstable, and volatile. Because the narrative terms in which we have understood the

so-called birth of subjectivity invest value in the emergent self, we have overemphasized its early dominance, for a surprising variety of popular texts indicate the considerable pleasure afforded to early modern audiences by experiences of shattering or dissolution. These were moments of allowable reversion to the unstable and poorly defined idea of selfhood familiar from humoral psychology, underlying the antitheatricalists' idea of emotional contagion, and granted theological license in the form of imagined identification with suffering martyrs. If in one sense texts affording self-shattering served as counterforces to the development of modern subjectivity, in a longer view they enabled its continued growth by offering temporary respite from the accumulating pressures of individual selfhood. As a result, we inherit from the Renaissance not only a violent literary culture but also a notion of subjective identity partly molded through interaction with textual forms that cast pleasure in terms of dominance and submission, assertion and dissolution.⁷⁵

Whilst Macbeth is clearly not a martyr and, hence, 'theological license' cannot be deemed as granted, it is possible that the self-theorised displays of *akrasia* within the self-contested psychomachic struggles that define our protagonist during the early stages of the play, and the dissolution of the self within the dark evocation of the *theatrum mundi* topos could be psychological bedfellows of the violent depictions of physical dismemberment that instigate, in Marshall's opinion, *jouissance* via self-shattering.⁷⁶ The suggestion is that Macbeth's rapt negotiating of a route through pre-destination, free will, ambition, morality and atheistic nothingness presents the playgoer with the opportunity for *jouissance* through self-dissolution. The self is momentarily shattered as Macbeth rationalises away key reference points for self-fashioning.

The pleasure taken in playgoing here is enabled by the professional, secular theatre offering an

⁷⁵ Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*, 4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

unofficial, liberal, empty space (finding its liberality in its self-assumed redundancy) in which the individual – the battered and battering subject – can, admittedly restricted by the manacles of cultural conditioning, imaginatively interrogate his or her relationship with the dominant perceptions and ideologies that shape his or her being. Importantly, because professional theatre has to be shown publically, and has to be pleasurable, it has a tendency to manufacture awakenings of passions amongst societal peers sharing the struggle to find contentment within the cultural conditions. Pleasure in fiction, then, might be seen as a code or language which signifies conflicts and incompatibilities between the subject and the agencies directing his or her subjectivity. A moment of pleasure in a performance of *Macbeth*, for example, presents a moment of being at which instinct is laid bare and, consequently, truths regarding the nature and status of subjectivity stand naked and await discovery. Pleasure taken in feeling the sensation of the post-murder rapture of the transgressor as it spills from the stage into the auditorium could be designated as such a moment. The separation of art from all that is not art offers, of course, enormous scope to this exposure of instinct – the only limits being those of the imagination and the skills of the artist.

This chapter has focused upon an expansion of the registers of pleasure created by *Macbeth*'s management of the aesthetic. The study has suggested that *Macbeth* presents an aestheticisation of violence that explores possibilities for theatre performance which would later be explored by

Friedrich Schiller in his employment of the aesthetic as a brutal, but moralising force. It has been proposed, however, that the moral focus that *Macbeth* projects is challenged by the immoralities that are evoked at its showing. The chapter has closed with an exploration of Marshall's theory of self-shattering and proposed that Macbeth's rapt wrestling with the concepts of pre-destination, free will, ambition, morality and the connotations for subjectivity implicated by the theatrum mundi topos presents the playgoer with the opportunity for jouissance through self-dissolution. The overall picture has been of an ambitious, self-reflexive theatre, always focused on progression and expansion – and always aware of the threat that progression and expansion present to morality.

Conclusion

The central claim of this thesis has been that identifiable within the plays of Shakespeare are rethinkings of pleasure. I have proposed that this constitutes the playwright's response to the professional situation and worldview that he found himself immersed in. As has been illustrated, during the second half of the sixteenth century early modern London was a growing city, with a growing theatre scene. This theatre scene was new, professional, secular, and – accounts suggest – wonderfully suited to purpose. The plays of Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe had replaced, or were replacing, the simpler entertainments of clowning and jigs. London was home, or destination, to an ever-growing, ever more various public. Changes in faith practice, scientific progress, new ways of doing business, new understandings of the cosmos, and adjustments to ways of understanding sex all speak of the need to think about pleasure and develop ways to manage it or, if your profession allowed, grasp the opportunity granted by the socio-cultural conditions, and seek to expand its registers. More and more was being written about pleasure and, I have argued, more and more ideas about pleasure were being performed on London's stages. Pleasure was an important philosophical concern.

