Race Tricks: Skill and Spectacle in the Blackfriars Boys' Repertory, 1600-1608

by Emily MacLeod

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Holly Dugan
Associate Professor of English

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Emily MacLeod

Dissertation Research Committee:

Holly Dugan, Associate Professor of English, Dissertation Director

Ayanna Thompson, Professor of English, Arizona State University, Committee Member

Jonathan Hsy, Associate Professor of English, Committee Member

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Dedication

For the youths that thunder at the playhouse

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Abstract of Dissertation

Race Tricks: Skill and Spectacle in the Blackfriars Boys' Repertory, 1600-1608

This dissertation analyzes the strategies that boy actors used to perform race on the early modern English stage. I argue that the plays of the Children of the Queen's Revels, a youth company that performed at London's Blackfriars theatre in the early seventeenth century, contain a neglected and significant archive of references to emergent racial difference, despite the fact that only one of their plays, John Marston's *Sophonisba,* contains overtly racialized characters. In the rest of their plays, the children's performance of race hinges on their employment of "race tricks": displays of skill and spectacle that hide their racial meanings in plain sight. I argue that racialization becomes visible through spectacular displays of skill shaped by the system of repertory. Repertory studies of English drama organizes plays by the company that performed them rather than by their author. This approach puts play texts into a network of performances that required the same bodies of actors and material things like props and costumes to be used repetitively by a company and often viewed by the same audiences. The repetition of "intertheatrical" figures like Greek gods and animals across the repertory of this company created a web of racialized associations, and these figures were the engines that powered these racemaking moments of spectacle, ability, and skill in the children's repertory.

The project is structured around figures who feature prominently across the Blackfriars repertory and participate in skilled "tricks" of imitation, transformation, deception, and disguise. Chapter 1, "Youthful Tricks: Cupid at the Blackfriars," unfolds in two parts: first, to expand on how the company's relationship to the Blackfriars

audience and the court is invested in early modern racecraft, and second, how portrayals of Cupid in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* alongside other plays by Marlowe and Lyly make him a figure akin to the boy player himself in his role as enforced laborer subject to discipline and punishment. Chapter 2, "Mimic Tricks: Aping the Moor in *Poetaster*," looks at the parody of George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* by the boys in Ben Jonson's play and the gaps between the perceived capacity of the boy actor's diminutive size and imitative skill set (associated with the ape) and the successful presentation of the "Moor" character type. In Chapter 3, "Transforming Tricks: Protean Performance in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," I argue that the god Proteus's transformational skill, just like that of the apprentice-turned-player Rafe, is a reaction to his captured or bound status and resonant with the role of freedom and agency in racializing practices. Chapter 4, "Sooty Tricks: Vulcan as Chimney Sweep in *May Day*," focuses on intersections of class and race represented in the spectacle of the blackened chimney sweep and other sooty figures in early modern drama like Vulcan, the deformed and cuckolded god of fire, and Othello.

Through reading plays by Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and Francis Beaumont with an intersectional methodology, I show how the materiality of early modern racecraft depends upon developing constructs of gender, sexuality, class, and ability in performance. By viewing child players and their dramatic repertory through the lens of early modern race and performance studies, I track the multiple and flexible ways that racial meanings were formed on the early modern stage, not only through the representation of racialized characters, but also through the employment of embodied theatrical skill and material spectacle.

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Introduction

The plays presented by the children's playing company at Blackfriars in early seventeenth century London included very few characters depicted as non-European or overtly "foreign" in any way. Unlike the adult companies and court performances of the period that often traded on the exotic appeal of non-European locales and characters, the boys at Blackfriars only embodied those types of roles on rare occasions.[1] John Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1606) is perhaps the exception that proves the rule. Despite its African setting, it features only two servant characters actually coded as black: Zanthia, Sophonisba's maid, and Vangue, a male "Ethiopian slave." Zanthia later becomes a stock character name in Jacobean drama for the black female servant, echoed in *The Bondman, The White Devil* as Zanche, and "Zanthia alias Abdella" in *The Knight of Malta*.[2] The gendered and classed positions of both these figures make these roles in *Sophonisba* typical character types for boy actors in an adult company, perhaps a deliberate imitation on Marston's part to emulate adult company practices.[3] Marston ends the printed version of this play with a note that gestures toward

[1] See Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race: the representation of blacks in English drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Emily C. Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor: from* Alcazar *to* Othello (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991) for studies focused on "types" of characters in these plays, almost entirely performed by adult companies from the 1580s through the Restoration era.

[2] Ambereen Dadabhoy locates in the name "specific Turkish and Arabic roots: the Turkish word *zenci* comes from Arabic *zanj,* both of which are used to refer to black people." "The Other Woman: The Geography of Exclusion in *The Knight of Malta* (1618)," in *Remapping Travel Narratives (1000-1700): to the East and back again,* ed. Montserrat Piera (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 244.

[3] Imtiaz Habib looks at the character type of the "blackamoor maid": "she is the negative mark against which English colonial patriarchy builds its notions of compliant white womanhood." "'Hel's perfect character': or The Blackamoor Maid in early modern English drama: the postcolonial cultural history of a dramatic type," *LIT: Literature, Interpretation, Theory* 11, no. 3 (2008): 281. Though Sophonisba is an African woman from Carthage (modern day Libya), Joyce Green Macdonald has noted "the disappearance

the limitations of the company: that it was "printed only as it was presented by youths & after the fashion of the private stage."[4] Kirsten N. Mendoza in her work on race and consent in *Sophonisba* acknowledges that these roles are all played by boy actors "on display to please their private audiences."[5] That these roles were all played by boy actors in this specific social and cultural milieu is important to remember whenever engaging with a play like this in performance. While *Sophonisba* is the obvious beginning to a discussion of the performance of race in the children's company repertory, it could also be the end, if race on the early modern stage is located solely in the presence of black characters or non-European settings.

I contend in this dissertation that even without straightforward representations of racialized characters like Aaron, Othello, Tamburlaine, or Barabas, we can still see racialization at work in the Blackfriars repertory in plays other than *Sophonisba*. While at first glance the play texts of the children's repertory do not engage in race-making in the way that plays like *Othello* or *The Merchant of Venice* do, I argue that their participation in the development of early modern racecraft hinges on their employment of "race tricks": displays of skill and spectacle that hide their racial meanings in plain sight from their audiences. By focusing on the work of this single company, I explore how a series of plays written for specific performers, venue, and audience can engage in racecraft through these particular tricks: acts of service and punishment, displays of imitation and transformation, and somatic markers of whiteness and blackness. These race tricks are

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of this African woman into whiteness" in Marston's play and later texts. *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76.

[4] Quoted in Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 148. Lopez wonders if the typical practices of the boys at Blackfriars might not have "befit the content of the tragedy."

[5] Kirsten N. Mendoza, "'Thou maiest inforce my body but not mee': Racializing Consent in John Marston's *The Wonder of Women*," *Renaissance Drama* 49, no. 1 (2021): 43.

most aptly performed using the labor of child players who, as they developed their skills under questionable conditions of exploitation, served as vehicles for emerging ideas about whiteness and Englishness at the turn of the seventeenth century. Dismissed by twentieth-century critics as "mere" imitators of adults, the child actors have proven themselves to be skilled and vital participants in the early modern theatrical landscape.[6] I also identify intertheatrical figures like Greek and Roman gods, apes, and Moors who not only featured prominently in the Blackfriars repertory but also appeared across multiple performance texts and helped to shape ideas of early modern racial difference through their performance tricks. By including child players and their repertory in the study of early modern race and performance, we can track the multiple and flexible ways that racial meanings were formed on the early modern stage, not only through representations of racialized characters, but also through the employment of embodied theatrical skill and intertheatrical reference.

To demonstrate how race-making occurs in these plays, I engage with both early modern performance/repertory scholars and scholars of premodern critical race studies to show that the children's plays contribute significantly to the making of race on the early modern English stage, and that racecraft and repertory are inextricably interwoven through the performative labors and skills, or tricks, of the boy player. I draw upon rich critical histories in both the fields of race and repertory to show what has been gained by pairing these methodologies and how race and early modern performance studies can

[6] See Evelyn Tribble, "Pretty and Apt: boy actors, skill, and embodiment," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment,* ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 628-640; Julie Ackroyd, *Child Actors on the London Stage, circa 1600* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2017); Jeanne H. McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes and the Transformation of English Theater, 1509-1608* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Edel Lamb, *Performing Childhood in the Early Modern Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

continue to inform and enrich each other. By reading race in and through the children's repertory at Blackfriars, we can expand the archive of early modern dramatic racecraft to include plays not usually considered to be "about race." Early studies of performing racial difference in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries focused largely on Shakespeare plays like *Othello, Titus Andronicus, The Merchant of Venice, The Tempest,* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.[7] The flourishing of early modern critical race studies over the last thirty years has also resulted in a turn towards texts like *Hamlet, The Comedy of Errors, Macbeth,* and others not originally designated to be "about race" to show how they too participate in early modern theatrical race-making.[8] Ayanna Thompson refers to early modern theatrical race-making as both rhetorical, with linguistic "patterns, 'errors', figures of speech, metaphors, colloquialisms, and/or idioms," and material, using "costumes, prosthetics, wigs, moustaches, physical gesture, vocal timbre and/or accent."[9] Identifying the verbal and visual patterns of dramatic performance has also long been the

[7] Peter Erickson and Kim F. Hall map out a genealogy of early modern race studies in the introduction to their special issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* (2016). They recognize the foundational work of Eldred Durosimi Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Published on behalf of Fourah Bay College, the University College of Sierra Leone by Oxford University Press, 1965), as well as Hall's *Things of Darkness: economies of race and gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), Ania Loomba's *Gender, Race, and Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), and *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period,* ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (New York: Routledge, 1994), among other influential scholars. Erickson and Hall, " A New Scholarly Song': Rereading Early Modern Race," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2016): 3-4.

[8] Recent examples include David Sterling Brown, "Code Black: Whiteness and Unmanliness in *Hamlet*," in *Hamlet: The State of Play*, ed. Sonia Massai and Lucy Munro (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021), 101-127; Patricia Akhimie, "'Bruised with Adversity': Reading Race in *The Comedy of Errors*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, Race*. ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 186-96; Scott Newstok and Ayanna Thompson, eds., *Weyward Macbeth: intersections of race and performance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Benjamin Minor and Ayanna Thompson, "'Edgar I Nothing Am': Blackface in *King Lear*," in *Staged Transgression in Shakespeare's England*, eds. Rory Loughnane and Edel Semple (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 153-164.

[9] Ayanna Thompson, "Did the Concept of Race Exist for Shakespeare and His Contemporaries? An Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race*, ed. Ayanna Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 7.

goal of repertory studies as a way of distinguishing particular company styles.[10] The work of Roslyn Knutson, Lucy Munro, Mary Bly, Tom Rutter, and Sarah Dustagheer has planted these dramatic texts firmly into the professional networks of their time with an emphasis on collaborative relationships, company cultures, and how playhouse spaces can shape play texts. Early modern disability and performance scholars such as Genevieve Love, Lindsey Row-Heyveld, and Katherine Schaap Williams have also engaged with repetitions of representations across early modern dramatic repertories to think through questions of embodiment and skill.[11] Yet, to my knowledge, there have been few scholars who have applied thinking through the repertory of a specific playing company with theories of early modern performances of race. Noémie Ndiaye's article on racecraft in the Queen of Bohemia's Men repertory during the Caroline period is a vital intervention in this regard, and her forthcoming monograph *Scripts of Blackness: early modern performance culture and the making of race* (which pairs the study of racecraft with visual, verbal, and kinetic styles of performance from England, France, and Spain) will no doubt be essential to any future version of this project.[12] In the pages that follow,

[10] Key texts of repertory studies include Roslyn Knutson, *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company, 1594-1613* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991); Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queans on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: a Jacobean theatre repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). More recent inter-repertory studies (looking across companies) include Tom Rutter, *Shakespeare and the Admiral's Men: reading across repertories on the London stage, 1594-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Mark Hutchings, *Turks, Repertories, and the Early Modern English Stage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), and Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: repertory and theatre space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[11] See Genevieve Love, *Early Modern Theatre and the Figure of Disability* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), Lindsey Row-Heyveld, *Dissembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama* (Cham, Switzterland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), and Katherine Schaap Williams, *Unfixable Forms: disability, performance, and the early modern English theater* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021).

[12] See Noémie Ndiaye, "'Come Aloft, Jack-Little-Ape': Race and Dance in *The Spanish Gypsie*," *English Literary Renaissance* 51, no. 1 (2021): 121-151, and *Scripts of Blackness: early modern performance culture and the making of race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022).

I define my key terms (racecraft, trick, repertory, intertheatricality, figure, and child) and expand on my rationale for choosing the Blackfriars boys repertory as my case study for locating early modern theatrical race-making in hitherto underexplored areas.

Racecraft as Trick: "Now you see it, now you don't…"

My use of "racecraft" (and at times "race-making") signals the active and erratic formations of race as a social construct dependent on performance both on and off the stage. Thompson in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race* defines "race-making, or what [Barbara J.] Fields and [Karen E.] Fields call racecraft" as "the underlying imaginative horizon, belief system, or individual and collective mental landscape that seeks to divide humans along unequal lines."[13] In *Racecraft,* Fields and Fields unfold a method for understanding how the violence and oppression of racism and racist acts has coalesced into the shorthand of the word "race." They use the metaphor of a card trick to illustrate how rhetorical shorthand "transforms *racism,* something an aggressor *does*, into *race*, something the target *is*, in a sleight of hand that is easy to miss."[14] The "now you see it, now you don't" aspect of racecraft enables racist thought and practice.[15] The people most subject to this "trick" of racecraft are white people. Fields and Fields refer to the Jim Crow South of Mississippi in 1964 as "a time and place when racecraft daily performed its *conjuror's trick* of transforming racism into race, leaving black persons in view while removing white persons from the

[13] Thompson, "Did the Concept of Race," 8; Barbara J. Fields and Karen E. Fields, *Racecraft: the Soul of Inequality in American Life* (New York: Verso, 2012).
[14] Fields and Fields, *Racecraft,* 16.
[15] Fields and Fields, *Racecraft,* 25. The Fields actually use a subtle quotation from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* when they describe one social construction of witchcraft as the ability to "call spirits from the vasty deep" (100).

stage" (emphasis added).[16] The trick of racecraft obscures whiteness and racism's impact on (and racist acts by) white people. Arthur Little Jr. notes a similar phenomenon in the context of early modern scholarship, that "cultural habits…have almost reflexively made blacks synonymous with race itself."[17] Locating early modern performances of race solely in the presence of characters of color does the very work of "removing white persons from the stage" that Fields and Fields identify. I argue, therefore, that the implicit whiteness of the children's company undergirds the lack of scholarly engagement with these plays as sites of racecraft and that their whiteness must be interrogated and investigated in order for their participation in early modern race-making to become clear.

With racecraft established as itself a "conjuror's trick," an action that is by nature both skillfully employed and inherently deceitful, similarly "tricky" performances of race-making on the early modern stage, become easier to trace. By examining four plays in the Blackfriars children's repertory (Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*, Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* and George Chapman's *May Day*), I identify moments of actor skill and spectacle that I call "race tricks," performances that hide their participation in racecraft in plain view of their audience: Cupid's labors and punishments in *Cynthia's Revels*, the parody of the Moor in *Poetaster*, the Protean performance of the apprentice in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and the blackface disguise of the chimney sweep in *May Day*. I catalog this list under what Geraldine Heng calls "particular moments and instances of how race is made, to indicate the exemplary,

[16] Ibid. The use of a theatrical metaphor here ("removing white persons from the stage") also emphasizes the performances, gestures, and choreographies embedded within the landscape of racecraft.
[17] Arthur L. Little Jr., *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: national-imperial re-visions of race, rape, and sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 268.

dynamic, and resourceful character of race-making under conditions of possibility."[18] What makes these moments particularly powerful is their repetition across play texts through the repeated use of character types and figures that create intertheatrical resonances for their audiences. These characters in the plays of the Blackfriars children's repertory present diverse displays of actor skill and traces of spectacle that hide the performance of their race-making techniques in plain sight of their audiences (both then and now). If racecraft is inherently a "tricky" device, then the theatrical race trick perpetuates the delusion that race resides solely in the presence of black(ened) bodies on the early modern stage which leads (mostly white) scholars and audiences to ignore the "racializing momentum" created through their dynamic and spectacular displays of skill.[19]

While using the term racecraft alongside race tricks, I acknowledge the double meanings that "craft" and "trick" share, but I see "trick" as more evocative of how race appears in the children's repertory. Craft in the theatrical context refers to both the skill that actors employ in their performances and the spectacle (visual display) either created or accompanied by that skill. Modern textbooks on acting refer to their course of study as a "craft," the development of tools (skills) that train the actor's voice and body for the profession.[20] Craft is also later used in the context of "stagecraft," often a synonym for the visual and material aspects of the performance, also known as "spectacle." The earliest usage of "stagecraft" in the OED is from the late nineteenth century, though it

[18] Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3.
[19] Heng, *Invention of Race*, 4.
[20] See David Krasner, *An Actor's Craft: the art and technique of acting* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and William Esper and Damon DiMarco, *The Actor's Art and Craft* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), among many others. The introductory acting class at my college was called "The Actor's Craft."

should be noted that medieval craft guilds were known for their performances and the making of sets, props, and costumes that would accompany their plays.[21] The spectacle of racializing materials such as black and white cloth and cosmetics discussed by Ian Smith and Farah Karim-Cooper definitively contributes to early modern race-making and racial impersonation on the early modern stage.[22] "Craft" then signals a certain sturdiness or solid foundation, a set of practices studied and perfected over time that produce something material and lasting, be it a well-honed performance or a finely tailored costume.

"Trick," by contrast, is more ephemeral and illusory, much like the performance history of the boy performers about whom so little is known. A trick can be hard to grasp or even to understand, whereas a craft feels more substantial, of substance and stability: an actual edifice rather than a house of cards that is liable to collapse at any moment. As a noun, the OED defines trick as "a crafty and fraudulent device of a mean and base kind" as well as "a feat of dexterity or skill."[23] Another definition of "trick," apart from its association with skilled performance and deception, makes it particularly relevant to the child actor: "a trifling ornament or toy; a trinket, bauble, knick-knack," something small that can be played with, or an object to take delight in. The small size of the boy actors is often noted in inductions to children's plays, where child actor play themselves. Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* refers specifically to the behavior of boys when asking

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[21] "Stage-craft, n." *OED Online*. For medieval guild performance, see Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[22] See Ian Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks: Racial Cross-dressing on the Early Modern Stage," *Renaissance Drama* 32 (2003): 33-67, and Farah Karim-Cooper, "The Materials of Race: Staging the Black and White Binary in the Early Modern Theatre," in *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race*, 17-29.
[23] "Trick, n.". *OED Online*.

about childhood antics: "I'll question you / Of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys" (1.2.76-77). Because the King's Men performed this play at the Blackfriars after the children's company left, this line would have also invoked the history of children's performance on that stage, the "tricks" of the Children of the Queen's Revels that were now long gone.

The playfulness of the Children of the Queen's Revels is evidenced in their repertoire, a largely comedic series of plays that tend to satirize their audiences and the institution of theatre itself. Child actors especially were seen as trying to trick the audience into believing that they are what they play, and the audience's imaginative labor here must have stretched even farther than with the adult companies. The development of these young performers alongside these tricks shows how their skills evolved through repetitions of trial and error. The courtiers' "tricks" on display in *Cynthia's Revels* show the precarity of their status in Cynthia's court, just as the company was often precarious in their relationship to the monarch. Most of the plays under discussion in this project are comedies, the genre most associated with the repertory of the Blackfriars boys, where tricks, jests, foolery, and deception are par for the course. Lucy Munro argues that the tragedies of this children's company, which included *Sophonisba*, *Bussy D'Ambois, Philotas* and *Cupid's Revenge*, are overlooked in scholarly attention to the company, and that "the rapidly maturing and increasingly adept company was capable of playing tragedies."[24] This "capability" of an "increasingly adept" company seems to suggest that tragedy requires more skill than comedy or at least different skills that needed to be honed or did not come as naturally to young performers. But it can be just as hard to

[24] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels,* 136.

make an audience laugh as it is to make them cry.

Tricks function both within the fiction of these plays, as characters show off and deceive one another, and within the performance itself, as actors play to their strengths and show their own physical and/or verbal dexterity. The ability to perform tricks is not limited to any race, gender, or rank of character in early modern drama, though it is often associated with children and apes (as I discuss in the first two chapters). Many female characters successfully perform cross-dressing tricks. While Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* prefers the vocabulary of "stratagem" and "villainy," he is engaged in many tricks, from the luring of Titus's sons into the pit of death to getting Titus to cut off his own hand. Prospero in *The Tempest* refers to his ethereal servant Ariel as his "tricksy spirit," and he categorizes Ariel's final act of service also as "such another trick" (4.1.40, 5.1.273). From tricks inevitably come tricksters, devilish or Vice-like characters who are also racialized by their association with blackness. Stephano in *The Tempest* links tricks specifically with devils as well as racialized figures upon encountering Caliban for the first time: "Have we devils here? Do / you put tricks upon's with savages and men of Ind, ha?" (2.2.58-59). The devil's ability to shapeshift, imitate, and perform physical feats of activity and verbal skill all make him the consummate actor, and the material blackening of the devil figure on the stage transfers this skill set visually to other blackened characters like Aaron and Muly Hamet in *The Battle of Alcazar*. The transference and repetition of tricks across texts is the subject of the next section as I explain further how intertheatricality and repertory create a way of seeing that enables new instances of racecraft to rise to the surface.

Intertheatricality and Repertory

The repeated performances of the early modern repertory created an environment that promoted intertheatricality, or the idea according to William N. West that early modern audiences experienced dramatic performance as a "reverberant constellation of speeches, gestures, and interactions rather than as neatly circumscribed plays."[25] Plays then become "networks of traceable elements of action," partly consisting of repeated characters and types of people, either alluded to in the script or represented on the stage. Intertheatricality recognizes that performances are made up out of other performances, dependent on the repetition of actorly skill and the memory and recognition of the playgoers.[26] Jonathan Gil Harris defines "intertheatrical interpretation" as focused on "the bodies of actors, their costumes, and their techniques of movement, gesture, and verbal delivery."[27] For clarity, I will distinguish "intertheatricality" with "repertory" in this study, though they can be used as synonyms to describe networks of performance modes across time and space. When I use "repertory," I am referring to a set of plays connected to a single company. The repertory of the Children of the Queen's Revels therefore is distinct from the repertory of the King's Men, although they share intertheatrical resonances. Studies of early modern playing companies and the plays they performed are key to understanding how English playwrights and players operated in the early modern period. Scholars have moved however from trying to differentiate between company repertories to analyzing, as Mark Hutchings writes, how companies created "symbiotic relationships" with one another, a cross-repertory method that I here refer to as

[25] William N. West, "Intertheatricality," in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 152.
[26] West, "Intertheatricality," 154.
[27] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 68.

"intertheatricality."[28] One cannot extract a single company as having an identity outside their interactions and collaborations with other companies and indeed, other social and cultural performances at large. Yet, as I argue in reference to my intentional focus on the Blackfriars boys, it is still useful to consider how plays performed by the same actors and in the same playhouse work to build theatrical skill and audience engagement.

Intertheatricality gives the audience as well as the actors a shorthand to making connections across performances and playing spaces. Another early modern definition of the word "trick" refers to "a characteristic expression (of the face or voice); a peculiar feature; a distinguishing trait." In Shakespeare's *King John,* Queen Eleanor remarks that the Bastard "hath a trick of Coeur-de-lion's face," that she recognizes her son in the face of his illegitimate offspring (1.1.87). This "trick" or trace of the dead king's likeness, this mark of resemblance that triggers a memory or a connection, reflects the concept of intertheatricality. The repetition of character types, choreography, rhetoric, props, and costumes…all of these "tricks" or traces of former dramatic events shape the viewer's experience and inform what they see. John Day in his children's play *Law Tricks* invokes the image of "the lascivious Turke" as a theatrical device, an intertheatrical reference that would undoubtedly stir up memories of past performances like those of Edward Alleyn in *Soliman and Perseda*. The practice of repertory, where a single company performs different plays on different days, often with recycled material accompaniments like costumes and props, provides repeat audiences with ample opportunities for this kind of perceptive *déjà vu*. One onstage image or spoken line can conjure up another, and this is particularly the case in terms of racialized characters, as Celia Daileader's work on Black

[28] Hutchings, *Turks*, 17.

actors and "Othellophilia" has shown.[29] Ian Smith uses the language of intertheatricality when he argues that repeated moments of racialized spectacle featuring characters in blackface provided a "network of images that reminded audiences and readers of their racializing power."[30] Both the materials Smith mentions (soot, dyed skin, black cloth) and the audience members themselves give "racializing power" to the images seen onstage. By presenting this "network of images" for the audience to view, the practice of repertory is key to the organization of this emergent racial thought, or "eruption of a racial consciousness" as Smith calls it.[31]

Analyzing early modern drama through the practices of repertory and the concept of intertheatricality allows us to "see" these performances differently. Repertory functions as a medium through which early modern performance must be viewed in order to see the whole picture. By designating repertory as something to "look through," I am invoking W. J. T. Mitchell's definition of "race" as a "medium…something we see through, like a frame, a window, a screen or a lens, rather than something we *look at*." [32] Repertory in this fashion becomes a medium or a screen, a way of seeing that places race and other embodied representations like gender, class, and disability in conversation with one another, as analogs for each other and sites of potent intersection. Repertory also serves as a kind of training ground for actors, where the schedule demands that a company presents multiple shows at the same time. Taking part in a repertory company gives actors a forum to display a wide range of skills, as well as a laboratory to train,

[29] Celia R. Daileader, *Racism, Misogyny, and the* Othello *Myth: Inter-racial Couples from Shakespeare to Spike Lee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[30] Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks," 52.
[31] Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks," 59.
[32] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), xii.

experiment, and refine their individual and collaborative performance techniques. Evelyn Tribble in *Early Modern Actors and Shakespeare's Theatre: thinking with the body* focuses on the spectacle of the actor-body in motion as she studies the ways in which training, practice, and sometimes just ineffable natural talent, contributed to the performance of skill on the early modern stage.[33] While actors hone their performances through the practice of repertory, repeat audiences are likewise "instructed" to draw intertheatrical connections between plays, players, and playing companies through the subject matter of the plays, the characters presented, and recycled spectacular elements (such as costumes, props, and movement). While this kind of entrainment might not be used consciously by companies to manage audience response and expectation, the effect remains that audiences who see multiple plays done by the same actors and inhabited by the same bodies will carry associations across playgoing experiences. This kind of "ghosting," where traces of former performances "haunt" future ones (to use Marvin Carlson's term), is particularly relevant in the inclusion of characters prosthetically fashioned as representations of race, gender, and disability portrayed by white abled-bodied male performers on the early modern stage.[34] Seeing through repertory informs the audience on how to "read" performing bodies through both repetitive display and visual difference.

With attention to this repetition of images, I have organized each chapter around what I call an "intertheatrical figure": a character or type who is enacted in or referenced

[33] Evelyn Tribble, *Early Modern Actors and Shakespeare's Theatre: thinking with the body* (New York: Bloomsbury Arden, 2017).
[34] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: the theatre as memory machine* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001). Ghosting is a hallmark repertory "trick," just as ghosts themselves are theatrical tricks, illusory figures that portray anxieties about death, sexuality, morality, and religion.

across multiple early modern plays, especially those of the Blackfriars repertory. Three of these figures are Greco-Roman gods: Cupid, the boy god of love and desire (chapter 1), Proteus, the sea god of transformation (chapter 3), and Vulcan, the blackened and disabled god of fire (chapter 4). Chapter 2 focuses on the imitative skill of the boy players through the figures of the ape and the stage Moor (also associated with the adult player Edward Alleyn). By identifying intertheatrical "figures," I recognize a similar strategy to Mario DiGangi's study of "sexual types" in identifying "recognizable figures of literary imagination and social fantasy."[35] "Figure," based on the Latin *figura,* is a term that Eric Auerbach describes as "living and dynamic, incomplete and playful," a formulation perfectly suited to the central organizing figure that underlies this whole project: the early modern boy player.[36] Unlike a rigidly set type, these intertheatrical figures, as presented by these young players, are shifting and moldable to whatever form or shape the text requires of them. While Proteus, Vulcan, and the ape do not appear literally in the children's plays discussed, the boys still perform the characteristic tricks of these figures. Thereby Proteus turns into an apprentice, Vulcan into a chimney sweep, and two apish children into one celebrity actor. The intertheatrical activity of these figures, drawn from ancient myths and transnational contact, creates a web of repetitions (with difference) that highlights the actor's skill, engages the audience's memory, and produces as a result a dynamic version of racecraft.

Another useful intertheatrical term is the "theatergram." Scholars like Gavin Hollis and Robert Hornback have both used Louise George Clubb's concept of the

[35] Mario DiGangi, *Sexual Types: embodiment, agency, and dramatic character from Shakespeare to Shirley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 5.
[36] Eric Auerbach. *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York: Median, 1959), 12.

"theatergram," a term referring to "those elements of dramatic composition such as character, situation, genre, and scene out of which…plays are assembled," to map repetitive displays of skill and spectacle that move across theatrical texts.[37] Hornback's study uses the Italian commedia dell'arte figure Harlequin to consider the employment of blackness in similarly devilish and/or foolish types from the early modern English stage all the way to nineteenth century American minstrelsy. Hollis focuses on the lack of American peoples and places depicted in early modern English theatrical performance. Playing companies' "allusions" to the Americas, he writes, "tend to be fleeting and draw more on generalized associations with the New World."[38] By focusing on the presence of racializing theatergrams in the form of intertheatrical figures in the Blackfriars repertory, I argue that racecraft is not actually absent in children's plays at all but simply takes a different form than it does in the more familiar race plays of Shakespeare's canon.

Repertory & Intersectionality

I argue in this project that repertory, together with racecraft, shaped the audience's experience of spectacle and actor skill through networks of repeated theatrical moments and figures. I theorize how these plays have been passed over in the studies of early modern racecraft and emphasize their significant participation in early modern race-making through their interconnected performances of race, gender, disability, sexuality, and class. This kind of intersectional approach is indebted to the work of Black feminists like Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term "intersectionality" in reference to the legal

[37] Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-26. Cited in Robert Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface Comic Traditions* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 35, and Gavin Hollis, *The Absence of America*: *The London Stage, 1576-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.
[38] Hollis, *Absence of America,* 2.

and political erasure of Black women and their experiences of discrimination. Discourses of intersectionality have not remained solely in the legal realm; they have been incorporated into many theoretical approaches including early modern studies of embodiment. For instance, the relationship of race to color on the early modern stage, as Karim-Cooper writes, "makes meaning onstage in intersectional terms: we have to read black and white faces in ways that are not only motivated by constructions of femininity but more urgently in ways that consider the network of racial meanings they both produce."[39] My consideration, therefore, of racecraft within the repertory cannot be completed without recognizing how performances of gender, sexuality, class, and disability, participated in constructing racial consciousness for early modern audiences. The intertheatrical figures of the children's repertory, from Cupid to Vulcan, demonstrate these complex intersections of identity categories and shifting popular ideas about them.

While there is such a rich history of gender and sexuality criticism to draw on in considering the children's repertory, scholarship on the early modern children's repertory has not engaged significantly with the importance of the plays' allusions to racialized "others," or how these allusions function to construct and establish whiteness as a property of its English actors and its imagined English audiences.[40] Discourses of gender and childhood in the early modern era are also built upon ideas of formation and development (discussed more at length in chapter 1) that relate to modern theories of

[39] Karim-Cooper, "The Materials of Race," 19.
[40] For work on children's performance that foregrounds gender and sexuality, see Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: the performance of gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare without women: representing gender and race on the Renaissance stage* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Michael Witmore, *Pretty Creatures: children and fiction in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Simone Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature: gender, performance, and queer relations* (London: Routledge, 2016).

ability, disability, and form. The form of the child actor, and how that relates to his skill set, is often referenced in play texts that refer to them as moldable entities. Williams notes that the early modern theater "works from the radical particularity of the actor's body rather than from a stable norm," and recognizing the "particularity" of the child actor's body in relation to the characters he played is essential to my project.[41] Patricia Akhimie's *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference* and her focus on somatic markers and perceived mutability of certain bodies over others has also been a profoundly useful text for exploring connections between race and disability, childhood and performance.[42] How the child actor becomes marked (perhaps permanently, perhaps violently) by their labors upon the stage and the characters they play is a throughline of this project.

Racecraft & The Child

The boy players at the Blackfriars are important, often overlooked, figures in the exploration of race and embodiment in relation to actor skill and theatrical spectacle on the early modern English stage. But the figure of the child does feature prominently in the work of early modern racecraft, as children are often used as symbols of family bloodlines and "purity" of lineage (with the threat of miscegenation). In Queen Elizabeth I's London coronation procession, child performers represented King Henry VII (who had united "the red rose and the white"), Henry VIII (the product of that union) and Elizabeth herself.[43] The "red and white" Tudor rose features colors often associated with poetic beauty, femininity and childish innocence. The child performers portraying the

[41] Williams, *Unfixable Forms,* 9.
[42] Patricia Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
[43] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (Yale University Press, 1994), 22.

triumphant national past and hopeful imperial future in this pageant prefigure the royal children depicted in Shakespeare's histories (*Henry VI, Richard III*, *King John*), characters who represent dynastic promise and almost always meet an early end. These doomed aristocratic children are figured as pure, innocent, tender, and white.[44] There is a long tradition of the dead white child in English literature; medieval English stories of Jewish ritual murder libel often featured young white boys who became viewed as Christian martyrs, like Hugh of Lincoln. The murdered boy in Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale" is repeatedly called "litel" and referred to as an "innocent."[45] Heng argues that the villainization and racialization of the Jews was figured through their supposed threat to little white Christian boys.[46] It was the use of "agents such as children and women, figures who serve as symbolic bearers of sociocultural identity for a community" that "articulate the seams of race" in England at this time.[47] The English child specifically became a site of national identity formation that centered around whiteness.

Critical discussions of racialized child figures on the early modern stage are usually centered around the baby in *Titus Andronicus,* or deal with characters that are mentioned but never seen, such as the unborn child of the offstage Moor referenced in *The Merchant of Venice* and the absent Indian boy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[48]

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[44] Rutland in *3 Henry VI* is an "innocent child" (1.3.8) and "sweet boy" (1.4.162). The dead princes in *Richard III* have "alabaster innocent arms" (4.3.11). Arthur in *King John* is "fair boy" (2.1.30). His mother Constance praises his "unblemished" complexion: "Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast, / And with the half-blown rose" (3.1.55-56).

[45] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Wadsworth Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning), 209-10.

[46] Heng, *Invention of Race,*84.

[47] Heng, *Invention of Race,* 58.

[48] See Margo Hendricks, "'Obscured by dreams': Race, Empire, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 37-60; Francesca T. Royster, "White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 432-455; Margo Hendricks, "Visions of Color: Spectacle, Spectators, and the Performance of Race," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance,* eds. Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 509-526; Kim F. Hall, "Guess Who's Coming to

They are also all by Shakespeare, as there is very little scholarship focusing on children of color in other early modern plays, probably because so few examples exist. While there are young relations of Muly Muhamet present in *The Battle of Alcazar* (his son and nephews in the dumbshow), there seems to be a general lack of non-white children's roles embodied by actors in early modern plays. Reacting to this absence, David Sterling Brown recognizes the "broader implications for how the period's drama depicts black people's development (or presumed lack of development) from youth to adulthood."[49] The lack of young characters of color on stage therefore suggests emergent notions tying childhood and whiteness together (a process that involved attention to gender, ability, and class). Urvashi Chakravarty, writing on Caliban in *The Tempest,* notes the "queer absence" of children of color in early modern drama "that paradoxically divulges the racialized assumptions underwriting and subtending the figure of the Child."[50] She writes, "the figure of the Child who must secure the future" is "white, legitimate, (racially) legible, able-bodied, unblemished."[51] The ties between ideas of childhood and whiteness, though not as linked in the early modern period as they are in consciousness today, become visible through the children's performances in satires of aristocratic culture at Blackfriars. Edel Lamb argues that "the players' identities as children" are shown through performances of and references to "their age, physiology, gender and

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Dinner? Colonization and Miscegenation in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Renaissance Drama* 23 (1992): 87-111; Ania Loomba, "Periodization, Race, and Global Contact," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 595-620.

[49] David Sterling Brown, "'Is Black so Base a Hue?': Black Life Matters in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," in *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies: a critical anthology,* eds. Cassander L. Smith, Nicholas R. Jones, and Miles P. Grier (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 147.

[50] Urvashi Chakravarty, "'I Had Peopled Else': Shakespeare's Queer Natalities and the Reproduction of Race," in *Queering Childhood in Early Modern English Drama and Culture,* eds. Jennifer Higginbotham and Mark Albert Johnston (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 60.

[51] Chakravarty, "I Had Peopled Else," 72.

sexuality."[52] The missing word in this list of terms of embodiment crucial to the figure of the child player is race.[53] The racialization of children in this period bears scrutiny, as the figure of the "white" child (and the whiteness that becomes implicit in the very word "child") does not become widely recognized until the mid-nineteenth century.[54]

Childish Tricks at Blackfriars

Known at its inception as the Children of the Chapel, the children's company at Blackfriars began performances in their indoor playhouse within London's city walls around 1600. They picked up on legacies and memories of the children resident at the "first" Blackfriars company in the early 1580s, when they were most well-known for performing the gender-bending comedies of John Lyly. This second Blackfriars company became notorious for the Clifton case heard in the Star Chamber in 1601, where a boy's family accused the company managers of kidnapping their son off the street and forcing him into a career of playing.[55] While this method of impressment stopped (at least to our knowledge) shortly thereafter, one wonders how many vulnerable boys whose parents did not have the means to complain entered the profession this way. Because the company's name changed so much over a short course of time (Children of the Chapel, Children of the Queen's Revels, and later just Children of the Revels), I will more often refer to them

[52] Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 36.
[53] Lamb does describe the boy "as a distinct racial entity" (49) in reference to the scene in *Poetaster* where Captain Tucca comments on his page's white face in comparison to the blackened "sooty" face of a boy player who is representing the fire god Vulcan in the masque (discussed in chapter 4 of this dissertation).
[54] See Urvashi Chakravarty, "Spirited away: race, slavery and childhood in early modern England," *Literature Compass* 18, no. 10 (2021), 11: "the yoking of whiteness to childhood…leads to the association of Black children with a kind of postlapsarian maturity. As the repeated and deliberate murder of Black children in the United States by the police as well as by civilians who invoke legal justification attests, this continues to have devastating effects. I am not only suggesting, here, that the racialization of childhood serves larger structures of violence and enables the institutional policing of Black life, but also that the invocation of childhood in itself often registers a racialised discourse, that we must attend to the ways in which the presumptive rhetorical 'innocence' of (some) children is deeply imbricated within the strategic rhetorics as well as the violent realities of race, labour and slavery."
[55] On the Clifton case, see Ackroyd, *Child Actors*, 4-22.

as “the Blackfriars children” or “Blackfriars boys” in order to categorize them mainly by the space in which they performed, since their relationship to “the chapel” is tenuous and refers to their former affiliation with the royal choir school. The title page of *Sophonisba,* for instance, only lists their performance venue at the Blackfriars, not the company’s name, which shows the significance of the playhouse space to the company identity. The Children of Paul’s, their counterparts at this time, are also aligned with the space in which they played in their company name.

I am interested in this repertory in particular as a site for racecraft because of their proximity to the court and political affairs that shaped what it meant to be powerful and English (and white) at this time. From the beginning of their resurgence at the Blackfriars, the Children put on plays that directly addressed the state of the nation, with topical referencing and local settings in London-based plays like *Eastward Ho!* and *The Dutch Courtesan*. Beginning with the Elizabethan allegory of *Cynthia’s Revels*, the company engaged directly with Elizabethan court culture and, under James, suitably revised their targets and became even more daring in their critique. They courted controversy with James by satirizing his court and depicting him and other Scottish nobles onstage, mostly through indirect imitation or sly references like Scottish accents. *Eastward Ho!*, a London-set city comedy authored by three of the company’s regular authors (Jonson, Chapman, and Marston), features anxieties not only about Scottish influence but also French infiltration, as well as the possibility of travel to Virginia. While Jonson’s earlier plays like *Cynthia’s Revels* engage with these questions of what it means to behave like a courtier, these later plays suggest that to be a purely *English* courtier was, in fact, most necessary in the face of changing demographics and foreign

influence.[56] Sarah Dustagheer notes how few plays written for the public theatres during this time were set in contemporary London, and the site-specificity of the Blackfriars becomes a clear marker in children's plays like Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. She defines the Blackfriars precinct as "an extension of the court, a place where royalty stayed, sought refuge, were buried, housed guests, and conducted state business."[57] The Blackfriars theatre itself is "haunted" by the many performances and public displays associated with it, from Henry VIII's divorce proceedings to its former monastic uses, and to the performances of the first Blackfriars company by John Lyly and George Peele. The history of their playing space brings Children of the Chapel/Queen's Revels into the same arena as royal business of national significance. While I reference the child players at Paul's at times, I find the most generative material in the work of the Blackfriars children due to their proximity and investment in the power structures of the Elizabethan and later Jacobean courts. As a result, their repertory is a rich site for investigating its role in early modern racecraft.

My focus on this second Blackfriars company is also due to the interactions between them and the adult companies of the time. In 1608, the King's Men took over performing at the Blackfriars after the Children's expulsion from the venue due to their many scrapes with James and the censor which resulted in the removal of their royal patronage. The Blackfriars boys shared two major playwrights (Ben Jonson and Francis Beaumont) with an adult company (the Lord Chamberlain's, later the King's Men), and

[56] Lamb sees *Eastward Ho!* as an "exploration of the performative aspects of national identity" that "implies a loss of a distinct Englishness in the mingling of multinational cultures in seventeenth-century London" (*Performing Childhood,* 83).
[57] Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: repertory and theatre space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 33.

as Dustagheer has shown, the transfer of space from the children to the King's Men led to a kind of "combined practices" at the Blackfriars where the men were influenced by the boys' strong showing of the previous eight years. As the study of repertory hinges not only on the study of individual playing companies but also the interplay between companies and different modes of performance, I pair plays from the Blackfriars boys' repertory in this project with performances from the children's companies of the 1580s (*Dido Queen of Carthage, Galatea, Sappho and Phao, Love's Metamorphosis*), the King's Men (*The Tempest, Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra, Othello*), the Lord Admiral's Men (*The Battle of Alcazar*), students at the Inns of Court (*Gesta Grayorum*), and university performances ("Mr. Moore's Revels").

Chapter Outline

While the Children at Blackfriars (known in 1600 as the Children of the Chapel) are mostly associated now with their contentious relationship to James after his accession in 1604, it is worthwhile to start this project by looking at their beginning and how this first play of their repertory reached back to older performance histories that featured Cupid and the gender-bending mythological comedies of John Lyly. Chapter 1, "Youthful Tricks: Cupid at the Blackfriars," lays the foundation for considering the figure of the early modern child and the boy player in relation to constructions of race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class across the dramatic repertory. The chapter unfolds in two parts: first, to expand on how the company's relationship to the Blackfriars audience and the court is invested in early modern racecraft, and second, how Cupid's portrayals in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* alongside other plays by Marlowe and Lyly make him a figure akin to the boy player himself in his role as enforced laborer subject to discipline

and punishment. I also consider the metatheatrical inductions of *Cynthia's Revels* and Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (written for the Children of Paul's) as key evidence for perceptions of boy actors and their skill at this time.

Chapter 2, "Mimic Tricks: Aping the Moor in *Poetaster*," argues that the representation of boy players in Jonson's *Poetaster, or the Arraignment* highlights their tricks as imitators (or "apes") of the adult company and draws attention to the specific skills and spectacle associated with the figure of the stage Moor. The boys perform a mock audition where they imitate celebrity actor Edward Alleyn as "the Moor" or Muly Hamet from *The Battle of Alcazar* in a spectacle that demonstrates the gaps between the perceived capacity of the boy actor's body and skill set and the successful presentation of that character type. The boys' "tricks" are consistently aligned rhetorically with apes in early modern dramatic texts, and I contend that the figure of the ape as a skilled (and bound) performer reflects the child actor's position on the early modern stage. They engage in processes of racialization alongside each other. I analyze this demonstration in *Poetaster* alongside the spectacle of apes and Moors in the Oxford "off-campus" university entertainment, "Mr. Moore's Revels" as well as other examples from *Cynthia's Revels, The Bondman, Troilus and Cressida,* and *Antony and Cleopatra.*

Chapter 3, "Transforming Tricks: Protean Performance in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," uses Francis Beaumont's play as a demonstration of bravura theatrical skill and versatility in the form of the scene-stealing apprentice Rafe. George and Nell, the couple to whom Rafe is apprenticed, force him onto the stage and into the plot of the play in this metatheatrical whirlwind of a play. I compare Rafe's presumed transformational capacity to that of Proteus, the god who tries to escape capture in

different myths by transforming into many different shapes. This theme of compulsion as the genesis for transformation and skill display in Proteus's story reflects the experience and training of the boy player. Proteus also appears in the "Masque of Proteus," a segment of the infamous *Gesta Grayorum*, the Gray's Inn Revels of 1594, and I compare the spectacle of nascent English imperial formations in *Gesta* with similar displays of skill and domination in *Pestle*. Rafe is not only pressured to perform but he transforms the play itself. By incorporating themes of medieval romance into this London city comedy, Rafe, George, and Nell engage consciously with the skills and spectacle associated both with the adult companies of the public theatres and with early modern race-making in performance. I also compare Rafe's theatrical labor to that of Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest,* a play performed a few years later by the King's Men at the Blackfriars. Like in *Poetaster,* this infusion of intertheatrical references shows how essential repertory is to the work of early modern theatrical racecraft.

Taking these tricks of transformation and imitation on board, Chapter 4, "Soot Tricks: Vulcan as Chimney Sweep in *May Day*," tackles George Chapman's gender-bending comedy in which tricks of disguise are integral to the plot when an old man dons blackface makeup to imitate a chimney sweep. This somatic marker of soot, both on the street and the stage, linked laboring subjects with foreign subjects and imbricated class and race formations. The use of these cosmetic spectacle, and the dynamic skill display of tragic acting that it unlocks for the actor, is reminiscent of other "sooty" performances of Vulcan, the cuckolded and disabled god of fire, from plays by George Peele and Thomas Heywood, as well as Shakespeare's *Othello*. I end the project with this depiction of old age that actually circles back to childhood in its performance by the boy player, and I

consider how the boy players are marked by their labors upon the stage.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 mostly focus on types of skillful and physical tricks and self-conscious performance displays from the boy actors, while chapter 4 features a play in which characters intend to (and only sometimes successfully) trick other characters, using disguise to offer up different kinds of spectacle and skill display for the actors. Chapters 2 and 4 deal specifically with a racialized type of character, the Moor, and how his somatic blackness alongside other physical attributes were shaped by the actors who played him and the material prostheses that they used. Chapters 1 and 3, by contrast, consider how power relations between the players and their masters, audiences, and patrons defined their whiteness through the employment of certain skills of transformation and spectacles of violence. This alternating structure reflects a major goal of this project: to put commonly recognizable representations of race on the early modern stage alongside less familiar ones. I also acknowledge that I keep returning to *Cynthia's Revels* beyond the first chapter and especially the character of Amorphus as a particularly useful avatar for the boy player himself. Throughout each of these chapters, I examine how the performance of race is produced through theatrical "tricks," repeated resonance that can only be uncovered through an intertheatrical and intersectional analysis.

Conclusion

The lack of many modern editions or modern performances of plays from the children's repertory produces a significant absence in the field of early modern dramatic study, especially when it comes to examples of early modern race-making in performance that lie beyond Shakespeare, Marlowe, and other anthologized authors of the English dramatic canon. Harry McCarthy's *Performing Early Modern Drama Beyond*

Shakespeare: Edward's Boys does an in-depth study of a modern all-boy company based in Stratford-upon-Avon that performs plays associated with the early modern boy companies.[58] But they have not performed any of the plays I focus on at length in this study. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is the only one of these plays to have survived in the modern repertory. Genevieve Love's "Performance Criticism without Performance," speculates that plays without a documented performance history, like much of the non-Shakespearean drama that I write about here, might be aptly suited to criticism, given the emphasis in performance studies on absence and loss.[59] As Hollis writes, "Early modern drama oscillates between presence and absence, bringing unto the stage what is clearly *not there* by means of words, bodies, and things that *are there*."[60]

I will conclude this introduction with a brief example to illustrate how the mechanisms of race-making have been overlooked in the children's plays. In John Day's *Law Tricks, Or Who Would Have Thought It,* written sometime between 1604 and 1608 and performed by the Children of the Queen's Revels at Blackfriars (or possibly the Children of the King's Revels at Whitefriars), Emilia, daughter of the Duke of Genoa, is captured by "the faithless Turkes" and her family fears that she is "ravish'd, slain, or taken prisoner."[61] When the play begins, Emilia has arrived back in Genoa, having

[58] Harry McCarthy, *Performing Early Modern Drama Beyond Shakespeare: Edward's Boys* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[59] Genevieve Love, "Performance Criticism without Performance: The Study of Non-Shakespearean Drama," in *New Directions in Renaissance Drama and Performance Studies,* ed. Sarah Werner (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 134.
[60] Hollis, *Absence of America,* 22.
[61] The title page of original 1608 edition *Law Tricks* lists "Children of the Revels" as the company attached, which could refer to either the Queen's or King's Revels. Mary Bly assigns it to King's Revels based on its similarities to *Pericles* (written after Queen's Revels disbanded) and other Whitefriars plays (*Queer Virgins,* 51). But both John Crow, editor of the Malone edition (1950), and E. K. Chambers in *Elizabethan Stage* (vol. 3: 285-86) date the play's conception to 1604 for the Queen's Revels at Blackfriars (Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels*, 174). Martin Wiggins also uses 1604 as the "best guess" date of composition [*British Drama 1533-1642*: *A Catalogue*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 126].

"counterfeited" madness in order to escape "the Turkes Gallies." No "actual" Turks appear onstage in the play, which is a romantic comedy that includes such familiar tropes as a brother wooing his disguised sister, a man framing his wife for adultery and trying to poison her, an unexpected resurrection, cross-dressing, and false conjuring tricks. *Law Tricks* also refers in other lines to racialized theatrical types like the Turk, including Indians (in reference to a character's love for "the Indian punck Tobacco"), Moors ("Leanders paramour / Compar'd with you was a swarth Blackamour"), and Africans ("Midnight, thou Aethiope, Empresse of black soules / Thou general Bawde to the whole world"). Thompson notes how in modern editions of Shakespeare's plays, references like these have been met in the past with editorial silence, and similar mentions of "Ethiopes" in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet* have been left largely unglossed.[62] There is no modern edition of *Law Tricks* to consult in order to see how an editor in the twenty-first century might explicate these allusions, and no modern performances of this play to turn to for guidance as to how theatre practitioners might stage (or choose to erase) these moments where identifiers of racial difference are employed.

Margo Hendricks describes race (adapting Shakespeare's words from *Midsummer*) as "a shaping fantasy," an illusion that takes on multiple forms and gains power in its transformative ability.[63] Just as the work of theatre history relies on imagination and fantasy, so does the construction of early modern racecraft. The act of seeing, reading, and writing through repertory brings the landscape of racecraft into focus. The figure of the child player in particular opens up new possibilities for the study of early modern racecraft. While Robin Bernstein's work on childhood, performance, and

[62] Thompson, "Did the Concept of Race Exist," 1.
[63] Hendricks, "Obscured by dreams," 42.

race specifically focuses on nineteenth century America, her theory of "racial innocence" and the linkage between childhood and whiteness as originating in that specific time and place (not in seventeenth century London) nevertheless provides a useful framework for thinking about how the Blackfriars children's repertory might be participating in the nascent formations of these ideologies. I wish to apply Bernstein's argument, "that performance…was the vehicle by which childhood suffused, gave power to, and crucially shaped these racial projects," to the early modern racecraft present in the repertory of the Children of the Queen's Revels.[64] As Bernstein writes, "the idea of childhood innocence and the bodies of living children have historically mystified racial ideology by hiding it in plain sight."[65] I contend this trick of race and childhood "hiding in plain sight" is present in the repertory of the Blackfriars boys just as it was in the nineteenth century.

[64] Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: performing American childhood from slavery to civil rights* (New York University Press, 2011), 4.
[65] Bernstein, 18.

Chapter 1

Youthful Tricks: Cupid at the Blackfriars

The boy players on the Blackfriars stage presented spectacles of ability (skill or "tricks") through a system of repertory performance that depended on their (potentially enforced) labor. By placing the boy actor in the context of the repertory system, we can start to see how different patterns of skill display emerge as repetitive forms of spectacle. Boy players were known particularly for their singing and their expert handling of wit and humor derived from rhetorical study (for the Chapel Children, in particular).[66] The manner in which the boys of the children's companies were educated probably followed pedagogical philosophies of the time, like those published by Richard Mulcaster.[67] The skills necessary to be a child player (reading, memorization, music, gesture) were those taught in a grammar or music school. The significance of the grammar school as a place where these boy actors were found and recruited (or coerced) into the playing company is explored below in the case of Thomas Clifton, the abducted schoolboy. Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels,* which might have been the company's inaugural production, features many self-conscious displays of skill and trickery that probably resulted from this school training. It begins with a metatheatrical induction where, when a child player is denied

[66] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes*, 76: "the chapel children were still…receiving some schooling in grammar, Latin, and song in accord with the educational program of the chapel choir or song school."
[67] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions wherin those primitive circvmstances be examined, which are necessarie for the training vp of children…*(London, 1581), ed. William Barker (University of Toronto Press, 2018). How exactly boys were trained as apprentices or laborers in adult companies is not well documented. For more on apprenticeship, see David Kathman, "Players, Livery Companies, and Apprentices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 413-428. For Mulcaster's influence on boy players, see Harry R. McCarthy, "'M[aster] Monkesters schollars': Richard Mulcaster, Physical Education, and the Early Modern Boy Companies," *Early Theatre* 24, no. 2 (2021): 31-54.

his wish to present the prologue, he decides in a fit of rebellious pique to give away "the argument" of the play by spoiling the plot. When the other two children in the induction try to stop this recitation, the first child complains that the boy is only doing this "to show us the happiness of his memory," or perform a kind of memory trick (84).[68] This trick or "device" is only the beginning of the third child's display of his skills (86). In his next trick, the third boy puts on the cloak meant for the prologue and does an impression of an audience member taking puffs of tobacco in between observations on the playhouse, actors, and audience. This action of smoking fills "the breaches" or dashes in the text and punctuates the speech with our imagination of the child's skilled gestures, though it is unclear whether the smoking is real or feigned (97). These skills of memory and imitation are revealed later in the courtier Amorphus's tutorials for his pupil Asotus to be key to the performance of the court gallant (discussed more in chapter 2).

By engaging with these displays of theatrical skill, labor, and emerging definitions of childhood and race, this chapter argues that the boy player, especially in the form of the mythical boy-god Cupid, is an apt vehicle for seeing how negotiations of the boundaries of whiteness in this period are dependent on performances of gender, sexuality, ability, and class. Ben Jonson's use of Cupid in *Cynthia's Revels* draws on previous repertories and performance histories while emphasizing the god's role as a laborer, in service to the gods and to the courtiers in his disguise as a page. Cupid as a theatrical figure therefore has a lot in common with the boy player himself, not only in his status as a worker but also in his role as a purveyor of desire and eroticism. Cupid is also notorious for his

[68] Quotations from *Cynthia's Revels* are from *Cynthia's Revels* (*Quarto Version)*, ed. Eric Rasmussen and Matthew Steggle, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson, Volume 1: 1597-1601*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Quotations from the Folio are also from Rasmussen and Steggle's edition.

tricks, the combination of his skill and his disobedient nature. While critical engagement with Cupid has focused on his gender and sexuality, I explore how the boy player-as-Cupid's tricks, both his skilled labor and his unruly deceits, contribute to the work of early modern racecraft ("craft" bringing together both senses of labor and trickery).

Seeing Cupid move through the children's repertory and land at the starting point of this particular company (the Children of the Chapel/the Queen's Revels) in *Cynthia's Revels* also helps us to track the development of the comical satire, a genre with a biting, antagonistic relationship to its audience of courtiers seeing themselves lampooned on the stage. Jonson's investment here in the courtly audience of the Blackfriars engages in a modelling of white English identity that excludes the overt representation of racialized subjects, yet it still conjures the dangers of foreign influence in their clothes and behaviors. This emphasis on performance and the "tricks" of social advancement leads to what I call "race tricks": presentations of skill and spectacle by figures that obfuscate their own role in early modern racecraft. Satire similarly can hide its aims, making an audience believe that the foolish characters they are seeing onstage do not actually reflect them or that they are "innocent" of such behaviors. The use of child players in these comical satires creates a kind of mirage, a trick that they could only get away with for so long before they were punished for it by King James I.

The Sideways Growth of Cupid in Repertory

Any study of the child actor on the early modern stage must consider the role of gender and sexuality in shaping perceptions of the boy player as he moves through the early modern repertory. Kathryn Bond Stockton's work on the queer child "growing sideways," rather than "up," has influenced scholars like Jennifer Higginbotham and

Mark Albert Johnston to apply this concept to the early modern period. They emphasize how central queerness is to a conceptualization of childhood that focuses on the child's "categorical mutability, fungibility, and plasticity…prior to their incorporation into universally binarized systems of sex, gender, and sexuality."[69] The very term "boy" is "elastic," as Jeffrey Masten writes, and categories such as "boy" or "youth" or "man" were "neither mutually exclusive, nor always logically developmental (boy *to* man)."[70] When put in terms of the boy actor specifically, we can see him grow "sideways" within the repertory system as his youthful embodiment, often metatheatrically referenced by the playwright in terms of his "little" body and "squeaking" voice, collided with the potential need to portray older roles. Gina Bloom points to the volatility present in the "cracking" male voice, constituting "a body in transition" and uncovering "the precarious, shifting nature of male identity."[71] Bethany Packard sees the discrepancy between role and boy actor as one of the "myriad ways in which the child player obstructs and alters the temporality of growing up."[72] Boy players rarely played "themselves" (children) outside of the metatheatrical inductions; Bart van Es points out that "paradoxically, the children's companies struggled to depict children," instead more often opting for characters who were young gallants, women, or older parents.[73] The boy player therefore was often

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[69] Jennifer Higginbotham and Mark Albert Johnston (eds.), *Queering Childhood in Early Modern English Drama and Culture* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 21. See Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth* Century (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
[70] Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: sex, language, and affect in Shakespeare's time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 113.
[71] Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: staging gender, shaping sound in early modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 39. Ben Jonson references the unstable voice of the "the rogue Play boy that acts *Cupid*" who has "got / so hoarse, your Majesty cannot hear him, half the bredth / o' your chair" in *Love Restored at a Masque at Court* (1612), lines 12-14.
[72] Bethany Packard, "Inducting Childhood: the scripted spontaneity of self-referential child players," in *Literary Cultures and Medieval and Early Modern Childhoods*, eds. Naomi J. Miller and Diane Purkiss (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 115.
[73] Bart van Es, "Shakespeare versus Blackfriars: Satiric Comedy, Domestic Tragedy, and the Boy Actor in *Othello*," in *Childhood, Education and the Stage in early modern England,* eds. Richard Preiss and Deanne

growing "beside himself," not only acting roles of different ages but also acknowledging that he was a boy acting, with the audience likewise engaged in this dual consciousness.