I have approached four plays and, using both historicist and formalist techniques, read them with the working assumption that they were not only designed to give pleasure, but are about pleasure. What I uncovered was a clear ambition within the plays to theorise a place or a shape

for pleasure within their intellectual and emotional terrain.

A Midsummer Night's Dream juxtaposes a world of ordered pleasure against a world of fantastic pleasure, then litters the play with references to pleasure before astonishingly positing the possibility of an unyoking of pleasure from virtue.

This sense of expanding the registers of pleasure is also found in *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*. If the concept of pleasure is foregrounded in critical approach, both plays reveal themselves to be engaged in the attempt to examine how the play's spectrum of pleasure can be expanded.

Hamlet is shown to engage with two fields of pleasure. The first of these is the old-world pleasure of revenge. The delight that Hamlet takes in the thinking and talking about revenge is twinned to the delight taken in introspection, and his fraught project of selfhood. The one discursive terrain fuels the other as the registers of pleasure expand. I have also attempted to show that *Hamlet*, whilst maintaining a strong focus on Montaignism, references Copernicanism and Lucretian thought. All three of these areas of thought speak to new pleasures in their rethinkings of worldview.

Twelfth Night or What You Will signals its interest in pleasure, particularly festive pleasure, in its title. As critical comment on *Twelfth Night's* festive content is vast I chose to focus upon

Viola and the shipwreck/spectator topos. Pleasure-focused Lucretian and Montaignian contexts emerged in the play and adverted to a Venus figure, the mutability of the ocean, and the concept of ataraxia, or tranquillity.

By maintaining this critical focus I found that *Macbeth* presented an interrogation and expansion of the registers of pleasure through an evolution of the aesthetic. *Macbeth* manages, I have found, to present an aestheticisation of violent murder that can be theorised as a moralising force. This is a means, later explored by Schiller, of enabling greater pleasure in theatricality. In reference to a different register of pleasure I also found that in its violence and darkness *Macbeth* offers the opportunity for a blissful momentary release from individualism to the playgoer. This release can develop into a pleasurable shattering of the self as theorised by Cynthia Marshall.¹

Regarding critical approach, prior to beginning this study a decision as to whether to embrace a formalist approach into an essentially historicist study had to be made. In the understanding that pleasure can be conceived of as timeless I decided to embrace the formalist approach whenever the situation suggested that it would be appropriate. This allowed me to develop understandings out of, for example *Macbeth*'s use of stichomythia, or *Twelfth Night*'s nautical imagery. To

¹ Marshall, *Shattering of the Self*.

elaborate, *Macbeth*'s use of stichomythia led me to historicist conclusions about the agency of the early modern imagination, and close study of the nautical imagery of *Twelfth Night* encouraged greater focus on Lucretius and the concept of mutability.

I find this idea of plays projecting a rethinking of pleasure invigorating and genuinely believe that a critical approach that develops out of this thought could enable new discoveries in the field of early modern theatre. Play selection would be important. I chose to select two plays that foreground an engagement with the imagination (*Dream* and *Macbeth*) and two that foreground an engagement with subjectivity (*Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*). My belief – a belief I still hold – was that plays that are in some way about the imagination and/or subjectivity would also carry a focus on pleasure. I suspect that important discoveries could be made, for example, about genre if a study were structured appropriately. There are, I am sure, things we could learn about the nature of tragedies and comedies if an appropriately structured search for the rethinkings of pleasure within them were organised. Perhaps the discoveries I have made about the nature of *Macbeth*'s aestheticisation of violence could shed light on the seemingly gratuitous displays of violence in *Titus Andronicus*.

I would like to close by suggesting that a change in the status of the concept of pleasure is called for. Studies on pleasure remain sparse and the concept continues to be overshadowed by

its more dynamic cousin 'desire'. Our educational institutions seem to be geared against serious consideration of pleasure as it carries the air of being too light for serious concern. Perhaps the problem is culture deep and rests within the word 'pleasure' and its inability to carry the weight of meaning appropriate to the concept it signifies. There is so very much more to learn about our rethinkings of pleasure, and pleasure per se.

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