Just as Cupid performs skillfully, the children playing him must have been well suited to the role based on their skills and natural abilities. These young performers' mutable and fungible natures made them, by early modern standards, viable candidates for training in the art of performance. They were often compared to "fresh wax," "impressionable" and pliant.[74] van Es argues that the children's companies role in the Wars of the Theatres was largely due to their "impressionability," that authors could more easily "project their personal identities and ethos" onto the boys than they could with an adult company.[75] Mulcaster deemed early modern children easy to teach because of their "capacity to perceive that which is taught them, and to imitate the foregoer."[76] The mode of being impressionable or unformed, however, was also one of danger and risk of "deformity" if not "shaped" correctly.[77] The child player, therefore, represents a doubly risky enterprise which might make their performance all the more pleasurable to behold. Michael Witmore posits that audiences saw child players as "cognitively incomplete…not fully possessed by the illusion, because not fully self-possessed."[78] This description of unfinished subjectivity is reflected in William Kempe's *The Education of Children in Learning* (1588), where he applies the metaphor of "an empty new vessel" to the figure of the child that must inevitably be "filled" with the appropriate actions and

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Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 117.
[74] Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 7.
[75] Bart van Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 200.
[76] Mulcaster, *Positions,* 38.
[77] Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 7. Quotes Bartholomew Batt, *De Oeconomia Christiana* (London, 1581): "Even as the members of infants so soon as they be borne, be carefully tended, roled and swaddled, that they grow not crooked and deformed: so it is meet, that the manners of youth, be aptly framed and fashioned in the beginning."
[78] Witmore, *Pretty Creatures,* 102.

characteristics of a respectable adult.[79] These images of children as empty vessels or fresh wax point to their unique capabilities but in contradictory ways. An empty vessel is fully formed yet still incomplete, whereas wax is made to change forms, to be flexible. But a vessel, like wax or the blank slate (*tabula rasa* - another symbol of childhood from John Locke), can still be manipulated easily by those with bad intent, as Kempe warns against that "being void of all learning" (or empty), the child "is most apt to receive that which is first taught...whether it be good or bad."[80] The child is then receptive to the authority of the playhouse managers and those in charge of his development, though we have very little concrete information about what that process would have looked like.

The actual ages of the boy players are not known, though scholars estimate that they were around ages ten to seventeen. If they stayed with the company over the course of its eight-year run at the Blackfriars (which future playwright and company shareholder Nathan Field did), they clearly aged along with the company. Robert Keysar, manager of the Children of the Revels in 1610, describes the "children" as "a Companye of the most exparte and skillfull actors within the Realme of England…all or moste of them 'trayned up in that service, in the raigne of the late Queene Elizabeth for Ten yeares together."[81] If these are really the same "boys" who began playing a decade ago in *Cynthia's Revels*, they would have since aged into young men, some even into their twenties. It was the company's identity as a "children's company," and the assumptions about performance style and types of dramatic entertainment associated with that moniker, that mattered more than the literal ages of the players themselves. The "childness" of the child actors

[79] Quoted in Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 97.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Quoted in Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 63.

was much more a category of status than age, Lamb argues.[82] To be a child is to be subservient, to be controlled, and under the authority of so-called "adults," making the status of the child player wholly reliant on their relationship to the managers of their troupes.[83]

These aspects of childhood are reflected in the most childish of characters (and one exception to the absence of young characters noted above): Cupid, who became an established theatrical figure in the first children's companies at Blackfriars and Paul's almost two decades prior to his appearance in *Cynthia's Revels*.[84] Bastian Kuhl positions Cupid at the Blackfriars in 1600 as "a powerful expression of the troupe's self-fashioning among its theatrical competitors," and he traces the character's evolution through Lyly's earlier work up until the revival of *Love's Metamorphosis* in 1600.[85] Lyly presents the figure of Cupid in *Sappho and Phao* and *Galatea* "as a small boy, wayward and regularly on the run from his mother, Venus."[86] While Cupid does gain more independence in *Galatea,* Kuhl notes that he does not develop in a linear fashion across plays, but rather contains an "increasingly flickering identity, oscillating between childish and adult conceptions of self."[87] Shakespeare recognizes these contradictions when Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost* calls Cupid "this senior-junior, giant-dwarf" (3.1.174-5). Cupid's

[82] Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 4.
[83] Ibid
[84] Cupid appears in early boy company plays like Lyly's *Sappho and Phao, The Woman in the Moon, Galatea* and *Love's Metamorphosis*, Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* and Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*. He also appears in *Cambyses, Doctor Faustus, Parasitaster or the Fawn, Cupid's Whirligig, The Masque of Beauty, Timon of Athens* and *Cupid's Revenge*, alongside many masques and court entertainments. See Thomas L. Berger, William C. Bradford, and Sidney L. Sondergard, *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama Printed Plays, 1500-1660, Revised Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 36.
[85] Bastian Kuhl, "The Metamorphoses of Cupid: John Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis* and the Return of the Children's Playing Companies," in *Childhood, Education and the Stage*, 121.
[86] Kuhl, "Metamorphoses," 124.
[87] Kuhl, "Metamorphoses," 126.

sideways growth is reflected in this doubled overlapping of age and size. Kate Chedgzoy writes that Berowne's label of Cupid "destabilizes the hierarchies of age…making them co-exist in a single moment rather than inhabit positions in a hierarchical sequence."[88] Kuhl notes that Cupid's various "incarnations" across the repertory could be called "alternative" versions rather than "earlier" or "later" based on when the play was written.[89] Repertory horizontalizes this idea of linear developments in character, especially when the audience could potentially experience watching the plays in any order. Through constantly returning to these familiar stories and characters through repeat performances, early modern drama likewise participates in constructing "a horizontally organized repertoire, never completed and slowly changing" (intertheatricality).[90] Seeing the early modern theatrical landscape as a horizontal plane of repeated moments of skill and spectacle signifies that the repertory system itself was a practice that "grew sideways."

Not only is he an intertheatrical figure who can be traced through the boys' performances of different plays, but Cupid is also a mythological figure. The use of myth in many of the children's plays offers a rich site of cultural material to explore through the lens of repertory. Jay Dolmage also cites Stockton's theory of "growing sideways" regarding the study of history: "putting texts outside of it by its side…to reveal that it grows sideways and outside itself."[91] Dolmage then applies this kind of "sideways growth" to myth: "Myth is a great example of this sidewaysness: myths are ways for a

[88] Kate Chedgzoy, "Playing with Cupid: gender sexuality and adolescence," in *Alternative Shakespeares 3,* ed. Diana E. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 2008), 144.
[89] Kuhl, "Metamorphoses," 131.
[90] West, "Intertheatricality," 154.
[91] Jay Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 13.

culture to 'grow itself from the side' as rhetorical means of making sense of realities." The concept of "myth" likewise applies to the excavation of race and gender as social constructs. W. J. T. Mitchell refers to race as a myth in the sense that it "has a powerful afterlife that continues to structure perception, experience, and thought."[92] Bruce R. Smith's use of "myths" to organize his study on homosexual desire in early modern England follows Foucault in looking at how "structures of ideology" intersect "with structures of power": "as we move from one myth to another we can observe changes in how the 'energies' of power and ideology come together, and how those energies shape and are shaped by a conventional set of characters, speeches, and plots."[93] The repetition of Cupid throughout the children's repertory shows just how a familiar type of character can become enmeshed in a system of power that shapes cultural understandings. This chapter will continue by exploring first how the young players at work at Blackfriars became embedded in a system of power by virtue of their proximity to early modern court culture and how the social constructs of race, class, and childhood intertwine in the creation of an unstable (but powerful) white English identity. The second section will then focus again on Cupid as the embodiment of this paradoxically powerful yet subjugated force as he plays his tricks and faces discipline just as the boy players did in their labors upon the stage.

I.

Race, Class, and Childhood at Blackfriars

As noted above, *Cynthia's Revels* begins with a metatheatrical induction that

[92] Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, 22.
[93] Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: a cultural poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 20.

offers a glimpse into the reemergence of the children's company at Blackfriars circa 1599-1600.[94] Three unnamed child players enter squabbling over who shall deliver the prologue for the play. While the first boy enters ready to begin with the prologue's cloak, the second boy claims to have "studied it first," and the third claims that the author will say he "speaks it better" (4-5). An offstage voice, perhaps of an adult manager since he addresses the actors onstage as "children," implores the disruptive boys to get off the stage (8). Instead, the boys draw straws with an agreement that the shortest straw drawn will speak the prologue. The shortest straw is then drawn by the first child, who is also presumably the shortest in stature ("the shortest is come to the shortest," 23). This attention to the children's bodies and behavior recurs throughout the play, as Jonson draws the audience's attention to the actors' particular physical skills, expressions, and gestures.

Julie Ackroyd interprets this induction as the company's way to "carefully introduce their new audience of 1600 to their presentational methods and demonstrate the etiquette of how an upper-class audience member will be received upon the stage as a viewer."[95] The audience members who are imitated, however, are not glowing supporters of the children's endeavors as one would imagine Jonson would want to see onstage at his plays. The gallant audience member that the boy player imitates here in the induction is very negative about the company and calls the young players "rascally tits," "wrens," and "pismires" (96-97). He portrays the experience of going to the indoor playhouse as a kind of sensory assault, where all that he sees, hears, and smells offends him. This over-the-

[94] For more on the first Blackfriars company, see Michael Shapiro, *The Children of the Revels: the boy companies of Shakespeare's time and their plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 17.
[95] Ackroyd, *Child Actors*, 128.

top characterization of an unhappy audience member, however, is a common occurrence in Jonson's comical satires, which could be considered training ground, not only for the young actors of the nascent company at Blackfriars, but also for their mixed-class audiences. Philip Stubbes in his anti-theatrical tracts plays on this pedagogical theme by calling the playhouses "schooles of mischeef."[96] Packard suggests that the inductions in plays like *Cynthia's Revels* and *Antonio and Mellida* "help to craft the category of 'child player' and *teach* audiences how to read those players" (emphasis added).[97] Inductions were educational devices, a how-to guide for being a spectator at Paul's or Blackfriars (though perhaps more satirical than operational). Bloom posits that the boys' "mimicry of manly masculinity…threatens to expose the latter as childish 'play'."[98] No wonder that the children's performances became controversial, if they touched on the classed and gendered anxieties of their audiences.

Their proximity to court culture gave the company a particularly risky cache as their performers satirized those who were their main audiences. Jeanne H. McCarthy emphasizes that "the primary audience for an early boy company performance was a queen and her courtiers."[99] These plays enacted a kind of "surveillance" of the courtier characters, followed by punishment or reprisal of some kind.[100] Andrew Gurr distinguishes between "the Blackfriars boys" who "allied themselves with the gentry, lawyers, courtiers, and satirists" and the players at Paul's who appealed more to "the London citizenry."[101] It was this proximity to the court that would later prove their

[96] Quoted in Blaine Greteman, "Coming of Age on Stage: Jonson's *Epicoene* and the Politics of Childhood in Early Stuart England." *English Literary History* 79, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 152.
[97] Packard, "Inducting Childhood," 106.
[98] Bloom, *Voice in Motion,* 44.
[99] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 153
[100] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 198.
[101] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 341.

downfall. But here in *Cynthia's Revels* (alternately titled *The Fountain of Self-Love*), at the tail end of Elizabeth's reign, Jonson emphasizes the company's status as a dynamic form of entertainment arrived on the scene to rival the "public" playhouses of the adult companies across the river. Heavily invested in the satirical depiction of Elizabeth's courtiers, *Cynthia's Revels* uses the bodies and skills of its child actors to portray the (exaggerated) behaviors of a portion of its own audience, the gallants who sat on the stage of the Blackfriars itself, as well as the audiences present when it was performed at court. This performance helped to cultivate a white aristocratic identity based on conduct, behavior, exclusion, subjection to authority, and reprisal for wrongdoing.

In *Cynthia's Revels,* Jonson uses the word "race" in terms that evoke class, performance, and the marked (or unmarked) body. The god Mercury tells Criticus, poet and Jonsonian stand-in, that "the better race in Court / That have the true nobility, called virtue" will both be able to identify themselves and separate themselves from the illegitimate courtiers and their "apish customs and forced garbs" (5.1.30-31, 35).[102] This "better race" is "unblemished," he says, and the gods have "formed" them "Of better metal, and in better mould" than their inferior colleagues (5.1.37-39). DiGangi notes that "it is much easier…to spot 'deformities' than to apprehend ideal 'forms'."[103] This focus on "deformity" shows how difficult it can be to identify the unmarked nature of whiteness and the cultivation of racializing structures within courtly discourses of gentility and nobility, as well as the linkage between physical impairment and racial

[102] This scene appears only in the 1616 folio version, and scholars debate whether it would have been included in the children's performances c. 1601. See the introduction to *Cynthia's Revels* (revised scenes from the 1616 folio) by Eric Rasmussen and Matthew Steggle in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.*
[103] DiGangi, *Sexual Types,* 118.

difference when both types of bodies are deemed as "marked." Akhimie's *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference* focuses on the sorts of behaviors and everyday performances as the basis of racialization in the early modern period: "while some individuals were imagined to be capable of moving between groups by means of cultivation — the employment of strategies for self-improvement through coded conduct — others were imagined to be incapable of this feat."[104] In this formulation, class and race are brought together, and somatic markers of class and servitude like bruises, rough hands, or blackness in general, become racialized on "a spectrum of mutability to immutability, a hierarchy in which those at the top could change themselves and those at the bottom could not."[105]

This anxiety of being marked as something other than a courtier is expressed in the first meeting between Amorphus, the experienced traveler, and Asotus, the young newcomer to court. In their first encounter, Amorphus and Asotus awkwardly exchange hats after Amorphus showers praise on Asotus's more expensive beaver hat. When Asotus realizes that he has certainly made a mistake in giving up his hat, Amorphus assures him that his cheaper hat will "preserve your complexion to eternity; for / no beam of the sun, should you wear it under *zona torrida*, hath / power to approach it by two ells" (1.4.146-47). This anxiety about sunburn and the marking of one's complexion shows itself as a fear of appearing lower class, or potentially non-English. While the courtly characters of *Cynthia's Revels* are mocked for their striving and desire to change themselves to fit certain social codes of conduct, they are still presented as being capable of this kind of mutability as well as able to protect their whiteness from becoming

[104] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 8.
[105] Ibid

"marked." Young characters like Asotus are encouraged to exercise certain skills to fit into his new surroundings. The demonstrations of this mutability by the child players themselves required skill and create a humorous spectacle for the audience, many of whom might have recognized the posturing of the child actors as reflecting something from their own court experiences.

Francesca Royster suggests that for whiteness to operate, it is required for those invested in it to "patrol and disciplin[e] the variations within it," forever shifting who is in and who is out.[106] The "problem" presented by the black mixed-race baby in *Titus* signifies how important children are in projects of early modern racecraft. The suggested "passing" of Muliteus's white baby for Aaron's black baby prompts Royster to wonder if "whiteness is something that one becomes and then performs, rather than what one *is*."[107] Early theories of color difference link whiteness to the figure of the child and suggest an acquiring of darkened skin through exposure to the sun, thereby designating whiteness as an "originary and natural state" (a theory still referenced by Shakespeare in *Merchant of Venice* and *Antony and Cleopatra*).[108] As late as 1646, Sir Thomas Browne was still conjecturing "why some men...should first *acquire* and still retaine the glosse and tincture of blackness" (emphasis mine).[109] Sujata Iyengar aligns whiteness with femininity in this period, not only due to the white color of cosmetic face paint used by upper class women, but also because it was considered a symbol of innocence or chastity.[110] She also notes in

[106] Francesca T. Royster, "White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 436. See also Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).
[107] Royster, "White-Limed Walls," 452.
[108] Royster, "White-Limed Walls," 443.
[109] Quoted in Hall, *Things of Darkness,* 12.
[110] Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of Difference: mythologies of skin color in early modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 127.

Richard Barnfield's *The Affectionate Shepherd* (1594) a "praise of black over white," and an alignment of men with blackness as a heraldic sign of constancy, as opposed to "white" as "the ensign of each common woman," untrustworthy and corrupt.[111] In Shakespeare's sonnets, however, the poet "argues that whiteness can be rescued – when it is personified not in a woman but in a man."[112] Indeed, the "fair youth" to whom many sonnets are addressed is the ideal figure for joining together ideas of whiteness, youth, and gender. To say that children are figured as "white" in this period is highly debatable, but we can make an analogy to the treatment of the figure of the English woman becoming racialized as "white" in response to global encounters of this period.[113] The child's perceived capacity for transformation, cultivation, development, and access to power all anticipate inclusion in the category of whiteness, and those abilities were being tried out and played with in the children's repertory. The concept of whiteness, as Richard Dyer reminds us, is based on the "enterprising white values of dynamism, flexibility and the capacity to change."[114]

The whiteness of early modern children, connected to their supposed innocence, was both acknowledged and denied, the boundaries policed and redrawn, just as the goalposts of who is "included" in white privilege continue to be moved today. Young people in seventeenth century London were not on the whole regarded as "innocent" or devoid of sexual desire or knowledge. William Prynne's anti-theatrical *Histriomastix* refers to young players "trained up from their cradles…in the school of vice, the Play-house (as if

[111] Iyengar, *Shades of Difference,* 166.
[112] Ibid.
[113] For more on early modern white womanhood, see Hall, *Things of Darkness*; Barbara Bowen, "Aemilia Lanyer and the Invention of White Womanhood," in *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*, eds. Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 274-303.
[114] Richard Dyer, *White: essays on race and culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 50.

their natures were not prone enough to sin)."[115] Children are inclined to sin, Prynne writes, and therefore must be instructed (in the right environment) to behave properly. In the now lost *The Chapel Children Stript and Whipt* (1569), the author castigates a previous children's company (though not one at the Blackfriars) for "flaunt[ing] it in silks and sattens" on the Lord's Day with "lascivious writhing of their tender limbs, and gorgeous decking of their apparel, in feigning bawdie fables gathered from the idolatrous heathen poets."[116] What is more repulsive to this author, the costumes or the erotic appeal of the actors (as well as the fact that they performed on Sundays), is difficult to pin down, but the so-called "writhing" points to a distinctive kinetic style that very well might have been echoed in these later performances of boy companies.

In the *Cynthia's Revels* induction, there are dashes or "breaches" in the third child's speech that denote when "the other two interrupt him" and try to get him to stop spoiling the plot (SD 33). The action that occurs during these pauses is not explained in the text, other than the third player's reactions to it. His response introduces a kind of danger that would give a modern audience pause: "what, will you ravish me?…I'd cry a rape, but that you are children" (77, 80). He acknowledges at once his fellow actors' juvenile status as well as a capacity for violence that they possess or might not possess, if intended ironically. This line raises most critical eyebrows who try to ascertain the effect of including such references to sexuality and sexual violence in the presence of child performers. van Es argues that the line "poses and then denies the sexual potency of children."[117] Michael Shapiro attributes the line about ravishment in *Cynthia's Revels* to a

[115] Quoted in Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 104.
[116] Quoted in *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2, ed. E. K. Chambers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), 34-5.
[117] van Es, "Shakespeare versus Blackfriars," 106.

kind of distancing technique for the audience that has "the effect of heightening the audience's awareness that the actors were children" and "underlining the incongruity between the erotic behavior of the characters and the sexual immaturity of the actors."[118] Shapiro also notes that "the comic effect of the bawdry in children's plays depends on the audience's sense of the actors' physical immaturity, not on its presumption of their inherent innocence, a more recent notion derived from Locke and Rousseau" and he calls "the belief in childhood innocence" at this time "anachronistic."[119] But this view that children were inherently sinful is not so clear-cut in early modern thought. Earlier in the sixteenth century, Thomas Elyot calls children "tender and innocent," though in some, "nature is more prone to vice than to virtue," but that can be avoided with good tutorship.[120] Truewit in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* refers to the young Dauphine repeatedly as "innocent" (1.2.54). Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos suggests that belief in childhood sin and childhood innocence were both given weight in the period. Even as certain discourses railed on the dangers of original sin, "this traditional depiction of the child as a pure soul, and of the youth as full of piety, continued to have its influence."[121] The role of parents and teachers also became more central to the conception of the child's potential to sin or not. Children needed "constant and diligent nurturing, strict discipline, and a proper education."[122]

Therefore, it was possible for children to be regarded by some as innocent in the early modern period, and that innocence was also linked with imagery of whiteness as well as

[118] Shapiro, *Children of the Revels,* 106.
[119] Shapiro, *Children of the Revels,* 107.
[120] Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London, 1534): 19.
[121] Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth,* 14.
[122] Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth,* 12.

high social status. The murderer Forrest describes the dead princes in *Richard III* as "girdling one another / Within their alabaster innocent arms" (4.3.10-11). They are made "emblems of noble innocence," a "heightened" state, that, as Katie Knowles points out, is "doubtful…any boy-actor could embody" and only is evoked when the actual child actor's body is absent from the stage.[123] The comparison to alabaster evokes the image of the white funerary statue or monument and precedes Othello's comparison to Desdemona's "alabaster" skin on her deathbed (5.2.5). This resonance between the dead bodies of the white boy princes and of a white woman suggest not only that both characters are played by young actors, but that whiteness is produced through performances of gender and sexuality (and perceptions of chastity) as well as age. While we cannot say definitively in the early seventeenth century that there is a logical transitive property at work (*whiteness is innocent, children are innocent, therefore children are white*), these constructs are reaching towards each other, their tendrils unfurling, just about to be intertwined.[124]

Lamb makes the link of whiteness to status and favor in childhood through the use of the affectionate term "white boy."[125] Dramatic uses of the phrase in *A Yorkshire Tragedy, The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (where it is glossed as "favorite son") as well as *Two Angry Women of Abingdon* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* show that "white" in this context has positive connotations, usually referring to a mother's favorite, with high status and

[123] Katie Knowles, *Shakespeare's Boys: a cultural history* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 23.
[124] See Chakravarty, "Spirited away," 8: "the invocation of childhood in itself often registers a racialised discourse, that we must attend to the ways in which the presumptive rhetorical 'innocence' of (some) children is deeply imbricated within the strategic rhetorics as well as the violent realities of race, labour and slavery."
[125] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 153.

access to inheritance.[126] She notes how while whiteness on the stage can signify "purity," boy players' whiteness worked alongside their eroticization. The assumption that one must preclude the other (the white child cannot be sexualized, because he is innocent) belies this tradition of boys being valued for their beauty, here figured as fairness/ whiteness. This collision of racialization and sexuality can be seen in such works as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander,* where "fair" white boys are figured as sexually desirable objects precisely because of their whiteness. [127] It is this perceived potential of the boy's ability to give pleasure that is so rooted in early modern race-making. The audience's gaze, looking through the medium of nascent racial thought, constructs the white boy as the object of desire, as well as an ideal vehicle for spectacle and skill.

Cupid as he appears in the first repertory of Blackfriars and Paul's is the favored son (the "white boy") of Venus that is consistently employed to do her bidding. (Though, as we see in *Sappho and Phao,* their relationship can also be strained.) As the son of the goddess of love, he embodies desire, and his work with his golden arrows wreaks havoc on the plots of these plays. Jane Kingsley-Smith discusses this figure at length in her study of Cupid's movement from a formerly marginal figure in classical and medieval texts to a significant symbol in early modern English culture that gained prominence as the Renaissance and Reformation progressed. She describes him as a figure that

[126] Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner (Manchester University Press, 1984), 2.2.79; John Ford, *Tis Pity She's a Whore*, ed. Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.3.73; Henry Porter, *The Two Angry Women of Abingdon*, ed. Alexander Dyce (London, 1841): 69.

[127] Abdulhamit Arvas compares Leander in Marlowe's poem to the mythical figure of Ganymede and draws connections also to "ganimets": boys, often European, who were abducted in the Mediterrean and brought into Ottoman court spaces under a "racializing imperial gaze." Abdulhamit Arvas, "Leander in the Ottoman Mediterranean: the Homoerotics of Abduction in the Global Renaissance," *English Literary Renaissance* 51, no. 1 (2020): 51.

combines seemingly antithetical ideas of "youth" and "power," "an alluring combination of innocence and sexual provocation, female beauty and male potency."[128] In this section, I have suggested that Jonson in *Cynthia's Revels* is writing for a specific audience that is invested in defining the boundaries of whiteness within their class system, and how the child player in his unmarkedness of youth and uncertain "innocence" puts stress on the contours of early modern racecraft. The rest of the chapter will look at Cupid's role(s) in the children's repertory as a tricky and unruly servant, defined by his labor and subject to discipline and punishment…similar to the boy player in the company who enacted the role.

II.

Cupid Haunts Blackfriars

The induction's third boy player, in the character of various audience members at Blackfriars that he imitates, complete with cloak and tobacco pipe, speaks out his wishes for originality in the material presented on the stage, that poets would not "derive their best grace, with servile imitation, from common / stages…feeding their friends with nothing of their own but what they have / twice or thrice cooked" (144-48). The "common stages" could refer doubly to the public theatres as well as lower-class dialogue in general, as the boy names the "laundress or hackney-man" as potential (and inappropriate) inspirations (143-44). He then adds another accusation (154-57):

> they say the *umbrae* or ghosts
> of some three or four plays, departed a dozen years since, have been seen walking on your stage here: take heed, boy, if your house be haunted with such hobgoblins, 'twill fright away all your spectators quickly.

[128] Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140.

While this line might be a reference to the Children's revival performance of Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis*, it can be applied more generally to the idea that repertory is itself a haunted and haunting practice.[129] Marvin Carlson applies this ghostly rhetoric to performance: "the present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection."[130] The fact that there was a children's company operating out of Blackfriars in the 1570s and 80s prevents this present company from claiming to be altogether "new." Jonson used these "hobgoblins," in the form of mythological characters and courtly allegories, intentionally to advance his authorly agenda and distinguish the company's trademark. The playwright takes a familiar form, a comedy with classical sources like John Lyly's boy company play *Galathea* or George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris,* and fashions a new kind of genre, a comical satire that skewers court culture while ultimately upholding and celebrating the monarch's control and authority over her subjects. Cynthia, here a clear analogue to Queen Elizabeth I, appears late in the play, and much of the action is given over to ridiculous encounters between foppish courtiers with commentary or "surveillance" from Criticus and the disguised gods Cupid and Mercury.[131] In *Cynthia's Revels,* Jonson, using the metatheatrical induction and the recycling of old characters like Cupid, harnesses this haunting method to his advantage. He situates the company within a longer history of children's repertory performance, and signals through that familiarity the dynamic changes that this company would employ, with the introduction of comical satire as a

[129] Kuhl, "The Metamorphoses of Cupid," 122.
[130] Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, 2.
[131] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 198.

genre. The "tricks" or traces of Lyly within Jonson's play are later eclipsed by his expert, satirical rendition of the tricks (performances) of Elizabeth's courtiers.[132]

Cupid, along with Mercury, had appeared in multiple children's plays of the first Blackfriars repertory and the third child in the induction ironically references their ubiquity: "take any of our play-books without a Cupid or a Mercury in it, and burn / it for an heretic in poetry" (38-39). The action of *Cynthia's Revels* starts with Mercury and Cupid, who, as outside observers and infiltrators of Cynthia's court, provide the most social commentary (other than Criticus). The pairing of Mercury and Cupid here emphasizes the childlike and youthful status of them both. In the "Ptolemaic system of the universe," Mercury corresponds with childhood and its attributes of learning and eloquence.[133] Mercury repeatedly calls Cupid by diminutive names in the first act: "little rover," "boy," "infant," and "dancing braggart in decimo sexto" (1.1.9, 12, 17, 37). Bloom compares Mercury and Cupid to "roguish youths," whose rough behavior was associated with apprentices both "on and off the stage".[134] The label of "crack," used to address one of the boys in the induction, refers to "a youth's cracked voice" which "operates as an aural signifier of an uncontrollable body and thus a point of focus for concerns about performing masculinity that is temporally shifting and imprecise."[135] The subordinate status of children meant that "to be a boy is to be less than adult, but also less than masculine."[136] Masculinity for these early modern boys was something to be acquired at their "breeching" around age seven, not an inherent, born trait.[137] Even the

[132] Shapiro, *Children of the Revels,* 187.
[133] Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth,* 10; see also Bloom, *Voice in Motion,* 42.
[134] Bloom, *Voice in Motion,* 42-43.
[135] Bloom, *Voice in Motion,* 44.
[136] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 5.
[137] Ackroyd, *Child Actors,* 62.

mere fact that these companies were most often referred to as "children" rather than "boys" points, writes Ackroyd, showed a kind of gender neutral identity.[138] Cupid's masculinity and sexuality is similarly "shifting and imprecise." Theresa Tinkle describes the medieval Cupid as "a curiously fugitive [figure]…sporadically emerging and then flitting away as swiftly as if he were fleeing the scene of some soon-to-be-discovered mischief."[139]

This mischief becomes apparent in his dramatic appearances where he proves to be a master of disguise and transformation. He can transform himself and others, as he does with the nymphs in *Love's Metamorphosis*. In Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage,* he changes places with the "fair child" Ascanius in order to strike Dido with his love's "arrow head" and make her dote on Aeneas.[140] He is called "little son" and "sweet boy," and he sings, all hallmarks of the ideal boy player, attractive to both men and women. He even has an admirer, an old nurse who tries to carry him away and wishes she "might live to see this boy a man." Cupid is often described as being in Dido's lap, and the image recurs in Lyly's *Sapho and Phao*: "Thou shalt sitte in / my lappe, I will rocke thee asleepe, and feede thee with all these / fine knackes" (5.2.22-24). Kingsley-Smith wonders if Cupid would have been played by a younger member of the children's company (closer to, say, age ten than fifteen), given that he had to be picked up and put on the lap of another boy actor in these plays.[141] Doubling might also have affected perceptions of Cupid here – what if the same actor playing Cupid in *Dido* also played

[138] Ackroyd, *Child Actors* 90.
[139] Quoted in Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature,* 9.
[140] Christopher Marlowe, *Dido Queen of Carthage,* ed. John S. Farmer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914).
[141] Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature,*134.

Ganymede, another famously beautiful boy?[142] The Cupid of the earlier children's repertory, who engages fully with the plot and the other characters, is then transformed again by Jonson into a less active, more observant page boy. He is paired with Mercury, who is also "classed" and marked as a youth or a kind of apprentice to the other older gods. Cupid describes him as "my uncle Jove's / pander, a lackey, that runs on errands for him" (1.1.19-20). He says that Mercury acts as a substitute for Ganymede as cup-bearer, among other menial "employments," which carry an undoubtedly sexual connotation (24). Both he and Cupid in this case are the errand-boys, the former dispatched on more "official" business and accepted by Cynthia at the end, and the other there to stir up trouble and be thrust out of the court space. Their disguise as so-called "cracks" only emphasizes the fact that, despite being immortal gods, they can easily pass for young pages. That version of Cupid in *Cynthia's Revels,* and how he reflects the figure of the boy player, will be the focus of the next section.

The Boy Player (and Cupid) as Laborer

In formulations of childhood development, both metaphors of the "vessel" and the "wax" are dependent on someone acting *upon* them, filling or stamping them to achieve a desired effect. This image reflects not only how a playwright like Jonson might be controlling them through his plays, but also the coercive structure of the playing company as a whole. It was royally sanctioned at this time to impress young choristers into Her Majesty's service, as evidenced by Nathaniel Giles's 1597 license to continue impressment for the Children of the Chapel, despite their lack of affiliation with the actual Chapel Royal and instead with the Blackfriars playhouse. The choirmaster's

[142] Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature,* 143.

commission gave permission to "take such and so many children as he…shall think meet, in all cathedral, collegiate, parish churches, chapels" or anywhere in England.[143] An earlier commission in 1585 also refers to the children's abilities and potential: "take up such apt and meet children as are most fit to be instructed and framed in the art and science of music and singing."[144]

The power dynamics of the children's company, at least at this moment circa 1600, enabled an environment of potential forced labor, with dark undertones of sexual exploitation. van Es points to the association between the Earl of Oxford (an accused pedophile) and Lyly's company (known for a time as Oxford's Boys): "power over children and an exploitation of their charm and beauty for entertainment were a conspicuous part of the Earl of Oxford's private and public life."[145] As Amanda Bailey writes, the figure of the boy as an early modern "accessory," a symbol of status for gentlemen, stems from the idea that children were already considered "property" to begin with, the property of their parents.[146] Mark Albert Johnston notes that to address someone as "boy" in early modern England "signaled male inferiority" and could be "deployed in relation to age, race, status, intellect, experience, morality, or any other index of degree."[147] The transformation of "boy" as a "derogatory term used to refer to African

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[143] "Nathaniel Giles' commission to impress children, 1597" in *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660,* eds. Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 263.
[144] "Thomas Giles' commission to impress children, 1585," in *English Professional Theatre*, 262.
[145] Bart van Es, "Captive children: John Lyly, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and child impressment on the early modern stage," *Renaissance Studies* 33, no. 2 (2018): 171. See also Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women*, 68: "While there were certain social advantages to becoming a player – principally access to education, culture, and to the hub of creativity in the metropolis – the specter of brutality and ostracism hung over these young performers."
[146] Amanda Bailey, "'Bought my boye': The Boy as Accessory on the Early Modern Stage," in *Ornamentalism: the art of Renaissance accessories,* ed. Bella Mirabella (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 315.
[147] Mark Albert Johnston, "Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and the Fertile Infertility of Eroticized Early Modern Boys." *Modern Philology* 114, no. 3 (2017): 578.

slaves in the British colonies" and the use of African boys as status symbols in English portraiture starting in the sixteenth century show how this word becomes loaded with racist meaning.[148] Blaine Greteman writes of early modern childhood that, despite the constantly changing definitions of childhood as a construct, "childishness was not merely a theatrical fiction but a legal and social condition with real consequences."[149]

The notorious abduction case of the schoolboy Thomas Clifton by the managers of the Blackfriars Children in 1601 brought the question of boy player impressment into this legal sphere.[150] Because the boys had to be literate in order to memorize their parts and deliver their roles efficiently, they usually came from some privilege so that they could quickly take on the responsibilities of an educated, professional player, albeit one who performed less often than the adult companies (about once a week). Giles went too far when he allegedly abducted several boys in London on their way to school, including the son of Henry Clifton, who wrote a complaint to the Star Chamber that his son had been taken to be a player, thus exposing Giles' abuse of his royal license, for they took boys to "better furnish their said plays and interludes," *not* to train as singers in the royal choir.[151] There are no records to suggest that Clifton's suit went further, and it is likely "that matters were settled out of court" (Thomas was returned to his father after "a day and a night"). It is a clear demographic that Giles is targeting here: "several children from divers and sundry schools of learning and other places, and apprentices to men of trade," i.e. boys not too upper-class, but with enough privilege to have education.[152] Clifton

[148] Bailey, "Bought my boye," 322.
[149] Greteman, "Coming of Age," 141. Akhimie makes a similar point about race, both then and now: "Race is nonsensical. Race is also real, however" (*Cultivation of Difference,* 11).
[150] For more on the Clifton case, see Ackroyd, *Child Actors.*
[151] "Henry Clifton's son Thomas forced to be a stage-player, 1601," in *English Professional Theatre,* 264.
[152] Quoted in *English Professional Theatre,* 267.

mentions several other boys taken at this time, including Nathan Field, who became a successful actor and playwright, and Salomon Pavy, who Ben Jonson wrote an elegy for praising his performances when he died quite young. Given that some of the boys who were taken clearly excelled in the careers they were supposedly forced into, it raises again this question of agency, and whether these child actors were willing participants in the art created for them.

Apparently, the violence did not end when the children were taken up to serve, and threats of violence towards children play a significant role in depictions of Cupid across the early modern repertory. Henry Clifton describes the "great force and violence" with which Thomas Clifton was taken and how that violence characterized the whole children's company enterprise: "the said Nathaniel Giles…delivered and committed your subject's said son unto the custody of the said Henry Evans" saying "if he did not obey the said Evans, he should surely be whipped."[153] Since he is recognized the god of love and desire, Cupid often runs afoul with Diana or Sappho or other stand-ins for the chaste virgin Queen Elizabeth. This is the case in *Cynthia's Revels* as well: "for if Cynthia hear / the twang of my bow, she'll go near to whip me with the string" (5.5.18-19). Because of his age and his temperament, he is often liable to be punished for disobedience and trickery. His mother Venus in *Sappho and Phao* threatens punishment for Cupid's betrayal of her: "you shall / be stripped from top to toe, and whipped with nettles, / not roses" (5.2.79-81). Cynthia's banishing Cupid at the end of her *Revels* is a mild sentence opposed to his punishments in other plays like *Galatea.* Diana (like Cynthia) also threatens to punish Cupid in *Galatea* for making her nymphs fall in love (3.4.85-86, 104-

[153] Quoted in *English Professional Theatre*, 266.

106):

> I will break thy bow, and burn thine arrows, bind thy
> hands, clip thy wings, and fetter thy feet…
> Thou shalt be used as Diana's slave, not
> Venus's son. All the world shall see that I will use thee
> like a captive, and shew myself a conqueror.

Diana's language recalls the spectacle of *2 Tamburlaine,* where bridled and captive kings draw his chariot unto the stage. Venus objects to this treatment: "she hath taken my son Cupid, / Cupid my lovely son, using him like a prentice, whipping / him like a slave, scorning him like a beast" (5.3.35-37). His punishments are "labours" to ensure that he is "busy" and not idle (4.2.64, 80).

The violent threats to Cupid in the play echo the violence apparently enacted on the players in the company by the playhouse managers. The players' status as both children and students, ostensibly there to train in their service to the court as performers and musicians, evokes the double Latin meaning of *puer,* referring to both child and servant, which Urvashi Chakravarty notes is "a mutually identificatory mechanism for the boy and slave."[154] Chakravarty's work on the enactment of classical plays featuring enslavement in the early modern classroom provides an instructive lens through which to view the child players as both training for and enacting their own servile status. "The grammar schoolboy learns the scripts of mastery and bondage alike," with slavery "woven into the quotidian fabric of the schoolroom, its languages and logics learned in childhood."[155] We know that at least some, if not most, of the players had some grammar school education. The overlaps here of student, child, and servant are exemplified in the

[154] Urvashi Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent: slavery, servitude, and free service in early modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 52.
[155] Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent,* 46.

figure of Cupid as unruly laborer. His interactions with power and punishment, desire and discipline, shape (and challenge) the contours of his whiteness. Mercury even threatens to use "the stretched vigour of [his] arm about [Cupid's] ears" when he feels insulted by him (1.1.40). The risk of punishment lies not just in the character's actions but also in the players' own bodies, as they continue to develop and change over the course of their careers. The white, mutable and unmarked body of the child player was both an asset and a liability.

Whiteness has also been construed as a modern synonym for "freedom," but it should be acknowledged that these child players were not "free" in any modern sense of the word.[156] They were bound subjects, some perhaps taken against their will, some apprenticed, all under the management of the company owners and necessarily obedient to the artistic vision of the playwrights. But just as discourses of liberty and freedom in the later eighteenth centuries were only made possible by their authors seeing the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, it seems fitting that theories of whiteness and what it means/looks like to be in power should take shape under conditions of disempowered people who are under constraint.[157] The subservient status of the child players, however, is always temporary and their perceived capacity for development is taken into account. Their inevitable growth automatically excludes them from a perpetual status as child player, with their changing voice being one of the factors in their continued success or failure. While it is plausible that for some, the life of a child player was one that they did

[156] See Tyler Stovall, *White Freedom: the racial history of an idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).
[157] See *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies: a critical anthology*, eds. Cassander L. Smith, Nicholas R. Jones, and Miles P. Grier (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 40*:* "freedom as a political concept and practice cannot be untethered from the subjection of gendered and racialized others."

not choose and wished to escape, it is also possible that the skills and experience they received set them up to make a career in what could be a lucrative industry. Furthermore, as Lamb notes, the Children of the Queen's Revels around when they received their royal patent in 1604 switched from the practice of impressment (which had gotten them into trouble in Elizabeth's time) to one of apprenticeship, which developed a "regulated system of control" that protected the boys to a certain degree.[158] Similar to the experience of the apprentice, boy players were inevitably thrust out into the world on their own but with training and "a recognized status."

The figure of Cupid as "prentise" is fully realized in Jonson's later court entertainment, "Christmas, His Masque" (1616), where Cupid is portrayed within the dramatic fiction as an apprentice turned child player, "attir'd in a flat Cap, and a Prentises Coat, with wings at his shoulders" (23). Kingsley-Smith refers to this character of Cupid as "literally synonymous with the boy actor." [159] His mother Venus, "a deaf tire-woman," clambers in to obtain "a good place to see my / child act in before the King" (85, 92-93). When Christmas tries to expel her, she argues that she as mother to the "pretty child" has a right to stay (102). She says that Cupid is "prentice in Love / Lane with a bugle-maker" (99-100). She also alludes to a traffic in boy players by the King's Men (109-13):

> I forsooth, he'le say his part I warrant him, as well as ere a Play boy of 'em all: I could ha' had money enough for him, an I would ha beene tempted, and ha' let him out by the weeke, to the Kings Players: Master Burbadge has beene about and about with me; and so has old Mr. Hemings too, they ha' need of him.

The "need" that these professional actors have of the boy raises the question of what kind

[158] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 58.
[159] Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature,* 144.

of desire they represent. Could this need of boy players be a reference to the absence of children's companies at this time? Or is this a more disturbing need for his "sexual currency"?[160] Or are his mother's boasts meant to be ironic or misleading, for this Cupid immediately falters in his performance when his mother interrupts him, and Christmas accuses her of putting him out of his part. She bids him use her son "tenderly" for "hee's a child, you must conceive" (224). Cupid's failure to perform here, along with his classed status and meddling, screeching mother, shows a very different representation of the mischievous and ultra-capable trickster of Lyly's plays. But this is a piece written after the fall of the children's companies, where they would have been a distant (and perhaps unpleasant) memory for most courtiers. The Cupid in *Cynthia's Revels* appears about midway through this transition from Lyly's cheeky child god to Jonson's performing lower class apprentice.

Conclusion

The labors of Cupid the boy player are seemingly at odds with the perception of court culture as a space of idleness and leisure. Tom Rutter discusses the children's companies as establishing an "ethos of unpreparedness" that contrasted with the more self-conscious labor on display in the adult companies: "private theatre [was] represented not as a place where workers come to watch other workers but where non-labouring audiences and amateur actors unite in a shared ethos of idleness."[161] Akhimie notes that "a key marker that functioned to differentiate between class groups was in fact the mark of 'idleness'" [162] The characters in *Cynthia's Revels* are remarkably idle. Indeed, the play itself barely

[160] Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature,* 144.
[161] Tom Rutter, *Work and Play on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 104, 105.
[162] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 26.

has a plot, and similar to other satiric comedies like *Every Man Out of His Humor,* Jonson focuses more on character portraits and social observation than dramatic action and events. Cupid, Mercury, Amorphus, and Asotus, are all arguably the most active and engaging, because they are the most performative. The ladies and gallants spend the majority of the play sharing their opinions of one another, playing silly language games, and waiting for the water from the Fountain of Self Love to arrive. When the titular revels are technically cancelled, Amorphus is the one who encourages and directs the ensuing masque. The amount of physical work that the players Amorphus and Mercury must put into their final "challenge" of courtly manners in the Folio version (a spectacle that we as readers of the text must mostly imagine based on the other characters' reactions) shows the extent of the labor expected of the performer in order to successfully portray an idle courtier. While the boy players might have self-consciously presented themselves as "unprepared" as Rutter suggests, it was all a trick to disguise the significant labor involved in their performance. The strain involved for courtiers like Amorphus and aspiring gallants like Asotus to develop the appropriate tricks shows how court performance requires a kind of labor, even if the labor is *affecting* idleness.

The conclusion of *Cynthia's Revels,* where the courtiers are made to confess their sins of vanity and pledge to amend their behaviors, is reminiscent of other children's plays written by George Peele (*The Arraignment of Paris*) and Lyly (*Campaspe*) where, as McCarthy writes, they end with "an overt disciplining of a subject…in the form of a trial or arraignment of presumptuous courtiers."[163] (Jonson's next play *Poetaster,* subtitled *The Arraignment*, repeats this process in a similar fashion, as does John Marston's

[163] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 152.

Parasitaster, or the Fawn.) Mercury wishes Criticus "to inflict just pains / On [the courtiers'] prodigious follies" (5.1.10-11). Cynthia uses language of medical treatment: "to lance these ulcers grown so ripe" (5.5.180). She bids Criticus to "impose what pains you please: / The incurable cut off, the rest reform" but she then instructs that "since revels were proclaimed, let now none bleed" (5.5.182-85). Her sentence for Cupid, however, is more harsh: "Tempt us no farther, we cannot endure / Thy presence longer: vanish hence, away" (5.5.175). Cupid's banishment, in tune with the depiction of Cynthia as an aged Elizabeth, shows a remarkably different fate than any character.[164] Cupid, unlike the real boy players, does not grow; he is perpetually a boy, subject to this treatment while expected to perform his repertoire of tricks.

While we see black characters of this period like Muly Hamet in *The Battle of Alcazar* and Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* violently punished for their social aspirations, the white characters of Jonson's comedy get off with a slap on the wrist, so to speak. Cupid, however, is banished, still bearing the intertheatrical scars of his previous misdeeds. Akhimie foregrounds the significance of "pain" in the "processes of inclusion and exclusion" that certain social groups employ that leads to "the stigmatization of bodily markers imagined to be biological, inheritable, socially meaningful, and indelible."[165] We see this exclusion occur when Asotus's sister and her husband, a citizen, try to enter the court to watch the revels. The sister, named Mistress Downfall, claims her familial relationship to a participant in the revels as her license to enter. While she is allowed in, her husband is thrust out, as Amorphus tells the guards to "knock that simple fellow

[164] For this play as reflection of Elizabethan politics, see Matthew Steggle, "Cynthia waning: *Cynthia's Revels* imagines the death of the queen," in *Goddesses and Queens: the iconography of Elizabeth I,* eds. Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 154-166.
[165] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 11.

there" (Folio, 5.3.35). As we shall see in the other chapters in this project on *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *May Day,* threats of violence as well as actual violent acts and physical pain often accompany these moments of race-making – the fact that the courtly characters in *Cynthia's Revels* ultimately escape any actual pain is proof of their classed, gendered and racial privilege. Despite the conglomeration of Amorphus's foreign influences from his travels, he is, by virtue of his social position, not "marked" in the same way that a bruised servant or a "leather-handed" laborer is marked. He can cast his frippery on and off at will; his gestures and expressions are employed tactically. But he still knows and fears "how bitter a thing it is not to be / looked on in court" (Folio, 5.4.66-67).

Cynthia's Revels takes much from court performance and courtly traditions and parades it upon the stage for an audience at the Blackfriars of actual and aspiring courtiers, alongside law students, citizens, merchants, their apprentices, or whoever could afford the price of admission. As an opening production for the Children of the Chapel, this play establishes a company that would continue to show off their skills through the physical, vocal, musical, and spectacular demands of the playwrights who wrote for them. Playwrights like Jonson capitalized on contradictory perceptions of the children's bodies as tender and experienced, pure and sexually desirable, and altogether not quite human, or at least not quite male. By demonstrating their unfixedness, malleability and flexibility, these players contributed to emerging notions of what it meant to perform race, class, and childhood on the early modern stage and in the early modern era. By focusing on the "forms" of these court types and their tricks, Jonson emphasizes the importance of proper conduct and the cultivation of courtly manners through

performance, as well as punishment for excessive self-love and bad conduct. These figures foreshadow the following chapters that follow the development of the boy player, the playing company, and its audience, through figures associated with particular skills of imitation (the ape, which in *Cynthia's Revels* is associated with Amorphus, Asotus, and vain courtiers in general) and transformation (the sea-god Proteus, linked also with Amorphus as well as Cupid, deemed capable of changing and performing new identities throughout the children's repertory). Tricks of imitation and transformation are alternately prized in the child players' ability to pull them off and decried in the characters' desire to use them to advance themselves socially. They serve both dramatic and metatheatrical functions within and outside of the play text.

CODA: A Brief Detour to Paul's

The boys at Blackfriars were only one of a pair of significant London children's companies whose activities were revived at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The induction to John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* stages the preparation of the Children of Paul's before their show, one of the first for the reincarnated playing company at the small indoor playhouse located in the cathedral precinct. In this prefatory scene, similar in its disorder to the beginning of *Cynthia's Revels*, eight of the players enter "with parts in their hands, having cloaks cast over their apparel" as they puzzle out how to perform the parts they have been assigned.[166] One player states that they are "ignorant in what / mold we must cast our actors" (3-4). Casting has, of course, become the modern term for assigning a role to a specific performer. The actor then becomes the un-formed substance that must be shaped by the role they will "personate" (5). Piero here makes a distinction

[166] All quotations from John Marston, *Antonio and Mellida,* ed. G. K. Hunter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

between the "parts" (the scripted lines that make up their rolls/roles) that they will say and the "form" that their body must take in order to portray the role adequately. This imagery of casting a flexible or malleable substance into a "mold" in order to shape it calls to mind the use of the word "form" (noun) to refer to "a mold or shape." Alberto suggests that to portray Piero, the actor must "frame [his] exterior *shape* / To haughty *form* of elate majesty" (7-8, emphasis mine). The attention to "shape" and "form" here also recalls the development of the child's body as well as the performative skills necessary to enact a character different from oneself.

In this induction scene, some actors are also concerned about playing two separate parts, also known as doubling, or when one actor played more than one role, a common practice on the early modern stage.[167] Another player, assigned to be the titular Antonio, is frazzled by the challenge of playing "two parts in one": both the Duke's son Antonio and his disguised persona of an Amazon (68). Antonio also worries that it is "impossible" for the actor playing Galeatzo to express this character fully given the contradictions and complexity of the representation. He concludes that it is a "right part for Proteus or Gew; ho, blind Gew would ha' done't rarely, rarely" (130-31). G. K. Hunter glosses this reference as possibly referring to "a blind performing baboon."[168] Early modern satirist Everard Guilpin references a performer in his fifth satire ("Satyra Quinta") of *Skialetheia* "that for ape-tricks can put *Gue* to school."[169] James Knowles, however, points to the uncertainty of this reference being to an actual ape or a human performer who might be

[167] See Brett Gamboa, *Shakespeare's Double Plays: Dramatic Economy on the Early Modern Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[168] Hunter, *Antonio and Mellida*, 9.
[169] Edverard Guilpin, *Skialetheia. Or, A shadowe of truth, in certain epigrams and satyres* (At London: Printed by I[ames] R[oberts] for Nicholas Ling, 1598). http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A02374.0001.001

known for apish or imitative qualities.[170] The homophonic relationship between "Gew" (or "Gue") and "Jew" cannot be ignored either.[171] The pairing of Proteus, the shapeshifting sea god of Greek myth, and a blind animal performer (or a human associated with animality) is a curious one and speaks to the popular and compelling performative skills associated with both figures. The ability of the ape or the apish figure to imitate is akin to Proteus's transformational capability, though the difference between imitation and transformation implies that the former is less successful as a performative mode than the latter. A gifted actor transforms; a less advanced player merely imitates. But it is "blind Gew" that Antonio highlights as the figure who "would have done it rarely," not Proteus. The next two chapters will delve into both the figure of the ape and of Proteus as highly skilled performance types used in children's plays that participate in racialized performance tactics across the early modern repertory.

Just as theatre scholars draw attention to the shapes and forms of actors taking on many different roles, I highlight here how child actors shaped early modern racecraft through their own displays of skill and stagecraft. The mutable, flexible figure of the child player becomes a figure through which we can trace certain perceptions of whiteness that come to the fore in later centuries: the associations of whiteness with an ability to transform and adapt in order to succeed. The actor who is deemed to possess these skills of transformation is labelled a "virtuoso," especially in a repertory system that relies on performances of difference. Callaghan compares "representation" of blackness

[170] James Knowles, "'Can ye not tell a man from a marmoset?': Apes and Others on the Early Modern Stage," in *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures,* ed. Erica Fudge (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 138.
[171] Holly Dugan, "'To Bark with Judgment': Playing Baboon in Early Modern London," *Shakespeare Studies* 41 (2013): 83.

with the cross-dressed boy actors representing women on the early modern English stage, noting that "it is not blackness and femininity that are the same but the extra-diegetic white masculinity that underlies them both."[172] This visible gap between person and personated, Ayanna Thompson argues, constitutes the very definition of "virtuosity" in acting today: "white actors are often heralded as being virtuosos if they impersonate another gender or race, while it is nearly impossible for black actors to be read as virtuoso performers regardless of what they do."[173] I argue that this perception of virtuosity finds one of its most potent forms in the early modern boy player.

[172] Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women*, 92.
[173] Ayanna Thompson, *Blackface* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 52.

Chapter 2

Mimic Tricks: Aping the Moor in Poetaster

Introduction

Printed in 1602 after being "sundry times privately acted in the Blackfriars, by the children of her Majesty's Chapel," Ben Jonson's *Poetaster, or The Arraignment* is most well-known today for its role in a conflict known as the "War of the Theatres," a competitive exercise between the children's companies of Paul's and Blackfriars, and the adults on the South Bank.[174] Kuhl distinguishes between the first children's companies in the 1580s as "effectively troupes of amateurs who were recruited from the eponymous boys' choirs," whereas upon their arrival back on the scene in 1600, they were "professional enterprises in a fiercely competitive theatrical environment."[175] The nature of this new competition is heavily debated in discourse on this so-called *Poetomachia* or "War of the Theatres," but no matter the interpretation of these dramatic jibes and interactions, it is clear at this moment that the boys were significant players on the theatrical scene.[176] Munro notes that "the boy actor's performance [in *Cynthia's Revels* at Blackfriars] highlights his virtuosity as an actor even as the induction also insists on the incongruity of his playing an adult role."[177] But the play texts often point to perceived differences in the skills of child and adult actors. Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, written

[174] Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, ed. Tom Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 61. Roslyn L. Knutson argues that scholarship on the so-called "war" has mischaracterized the conflict and focused on personal rivalries rather than commercial and collaborative relationships between companies that showed mutual support. Other plays referenced in this so-called "War" are Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet* (specifically the reference to the "little eyases" or children who compete with the players in the city). *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 14-20.
[175] Kuhl, "Metamorphoses," 121.
[176] For an overview of the so-called "War of the Theatres," see James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Poets' War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
[177] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels*, 43.

for the Children of Paul's, makes this kind of reference when Antonio assures us that he "will not swell like a tragedian / In forced passion of affected strains" (2.2.105-6). His refusal (or inability) to "swell" could be a reference to the "little" stature of these players, a quality often remarked upon by playwrights like Marston and Jonson in their inaugural plays for the children's companies. Sophonisba in Marston's play for the Blackfriars also comments on the contrast of her stoic response to her tragic circumstance in comparison to a (presumably adult) player: "I should now curse the gods,/…stamp the patient earth, / Cleave my stretched cheeks with sound, speak from all sense / But loud and full of players' eloquence" (4.1.30-33). Both examples here draw attention to the theatrical labor involved in the performative tricks of tragic playing and suggest that the boy player is limited in his access to these skills. The stamping, swelling, passionate, and loud tragic actor uses his skills of gait, gesture, and vocal delivery to create a spectacle that endured in the memory of his audiences. This spectacle of "over-the-top, histrionic bodily gestures and deafening vocal delivery" created, as Jonathan Gil Harris has termed it, the "Tamburlaine effect," where the famous style of acting associated with Edward Alleyn (and his roles as "oriental despots") is reproduced on the early modern stage to "draw attention to both the actor's and his character's histrionic versatility."[178]

In Edward Alleyn's repertory of roles, the ones associated with this kind of virtuosity were primarily racialized and tragic figures. This linkage between performing racial difference and theatrical skill shows up in the children's repertory in the form of parody or "aping" other performance styles. Thompson observes that Alleyn's versatile or "Protean" ability of transformation "seems to be a very specific code for praising

[178] Harris, *Untimely Matter*, 67, 72, 78.

cross-racial impersonation."[179] In *Poetaster,* Jonson makes a direct reference to Alleyn and his "cross-racial impersonations" when he has two child actors, one sitting on the other shoulders, imitate Alleyn as "the Moor," clearly referencing the role of Muly Hamet in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar,* performed by the Lord Admiral's Men in the 1590s and revived around the time of the children's first performances at Blackfriars. The act of imitation itself is inherent to the art of acting: Thomas Wright in 1601 wrote of stage players that "the perfection of their exercise consisteth in imitation of others, so they that imitate best, act best."[180] Imitation also served as a valuable tool in the humanist classroom, where "the skills of mimesis and mimicry" were "central to the success of their students."[181] Quintilian, however, warned that "mere imitation" was "insufficient for one to express anything with force," that the student must employ "invention" as well.[182] The use of "apes" and "apish tricks" in reference to child performers highlights a similar devaluing of imitative skill. I wonder, therefore, how we might view the tricks of imitation and parody employed by the boys' companies as sites of skill and spectacle that explore how ideas about race in/and performance were shaped by actors' bodies through the figure of the ape.[183]

Satirical material for the children's companies became their calling card, and one

[179] Thompson, *Blackface,* 39. I discuss Proteus at length in the next chapter.
[180] Quoted in Ackroyd, *Child Actors,* 35.
[181] Ackroyd, *Child Actors,* 46.
[182] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 108.
[183] A theatrical anecdote from Plato's *Symposium* used by Ackroyd likewise links up these ideas of mimicry and animals, though in this case it concerns an actor, Parmeno, who imitates the noise of a piglet. A boy challenges Parmeno and hides a real piglet under his cloak, but the audience deems Parmeno's imitation more effective than the real thing. In other words, Ackroyd argues, the adults "**"**cannot hope to challenge the children's performance" because "children counterfeit adults in a way which involves more skill" (*Child Actors,* 141). This reflects arguments against the portrayal of Othello by the black actor Ira Aldridge in the 19th century, that there was no skill in the presentation of "the-thing-in-itself" (Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women,* 91).

of their most recognizable tricks was imitation, or their ability to "ape" their elders. Frequent comparisons of boy players to "little" apes fuel this dramatic tension of the boys' imitative skill display, to see whether they can measure up (literally as well as figuratively) to the height of celebrity actor Alleyn.[184] References to apes and their tricks of imitation, as well as their physical skills, can be found across the early modern dramatic repertory.[185] Anat Feinberg defines "apish tricks" as "extravagant feats of skill and witty practical jokes" or pranks.[186] The verb "to ape" pairs acts of imitation with physical skill and action. Edward Topsell in *History of Four-Footed Beasts* compares the movement of the ape to "a man that counterfeits a lame mans halting."[187] This comparison of an ape not to a disabled man but a man who *pretends* to be disabled yields a fascinating connection to the common occurrence of "dissembling disability" in performance on the early modern stage.[188] But the effect of this counterfeit performance was not awe at the performer's skill but ridicule: Topsell also calls the Ape's body "ridiculous."[189] Nano, the dwarf in Jonson's *Volpone,* is likewise compared to a "pretty little ape…for pleasing imitation / Of greater men's actions, in a ridiculous fashion" (3.2.13-14).[190]

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[184] Holly Dugan discusses the perception of the "small" and "weak" Barbary ape in "Aping Rape: Animal Ravishment and Sexual Knowledge in Early Modern England," in *Sex before Sex: figuring the act in Early Modern England,* eds. Will Stockton and James M. Bromley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2013), 213.

[185] *Shakespeare,* Measure for Measure: "like an angry ape, / Plays such fantastic tricks" (2.2.149-150); Thomas Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*: "a young ape, full of fantastic tricks" (2.2.22); *Mother Bombie*: "to shew trickes like Apes" (2.1.162); *The Return from Parnassus*: "let your invention play tricks like an Ape" (4.2.9).

[186] Anat Feinberg, "'Like Demie Gods the Apes Began to Move': The Ape in the English Theatrical Tradition, 1580–1660," *Cahiers Elisabéthains* 35 (1989): 6.

[187] Edward Topsell, *History of Four-Footed Beasts, Describing the true and lively figure of every beast, with a discourse of their severall names...*(London: Printed by William Jaggard, 1607), 4.

[188] See Row-Heyveld, *Dissembling Disability*.

[189] Topsell, *History*, 4.

[190] Jonson's *Volpone* was written for the King's Men, but Nano was almost certainly played by a child actor. Quotation from Ben Jonson, *Volpone and Other Plays*, ed. Michael Jamieson (New York: Penguin

This connection between "little" bodies and comedic satire naturally led to an emphasis on parody in the repertories of the newly formed children's companies both at St Paul's and the Blackfriars. Sir Edward in Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* calls the boy players "apes," in an extremely self-referential moment: "I saw the Children of Paul's last night, / And troth they pleased me pretty, pretty well: / The Apes in time will do it handsomely" (4.104). The casting of the boy players as apes who will "in time" prove to be quite formidable performers shows an awareness of (or an optimism for) their potential and room for growth. By "aping" the adult actors and imitating their movements and displays of passion, the child performers were required to take on a feat that attracted attention due to its comic success and popularity in London's competitive theatrical environment.

The imitation of Alleyn in *Poetaster* has often been mentioned by scholars regarding the children's acting skills without any attention to the spectacle of its cross-racial impersonation. Knutson notes how Jonson's borrowed "play-scraps" of "old offerings newly current" works as a commercial marketing strategy.[191] Ackroyd categorizes the scene a "bravura acting demonstration" of the children's "versatility."[192] McCarthy recognizes how "Jonson's play…strives to demonstrate" how "boys trained in the more educative grammar and choir school system could do it all."[193] But in order to "do the Moor" (as the children say), Jonson employs not one actor, but two. The child on top recites a speech from *Alcazar* while the one on the bottom "stalks" around the stage. It is a performance set up to be comical, a spectacle akin to the modern meme of "two

Books, 1966).
[191] Knutson, *Playing Companies,* 131.
[192] Ackroyd, *Child Actors,* 134-5.
[193] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 78.

kids in a trenchcoat."[194] It is also an image that evokes the popular early modern performances of apes who were known for their tumbling tricks and other physical dexterity, and at times were put on display by being carried around a performance space. By splitting the labor of Alleyn's "Moor" performance into one child who speaks and another who moves, Jonson emphasizes both the excessive physical and vocal demands that accompanied Alleyn's "virtuoso" performance and the "apish" quality of the children's performance of this dramatic figure. By glossing over the significance of the presence of "the Moor" in this play, scholars have ignored a demonstration of the acting skill associated with this theatrical type, as well as the physicality of the actor expected to play him (the spectacle of the large tragic actor, as Alleyn was known to be quite tall). The boy actors' tricks of imitation here serve as a smokescreen that hides this work of racialization from critical view, just as both *Poetaster* and *Alcazar* due to their lack of modern performances have withdrawn from the view of modern audiences.

In this chapter, I trace the associations between the figures of apes and children in terms of performance as well as racialization and how the imitative tricks of the boys in *Poetaster* reveal the skills associated with actors like Alleyn who portrayed roles that did not match their own identities. The ape as an intertheatrical figure serves as both a metaphor for the child as well as a dynamic performer in its own right, who, like the child, is bound into a system of control and exploitation. By analyzing apish performances by characters in *Cynthia's Revels* and Massinger's *The Bondman,* we can see how the figure of the ape in the early modern English imagination raised important questions about status, ability, national identity, and race. I look at "Mr. Moore's

[194] "Two Kids in a Trenchcoat." *Know Your Meme.* https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/two-kids-in-a-trenchcoat

Revels," a masque from Oxford that features child performers dressed as apes pretending to be Moors, to consider how a performance like this that exists outside this specific repertory can still contribute to ideas about race, childhood, and performance on the early modern stage. I explore in depth the two boys' performance in *Poetaster* of Alleyn's "Moor," and how intertheatrical associations with size, movement, and skill create a spectacle of performance racial difference unlike anything else we see in the Blackfriars children's repertory. And finally, I briefly engage with two references of boy performance in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Troilus and Cressida* that show the skills associated with the boy player as one both associated with transformation and also limited in the types of roles that he can convincingly play.

Apish Tricks in the Early Modern Repertory

Associations with imitation, foreign places, sexuality, and children follow the early modern ape throughout its appearances in English drama and literature. Topsell notes that apes come from "*Lybia* and all that desert Woods betwixt *Egypt, Aethiopia* and *Lybia.*"[195] These geographical ties mark them as African and thereby associated with people from those laces in harmful racist tropes. Some apes are sexually dangerous ("they will ravish their Women") whereas others "grow so tame, that they go up and down the streets so boldly and civilly, as if they were Children."[196] The linkage of apes to being either sexually unrestrained or "tame" like "children" echoes my discussion in the first chapter on the competing notions of innocence and sinfulness in childish natures at this time. Topsell also calls apes creatures "made for laughter…much given to imitation" and it is

[195] Topsell, *History*, 3.
[196] Ibid.

that penchant for mimicry that the comparison to children is most invoked.[197] Erasmus notes the child's "ape-like instinct of imitation."[198] Edmund Spenser also applies the term to Irish children (another racialized and colonized population) who are "like apes, which affect and imitate what they have seen done before them."[199] The capacity for both children and apes to imitate made them highly theatrical beings who produced a mix of pleasure and anxiety in their mimetic tricks. James Knowles acknowledges that both actual apes and boys or men acting as apes in early modern performance tested the boundaries of human capabilities: "if apes themselves present a disturbing series of images that question the nature of human identity, adult ape-actors intensify these anxieties."[200] Children and animals are linked in a dehumanizing discourse based on their ability (or inability) to perform.

The recurring image of the ape in English history plays as well as comical satires speaks to an anxiety about national identity and the tendency to "ape" or imitate other nations, which "disables" them from forming an identity of their own.[201] These allusions also often engage images of children as well as the threat of foreign influence. In *Richard II,* York uses a striking disability metaphor to describe "reports of fashions in proud Italy, / Whose manners still our tardy *apish* nation / *Limps* after in base imitation" (2.1.24-26, emphasis added). In *Henry IV, Part 2*, Prince Hal notes that the boy he "gave Falstaff"

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[197] Topsell, *History*, 2.
[198] Quoted in Gary Taylor, "Thomas Middleton: Lives and Afterlives" in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33.
[199] Edmund Spenser, "A View of the Present State of Ireland" (1596). Quoted in *Race in Early Modern England: a documentary companion*, ed. Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 23.
[200] Knowles, "'Can ye not tell a man from a marmoset?'," 139.
[201] See William Rankins, *The English Ape* (London: Imprinted by Robert Robinson, 1588). See also Scott Maisano and Holly Dugan, "Ape," in *Veer Ecology: a companion to environmental thinking*, eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 368.

has been "transformed" by Falstaff into an ape (2.2.69).[202] Things that are "apish" to Shakespeare include the "boyish troops" of the French in *King John* (5.2.132) and fools in *King Lear* (1.4.173). In *Cynthia's Revels,* Criticus, who serves as commentator on the foolish actions of the courtiers, calls their actions "mimic tricks" and compares them to puppets (1.4.58, 60-61).[203] Children's plays also use the figure of the ape to voice anxieties of foreign influence. In the opening scene of George Chapman's *Sir Giles Goosecap*, a servingman who is mistaken for a baboon exclaims, "Out, ye moped monkies! Can ye not know a man from a marmoset in these Frenchified days of ours?" (1.1.34-35). In Chapman's tragedy *Bussy D'Ambois,* also written for the Blackfriars Children, Montsurry complains that English men who copy the French in fashion are "like apes, disfigured with the attires of men" (1.2.50). In the Paul's play *Histriomastix, or the Player whipt*, the figure of Pride "casts a mist" across the stage that makes "this, your native soil, the land of apes" where "rascal boys…ape-like jet in garded coats" (3.1). "To jet" was a type of movement associated specifically with tragic performance (similar to stalking); Tiffany Stern calls it a "stiff, pompous gait."[204] While the line could be read as the boys in imitation of tragic adult actors ("ape-like") using a physical skill associated with those actors, there is a tantalizing ambiguity in the language here that suggests "jetting" was also in the ape's skill set (if "ape-like" refers to the verb "jet" rather than

[202] James C. Bulman glosses this passage as "dressed him up fantastically as one would a performing ape, with a hint that the Page is now an imitator (ape) of Falstaff's own wit and manners." *Henry IV, Part 2,* ed. James C. Bulman (New York: Bloomsbury Arden, 2016), 235.
[203] For more on Ben Jonson and puppets, see Nicole Sheriko, "Ben Jonson's Puppet Theater and Modeling Interpretive Practice," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 59, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 281-304. Criticus later performs his own "trick" when he imitates a vain courtier: "You shall see me undo the assured swaggerer with a trick, / instantly: I will play all his own play before him" (5.4.514-15).
[204] Tiffany Stern, "Early Modern Tragedy and Performance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy,* ed. Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 493. Stern also notes the "internal pun on the jet-black clothes worn sometimes by tragedians" (494).

the "boys").

An emphasis on imitative skills in performance moves beyond the figure of the boy actor in these plays to the characters themselves. In *Cynthia's Revels,* Amorphus instructs the youthful Asotus, a courtier-in-training, in scenes that very well could reflect the training of young players, given that both courtiers and players "are characterized by the ability to perform a role and to shift between parts."[205] Asotus is described in terms that could well suit a successful boy player: "a most delicate youth, a sweet face, a straight body, a well propor-/tioned leg and foot, a white hand, a tender voice" (4.1.85-86). His youth, whiteness, and ablebodiedness especially strike the women (and men, like Amorphus) as being attractive. When Asotus fails at his first court appearance, Amorphus reassures him that "it is with your young grammatical courtier, as with your neophyte player, a thing usual / to be daunted at the first presence, or interview" (3.1.2-4). The god Mercury, who along with Cupid spies on the courtiers, describes Asotus, as he who "doth most of these tricks after him [Amorphus]; sweats to imitate him / in every thing…as if / he were moulded of him" (2.3.91-92, 95-96).[206] Asotus' "sweat" indicates a strain, an effect of physical labor or effort that should be absent from the careless free body of the courtier. The "tricks" that Asotus imitates, be they gestural, vocal or physical, all mark him as performing the role (or assuming the shape) of the courtier, but his "sweat" (signs of strain and labor) belies his actual inclusion in the courtly sphere. Asotus expresses disappointment at the interruption of the proclaimed revels: "And / Cynthia had but seen me dance a strain, or do but one trick, I had / been kept in court" (4.5.65-69). Asotus

[205] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 95.
[206] His attempt to be "moulded" in the shape of Amorphus is also ironic – Amorphus by virtue of his name is without shape, without form, or rather, he is of such various shapes and forms that he eludes all categories of distinction.

believes that just "one trick" would have set him up for life. Jonson's descriptions of court performance rely heavily on the idea of the trick as the means for social advancement. The importance of the "trick" to court performance shows just how flimsy the veneer is, that one must perform tricks (which could also be classified as deceptions) in order to be admitted.

Boys as Apes as Moors in "Mr. Moore's Revels"

A significant dramatic performance that brings together ideas of children's performance, Moors, blackness, and apes is known as "Mr. Moore's Revels," a 1636 masque performed at Oxford. Its title echoes the title of *Cynthia's Revels,* though it replaces the white female English monarch as the host of the entertainment with a male commoner whose name suggest a linkage to Moors. While this performance date and location lie far outside the parameters of children's performance as focused on in this project, the coalescence of these themes at this later date and in this venue only reinforces the relevant connections I am making in the intertheatrical moments featuring the Blackfriars Children. Masques at court often presented spectacles of racial impersonation, a trend that reached back to the masques of the earlier Tudor period, where children like King Edward VI performed in the 1548 "Masque of Moors," and continued on under James I with Ben Jonson's "Masque of Blackness."[207] The text of this university "Revels" performance features dancers in blackface called both Indians and Moors, and boys dressed as apes who then apply blackface onto themselves.[208] The location of the

[207] Wiggins and Richardson. *British Drama, vol. 1: 1533-1566*, 179. See also Suzanne Westfall, "The Boy Who Would Be King: Court Revels of King Edward VI," *Comparative Drama* 35, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2001-02): 271-290, 278.
[208] All quotations from "Mr. Moore's Revels" are from John R. Elliott, Jr., "Mr. Moore's Revels: A 'Lost' Oxford Masque." *Renaissance Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 1984): 411-420.

performance, "near Eastgate," likely in an inn or ale-house, rather than at one of the colleges, distinguishes this from a court masque, and the author was likely a scholar or recent graduate of the university.[209] The relatively informal setting thus emphasizes the imitative and potential burlesque qualities that this masque has in comparison to the more formal court masques written by Jonson. Removed from the traffic of London stages, both royal and theatrical, "Mr. Moore's Revels" shows elements of both traditions crammed together to create a spectacle that trades on the associations between apes and children as well as the court's obsession with dancing Moors.

The "Moors" who enter are described as "negroes" and "sutty visag'd Indians" (24-25). Their blackness is put in contrast to the fairness of the audience (30). They each carry a prop, a javelin or "spear," though the narrator reassures us that "These inoffensive javelins were design'd / ffor noe intent but this to be resign'd / vnto your feete" (43-45). An emphasis on movement and skill accompanies this physical description: "they came not hither to expresse / Their active armes but their feet and nimblenesse" (49-50). After their exit, in which they cast their "black-coats" aside to "dance a country dance," a stage direction describes a detailed scene that happens "in ye meane while":

> ffoure litle / boyes drest ffor apes stole a way
> ffoure of their coates who soe soone
> As ye moores left ye stage each of
> the Apes had an inkehorne in his
> hand to blacke themselves
> To resemble ye moores and yat they might
> see to doe it exactly one of them
> had a lookinglasse…(67-80)

The disguising of boys dressed as apes, as Moors, points to both the tension and pleasure of seeing these imagined embodiments collide. The boys cannot take on the guise of

[209] Elliott, Jr., "Mr. Moore's Revels," 412-13.

Moors themselves but instead they must do it through the conduit of "apish" performance. Their impulse to "counterfeit" the "activity" of the Moors, not just their apparel, is portrayed as a natural one, given that they are a "messe / Of mimicks" (96-99). The stealing of the coats links these child-apes with criminality ("They stole this ffrom ye Aethiops," 112) as well as extraordinary physical skill ("They'd stann vppon their hands steale with their ffeete," 115).

Kim F. Hall notes the "troubling doubles" of the "'visages' of apes and African peoples: "Primates and Africans from the interior capture the European imagination in many of the same ways."[210] Anxieties about gender and sexuality are undercurrents here as well, given the role of academic drama as a "Renaissance puberty rite" for an audience of elite males.[211] Hall argues, therefore, that, "this masque also seems to be very much about the demarcation, not simply of masculinity, but specifically of 'white' masculinity," with the inclusion of the "inoffensive" phallic javelins in the Moors' hands: "this masque works to domesticate and thus nullify the threat of the moor."[212] The presence of "apes" as imitating actors, "shadows" of the "real thing," is made all the more clear, I argue, by their presence as boy performers, who are doubly tied to the production of both masculinity and whiteness in early modern performance. Hornback focuses in his analysis of this masque on the presence of the mirror as a signifier of vanity: "the masque blurs dancing Moor, ape, and fool to suggest that Moors and apes

[210] Kim F. Hall, "'Troubling Doubles': Apes, Africans, and Blackface in *Mr. Moore's Revels*," in *Race, ethnicity, and power in the Renaissance,* ed. Joyce Green MacDonald (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1997), 120, 124.
[211] Hall, "Troubling Doubles," 134. The third performance of the masque did have an epilogue notably addressed to the gentlewomen in attendance which suggests that women were a significant part of the audience for the entertainment.
[212] Hall, "Troubing Doubles," 135, 136.

are, alike, foolishly vain pretenders to humanity."[213] I would add "boy" to Hornback's list of subject positions there, as a key performing figure around which questions of gender, race, and ability combine.

Apes and Boys in Bondage

In her discussion of Philip Massinger's *The Bondman* (1624), Noémie Ndiaye argues that animalization "constituted a powerful and portable tool of racialization," as it served "to legitimize or de-legitimize claims to property ownership in the interest of power."[214] Massinger's play features a slave revolt in which the rebellious slave Gracculo takes control of his master, the foolish Asotus (also a name used in *Cynthia's Revels*) and dresses him as an ape. The opening stage direction of act 3, scene 3 ("Enter Gracculo, leading Asotus in an ape's habit, with a chain about his neck") shows the formerly exploitative master now subject to humiliation, in the form of the "fettered ape icon" of medieval origin.[215] Gracculo mocks Asotus, saying that he will "teach [him] / To come aloft, and do tricks like an ape." "Come aloft" is glossed as "leap, or rather tumble," and these kinds of physical tricks were paired with mimicry in the ape's repertoire. Ndiaye's work on apes and dance in Massinger's *The Spanish Gypsie* similarly recognizes "the animalizing discourse wielded against racial others" as well as "movement" as a "hitherto understudied dimension of racial impersonation onstage."[216] The intertheatrical connection between the apish Asotus in Jonson's 1600 play and Massinger's recycling of the character in ape form more than twenty years later shows how repetitions in the

[213] Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface*, 112.
[214] Ndiaye, "'Come Aloft," 144.
[215] Feinberg, "'Like Demie Gods," 4. For more on apes in English culture, see H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1952).
[216] Ndiaye, "'Come Aloft," 122, 149.

repertory can signal deeply held anxieties about class, ability, and structures of power over time.

By invoking the figure of the ape in a play called *The Bondman,* Massinger clearly draws the line between apes and bondage. Another skill of the ape besides imitation is its ability to be tamed and to serve: "they are kept only in rich mens houses to sport withall, being for that cause easily tamed, following every action he seeth done, even to his own harme without discretion."[217] This portrait of the ape's tameness and willingness to perform even at its own bodily risk becomes disturbing when put in dialogue with the position of the boy player. Robert Cawdry's *A treasurie or store-house of similes* (1600) includes the simile "As an Ape or Munket, is tied and tethered to his clogge" which commonplaces the idea of restraint and control exerted on these animals.[218] Of course, we do not know how "tame" or how "tethered" the boy players might have been. The records in the play texts themselves are controlled by the adults, the playwrights and the printers who profited off their company's successful performances. The child actors were underage laborers, and some (if not most) had been impressed or forced into their position as performers in the company, as discussed in the first chapter. While the boy players of the adult companies were more protected by the "legally and royally sanctioned" practice of apprenticeship, these children and their work at this moment circa 1601 existed without protection and "beyond a regulated system of control."[219]

The boys' status as "captive performers" in a sense, links them to the chained and

[217] Topsell, *History,* 4.
[218] Robert Cawdry, *A treasurie or store-house of similes both pleasaunt, delightfull, and profitable for all estates of men in generall* (London: Printed by Tho. Creede, 1600), 629.
[219] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 58.

mistreated animals like apes and bears who were also conscripted to perform in entertainments.[220] These children therefore are not only queer and sexualized creatures, but they are animal-like, compared proverbially to insects, birds, and often to apes because of their skills in imitation.[221] By using this simile and metaphor of the boy as ape, I do not want to forget the actual presence or downplay the violence done toward real apes, monkeys, and baboons in early modern London. As Holly Dugan writes, the "pleasures of mimesis on the Renaissance stage" cannot be separated from "its violent and intimate histories of human and animal interaction."[222] This intimacy is foregrounded in the common metaphors and similes (and possible experiences of oppression) that link these two creatures, the ape and the boy player, together.

Anna Mae Duane in *Suffering Childhood in Early America: violence, race, and the making of the child victim* focuses on metaphor as a literary form that "provides a powerful means of accessing historical content."[223] She uses the work of cognitive theorists Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier to show how "both terms of a metaphor exert influence on the other, subtly changing the ways in which each term is understood."[224] Duane's work looks at "comparisons between suffering children and marginalized people" such as Native Americans and enslaved Africans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: "Coming from a tradition in which the child represented a

[220] Dugan, "'To Bark with Judgment," 80.
[221] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 8. For queer readings of the boys, see Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins* and Simone Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing*. For animal references, see *Poetaster,* where Tucca calls his performing boys his "beagles", and Jonson in the induction of *Cynthia's Revels* likewise calls them "wrens and pismires." Shakespeare echoes that in the first folio edition of *Hamlet* calling them "little eyases" and "an aerie of children."
[222] Dugan, "To Bark with Judgment," 78.
[223] Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: violence, race, and the making of the child victim* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 4.
[224] Duane, *Suffering Childhood,* 11. See Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic, 2003).

dependent subject, European colonists depended on old meanings of childhood to create infantilizing metaphors that answered the need for a new conceptual structure required by the colonizing process."[225] This emphasis on metaphor shaping perception and shifting definitions of familiar terms in cultural consciousness serves as an apt theoretical framework for the literary encounters in the children's companies between boy players and apes, as well as the many metatheatrical references to other plays that create what Turner and Fauconnier would call a "blended story" for their audiences. "Blended stories," drawn from "selective borrowing" of different cultural associations prompts an audience to "create conceptual blends," are often used for humor or parody. When Sir Edward says of the Children of Paul's that "the Apes in time will do it handsomely," he could be using the metaphor to refer to several attributes of the boy players, including their small size and their imitative skills, highlighting their comic ability.

While apes are referred to as children in an attempt to make their behavior more intelligible to humans, and to subordinate their potential to become fully human, the "child as ape" construction here instead casts apes not only as highly skilled but also with the potential to improve "in time." Fauconnier and Turner note that for a metaphor to work, the audience recognizes "the traits that" the two subjects in question "share and the context" then "indicate[s] the implied meaning."[226] A metaphor of this kind assumes that audiences will be aware of these similarities between the two figures, but what of the differences? How does the "foreignness" of apes, as well as the other popular metaphor of men in French or Italian fashions being apes, exert force and change the shape of the

[225] Duane, *Suffering Childhood*, 4, 10.
[226] "Metaphor," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, eds. Stephen Cushman, et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 869.

boy player? What does the sexual excessiveness associated with apes bring to bear upon the sexuality of the boy player? The answers to these questions I believe are central to understanding how racial difference is performed within the repertory of the Blackfriars children, with the ape as a figure of performance that shapes the audience's perception of the child.

Muly Hamet & Edward Alleyn in Jonson's *Poetaster*

The "aping" of Alleyn's role in *Poetaster* therefore brings the figure of the ape and apish tricks together with the children's parody of Alleyn's gait and delivery of this racialized role. The children in their repertory do not get to embody this type of role in a serious way; it is a self-conscious parody of a famous performance done in a "ridiculous" (aka "apish") manner. Their trick of cross-racial impersonation is set up (by Jonson) to fail and show instead the significant theatrical labor that goes into the enactment of this character type. In Jonson's play, the obstreperous Captain Tucca encounters an actor named Histrio. Tucca himself embodies another kind of dramatic type, that of the swaggering, boasting soldier. He has two pages, called the Pyrgi, derived from the Greek *pyrgus* for tower, what editor Tom Cain assumes is an "ironic reference to the size of the boy actors."[227] Tucca offers his pages' services, for a price, as potential players with Histrio's company, and commands them to perform in a kind of audition. Tucca's pages are tasked with an impression parade, moving from "king Darius' doleful strain" to the roles of lover, soldier, lady, and finally, "the Moor." Jonson uses direct quotations as well as corrupted speeches from other plays, mostly *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Battle of Alcazar,* both property at this time associated with the Lord Admiral's Men and their star

[227] Ben Jonson. *Poetaster,* ed. Tom Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 66. All quotations are from this edition.

performer Edward Alleyn. Jonson, who composed multiple plays for the children at Blackfriars, wrote later of his distaste for "the Tamerlanes and Tamer-Chams of the late Age, which had no thing in them but the scenical strutting and furious vociferations, to warrant them to the ignorant gapers."[228] This criticism of Alleyn's other star vehicles (Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and the lost *Tamer Cham*) and his often cited mode of traversing the stage ("strutting," or what Jonson references in *Poetaster* as "stalking") is reflected in this children's play, with the performance of two children, one sitting on the other shoulders, impersonating Alleyn's performance as "the Moor" in *The Battle of Alcazar.* The reemergence of the children's companies at the playhouses of St. Paul's and Blackfriars circa 1600 coincided with the return of Edward Alleyn to the stage after a short retirement to support his company, the Admiral's Men, in their new business venture at the Fortune Playhouse. Revivals of Alleyn's most famous roles, including Tamburlaine and Muly Hamet in *Alcazar,* must have captured the public interest and Ben Jonson's attention, given that the play was old news by this time.[229] The attention given in *Poetaster* to Alleyn and his role as "the Moor" (not named in the scene, but clearly from *Alcazar* given the speech recited) shows the potent intertheatrical resonances that a repertory system creates.

This imitation of Alleyn in *Poetaster* proves the actor's status as a recognizable and celebrated figure in his day, just as elegies praised him after his death as one of the finest actors seen on England's stages. While Alleyn's roles as Doctor Faustus and Edward II all drew acclaim, it was his personations of foreign and racialized characters such as Muly in *Alcazar,* Barabas in *Jew of Malta,* and Tamburlaine that showcased his

[228] Quoted in McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 84.
[229] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 85.

virtuosity and towering skill.[230] Ambereen Dadabhoy also notes *Alcazar*'s contribution to early modern racecraft in "its coupling of racial formation to fantasies of imperial expansion and the strategic geopolitical location of Morocco."[231] In putting these non-European cultures and characters on display, companies like the Admiral's Men developed a store of recycled props, costumes, and gestures that gave audiences a shorthand to recognizing racialized figures in the dramatic repertory. *Alcazar* is also a play indebted to *Tamburlaine* in structure and characterization, though Tom Rutter disagrees with the prevailing opinion that it is "an inferior rehash" but calls it instead "a more intelligent response to Marlowe than is usually supposed."[232]

Whatever the merit of the play itself, Alleyn's performance as Muly was likely haunted for repeat audiences by memories of his powerful Tamburlaine. As Virginia Mason Vaughan writes, "the blackface and flamboyant Muly was probably an automatic guarantee that, from the spectacular chariot-driving entrance to his final lines, the audience's gaze would focus on Edward Alleyn."[233] That Jonson chose Muly, not Tamburlaine, for the boys to imitate demonstrates that "doing the Moor" provides a specific and recognizable sign of performance prowess and expertise. [234] Muly Hamet is only referred to in the stage directions of *Alcazar* as "the Moor," but unlike Othello and Aaron he is not the only Moor depicted in this play. There are others like Abdelmelec

[230] S. P. Cerasano, "Edward Alleyn, the New Model Actor, and the Rise of the Celebrity in the 1590s," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005): 47-58.
[231] Ambereen Dadabhoy, "Barbarian Moors: Documenting Racial Formation in Early Modern England," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race*, 33.
[232] Tom Rutter, *Shakespeare and the Admiral's Men*, 98.
[233] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness,* 43.
[234] Despite evidence from the surviving "plott" that Alleyn played Muly, Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean offer an alternate casting theory: "Given Henslowe's proclivity elsewhere for naming plays after Alleyn's roles, the title of "mulomurco" suggests that with Lord Strange's Men in 1592-3 Alleyn may not have played the villain Muly Hamet but the great-souled hero, Abdelmelec." See *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 77.

known as the "brave Barbarian" but Muly is the only one associated with blackness and referred to as "negro" (1.Prologue.6-7).[235] Despite this color specification there is no suggestion in *Poetaster* that the boy player has blackened his visage to parody the role. Racial difference here is instead produced through an oversized physicality and acting style (the "Tamburlaine effect").

The second Pyrgus's rendition of Muly starts differently from his other impressions. The boy requests to do this character after he refuses to "do a little of a lady" as Histrio requests: "No, you shall see me do the Moor" (3.4.263, 270). This sudden refusal is significant, given that the boy was happy up until this point to present a soldier and a ghost who spouted off speeches from *The Spanish Tragedy.* He had shown a hint of rebellion previously when he refused to stop his declarations and Tucca had to tell him "enough" (259). Clearly this child is more drawn to the highly emotional and physical "apish action" that Pandulpho in *Antonio's Revenge* calls "player-like": to "stamp, curse, weep" and "rage" (1.2.315-6). Tucca doesn't object to the boy's demand to "do the Moor." Rather, the boy immediately asks for a material supplement to complete the character: "Master, lend me your scarf a little" (270). Cain glosses the scarf as a badge of an English officer and a symbol of military rank. He does not note that a scarf is also used by Alleyn in Robert Greene's *Orlando Furioso* for a disguise as a mercenary who is later referred to as both an Indian and a Moor. The stage direction for his entrance reads: '*Enter Orlando with a scarf before his face*' (5.1.1224).[236] There is no

[235] George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*, in *The Stukeley Plays*, ed. Charles Edelman (Manchester, 2005).
[236] Robert Greene, *Orlando Furioso*, in *The Plays & Poems of Robert Greene*, ed. J. Churton Collins (Oxford, 1905), 5.1.1224. See Richard Blunt, "The Evolution of Blackface Cosmetics on the Early Modern Stage." in *The materiality of color: the production, circulation, and application of dyes and pigments, 1400-1800*, eds. Andrea Fesser, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 220.

reference to how the boy uses the scarf in *Poetaster,* what color it is, or whether it serves directly as a "racial prosthesis," to use Ian Smith's term, to aid in his portrayal of the Moor.[237] The scarf therefore remains an ambiguous symbol of not only racializing power but also connotations of military rank and the threat of physical violence and force.

When Tucca gives the scarf to his boy, he replies that the object is at the boy's "service," a word that resonates with multiple meanings here, both in terms of the performance of a military figure and in pointing out the relationship between Tucca and his unnamed page (or Pyrgus). Not unlike the slave market scene in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta,* this scene is set up as a potential economic transaction, where Tucca's "goods" (his boy players) are on display for Histrio's potential investment. Lamb's reading of the scene notes how Tucca calls the boys his "beagles" and presents them as "salable and marketable commodities within an explicit economic discourse."[238] Histrio's request to see one of them play a lady speaks to the "erotic response" engendered by the presence of these boy players onstage. What Lamb notes as the "intersection of the trade of slaves and the trade in sex" leads Tucca then to object to the deal.[239] He is wary that Histrio will use the boys as "engles" or prostitutes (3.4.278). By insisting on playing the Moor, the young Pyrgus is flipping the script, not only in his refusal to play a woman, but his taking of Tucca's scarf to be "at his service," given that the young boy's life is defined by his service to Tucca, and potentially to other exploiting figures, even the very managers of the Blackfriars Children themselves. "Doing the Moor" in this case becomes a moment of defiance and agency, however brief, in which the child (within the fiction of the drama)

[237] Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks," 44.
[238] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 47.
[239] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 48.

gets to choose what role he might play. It also puts "the Moor" in opposition to "the lady" as a theatrical type, the latter being what appears to be most suited to the diminutive white boy player, the former being more of a "stretch" in terms of ability and appearance.

The following execution of this performance of "the Moor" is where questions of skill and spectacle come into focus most clearly. According to the stage direction, this second Pyrgus and the apothecary Minos "*withdraw to make themselves ready,*" and they remain offstage for roughly seventy lines. When they reenter, "*the boy comes in on Mino's shoulders, who stalks, as he acts*" (stage direction, 343).[240] The boy speaks Muly's words, inflected with imagery of blackness and sounds akin to the roaring of a medieval stage-devil in its curses. He speaks of "hellish shades," "foul contagion," "cursed [tree]tops," and "dismal night-ravens" (3.4.347-50). These words are among those like "black" and "foul" that Hall writes are "push[ed]...into the realm of racial discourse" by their "insistent association" with "negative signifier[s]."[241] This brief interlude within the larger narrative of the play is rich with possibilities of spectacle left open by the printed play text. Why does the boy leave the stage for approximately five minutes (a substantial amount of theatrical time) in order to prepare for the role? Is his exit just to execute getting on the other actor's shoulders, or does he take a moment to add any other material signifier, such as a cosmetic to darken his skin? How does he wear the scarf? And why does he enter on Minos's shoulders? Why is Alleyn's labor of "stalking and roaring" split between two child actors? The double labor of these two actors in presenting one character presents a possible theory for the absence of these

[240] This stage direction only appears in the 1616 folio, not in the 1602 quarto, where there is no textual indication of how they enter.
[241] Hall, *Things of Darkness,* 6.

types of characters in the children's repertory: the child actor were perhaps perceived as simply too small in size and underdeveloped in skill to appropriately present the spectacle of characters like Alleyn's stalking Moor on his own. Yet they employ other skills, like physical strength and agility, to lay bare the work that went into personating these characters.

Unlike most characters in the children's repertory, the figure of the Moor in *Poetaster* is seen as "oversized," not only in size but in manner of speaking and moving, thus creating a specific kind of spectacle that an audience might expect. Chakravarty points to the common pun on "Moor" and "more," used by Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, that "always already articulat[es] the Moor" as "superfluous and excessive."[242] Shakespeare's characterization of Othello as an "extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" likewise plays on this theme (1.1.151-52). Heng notes that "black devilish Saracen enemies – sometimes of gigantic size – abound, especially in the *chanson de geste* and romance" of medieval European literature.[243] Muly's large size is emphasized through his accompaniment by younger characters like his son who shadow him throughout the play. In Muly's first appearance in the prologue's bloody dumbshow, he is with his son as well as two pages and his "young brethren," who he then murders (1.Prologue.20). Muly refers to his son repeatedly as "boy," a word that we hear echoed in the lines that Tucca's page recites: "Where art thou, boy?" (*Poetaster* 3.4.345; *Alcazar* 2.3.1). Later in *Alcazar,* a stage direction reads, "*Then enter the Moor and his boy, flying*" (5.1.70.3 sd). Aaron in *Titus* is likewise often flanked onstage with the two Goth brothers, their youth, size, and whiteness accentuating his age, stature, and blackness.

[242] Chakravarty, "'I Had Peopled Else," 64.
[243] Heng, *The Invention of Race,* 16.

The consistent pairing of the Moor in *Alcazar* with what we can imagine to be younger and smaller actors emphasizes his own larger size, just as Lamb notes how the adult gallants seated on the Blackfriars stage must have provided a "visual contrast" with the smaller child players.[244] It is also reminiscent of Falstaff's line in *Henry IV, Part 2* where he grumbles that the prince has given him the small page to "set him off," or make Falstaff look bigger by comparison (1.2.14). Alleyn himself was "set off" by a boy actor from the Queen's Revels company in King James I's processional entrance to London in 1604.[245] The image of the boy riding on Minos' shoulders in order to appear taller therefore makes reference to Alleyn's stature and connects the skill seemingly required to play the role with the spectacle of the performer's large body. The linkage here to "the Moor" not only as a copy of Alleyn but also classified as "adult" size echoes later critiques of the boy's company style made by R. A. Foakes, who characterized this action as "child-actors consciously ranting in oversize parts."[246] The reference in the Induction of *The Malcontent* that the men are "folio" sized and the boys "decimo-sexto" comes to mind.[247] Here the Moor is literally "oversize" and must be performed by one player on top of another. While use of theatrical methods like blackface cosmetics is key to imagining racial impersonation on the early modern stage, the scene here suggests that it was not the only thing that marked these characters as racially different from the white majority and that other factors such as movement, size, age, and linguistic style mattered as well.

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[244] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 20.
[245] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels*, 43.
[246] R. A. Foakes, "John Marston's Fantastical Plays: *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge,*" *Philological Quarterly* 41 (1962): 236.
[247] Induction by John Webster, lines 75-76. In John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. Bernard Harris (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

Performances of racial difference in the early modern repertory also often included a mode of conveyance across the stage which produced another form of distinctive, stylized movement. Muly's first entrance riding in a chariot aligns with other representations of Moors in Lord Mayor's Pageants discussed by Anthony Barthelemy who would be riding "exotic beasts" as well as Tamburlaine's entrances in the second part of his play, "*drawn in his chariot*" by captive kings "*with bits in their mouths*" (4.3.1, sd).[248] Perhaps the conveyance of the child actor on the other's shoulders serves a dual purpose, both an addition in height as well as the impression that he is riding something, giving him even higher status. People have also ridden other people before in the repertory of medieval morality plays where the Vice would sometimes ride on the devil's back.[249] In another play filled with devils, *Doctor Faustus* (the B text), we see the servant Dick "for apish deeds transformed to an ape" by Mephistopheles (3.3.42). His fellow Robin is delighted by the change and asks for "the carrying of him / about to show some tricks" (43-44). Mephistopheles responds by turning Robin into a dog and suggests that he "carry [Dick] upon [his] back" (46). The exit of the ape riding the dog puts the ape in the position of the boy riding atop Minos' shoulders as he impersonates the Moor. The young prince in *Richard III* refers to this method of conveyance when he compares himself to "an ape" because he is "little" and thus should be able to ride on Richard's shoulders (3.1.132). Conveyance can therefore be used both as a marker of high status (and size) as well as a staple in the spectacles of performing animals. When Tucca asks Crispinus if he thought Minos did "impart" the role well, Crispinus replies that "he did

[248] Barthelemy, *Black Face*, 48; Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II* in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Quotes from *Doctor Faustus (B-Text)* are also from this edition.
[249] John D. Cox, *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350-1642* (Cambridge, 2000), 103.

convey," punning on a double meaning of carrying something as well as communicating or expressing an idea (3.5.370). The skills of both child actors in this scene by Jonson combine to create an intertheatrical spectacle that evokes entrances of both Moors and animals in early modern performance. They not only mimick Alleyn's height but also the quality of his movement.

The second Pyrgus in aping Alleyn delivers the speech from *Alcazar* from atop his fellow's shoulders, but it is Minos's movement below that attracts Tucca's praise, as he also refers to the boy's diminutive size: "'Twas well done, *little* Minos, thou didst stalk well" (359, emphasis mine). For someone "little" to "stalk well" must have been very impressive, considering the implications that to stalk must require the long legs of cranes or the help of high heels (which Minos could have retrieved from the tiring house before his entrance with the boy on his shoulders). Tucca's reaction to the skills on display here, the boy on top balancing and reciting his speech while the boy on the bottom manages to hold on to him while strutting around the stage, shows the significance of "stalking" as essential to this particular "mimic trick." Stalking is linked not only with Alleyn in records of his performance style but also refers to long legs or heightened steps in early modern usage. While stalking is often associated in contemporary accounts with the character of Tamburlaine, Edward Guilpin's 1598 epigram also links Alleyn's "gate" (or gait) to "stalking."[250] Given that in *Poetaster,* we have this impression of another Alleyn character who stalks, it serves as another example

[250] Edward Guilpin, *Skialetheia or, A shadowe of Truth, in certaine Epigrams and Satyres* (1598). See also Jeremy Lopez, "Alleyn Resurrected," *Marlowe Studies: an annual* 1 (2011): 169, and Andrew Bozio, "Timur the Lame: Marlowe, Disability, and Form," *Modern Philology* 119, no. 3 (2022): 354-76. https://doi.org/10.1086/717772. The verb "stalking" is also used in reference to Histrio's entrance earlier in the scene, where Tucca asks "What's he that stalks be there" and twice calls him a "stalker" (121, 127, 279), making the word more of a generic reference to any actor's movement.

of the actor's signature movement and physicality across his roles, potentially due to his tall stature (around six foot).[251]

While one definition of stalking refers to the stealthy movement that a predatory animal might make, another contemporary usage suggests it referred to walking "with stiff, high, measured steps, like a long-legged bird."[252] References in Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* link stalking with "one of the giant's stilts that stalks before my Lord Mayor's pageant" (3.1.121) and Jonson in *Cynthia's Revels* assigns stalking to "a proud and spangled sir / That looks three handfuls higher than his foretop" (3.4.12-13). Height clearly affects the quality of this movement and is a key element to successful "stalking." Marston in his *Scourge of Villainy* (1598) alludes to ones "that stalk in goodly shape, / What though in velvet cloake, yet still an Ape."[253] Marston's reference to the ape recalls previous characterizations of courtiers as inauthentic pretenders, and reminds his audience that an "ape" can put on the performance of a "stalking" courtier with a velvet cloak (recalling the jetting boys in *Histriomastix*), but he remains a copy of the real thing ("an Ape"), not the thing itself.

This demonstration in *Poetaster* therefore shows the boys at their most "apish," where they demonstrate tremendous physical skill and agility to imitate a character and a type of actor that is almost completely absent from their repertoire. The child on top of the other's shoulders in this scene simultaneously emulates "the Moor" and Edward Alleyn by doubling his size and appearing larger and therefore older. Alleyn's characteristic movement, height, and loud voice all contributed to the lasting image

[251] Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn', 49.
[252] "Stalking," *OED Online*, definition 4a.
[253] John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie: Three Bookes of Satyres* (London, 1598).

(spectacle) of his skill on the stage. An actor's physicality, the combination of bodily appearance and skilled movement, clearly made a lasting impression on audiences and shaped their perceptions of how certain types of characters were portrayed. The absence of raced characters in their repertory might be explained by the contrast between the figure of the little (white) child capable of growth and transformation and the theatrical image of the fully developed oversized (and black) "Moor." In this act of imitation, the children put their bodies in circulation with images of animals like apes and cast themselves as imitators of "foreign" roles in the adult repertory. Jonson uses racial impersonation in a self-conscious parodic way to highlight the remarkable skill of the Blackfriars Children and foreshadow the absence of characters like "the Moor" in their own repertory.

Conclusion: Boyish Tricks in *Troilus and Cressida*

In *Troilus and Cressida*, a play that some have deemed the last volley in the War of the Theatres, the audience hears a report of a performance by a young player who takes on the multiple roles of the "strutting" (or stalking) large leading man and the comically small old man one right after the other, much like the impression parade seen enacted by Tucca's pages in *Poetaster*.[254] Frustrated by Achilles' absence from their war council, Ulysses in Shakespeare's play complains that Achilles lies in his tent on a "lazy bed" "mocking [their] designs" and "with him Patroclus" who "with ridiculous and awkward action, / which, slanderer, he imitation calls, /...pageants [them]" (1.3.150-55). The term "ridiculous" conjures up previously discussed images of the ape and the child as a tool for humor. Ulysses describes how Patroclus apes Agamemnon "like a strutting

[254] See Bednarz, *Poets' War,* 32-52, 257-264.

player" and the aged Nestor "with a palsy," making "the faint defects of age" into a "scene of mirth" (157, 176, 178). Ulysses decries Patroclus' performance, calling his impersonations "as like" to their subjects "as Vulcan and his wife," meaning that Vulcan, the old, blackened, and deformed man, is diametrically opposed to Venus, the young white able-bodied woman (171-72). The invocation of Vulcan in this speech implies that the boy player who might have portrayed Patroclus, as he is called "boy" by Thersites, exists at the farthest end of the spectrum from the old man, Nestor, whom he imitates.[255] Being the inverse of Vulcan therefore casts the boy player as the young, white, feminine object that Thersites calls Achilles' "masculine whore" (5.1.18).[256] Achilles even requests that he "now play [him] Nestor," not unlike Captain Tucca in *Poetaster* making demands on his pyrgi. Daniel Juan Gil calls this performance in *Troilus* "aping": "by aping the Greek generals," he writes, Patroclus produces a scene of "erotic pleasure" for Achilles, pleasure rooted in the wide gaps between the body of the boyish performer and the different parts he plays.[257] Patroclus' comic performance is not seen, nor do he or Achilles ever allude to it in the play itself, but the report stands as a reminder to the audience, perhaps, of the efforts of the child players at the Blackfriars, who tried (and maybe failed, in the audience's estimation) to make those impersonations successful. The image of Patroclus, particularly in his implied sexual relationship with Achilles, becomes yoked with the images of the boy players who imitated Alleyn in *Poetaster* or, as will be

[255] This address by Thersites is among many insults hurled at Patroclus, and might allude more to status as Achilles' "male varlet" than age of the actor playing him (5.1.15-16). Achilles also refers to Patroclus as a boy when he calls Hector a "boy-queller" after Hector kills Patroclus (5.5.49).
[256] Frederick Fleay "surmises that...Chapman was Achilles" in Shakespeare's treatment of figures in the Poets' War in *Troilus and Cressida*. While Bednarz finds no basis for this claim, it would be appropriate if Achilles is linked with a boy player (Patroclus), given that Chapman wrote almost exclusively for the Blackfriars Children. (Bednarz, *Poets' War,* 32)
[257] Daniel Juan Gil, *Before Intimacy: Asocial Sexuality in Early Modern England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 96-7.

discussed in the final chapter, pretended to be old Lorenzo (a Vulcan-like figure) in *May Day*. That Patroclus portrayed these two types in particular is instructive to the impression that these boy players made in enacting roles that were considered far removed from their expertise and/or life experience.

Another famous reference to the acting of boy players comes from Shakespeare's Cleopatra when she dreads to "see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I' th' posture of a whore" (5.2.263-8). She employs anthimeria, the poetic device in which one part of speech (a noun) is used as another (a verb). Her "verbing" of the word "boy," much like the verb "to ape," puts tremendous energy into the figure of the performer and also evokes for the audience not only the characteristics of the boy performer which have been discussed in this chapter, but also the irony that a boy player as Cleopatra is also speaking (or squeaking) these words. "To boy" was, in most cases, the same as "to ape," to fill the wide gap between the actor and the character's body with the skill of imitation. By loading their plays with intertheatrical references to racialized characters, the Blackfriars Children were using racial impersonation in a self-conscious, parodic way to highlight their own skills and appeal to audience taste. Boy players by "aping" adult performers and specializing in highly skilled physical, vocal, and musical feats, have throughout the early modern period been associated with the production of the versatile, variable skill of the white male body. This parody in *Poetaster* demonstrates that whiteness was central to the identity of the child player and this perception of their whiteness produced their supposed malleability and "metamorphic potential."[258] By putting their repertory into conversation with other performances, both of children and

[258] Lucy Munro, "Queering Gender, Age, and Status in Early Modern Children's Drama" in Higginbotham and Johnston, *Queering Childhood*, 227.

adults, that circulated throughout early modern England, a more nuanced understanding of embodiment and actor skill emerges. Reading *Poetaster* alongside *Battle of Alcazar* (as well as "Mr. Moore's Revels") shows how racialized performance, of both whiteness and blackness, is produced intertheatrically through repeated (and often self-conscious) displays of theatrical skill.

CODA – "Playing the Moor": Othello, Height, and the Absence of Black Childhood

In the boy company's parody of "the Moor," they stack one player on top of the other to create an effect of a tall, imposing performer in the role. In later generations of Shakespearean acting, the question of height, and who is the right size for what role, became deeply vexed when it came to the part of Othello. In performances by David Garrick and Edmund Kean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively, commentators made much of their small sizes in contrast with their own ideas about the character. Emily Hodgson Anderson attributes Garrick's failure in the role to both acting style and size: Othello being "the property of bombastic or declamatory 'ranters' such as James Quin" and not suited to Garrick's "naturalistic" style, which, "coupled with his short stature, made him physically unsuitable for the part."[259] In comparison with six-foot tall rival actor Spranger Barry, who also played the role at this time, Garrick was only five foot four inches tall.[260] The envious and sarcastic Colley Cibber reportedly said that Garrick "is the completest little doll of a figure, the prettiest little creature you can

[259] Emily Hodgson Anderson, *Shakespeare and the Legacy of Loss* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2018), 50.
[260] Leslie Ritchie, *David Garrick and the Mediation of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 118.

imagine."[261] Quin compared him to Pompey, the black servant boy from William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, purportedly by shouting out at a performance of Garrick's Othello: "Here's Pompey—but where is the teakettle?" While this is an apocryphal anecdote, this comparison of Garrick to a enslaved Black boy shows, as Ashley L. Cohen writes, what made Garrick "an inadequate stand-in for the imposing noble Moor" due to "an unbridgeable gulf separating" Othello "from the enslaved child Pompey." [262]

While Garrick only played the role briefly, Kean made it a regular staple of his repertory, despite being only a couple inches taller than Garrick. While Kean's Othello is most well-known for his adoption of a lighter brown makeup than his predecessors, his success in the role is also remarkable because of his smaller size.[263] C. Douglas Abel notes that critics considered "his diminutive stature…inadequate for just representation of tragic characters," and that "the defect was commented upon, more frequently and more critically, in Othello than in his other roles."[264] William Robson, a fan of the statuesque John Philip Kemble (Kean's rival), compared Kean in the role to "a little vixenish black girl, in short petticoats."[265] Abel also quotes an 1814 newspaper review from *The Scourge*: "Mr. Kean, in Othello…looks like a stripling who would ape the 'pomp and

[261] Quoted in Charles E. L. Wingate, *Shakespeare's Heroes on the Stage* (Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1896), 309.
[262] Ashley L. Cohen, *The Global Indies: British imperial culture and the reshaping of the world, 1756-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 87. In true theatrical anecdotal fashion, this quip is attributed to Colley Cibber in J. Fitzgerald Molloy's *The Life and Adventures of Edmund Kean, tragedian, Vol. 1* (London, 1888), 195. For the power of the theatrical anecdote in shaping performance history, see Paul Menzer, *Anecdotal Shakespeare* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).
[263] For recent work on Kean's "tawny" Othello, see Atesede Makonnen, "'Our Blackamoor or Negro Othello': Rejecting the Affective Power of Blackness," *European Romantic Review* 29, no. 3 (2018): 347-355.
[264] C. Douglas Abel, "'Alexander the Little': The Question of Stature in Edmund Kean's Othello," *Theatre History Studies* 9 (1989): 97.
[265] William Robson, *The Old Play-Goer* (London, 1854), 9.

circumstance' of command."[266] Both critiques put pressure on the shape of Kean's body, questioning his gender as well as his ability. The use of the verb "ape" and the idea that "diminutive stature" is "inadequate" for tragic figures like Othello resonates with the spectacle of the boys' parody in *Poetaster* two hundred years prior. It was Kean's "intense, vehement, varied, and physically exuberant acting style," Abel argues, that would "compensate for his physical defects."[267] In other words, his movement, like the boys' stalking, became the character's calling card. The use of physical skill turned spectacle tricked the audience into seeing the character in a new light.

Associations of Othello with height and size continue to this day. In Keith Hamilton Cobb's 2019 play *American Moor,* Cobb portrays an African American actor auditioning for the role of Othello in a production directed by a white man. The opening stage direction refers to the character (based on Cobb himself who performed the role) as "a tall man, powerfully built and handsome, and only imposing if you see him that way" (3).[268] The first exchange he has with the director (an actor seated in the darkened house, a cross between an audience member and a disembodied voice) is about his height (11):

Director	Man! You're tall!
Actor	…It's great to meet you as –
Director	How tall *are* you?
Actor	I don't know, about 6'4'' on a good day. Thank you for having me in.

The white director's use of what Cobb later calls a "hollow compliment," is also a microaggression, a fixation on his size as an indicator of his fitness for the role rather than his acting ability (41). The actor tries to change the subject, perhaps at first with

[266] Quoted in Abel, "Alexander the Little," 98.
[267] Abel, "Alexander the Little," 100.
[268] Quotations from Keith Hamilton Cobb, *American Moor* (New York: Methuen Drama, 2019).

some discomfort (as evidenced by the ellipsis) and then when pressed, he casually shrugs off the answer to the question and redirects the conversation back to the task at hand. But Cobb also reinforces the importance of Othello's height when he criticizes one of the other auditioners as being "ugly and way too short": "I mean we're doin' Othello, right? The warrior…" (12). As "a large Black man," the actor feels that he understands the role of Othello much better than "a little white man" like the director ever could (13). But Cobb also emphasizes Othello's childishness (32):

> …this proud Prince, at his core, is a boy…He is a boy. He is an arrogant, ill-mannered, perfect, precocious Black child in the body of an aging badass. But he is a boy, like Tamir Rice was a boy…like Trayvon Martin was a boy.

In the first chapter, I discussed the connections between whiteness, innocence, and childhood in the early modern period. An absence of children of color in early modern plays associates blackness by default with older and larger characters, like Othello. This perception of Black youths as bigger, older, and guilty is reflected tragically in cases of police brutality and the murder of Black boys and young men, who are supposedly more threatening (or "imposing").[269] We can see an early modern antecedent to this phenomenon in the children's performance of the Moor in *Poetaster*.

[269] See Phillip Atiba Goff, Matthew Christian Jackson, Brooke Allison, Lewis Di Leone, Carmen Marie Culotta, and Natalie Ann DiTomasso, "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106, no. 4 (2014): 526-45, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035663.

Chapter 3

Transforming Tricks: Protean Performance in The Knight of the Burning Pestle

Introduction

Amorphus in *Cynthia's Revels,* discussed briefly in the first two chapters, has a name that suggests formlessness and an ability to take on many forms, like the mythological sea god Proteus. His powers are at their height when he shows his young pupil Asotus his own "pageant" of "socially fluid" transformational capability (2.3.14-19)[270]:

> the particular and distinct
> face of every your most noted species of persons, as your merchant,
> your scholar, your soldier, your lawyer, courtier, etc. and each of
> these so truly as you would swear, but that your eye shall see the
> variation of the lineament, it were my most proper and genuine aspect.

Criticus compares this type of courtier to "some subtle Proteus, one [who] / Can change and vary with all forms he sees" and "be anything but honest" (3.4.42-44). The future Richard III's comparison of himself to Proteus in *3 Henry VI* ("I can add colors to the chameleon / Change shapes with Proteus for advantages" [3.2.193-94]) connects the god's transformational skills with deceitful performance, associated with both the medieval theatrical figure of the Vice, as well as characters pretending to have physical or mental impairments.[271] Mercury actually categorizes Amorphus's formlessness as a kind of deformity: "Amorphus, / a traveller, one so made out of the mixture and shreds of forms that / himself is truly deformed" (2.3.76-78). DiGangi refers to him as "a monstrous hybrid of the excessive…difficult to visualize as an actual stage character."[272]

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[270] Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: drama and social space in London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 75
[271] See Row-Heyveld, *Dissembling Disability.*
[272] DiGangi, *Sexual Types,* 110-11.

That Amorphus is difficult to visualize might also be a product of this play having no notable performances since its debut four hundred years ago, so there is no record of how he was staged. Therefore, our imagination of Amorphus as a character is at once lacking and superfluous in its form. The character's status as a "traveler" attributes his shapelessness to "Italian 'remnants,' 'Spanish shrugs,' French faces' — acquired from [his] travels to less 'civilized' (unlawful, unchaste, irreligious) foreign cultures."[273] These foreign (and Catholic) influences threaten his Englishness (and his whiteness), while always pointing back to the body of the English courtier (and boy actor) beneath. Katherine Schaap Williams echoes DiGangi's assessment of Amorphus when she argues that the exact shape of Richard III's theatrical body is difficult to locate textually. It is his Protean and chameleon-like abilities that make him such an unlikely "deformed" character, never fixed in one place.[274] Williams also links the concept of deformity to a "multiplicity" of forms, where the presentation of disability onstage is both a "site of limitation and scope for limitless variation."[275] Amorphus's so-called "deformity" might be more akin to the Latin *dis-forma* or *difformity*, meaning diverse or many forms.[276] His seeming formlessness enables his ability to transform into many different shapes and perform many different roles. The "unfinished" body of the child actor playing Amorphus also exhibits a kind of malleability associated with childhood, as discussed in the first chapter.

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[273] Mario DiGangi, "'Male deformities': Narcissus and the Reformation of Courtly Manners in *Cynthia's Revels*," in *Ovid and the Renaissance Body*, ed. Goran V. Stanivukovic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 107.
[274] I have chosen to capitalize "Protean" in this discussion to highlight the term's connection to Proteus, the sea god, and the myth of his transformation by force.
[275] Williams, *Unfixable Forms*, 17.
[276] For the definition of difformity, see Colleen Rosenfeld, *Indecorous Thinking: figures of speech in early modern poetics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 75. Quoted in Williams, *Unfixable Forms*, 17.

The invocation of Proteus in both *Cynthia's Revels* and *3 Henry VI* makes him a figure synonymous with shapeshifting, transformable, and virtuosic or versatile skill in performance practice. In this chapter, I wish to put the word "Protean" as it is applied to the art of performance back in its mythological context to recover a key element of the story that has been elided in its modern usage. In the stories featuring Proteus in Homer and Virgil, the god has the gift of transformation, but he is also a figure, like the boy actor and the ape, who can be caught and held against his will. It is within this pressurized environment of constraint that he performs his shapeshifting, and then only after his progress through transformation, when he gives up his struggle, can he prophesy as his captors wish him to do. Proteus's transformations therefore serve a defensive purpose; they are employed to get him out of his captor's grip.

Beginning with an audition scene that recalls Jonson's display of the young Pyrgi in *Poetaster*, Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* features a young apprentice, Rafe, who is accepted (albeit begrudgingly) into the ranks of a playing company at the behest of his master, George the citizen grocer, and his wife Nell. Throughout the play, George and Nell compel Rafe to conjure up acts of performative skill and take on many different roles — a grocer turned knight errant, a royal wooer, the lord of the May Day celebrations, and an army captain. Due to the metatheatrical nature of the play, the audience of *Pestle* is fully aware of Rafe's identity outside of the dramatic fiction of the play. This awareness makes Rafe's transformations even more impressive, since he starts the play as a quiet boy and ends as a swaggering player. Rafe's Protean performance in *Pestle* is, I argue, not only a demonstration of remarkable skill but also constituted of acts enforced by an oppressive power. It is a reaction to pressure, and it is

this quality that classifies his transformations as a race trick, a show of skill and spectacle that lays bare structures of control and oppression, while on its surface eliding any overt reference to racial difference or racecraft.

The development of race as a social concept has this same transformational quality while being deeply invested in structures of power. Margo Hendricks compares race to a figure that is "very adept at assuming, chameleon-like, whatever appearance its natural surroundings require."[277] Barbara F. Fields and Karen E. Fields likewise call the foundation of racecraft shapeshifting or "protean."[278] By incorporating pressure back into the term "Protean," I also call upon Urvashi Chakravarty's definition of race "as a function of power, designed both to signify and to justify subjection," and the pressure of constraint/restraint being a key function of that power.[279] I argue that the child players, and especially a character like Rafe in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* are key figures in elucidating the Protean quality of racemaking on the early modern stage. Rafe is the prototypical Protean figure for his shifting roles, as he uses props and costumes from the playing company to fulfill such successive part. But Rafe is also under pressure, as he is pulled onto the stage and thrust into the narrative of this play by George and Nell in a performance that does not liberate him as much as insert him into another patriarchal structure, that of the playing company. By engaging with Rafe's tricks in Beaumont's play, alongside its more overt references to racial difference, I argue that metatheatrical representations of the boy player's performance skill, and the reactions from the audience

[277] Margo Hendricks, "Visions of Color: Spectacle, Spectators, and the Performance of Race," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, eds. Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 511.
[278] Fields and Fields, *Racecraft,* 85.
[279] Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent,* 7.

they provoke within the fiction of the play, engage discourses of gender, sexuality, class, and ability that all put pressure on the formation of early modern racecraft.

In this chapter, I will read the character of Rafe in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* as a Protean figure, one who is held in the restrictive practice of apprenticeship and compelled to perform in the play by his master and mistress. I will begin with a brief overview of Proteus as a mythological figure in classical texts and early modern drama that foreground his captivity and transformation as a strategy for freedom. Proteus's dramatic career is not as prolific as one might think. For being so tied to acting and performance, the character of the sea god Proteus is represented sparsely, mostly in court masques and masques within plays.[280] I look then at the use of Proteus as a character in the 1595 Christmas revels of Gray's Inn, published as the *Gesta Grayorum*, a ritual performance of youth, rebellion, and ultimate submission to authority. Beaumont was a member of the Inner Temple, another Inn of Court, and the influence of the law students' revels on *Pestle* make these performances well suited to be read together as sites of imperial worldbuilding (i.e. transformation under pressure) for a specific social milieu.[281] The character Protea in John Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis* from the first Blackfriars repertory (and probably revived in the second) also evokes these twinned elements of violent pressure and (potentially) liberatory transformation mapped onto the body of the boy player.

Then, after tracking how terms of Protean transformation has been applied to

[280] He appears in the wedding masque in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (1619), Jonson's masques *Neptune's Triumph* (1624), *The Fortunate Isles* (1625), and *Love's Triumph Through Callipolis* (1630), and Thomas Heywood's mayoral city pageant *Porta Pietatis* (1638). See *Index of Characters*, 82.
[281] See Brent E. Whitted, "Staging Exchange: Why *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* Flopped at Blackfriars in 1607," *Early Theatre* 15, no. 2 (2012): 111-130.

early modern actors as a desirable skill and a site of virtuosity, I will argue that for the child players, their skills, and the spectacles of their versatility in plays like *Pestle* are shaped by their condition as impressed theatrical workers. The use of terms such as "bound," "cast," and "discharged" within the play text point to the significance of not only the characters as apprentices but also how terms of service overlap with terms of performance and theatrical labor. Rafe's terms of performative service resonate with those of Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest,* and I consider how reading Rafe as a "bound" versatile performer can be put into conversation with more overtly racialized characters of the early modern canon.

Finally, I look at how Beaumont's play also traffics in more overt references to racialized performance practices that speak to the "Protean" structure of the play itself, which draws on many different dramatic forms.[282] Rafe not only transforms himself to suit his master and mistress's whims, but the three of them put pressure on the play generically and transform it together. As a typical knight errant of medieval romance, Rafe takes on the fighting of "barbarous" giants, the rescuing of fair damsels, and the temptation of an "infidel" princess. While it has been noted that the citizens infuse the play with practices of the public theatres like the Red Bull and the content of their repertory, the inclusion of these specific racial elements, I argue, points to a perceived disparity between the repertories of the public and private theaters, that the Blackfriars was not a space that engaged with these types of racialized performance.[283] That the

[282] Introduction to Revels edition by Sheldon P. Zitner, 42. All quotations from *Pestle* are from Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* ed. Sheldon P. Zitner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
[283] For discussion of the public theatre's influence on George and Nell, see Joshua S. Smith, "Reading Between the Acts: Satire and the Interludes in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," *Studies in Philology* 109, no. 4 (Summer 2012), 474-495.

citizens use Rafe as their instrument to make the play engage with these intertheatrical and racialized tropes shows how his versatility, formed under powerful pressure and subjection, promotes a nationalist and imperialist agenda. Tracing Proteus across myth, drama on the public and private stages, in the court and the Inns, is an expansive project that unveils how control and restraint is key to the versatility shown by these players and our perceptions of them as skilled laborers, both "unformed" (amorphous) and perpetually "transformed."

The Figure of Proteus in Myth and Drama

Proteus has become synonymous with his transformative power, which makes him a potent theatrical figure, but by engaging with the nuances of his story (and its uses by authors in the Renaissance), we see a more complex image emerge. In George Chapman's translation of *The Odyssey* (1616), he refers to Proteus as "an old Sea-farer."[284] He is "deathlesse," an "Aegyptian Peere" and "Neptune's priest."[285] Edothea, purportedly his daughter, advises the king Menelaus on how to catch Proteus, saying that "Him, if any way / Thou couldest inveagle, he would cleare display / Thy course from hence" and help them home.[286] She says that he will sleep "like to a shepheard midst his flocke of sheepe."[287] Recalling terminology of labor, skill, and deceit, Menelaus calls their exploit "craft" (Proteus "came never neare / The craft we usde"). When he is caught, Proteus turns into a lion, dragon, panther, boar, water, and a tree. But he fails to escape their hold; the men "held to straight for all his skill, / To extricate." The men were too

[284] George Chapman, *Homer's Odyssey. Translated according to ye Greeke* (London: By Rich: Field [and W. Jaggard], 1616), 56. http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A03515.0001.001
[285] Chapman, *Odyssey*, 57.
[286] The use of the word "inveagle" echoes Nell's concern in *Knight of the Burning Pestle* that Rafe might be "inveigled" into a company of players (2.208).
[287] Chapman, *Odyssey*, 58.

powerful for Proteus to escape, despite his transformational skill. Playwright Thomas Heywood also describes the episode thus: Proteus, the shepherd of a "sea herd" of porpoises, "used to come out of the deepes upon the dry land, and there take a nappe with his Porposes."[288] Menelaus and his men hide in the skins of the porpoises in order to pounce on the god while he is sleeping and force him to tell them his prophecy. They are meant to "catch fast hold on him sleeping: & notwithstanding all his changeable shapes and figures, not to dismisse him, till he had reduc't himselfe to his owne natural forme, and then he would predict to him whatsoever was to come." Proteus being "reduced" to his "natural form" recalls the language of Amorphus' excessive presence, and indeed the large presence of the Moor figure discussed in the previous chapter. Proteus's story, therefore, is one full of crafty trickery, that hinges on the power of the men to withstand the god's transformations. His status is also configured around a racialized identity (that of an Egyptian) and a classed position as a shepherd, despite also being a god. This classification of the god as laborer, a shepherd, is reminiscent of iconic dramatic types like Tamburlaine the shepherd king and Vulcan the smith god (featured in the next chapter).

Proteus also appears in Virgil's *Georgics* where he is arrested not by a group of men, but by a single youth. The difference in age between Proteus and his captor Aristaeus makes this telling of the story particularly relevant to this project. Peter Pesic notes that the dynamic image of the young man wrestling with a god is reminiscent of Jacob's wrestling with the angel in the Christian Old Testament.[289] Dryden's 1697 translation of

[288] Thomas Heywood, *Gynaikeion: Or, Nine Bookes of various History. Concerninge Women Inscribed by Ye Names of Ye Nine Muses*...(London, Printed by Adam Islip, 1624), 38-39.
[289] Peter Pesic, "Shapes of Proteus in Renaissance Art," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (March 2010): 62. See also A. Bartlett Giamatti's chapter, "Proteus Unbound: Some Version of the Sea God in the

Virgil describes Proteus as being "weary with his Toyl, and scorch'd with Heat," a reference to a somatic marking of lower-class labor and race that I will take up in my next chapter.[290] The young captor in this story is Aristaeus, who, aggrieved at the loss of his bees, asks his mother Cyrene for the remedy. She, like Edothea in Homer, instructs her son to seek out Proteus for the answer and gives him the method to make the god talk. This is her speech in John Ogilby's 1649 translation:

> But him thou first must binde, ere heel'le declare
> Cause of thy losse, and prosper thy affair.
> Unless you force him, no advice he grants,
> And is inexorable to all complaints.
> Handle him roughly then, and binde him fast,
> And all his slights shall useless prove at last.[291]

Proteus must be found, forced, bound, and handled roughly to prevent his "slights" (or tricks) from working. Dryden in his later version even uses language of invasion: "With Force invade his Limbs, and bind him fast" (140) and later, "convinc'd of conquest, he resum'd his shape."[292] Virgil clearly designates Proteus as not only a powerful god but also an object to be taken and controlled, his resources (the information he has) available to anyone who can force him to talk.

These translations by Ogilby and Dryden call Aristaeus a "most undaunted youth" or "Audacious Youth."[293] "Audacity" was one of the key principles taught in a grammar

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Renaissance," in *Exile and Change in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 115-150.

[290] John Dryden, *The works of Virgil containing his Pastorals, Georgics and Aeneis: adorn'd with a hundred sculptures (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1697),* 139. http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A65112.0001.001

[291] John Ogilby, *The works of Publius Virgilius Maro* (London: Printed by T.R. and E. M. for John Crook, 1649), 107. http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A65106.0001.001

[292] Dryden, *Georgics*, 141. Proteus in response to Aristaeus' demand recounts the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, who Aristaeus had been chasing before inadvertently causing her death, for which he is punished by the Nymphs with the loss of his bees.

[293] Ogilby, 109; Dryden, 141.

school education, as Sir James Whitelocke writes in his account of being trained by Richard Mulcaster at the Merchant Taylors school, where performing in plays at court "taught" the young scholars "good behavior and good audacity."[294] Thomas Heywood suggests that plays at the university helped to "arm" young scholars with "audacity," using military rhetoric to suggest that it is an essential attribute of power and control.[295] Audacity refers to a boldness or confidence that could also verge on reckless or impudent. John Astington calls it "the ability to come out of an involuted adolescent protective shell," or in other words, an aging transformation of its own.[296] Nell in *Pestle* calls out to Rafe upon his first entrance as the grocer that "the gentlemen will / praise thee, Rafe, if thou playst thy part with audacity" (2.102-103). Both Whitelocke and Nell therefore see audacity as a key kind of behavior needed to succeed at court amongst "gentlemen." It is a development of power that must be cultivated by those with the privilege to use it; that Rafe is encouraged to be "audacious" in his role raises the question of whether his audacity can be exercised off the stage as well (not likely).

Aristaeus the "audacious youth" binding Proteus the ancient sea-god certainly presents a different power relation, one echoed in *The Masque of Proteus*. Audacity was also on display in the series of entertainments presented by the young law students at Gray's Inn that made up the *Gesta Grayorum* in 1594-95. This months-long festival ended with *The Masque of Proteus,* written by Inn student Francis Davison and published almost a hundred years later in a purportedly eyewitness account in 1688.[297] A mock

[294] Quoted in John Astington, *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time: the art of stage playing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 42.
[295] Thomas Heywood, "An Apology for Actors," in *Shakespeare's Theater: a sourcebook,* ed. Tanya Pollard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 227.
[296] Astington, *Actors and Acting*, 42.
[297] Quotations from *Gesta Grayorum, or The History of the High and Mighty Prince Henry, Prince of Purpoole, Anno Domini 1594*, ed. Desmond Bland (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1968).

court was instated at the Inn, led by the Prince of Purpoole, a title bestowed on Mr. Henry Holmes, who was designated the "ruler" that presided over the festivities from Christmastide to Shrove Tuesday of 1594-95.[298] Emma K. Rhatigan also characterizes the student's activities as a method that "bound them into the corporate body of Gray's Inn."[299] It should be noted that attendance at these revels, despite their association with "relaxation" and release for the law students, was compulsory.[300] This "bound" status, while similar to the "bound" apprentice, offered a different kind of social advancement into upper echelons of court.

Bernadette Andrea has written on the silent presence of the Tartarian Page in the "Masque of Proteus" as a symbol of "the patriarchal web of empire indexed by the *Gesta Grayorum*," invoking chivalric language and medieval romance.[301] This rhetoric is on full display in the Prince's Squire's speech that recounts how the prince "and his courageous knights" were led to seek out Proteus: they "Disperst themselves in many sundry quests, / To seeke adventures as they should befall."[302] The Squire then recounts the struggle between the prince and Proteus. This struggle is not staged, however, even though

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Another intriguing connection between the *Gesta* and *Pestle* is that the former featured a performance of *The Comedy of Errors*, which shares character names with *Pestle* (Nell and Luce). The references to Luce in *Comedy* might also refer to the real London resident Lucy Negro, a Black woman involved in sex work. References to early modern racial difference emerge once again by putting these texts side by side.

[298] The production of *Knight of the Burning Pestle* at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse was billed as a Christmas show and decked out with holly, hearkening back to the Christmas revels of the *Gesta Grayorum*, and it was similarly hectic and exuberant in its staging, where the players used the small playhouse like a jungle gym. Will Tosh writes, "Adele Thomas's *Pestle*, despite its springtime themes…was re-conceived as a Christmas show when it was included in the 2014-15 winter season: marketed by the Globe as a 'festive treat'". *Playing Indoors: Staging Early Modern Drama in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse* (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018), 31.

[299] Emma K. Rhatigan, "Audience, Actors, and 'Taking Part' in the Revels," in *Imagining the audience in early modern drama, 1558-1642,* eds. Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 162.

[300] Bland, *Gesta,* xviii.

[301] Bernadette Andrea, "Amazons, Turks, and Tartars in the Gesta Grayorum and The Comedy of Errors," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment,* ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 80.

[302] Bland, *Gesta,* 79 [lines 13, 20-21].

Proteus is present on the stage. We do not get to see any representation of his transformational powers enacted. When the prince seized Proteus, he "thus surprisde resorted presently / To his familiar artes and turning tricks."[303] Because the prince had a "gallant shape, and budding youth," Proteus first turned into "a goodly lady, passing faire."[304] In no other Proteus myths does he change his gender, and this gender transformation plays into the other kinds of transformations seen in the children's repertory. The prince "embraces" the female Proteus, inviting an erotic connection between the two figures and the "intense desire that pervades their encounter and acts strongly on both."[305] Proteus then turns into a black serpent, a casket full of jewels, and the "spectacle" of a wounded army.[306]

When finally subdued and defeated, Proteus offers the prince a range of prizes in exchange for his liberty, including the powerful "Adamantine Rock…That the wild Empire of the Ocean…/Should follow that, where e'er it should be set." [307] But the prince ends up bringing Proteus to a more "attractive" power that "surpass[es / The wond'rous force of his Iron-drawing Rocks," i.e. Queen Elizabeth I, who was in attendance at the masque.[308] The metaphor of the sovereign's power as iron here also moves into language of empire building and discovery: "by this Attractive force was drawne to light / From depth of ignorance that new-found world / Whose golden mines Iron found and conquered."[309] In Heywood's *Porta Pietatis* (1638), a mayoral city pageant, Proteus enters riding on a tortoise that signifies, as Heywood writes, the "double nature" of

[303] Bland, *Gesta,* 80 [lines 19-20].
[304] Bland, 80 [lines 27, 29].
[305] Pesic, "Shapes of Proteus," 78.
[306] Bland, 81 [line 13].
[307] Bland, 82 [lines 9, 13,15].
[308] Bland, 82 [lines 19-20].
[309] Bland, 83 [lines 14-16].

England's "noble Trading both by Sea and Land." The god wishes "that *Fleete* / Which makes th'*East Indies* with our *England* meete, / Prosper to all your hearts desires."[310] The presence of Proteus as specifically a *sea* god in these masques and entertainments represents Britain's imperial aspirations at this historical moment. Here Proteus participates directly in the performance of white English enterprise enacted by the young students of Gray's Inn. They overpower his transformations and then undermine what he has to offer as "ransom" for his liberty. Despite Proteus's skill, he consistently ends on the losing side of the narrative.

Protean Figures at the First Blackfriars: Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis*

Despite depictions of Proteus in these source texts as an older masculine figure, child players have also been likened to the transforming god and classified by Lamb as "shapeable entities," and "protean figures that can potentially become anything."[311] The child's ability to transform is inherent in his growth towards adult status as well as his implicit whiteness (the underlying agent of perceived versatility noted by Thompson below). Boy actors were given opportunities to show off their imitative and transformational skill in performances where they had to take on many roles. An actor in the children's companies might even play more than one role in a single production, as evidenced in the induction to *Antonio and Mellida* referenced in the first chapter. Some plays, like Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* or Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* feature characters who must transform within the fiction of the play, either as an

[310] Thomas Heywood, *Porta Pietatis or, The port or harbour of piety Exprest in sundry triumphes, pageants, and showes, at the initiation of the Right Honourable Sir Maurice Abbot Knight, into the Majoralty of the famous and farre renowned city London…*(London: By I. Okes, 1638). http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A03242.0001.001.
[311] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 93.

agent of deception and trickery (Cocledemoy in *Courtesan*) or at the behest of the playhouse audience (Rafe in *Pestle*). In this spectacle of self-conscious transformation, the children's company plays also consistently use pressure and restraint for dramatic effect in their staging of the boy players as courtly servants and apprentice workers with potential for rebellion and authorial challenge.

John Lyly's children's plays from the 1580s adapt episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that emphasize this childish ability to change shape. While the mythological Proteus does not change gender, Lyly uses gender transformation as a key element of plays like *Gallathea* and *The Maid's Metamorphosis,* which both highlight the perceived malleability of the child player's gender identity. Lyly also has characters in *Love's Metamorphosis* turned into a stone, a bird, and a flower, theatrical tricks that are hard to visualize and have not been attempted in modern performance. In this play, which was probably revived by the Children of the Chapel at the Blackfriars around 1600, the aptly named Protea, a young woman, calls on the sea god Neptune to transform her as an escape from her tyrannical father's wish to sell her off in marriage.[312] She summons Neptune's help because his "godhead conquered [her] maidenhead" (3.2.27-28). Kuhl contrasts Protea's attitude toward love and sex with that of Diana's chaste nymphs, and he calls her encounter with Neptune "a consensual erotic relationship" that she admits freely.[313] Her use of the verb "conquered" however suggests a kind of sexual and gendered violence against a young person that speaks to the forced transformation of

[312] Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels,* 183. More discussion on Protea can be found in Jeff Shulman, "Ovidian Myth in Lyly's Courtship Comedies," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 25, no 2 (Spring 1985): 249-69, and Claire M. Busse, "Profitable Children: Children as Commodities in Early Modern England*,"* in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England,* ed. Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2002), 209-243.
[313] Kuhl, "The Metamorposes of Cupid," 138 (n. 36).

Proteus described above.

Like Rafe, who does not end the play with his freedom, Protea ultimately becomes a representative of "the play's established order," as she submits to Cupid's control and marries when the nymphs do not.[314] Considering this play as a revival alongside the other early plays of the second Blackfriars company, like *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*, allows us to see how boy actors were continually exercising transformational abilities, though they were carefully sculpted as temporary tricks that are resolved by the end through incorporation into established structures (Lyly) or arraignment and punishment for their social striving (Jonson). These tricks should not be discounted as significant acts of meaning-making; they should rather be appreciated as moments where the lines of power and control both within and without the dramatic fiction become blurry. I will continue engaging with Proteus now as a figure of theatrical skill and versatility, and how the term "Protean" has been theorized differently when referring to the performance tricks of adult and child performers.

An Actor Transforms

Early modern writers often heralded the actor's transformational ability. John Webster's treatise on "an Excellent Actor" highlights how "this day one plays a Monarch, the next a private person…[then] a tyrant, on the morrow, an Exile."[315] The best actors could play a wide variety of roles, and the repertory system made this skill visible when actors took on multiple roles within a single week of performance. To achieve this feat,

[314] Kuhl, 129.
[315] "An Excellent Actor," attributed to John Webster, from *New and Choise Characters, of several authors...*(London: Printed by Thomas Creede, for Laurence Lisle, 1615); Sir William Cornwallis notes the metamorphic potential of actors primarily by material means, not physical: "players that must bee understood other men, because they appeare in others beards and cloakes." *Essayes. by sir william corne-waleys the younger, knight* (London, Printed by S. Stafford and R. Read] for Edmund Mattes, 1600).

the actor in fashioning his performances for the stage had to exhibit a certain amount of self-control to deliver an effective performance. When an actor transforms from one role to another, his body undergoes a process that William West calls "the reforming, or deforming, or performing, of the player's substance into a series of new forms while maintaining a material sameness."[316] The "substance" of the player – his age, gender, height, physical appearance – all the elements of his physical presence onstage, must be formed or shaped to fit the image of the character, in a feat of theatrical trickery that combines physical/vocal skill with material spectacle. Joseph Roach's study of the "passions" in seventeenth century acting technique emphasizes the actor's control over their bodies and emotions, while remaining aware of the effects of their passions on the audience.[317] Roach ascribes the actor's method of transformation (as instigated by the playwright) in terms of speed and force: "playwrights demanded that actors depict the passions as sudden and violent metamorphoses."[318] But it is crucial in his conception of the Protean actor that he "can embody the passions by a 'voluntary metamorphosis,' that he enjoys instantaneous command over his means of expression."[319] The actor stands out as the one primarily in control because his performance depends on self-control. Both Martin A. Berger and Richard Dyer point to "self-control" as a purported feature of whiteness.[320] This kind of control of transformational power in a performer, Ayanna

[316] William N. West, "What's the Matter with Shakespeare? Physics, Identity, Playing," *South Central Review* 26, no. 1/2 (Spring-Summer 2009): 113.
[317] Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: studies in the science of acting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 28.
[318] Roach, *Player's Passion,* 42.
[319] Roach, *Player's Passion,* 47. Roach here quotes *The Jealous Lovers* by Thomas Randolph: "I have seen a Proteus, that can take / What shape he please, and in an instant make / Himself to anything: be that or this / By voluntary metamorphosis…"
[320] Berger terms self-regulation, control, or rigidity as "secondary characteristics" of whiteness. Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: whiteness and American visual culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 4. Dyer mentions "tightness" and "self-control" (*White,* 6).

Thompson also suggests, is aligned with ideas of whiteness, both as a "blank slate" upon which other forms can emerge, and as a figure that is both flexible and controlled.[321]

Protean performance became positively associated with specific adult actors like Burbage and Alleyn who were both called "Proteus" in tributes to them after their deaths. Heywood heralds Alleyn as "the best of actors" who played Tamburlaine and "this Jew" (of Malta, Barabas) and calls him a "Proteus for shapes, and Roscius for a tongue, — / So could he speak, so vary."[322] The apparently equal weighing of excellence in speech and variety ("so vary") shows the value of metamorphic skill for the early modern actor. Richard Flecknoe's Restoration account also praises Burbage as "a delightful Proteus" who "could / Transform himself into what shape he would."[323] Tribble posits that characters deemed by modern critics as "dramatically uneven" like Barabas and Hamlet might have been products of this kind of collaboration between the playwright and the actor in order to provide "a vehicle for the display of actorly skill, a *tour de force* variety." [324] Alexander Paulssen Lash calls Chapman's vehicle for Alleyn, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria,* "a comedic celebration of his star actor's capacity for transformation."[325] Alleyn's extant career was also particularly full of different types, though they shared a commanding and powerful style. He clearly excelled in the

[321] Ayanna Thompson, *Blackface*, 39. Ayanna Thompson in her lecture entitled "On Protean Acting in Shakespeare: Race and Virtuosity" pointed to a New York Times list of the century's "greatest actors" that praised a Black actor, Denzel Washington, for his "charisma" and a white actor, Tilda Swinton, for her "chameleon-like" ability to transform for her different roles. Her pale white face becomes a "canvas for paint and prosthetics" in a way that a black face does not. Whiteness in this case renders the craft of acting visible. Thompson asks if whiteness is required for this kind of shapeshifting. See Manohla Dargis and A.O. Scott, "The 25 Greatest Actors of the 21st Century (So Far)," *The New York Times*, Nov. 25, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/movies/greatest-actors-actresses.html#tilda-swinton
[322] Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays,* 250.
[323] Richard Flecknoe, *Euterpe Revived, Or, Epigrams made at several Times*...(London, 1675), 78.
[324] Tribble, *Early Modern Actors,* 137, 140.
[325] Alexander Paulssen Lash, " 'A delightful Proteus': Humors, Disguise, and the Actor's Skill in *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* and *1 Henry IV*," *Shakespeare Studies* 47 (2019): 211.

representation of racialized and religious "others," judging from his recorded successes as Muly in *The Battle of Alcazar,* Tamburlaine, and Barabas. Thompson identifies the "Proteus" label as "a very specific code for praising cross-racial impersonation."[326] But as discussed above, "Protean" is also applied to child performers who were not tasked with the same kinds of "cross-racial impersonation," especially given the lack of "Jew" or "Moor" types in their repertory. Excavating this term "Protean" as it relates to the skill and spectacle of performing racial difference can help to elucidate how the tricks of racecraft emerge within the children's repertory, where formulations of versatility and virtuosity exist within clearly delineated power structures.

The variation that adult actors used, whether it was through prosthetics or physical and vocal difference, is perceived differently than the children's style of variation, one predicated not on perceptions of their acting skill but of their malleable bodies. They were not capable of transformation themselves; instead, they *were transformed*. Lash makes this distinction, between the transformation enacted by the boys in Lyly's company (such as those in *Love's Metamorphosis* discussed above) and that of Alleyn in *Blind Beggar*:

> Unlike the adult actors who performed Vices or figures like the Blind Beggar, however, these boys were not portrayed as if in control of this process. Lyly's plots instead impose the disguise or transformation from outside. The plot presents these skills as seemingly subordinate to those of their teacher, Lyly, who highlights how the boy actors are guided and advised by their (ostensibly) adult fathers.[327]

Alleyn is "in control" of his disguising and metamorphosis; the Blackfriars children were not. Claire Busse likewise notes how Ben Jonson treats Alleyn and the boy actor

[326] Thompson, *Blackface*, 39.
[327] Lash, "A delightful Proteus," 212.

Salomon Pavy very differently in his odes to them: "Although Pavy is continually acted on, Alleyn acts."[328] The fact that Chapman wrote *Blind Beggar* for the Lord Admiral's Men and then preceded to write ten plays for the Children of the Blackfriars presents an intriguing connection between the kind of skill display expected of Alleyn and that of the children in this later company. Lash's point about who is in "control" of the transformational process, be it playwright or actor, does not recognize the collaborative aspect of theatermaking as well as how ingrained the idea of "control" is in the Proteus myth itself. While Proteus is the one who can change, it is the one who lays hold of Proteus (Menelaus and his men or Aristaeus) that instigates the display of skill. The second Blackfriars repertory is a space where metamorphic potential is being tested and demanded as evidenced in this chapter by the "tricks" presented in *Knight of the Burning Pestle.* The boys themselves were "caught up" as Wendy Wall writes "in a business where they straddle different identities – pupil, servant, commercial player, courtier."[329] In this repertory, unlike Lyly's plays for the first Blackfriars, we see characters within the dramatic fiction asserting their ability to transform (rather than *being* transformed) much more often. But as Lash suggests, the spectacle of transformation and what the actor is called to do remains the same regardless of who initiates it.

The possibilities for and anxieties about the children's capacity to transform themselves and disrupt power structures are visible in the metatheatrical inductions of children's plays. van Es recognizes how the "organized chaos" of the induction to

[328] Claire Busse, "'Pretty Fictions' and 'Little Stories': Child Actors on the Early Modern Stage." In *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800*, eds. Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore (New York: Routledge, 2006), 79.
[329] Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 178.

Cynthia's Revels is actually a "scripted argument" that "asserts the poet's mastery over the detail of production."[330] While it might appear in the fiction of the scene that these "rebellions" are generated from the actors themselves, we must remember that Jonson as playwright is always "pulling the strings."[331] Lamb reads similarly scripted "rebellions" in Marston's *What You Will* slightly differently, seeing them rather "as a moment of release for the boys, echoing perhaps, the carnivalesque revels of educational institutions…in which authority is temporarily suspended and the students are allowed to gain control."[332] This question of control applies not only to the boys' lives as players but also to their gender identities. In the early modern period, Bailey writes, "manhood was construed not merely as a biological category but a political one based on the distinction between freedom and subjection."[333] Not yet recognized as "men" based on their subordinate social status, the experience of the child players reflected those of the guild apprentices and Inns of Court students who showed up at the playhouse, both in the audience and as characters in the plays themselves.[334] By staging encounters that put pressure on the relationship between servant and master, the children's repertory also returns to reinforcing the status quo, as apprentices are reformed (*Eastward Ho!*) and courtiers punished for stepping out of bounds (*Cynthia's Revels, Poetaster*). But there are moments of "release" (or "discharge," a key term for my argument in this chapter) that should point us to more complex characterizations of the boy player's status in this period.

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[330] van Es, "Shakespeare versus Blackfriars," 106.
[331] McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes,* 198.
[332] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 110.
[333] Bailey, "'Bought my boye," 316. See also Greteman, "Coming of Age."
[334] Rebecca Yearling, *Ben Jonson, John Marston and early modern drama: satire and the audience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 15. See also Philip J. Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple: an Elizabethan dramatist in his social setting* (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1969).

Rafe as Protean Apprentice in *Pestle*

Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is notorious for its early modern failure and celebrated for its modern-day success. Unlike the other plays I discuss in this project, it has been professionally produced in this century, at both the recreations of early modern indoor playhouses in the UK and the US.[335] Critics have argued for decades over the reasons for *Pestle*'s initial failure, and the question of whether it was too satirical of its citizen audiences or not satirical enough remains fairly debated on either side.[336] The intrusion of George and Nell into the dramatic fiction of *The London Merchant* is predated by a similar situation in *Cynthia's Revels,* where a citizen and his wife, whose brother Asotus has recently come to court, are demanding entry into the audience of the court revels. Amorphus rejects their suit, claiming that Asotus is now "taken up with great persons" and "he is not to know you tonight" (5.3.25-26). While the wife (whose name is Mistress Downfall, presumably for her choice of marrying a citizen) is ultimately admitted at the behest of her brother, the citizen is "knocked" back and leaves the court, humiliated (35).[337] The difference between Jonson's Citizen not making it past the door and Beaumont's Citizen striding confidently onto the stage (after paying his admittance fee) does speak to a potential shift in performance culture over the seven years between the two plays.[338] When George, the citizen grocer, and his wife Nell interrupt the prologue and insert their apprentice Rafe into the dramatic world of the city comedy *The*

[335] Three times at the American Shakespeare Center (1999, 2003, and 2010) and once at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (2014, with a revival of the same production later that year).
[336] For a review of *Pestle*'s initial failure, see Robert Zacharias, **"**Rafe's Rebellion: Reconsidering *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 31, no. 3 (summer 2008): 104.
[337] The citizen's wife, like Nell, is noted simply in the text of *Cynthia's Revels* as "Wife."
[338] See Leslie Thomson, "Who's In, Who's Out?: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* on the Blackfriars Stage," in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 61-71.

London Merchant, they unleash an energy that produces a rollicking and unruly night at the theatre. As Busse notes, this relationship between audience and actors represents a shift from the earlier repertoire: "Depictions of child actors shift from presenting them as threatening the success of the play [like in the induction to *Cynthia's Revels*] to a vision of the children as the disciplined force attempting to save the theater from its audience."[339]

The Blackfriars playhouse as the site of *Pestle*'s premiere is crucial to ideas about the play's initial reception. At this point, as Lucy Munro reminds us, the company was "accustomed to financial, social and political hazard."[340] Having angered James with their satirical presentations of his court (and in one lost play, a caricature of himself), the Children of the Queen's Revels had lost their royal patent, making them simply the Children of the Revels, and their access to the Blackfriars was also soon to be revoked after more troubles with George Chapman's *Byron* plays. The title page of the 1613 quarto of *Pestle* includes no information about the playing company or site of first performance. The dedication by the publisher Walter Burre to Robert Keysar, the manager of the Children, however, places the play firmly in their repertory, as does the many references within the play to the children and a slew of references to the playing cultures of the day. Critics have also estimated the year of first performance as 1607, only one year before the King's Men took over the lease at Blackfriars from the children. Sarah Dustagheer also notes that the premiere of *Pestle* coincided with an impending ruling from the City of London as to the Blackfriars precinct's status as a liberty,

[339] Busse, "Pretty Fictions," 91
[340] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels,* 1.

meaning that the area was about to be incorporated into the city itself.[341] The tensions between court and city, playhouse and precinct, are reflected in the play's own references to civic pressure, regulation, and control.[342]

The role of Rafe, the young apprentice turned actor, has been interpreted in many ways in modern scholarship. Lamb calls him "an experienced [amateur] player," while Matthew Kendrick labels him a "commercial extravagance to be commanded according to [his master's] whim."[343] Robert Zacharias gives Rafe credit not only for his role as actor but also as playwright and director: "Rafe…for too long, has been unjustly passed over as the fool whose part he is forced to play."[344] The question of whether Rafe has any agency as an apprentice actor foisted about the Children of the Revels company relates to larger systems of control in place for the company itself, where all the actors were children, or at least they were treated as such. While the ages of these actors likely ranged into their teens, they were embedded in a hierarchical institution of mastery, in a company that had only a few years before faced legal action for their impressment of young players against their will. The company had begun to use legitimate apprenticeship contracts for at least some of their young players at this point as evidenced by a 1607 record of indenture for boy player Abel Cooke as apprentice to Thomas Kendall, company manager.[345]

The practice of apprenticeship was meant to benefit both master and the servant:

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[341] Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses,* 73.
[342] See Janette Dillon, "'Is Not All the World Mile End, Mother?': The Blackfriars Theater, the City of London, and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle," Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 9 (1997): 127-148.
[343] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 61; Matthew Kendrick, *At Work In the Early Modern English Theater: Valuing Labor* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2015), 79.
[344] Zacharias, **"**Rafe's Rebellion," 121.
[345] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 56.

the servant would provide their labor without wages in exchange for the tutelage of their master in his given trade for a fixed period of term, usually seven years. Then the apprentice could ostensibly become a member of the guild, a citizen of London, and begin to take on his own apprentices. The master took on a dual role of both supervisor and teacher, and since the apprentice was technically a part of his household, he could also be *in loco parentis*. George and Nell could be seen as surrogate parents for Rafe in the way they alternately push, praise, and cajole him. Nell calls him "our Rafe" and later "my boy" while in the same speech revealing that he is a "fatherless child" (Induction 90, 2.95-96). Rafe is included in their family structure; he would perform at "our house" (Induction 67). But Rafe's favored status is dependent on the quality of his service, which very well could have been stipulated in his contract, as Chakravarty has shown in real apprenticeship contracts, as needing to be "fundamentally willing" and "cheerful": "In attempting to enjoin or enforce an affective tie, the contract of apprenticeship not only mandates the performance of regulated forms of labor; it also enforces the enactment of mutuality."[346] George first instructs Rafe to "set out the Grocery in their / kind, *if thou lovest me*" (Induction 88-89, emphasis added). The citizen's appeal to this "affective tie" with his apprentice also refers to Rafe's proper representation of the livery, the blue apron, associated with the trade. Rafe's loyalty to them is also reinforced by Nell: "I dare swear thou wilt not forget thy old trade" (1.269). When George and Nell fear that Rafe will not perform his bidding adequately, however, the tone shifts abruptly. If Rafe doesn't beat Jasper, Nell "would [he] were hanged" (2.289), and George speculates that if Rafe didn't best Jasper at fencing, "he should ne'er come in my shop more" (2.340). Rafe's

[346] Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent*, 137.

favor is dependent on his willing service to his master and mistress, here figured in his theatrical prowess and his ability to transform the play as well as himself to suit their taste.

The master would provide room and board for the apprentice, and as long as the apprentice was "bound" to the master, he was safe from the laws persecuting rogues, vagabonds, and other masterless men who were in danger of enslavement or imprisonment, as Chakravarty reminds us.[347] Jasper expresses anxiety about being vulnerable to this "statute" after his dismissal from Venturewell's household (1.48). The potential unruliness of apprentices is seen throughout the children's repertory, not only in *Pestle* with Jasper, the young man who falls in love with his master's daughter, Luce, but also in *Eastward Ho!* (1605), where the upstart gallant turned apprentice Quicksilver must repent his wrongdoing from his prison cell.[348] Kendrick locates the stage "as a point of resistance against perceived abuses within London's guild system" where "issues of apprentice insecurity and rebellion" existed "within a framework of theatrical performance and consumer demand."[349] Zacharias sees Rafe as a figure potentially "more frightening than funny" to his audience, especially in his "abrupt transformation" as military leader, a Jack Cade-like rabble rouser of the commons at Mile End.[350] By focusing on Rafe's role as a London apprentice, a familiar theatrical and social figure to this audience who was associated with youth, service, and rebellion, I engage with Chakravarty's work on apprenticeship to show how Rafe is bound up in a system that "deeply disrupt[s] the boundaries between pedagogy and bondage, service and servitude,"

[347] Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent*, 4.
[348] A play that fittingly landed two of its three authors, Jonson and Chapman, in jail for offending the king.
[349] Kendrick, *At Work*, 73.
[350] Zacharias, "Rafe's Rebellion," 104.

in order to lay the groundwork for reading the play through the lens of early modern racecraft.[351]

Rafe can be viewed as a Protean figure based on his versatility in performance and his status as a young apprentice performer under the pressure of service to his master and mistress. He moves between different modes at their command, starting first as the grocer errant but then taking on such roles as the Lord of the May and an army captain. His capability appears to be enabled by the performance experiences he has had previously under the roof of his master, who seem to have spent more time developing him as a player than a grocer. George and Nell, in this moment acting as Rafe's theatrical agents, assure the audience of Rafe's previous credits: "he hath played…*Mucedorus* before the wardens of our company," "he should have played Jeronimo with a shoemaker for a wager" (Induction 83-86). Here are references to two popular Elizabethan dramas (*Mucedorus* and *The Spanish Tragedy*) which at this point in 1607 could be regarded as outmoded or stale in the eyes of the fashionable audience of the private theatre. They serve, however, to put Rafe into a popular theatrical lineage and to acknowledge how performance of plays was not limited to the professionals in the playhouses or at court but done as part of guild entertainments and apparently as part of gambling and games.[352] Rafe has apparently done well in amateur performances at home, according to Nell: "He will act you sometimes at our house that all the neighbours cry out on him" (Induction 66-67).[353] The effect of his performance, however, is not only one of pleasure but also of

[351] Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent*, 64.
[352] This is echoed throughout the play as money is paid to see certain things and wagered on the outcomes of situations: "I'll hold him a penny he shall have his bellyful of fighting now" (Citizen, 2.278).
[353] Zitner suggests that Nell does not understand the idiom "cry out on" (meaning "to complain of"), 59. This malapropism only adds to the ambiguity of how we are to interpret the quality of Rafe's skill.

fear: “we are all as feared, I warrant you, that we quake again” (69-70). Nell also implies that they threaten their misbehaving children by telling them that “Rafe comes” and then they are “quiet as lambs” (71-72). Rafe’s skill is therefore already used as a tool of intimidation and control in their shared household. His service and labor is required not only in the grocer’s shop but also as a source of entertainment for their friends and discipline for their children.

The moment before Rafe’s first speech as actor upon the stage, however, paints a different picture than the introduction we get from George and Nell about Rafe’s performance experience, and is crucial to recognizing his potential position as an enforced player in *Pestle.* Rafe’s silence in this opening scene contrasts greatly with the amount of speaking he does as the Knight within the play. He enters “below” with his mistress Nell, who calls out to her husband after he has entered upon the stage. Rafe’s one and only line before he is brought up on the stage is bidding his mistress “peace,” to be quiet and let the play proceed (Induction 38). When she does not heed him, he then is directed to help Nell onto the stage to sit but he does not yet join her there. He remains silent as George and Nell volunteer him for the role in the play. He is pulled onto the stage, and into the story, through their determination to have things their way. There is no stage direction that indicates exactly when Rafe enters the stage from below, only George’s call for him to “come up” (61). As opposed to the one line that covers Nell’s entrance onto the stage, Rafe has nine lines between his first direction to “come up” and his first line reciting his audition monologue from *1 Henry IV.* Nell’s direction also to “Hold thy head up” is the only indication of his demeanor, which could signal that he is feeling shy or nervous and not presenting well in the theatrical space, or perhaps Nell is

being overly fussy and attentive to her charge, who is ready and willing to show off (72). The ambiguity of Rafe's performance here is a staging question that modern directors must answer. George and Nell continue to direct Rafe like this throughout the action of the play. They are constantly asking after him, giving him instructions, and dictating his next moves, right up until his death speech. Rafe then transforms in the play under the pressure of his master and mistress, much like Proteus who is caught and held while performing his transforming tricks. The question, however, is whether Rafe's transformations hold the same goal as Proteus': does Rafe transform in order to be free? In the next section I will look at how terms of performance, freedom, and violence intersect to show the ways in which racecraft on the early modern stage is a product of these kinds of enforced theatrical labor, articulated through the malleable body of the young white actor.

Discharging Rafe

There is a dynamic verb that brings these ideas about acting style, emotion, freedom, and constraint together, and both George and Venturewell use it in relation to their apprentices: "discharge." The first action of *The London Merchant* (the fictive play within *Pestle*) is Venturewell "discharging" Jasper from his "house and service" as his apprentice, a state of being that Jasper describes as being "bound both by love and duty to your service" (1.17, 36-37). Jasper is "bound" to his employer who in his first speech describes how he has given Jasper shape and form: "gave thee heat / And growth to be what now thou art, new cast thee" (3-4). This comparison of Jasper to a kind of metal that needed to be heated and "cast" or molded, is reminiscent of the language in the induction to *Antonio and Mellida* of actors being "cast" into their "molds" in order to perform their

parts. Here it is Venturewell doing this action upon Jasper, just as George and Nell continually throughout the play "cast" Rafe into various molds, as a knight, fighter, potential lover, morris dancer, soldier, and finally, dying man. Kendrick notes the aggressive tone of this action: "To cast actors in a play, in this early usage, conveys a certain violence, a sense of being literally tossed onto the stage."[354] It can also connote a "sudden and violent transition" or transformation in status from one identity position to another.[355] The intensity then of Jasper's discharge, which Venturewell also calls his "liberty," is what begins the dramatic action of the play (37).

George uses the word "discharge" in reference to Rafe's ability to succeed in his performance. At the end of the induction, he assures the boy prologue to "take you no care for Rafe. He'll discharge himself, I / warrant you" (121-22). While Venturewell follows the OED definition 4b, "to remove or release (a person) from office or employment," George uses another definition in this context: "to acquit oneself in some respect; to carry out or successfully undertake a role, task, or commission; to perform a duty" (6a).[356] To "discharge oneself" could also be used to describe the art of acting itself: "to relieve or unburden oneself by giving vent to words, feelings, etc.; to give utterance or expression to (one's feelings, opinions, etc.); to vent or release (anger, emotion)" (11a). This "venting" relates to the concept of the humors, that some must be expelled to achieve an appropriate balance. Shakespeare uses the term "discharge" repeatedly in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where members of the mechanical amateur acting troupe as well as Duke Theseus use it as a synonym for performance. Bottom

[354] Kendrick, *At Work,* 82.
[355] Kendrick, *At Work,* 83.
[356] "discharge, v.". *OED Online*. March 2022.

declares that he shall "discharge" the character in a variety of beards (1.2.89). Quince laments that "not a man in all Athens" is "able to discharge Pyramus but" Bottom (4.2.8). Theseus ironically calls *Pyramus and Thisbe* "very notably discharged" (5.1.377). By bringing meanings of release (freedom) and performance together, this keyword suggests that inherent to the act of performance is a kind of response to pressure, usually in the form of release.

Rafe potentially discharges his pent-up emotions and desires in the act of playing his role. The (slightly paraphrased) recitation of Hotspur's speech from *Henry IV, Part 1* that serves as Rafe's audition for the company is associated with the kind of acting style that Bottom employs. The loud and brash style of the character might contrast with Rafe's initially quiet demeanor and serve as an ironic counterpart or an opportunity to unload some frustration or pent-up energy. Nell directs Rafe to audition for the gentlemen (i.e. the audience) by "speak[ing] a huffing part" (Induction 74). "Huffing" refers to "blowing, puffing, inflating, swelling" as well as "puffed up, conceited, boastful; blustering, swaggering, hectoring, bullying."[357] In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife,* the Duke refers to a "high huffing strain" associated with "brave fury" (3.5).[358] Rafe's choice of Hotspur can be put alongside other auditions we see staged by young men in early modern drama, such as the university student's "audition" speaking Richard III in *II Return to Parnassus* or the parody of Alleyn's Muly by the boys in *Poetaster*.[359] The choice of this "huffing part" for Rafe's audition shows an attention to

[357] Zitner glosses as "bombastic" (Induction 74). "huffing, adj." *OED Online.* March 2022.
[358] The players in Marston's *Histriomastix* also recognize "huffing parts" in the play they want to stage.
[359] Hotspur's significance fades slightly in the modern convention of history play cycle performance, in which he blazes brightly in only one play out of four (or even eight) that the company produces (where Hal and his development from wastrel prince to conquering king takes precedence). But we know that the character was considered a crucial part of this play given the 1599 quarto title page's inclusion of "Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henry Hotspur of the North" listed alongside Sir John Falstaff as one of the play's

what quality of performance got the most attention on the public stage, that of the big, loud, and virile character. Jonson parodies the public theatre with the impression of Alleyn in *Poetaster* to both showcase as well as undercut the boy actor's skills. He shows how out of place that type of character is on the Blackfriars stage. Rafe's audition as Hotspur could very well serve a similar function, though there is nothing to suggest how his recitation of the speech is received by the actors in the company or the audience.

Rafe's success in the play with the Children of the Revels could open up possibilities for his career. At least Nell supposes that the talented Rafe might be "inveigled by some / of these paltry players," that is, beguiled, trapped, ensnared, or seduced, to join their company (2.208-209). She suggests that because she and her husband have "done [their] parts," Rafe should be "thankful" to them (210). What exactly Rafe's gratitude might look like in that situation is left up to interpretation. Perhaps Nell is implying that if Rafe was truly grateful, he would not leave their service. One of the most direct references to Rafe's status occurs toward the end of the play when Nell instructs him to perform the action of an army captain "bravely" and to "think before whom you perform and what person you / represent" (5.64-66). Rafe then replies: "I warrant you, mistress, if I do it not for the honour of / the city and the credit of my master, let me never hope for / freedom" (67-69). Rafe here associates the success of his performance with his release from his contract by conversely implying that his failure would lead him to "never hope for freedom" from his master and mistress. His discharge

main attractions. Whoever played Hotspur in the original production was undoubtedly a strong performer. Modern productions might enlist the actor who played Hotspur to reappear as his swaggering, unhinged double Pistol in *Henry IV, Part 2,* or even the elderly Justice Shallow to show the actor's impeccable "chameleon-like" range (Laurence Olivier played Hotspur/Shallow; Sam Crane at Shakespeare's Globe in 2010 played Hotspur/Pistol).

(freedom) from service is dependent on his discharge (performance) of his role. This line would stand out and be particularly uncomfortable in a modern audience if Rafe was played by a Black actor and the Grocer and his wife were played by white actors. How the language of Shakespeare and his contemporaries resonates differently over time is a significant struggle that theatre practitioners preparing scripts face today. The manner in which the actor playing Rafe performs his role would probably also make a huge difference. Is he enjoying himself, or visibly being forced? Is he reveling in his skills or exhausting himself? Is his compulsion to perform actually, in any sense, liberating? Modern casting practices could put pressure on the answers to these questions, but I argue that the continual references to service, bondage, freedom and violence linked with performance in this play show how it engages with racemaking as a system of power on the early modern stage.

Performing Servants under Pressure: Rafe and Ariel/Caliban in *The Tempest*

While Jasper unwillingly obliges to "liberty" from Venturewell's service, Rafe ends the play still, as far as we know, in the service of the grocer and his wife. Might Rafe's heroic and skillful action in the play serve as a means to his release from his apprenticeship? He certainly fulfilled every task set for him, including upholding the honor of the grocer's trade. Could he "discharge himself," i.e. provide the means for his own liberation by performing the role of the Knight with dexterity?[360] For Ariel's performance in *The Tempest*, part of the later Blackfriars repertory of the King's Men, Prospero also promises to "discharge" him after Ariel has discharged himself of many

[360] OED, 10a: "to release (a prisoner, or a person charge with an offence from prison or custody; to liberate," also aligns with the idea of these two youths (Rafe and Jasper) as being bound to service and not having true autonomy.

performed acts of service (1.2.356). The Protean nature of this "airy spirit" might have even recalled characters like Rafe for the audiences at Blackfriars, especially if Ariel was also played by a child actor.[361] Rafe could be aligned with Ariel, whose transformative skills aid Prospero's plots and ultimately help to gain freedom from indenture. Chakravarty argues that Shakespeare's play "articulates the performance of volition, gratitude, and liberty as the properties of 'good service,' demonstrating…the fictions of consent inherent in the enactment of faithful service."[362] Rafe's own "fictive" consent as player in *Pestle* can be read alongside these other forms of theatrical and racialized servitude to reveal how versatility under the constraints of bondage might prove a temporary survival strategy but not necessarily a means to escape.

The compulsion of Rafe's first entrance onto the stage recalls another enforced laborer, Caliban. Caliban is similarly drawn onto the stage by force, though unlike Rafe, he speaks against it. When Prospero first calls for him, his voice is heard from offstage, dismissing Prospero's command to enter. He assumes that Prospero is fetching him to carry more logs to supply his dwelling: "There's wood enough within" (1.2.377). Prospero calls three times for Caliban to "come forth" before Caliban finally shows himself (1.2.378). *The Tempest* is Prospero's play, and Caliban does not want a role in it. This coercion of Caliban to "come forth" echoes the injunction for Rafe to "come up" onto the very same stage at Blackfriars. Caliban in the First Folio is marked on the list of characters as a "savage, deformed slave," here serving under punishment for his sexual threat to Prospero's daughter Miranda. His nature of his "deformity" has been debated

[361] For discussion of Ariel's "childlike, protean" qualities, see Ezra Horbury, "Early Modern Transgender Fairies," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Feb. 2021): 75-95.
[362] Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent*, 172.

given the ambiguity of how other characters describe him, and Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan characterize "his perceived deformities, whatever they may be" as commonly "exaggerated terms" used in reference to "enslaved persons."[363] Allison Hobgood contrasts the so-called "deformity" of Caliban with Ariel's capability of transformation "supposedly intrinsic to able bodies."[364] Vaughan and Vaughan also reference how Caliban, despite misreadings of Prospero's words by many critics, is "human-shaped," the only human present on the island when Prospero arrived.[365] Debates of both shape (form) and ability in relation to this character recall the character of Amorphus that started this chapter. While Amorphus is also designated as "deformed," his capacity is never up for debate as it is with Caliban, showing how perceptions of whiteness are intertwined with skill.

Both *Tempest* and *Pestle* end with the masters' acknowledgement of their servants and their performances (bad and good, respectively) over the course of the play. While Prospero's attitude toward Caliban in this final scene is relentlessly insulting and diminishing, he nevertheless calls Caliban "mine" ("this things of darkness I / acknowledge mine" 5.1.330-31). That Caliban is both his property and his responsibility ties together Prospero's various roles as master, teacher, surrogate parent, and colonizer. In *Pestle,* Rafe exits after his final speech and is not a part of the company song at the end of the play. Nell gives an epilogue after they exit, where she thanks the gentlemen for their "patience and countenance to Rafe, a / poor fatherless child…for truly I hope you do

[363] Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, "*The Tempest* and Early Modern Conceptions of Race," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race,* ed. Ayanna Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 143.
[364] Allison P. Hobgood, *Beholding Disability in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2021), 26.
[365] Vaughan and Vaughan, "*The Tempest,*" 142.

like the / youth, but I would be glad to know the truth" (Epilogue 4-5, 7-8).[366] Here there is no overt ownership of Rafe in her words: he is fatherless, he is "*the* youth," not "*our*" or "*my*." She does not, in her language, acknowledge Rafe theirs. It is unclear, especially given the staging of their exit, whether they would join Rafe in the tiring house, or leave through the same entrance as the rest of the audience. But as the fictive narrative fades away, we must remember that George and Nell are likewise boy actors, just like Rafe, caught up in the same system of apprenticeship and "fictions of consent" inherent in the boy player's play acting. I draw this comparison between Ariel, Caliban, and Rafe to suggest that while they share a subjugated status, Ariel and Rafe are treated very differently from Caliban given the quality of their "cheerful" service, figured in their transformational capacities. I also want to engage with this more well-known "race play" that employs similar terms in their texts and performance skills from their actors to trace how race can be evoked through intertheatrical associations and repetitions of spectacle.

Generic Pressure: Performing Race & Skill in London City Comedy

Rafe is released (discharged) onto the children's company and *The London Merchant* like a bomb. Nell calls Rafe "a spark indeed," one that ignites the action of the play and blazes throughout (5.70). "Spark" could also be a reference to his size/age/status, as a "small remnant, fragment" of something like metal or mineral which relates back to the image of casting and molding forms. He explodes the action of the play and breaks it into fragments.[367] The performance shifts at the beginning from a typical London city comedy (*The London Merchant*) to the romantic adventure that becomes the play's published title

[366] See discussion of this epilogue in Valerie Billing, "Female Spectators and the Erotics of the Diminutive in *Epicoene* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle." Renaissance Drama* 42, no. 1 (2014): 1-28.
[367] There is also the sexual connotation/innuendo of "discharge." See *Henry IV, Part 2*, 2.4.113-16: "do you discharge upon mine hostess" / "I will discharge upon her, Sir John, with two bullets."

(*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*). The specters of non-Christians and "foreign" characters are evoked throughout the play, especially in Rafe's "crusades" as the Knight of the Burning Pestle to protect "fair ladies" and promote English supremacy. This mixing of an Orientalized space with English goods and materials recalls what Corinne Zeman has termed "sultanic drag" in another children's play, Jonson's *Epicoene*. "London-based dramas," Zeman writes, "fold Islamic cultural materials into the fabric of metropolitan life" and produce "scenes in which English characters make imaginative excisions across racial and religious boundaries."[368] It is the practice of repertory that enables these connections to be made as it "thickens performance by activating meanings across playscripts and genres."[369] By overtly naming the plays that inspire them, George and Nell show their acumen as theatregoers to multiple establishments as they draw on multiple performance traditions. They call upon Rafe to enact plots specifically associated with the adult's repertory, not the children's. While it has been commonly argued that this discrepancy was the reason for the play's failure, that the audience at Blackfriars did not want to see the type of play put on at the Red Bull, I posit that a significant part of the difference between the two repertories was the engagement with racialized performance, and that Rafe's incorporation into the plot of *The London Merchant* entangles the company in a web of new skills and spectacle, a new kind of race trick.

Gesturing back to *Gesta Grayorum*, I see an indebtedness in *Pestle* to Inns of Court entertainments as well as the public theatres like the Red Bull in its racemaking traffic upon the stage. Brent Whitted encourages a renewed "attention to the culture of

[368] Corinne Zeman, "Sultanic Drag in Ben Jonson's *Epicene*," *Shakespeare Studies* 47 (2019): 134.
[369] Zeman, "Sultanic Drag," 135.

playgoing at the Blackfriars and the culture of revels at the Inns of Courts" and wonders if the play's failure was due to a "misguided 'retrofitting' of dramatic genre from the Inns of Court to the Blackfriars."[370] The title "Gesta Grayorum" also invokes a medieval past, as "gesta" (Latin for deeds or acts) often accompanied the titles of medieval chronicles or biographies. The oral tradition of medieval French *chansons de geste* also connect performance with the romantic genre and often draw on themes of transcultural contact with giant black Saracens or enamored Muslim princesses ready to convert to Christianity.[371] "Gesta" also linguistically mimics "jest," a common performative term that Thomas Dekker uses in his criticism that Jonson's children's plays are made up of "jests" stolen from the Inns of Court revels.[372] Rafe's adventures with the giant Barborossa and the Princess of Moldavia in particular demonstrate this engagement with racialized performance that was rare to see at Blackfriars at this time, but done on the public, university, and court stages by other performers. Rafe's commitment to "spill the blood of treacherous Saracens" evokes the medieval Crusades, a popular subject of romance narratives (3.156). Munro describes this generic shift in terms of an "excessive" Protean "force": "the excessive nature of the romance narrative which the Citizens force upon the playing company."[373] Cyrus Mulready calls *Pestle* a "revealing parody" that demonstrates how the audience's "knowledge of…narrative and dramatic romances…shape their expectations of what stories the stage should adapt."[374] The

[370] Whitted, "Staging Exchange," 113.
[371] Heng, *Invention of Race*, 141, 219.
[372] See Dekker, *Satiromastix*, 5.2.295, and Michelle O'Callaghan, "'Jests, stolne from the Tempels Revels': the Inns of Court revels and early modern drama," in *Drama and pedagogy in medieval and early modern England*, eds. Elisabeth Button and James McBain (Tubingen: Narr, 2015), 227-52.
[373] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels*, 59.
[374] Cyrus Mulready, *Romance on the Early Modern Stage: English expansion before and after Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 71.

pressure that George and Nell put on Rafe, and by extension the play itself, produces racialized performances from across the early modern theatrical landscape.

Both figures that Rafe encounters, the giant and the princess, are set up as racial and religious "others" who might possibly be converted to a kind of Christian civility. The giant's size, while it could be an ironic reference to a boy player's short stature, might also signal some kind of prosthetic enhancement to add height, or perhaps even a similar trick to the one employed in *Poetaster* when they performed the Moor stacked on each other's shoulders.[375] The giant's name, Barbaroso, is "a punning allusion" to Barbary, barbarism, and the fact that he is actually a barber named Nick (3.215).[376] Patricia Parker writes that "multiple contemporary connections between barbering, Barbary, barbarisms, and the barbarian or barbarous" also included "references to the 'barbarous' Moor and Turk."[377] For Parker, this "Barbaroso" clearly refers to "the notorious Barbary corsair" called Barbarossa (Redbeard): "shaving…was a synonym for piracy and the 'nicking' or circumcising of a phallic 'pestle,' associated with the Barbarossa who took Christian captives and inspired (or forced) so many to turn Turk."[378] Rafe therefore frees the barber's "captives" from the threat of enforced conversion or labor, signified by the marks that could be made on their bodies by the barber's shaving or incisions. When the Wife asks if Rafe will kill the giant for his crimes, the Citizen replies that he will not "if he could convert him" (3.425). Zitner notes that "the conversion of adversary heathens

[375] The similarity of Barbaroso to Barabas, one of Alleyn's signature roles, also suggests another reference to Alleyn's distinctive height/acting style, here vanquished by the boy player.
[376] Zitner, *Pestle*, 112.
[377] Patricia Parker, "Barbers and Barbary: early modern cultural semantics," *Renaissance Drama* 33 (2004): 205. Parker reads the use of "Nick" in *Pestle* as a "name that resonates in English with the nicking or cutting associated with Barbary and the threat of circumcision, castration, or shaving by the Turk" ("Barbers," 227).
[378] Parker, "Barbers," 228.

was a favorite romance theme."[379] In the end the Barber "recant[s] [his] ill" and Rafe gives him mercy, as long as he swears and kisses Rafe's "burning pestle," an act that suggests sexual humiliation, not unlike the reported treatment of Christian captives in the hands of the Turk who faced possible "circumcising, gelding, and sodomizing or pathic subjection."[380]

Following this defeat of the "giant," the couple takes us deeply into the land of intertheatrical reference. In Act 4, when asked what he wants to see, George calls out for the Sophy of Persia to "come and christen him a child" (4.30). The boy player running interference with the couple objects to this suggestion, calling it "stale" and already done at the Red Bull, a reference to events depicted in *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* by George Wilkins, John Day, and William Rowley (4.31). Anthony Parr classifies this travel play as "a patriotic drama which shows English heroes abroad in a series of implausible triumphs over foreign adversaries."[381] Clearly, after seeing Rafe's bout with the giant, George is eager to see him go farther afield. Nell then spins a different plot, involving the daughter of the King of Cracovia (later referred to, and referenced here, as Moldavia).[382] The interchangeableness of these fictional "foreign" spaces shows just how often the theatrical imaginary appropriated such types of places and characters. Nell wants the princess, named Pompiona, to be in love with Rafe who is "very weary" from his travels (4.34). Pompiona, despite being described as a "lady / That trusts in Antichrist and false traditions" is also figured as a "damsel right fair," with "golden locks" and "snowy hand" (37, 63, 93-94, 113). The references to gold and ivory

[379] Zitner, *Pestle*, 120.
[380] Parker, "Barbers," 219.
[381] Anthony Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 9.
[382] Zitner notes that there was a "visit to England by the Prince of Moldavia in 1607" (11).

in the palace setting speak to "demands for opulence" like the displays at Court "as detailed in the Revels Accounts of expenditure for Court theatrical entertainments," though they also suggest an ostentatious wealth associated with the exotic East.[383] These descriptions fit the terms of what Dennis Britton calls "one of the primary desires of romance: to transform and then incorporate that which is different but desirable."[384]

George here urges that Rafe "convert her if thou canst," but converting a "pagan" woman proves to be very different from converting a barbarous giant, and in fact, Rafe shows no interest in doing so at all. When Rafe enters the stage to play this scene with Pompiona, he appears most "like himself" in that he introduces his own name, nationality, and profession (Rafe, Englishmen, prentice to a grocer in the Strand, 4.71-73). He firmly rejects her advances and professes his love for Susan, the cobbler's maid in Milk Street. While Beaumont opens up the dramatic space for the "infidel-conversion motif," as Britton has termed this trope of the romance genre, the playwright does not follow through with this different form of transformation, despite letting Rafe be continually transformed.[385] Lieke Stelling draws a distinction between theatrical transformations and religious conversion: "the appeal and dramatic power of the former lay in their reversibility, while in the case of conversion, reversibility posed a fundamental menace."[386] That Rafe returns to being a servant at the end of the play is necessary for the audience to take pleasure in his transformations, just as all the children had to revert back to their subjected social positions after a performance no matter what

[383] Zitner, *Pestle*, 130.
[384] Dennis Austin Britton, *Becoming Christian: race, reformation, and early modern English romance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 22.
[385] Britton, *Becoming Christian,* 13.
[386] Lieke Stelling, *Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 13.

role they played during it.

While the narrative flirts with romantic adventuring into parts unknown, it ends squarely in London. This patriotic bent comes to a head in Rafe's later performances as Lord of the May and the army captain of Mile End. Wall notes that even the "shimmer of Moldavia dissolves into an English domain" as Rafe proceeds to tip the members of her household who had treated him well.[387] By venturing into this "foreign" theatrical spaces, "the play mires fantasies about submission, escape, and mastery to the absolute particularities of English life."[388] Rafe's later performance as the military captain is especially verbally impressive, as he speaks in prose, in a completely different vernacular than he spoke as the Knight or the May Lord. He barks orders with confidence. His final speech, though it is in prose, has a certain *Henry V* flavor to it: "Let it not, oh, let it not, I say, be / told hereafter the noble issue of this city fainted, but bear / yourselves in this fair action like men, valiant men, and / freemen" (5.142-145). Invoking terms of nobility, fairness, and freedom pushes the discourse into racialized ideas of whiteness intermixed with Englishness. In the first act, George decries Jasper and Luce's disobedience to her father by calling them "little infidels." By marking disobedient children as equivalent to individuals perceived as threatening based on their religious and racialized differences, George participates in a kind of race-making that cuts across age, class, and gender distinctions to define those at home who are "unnatural" or "treasonous" as less than human (or at least, less than English). They must be called to service, as Rafe shows at Mile End, to prove their loyalty to their country and the crown, to prove their whiteness through their transformational abilities.

[387] Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 187.
[388] Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 186.

Rafe's death is the final moment inflected with racialized language and spectacle in the play. When George and Nell call for Rafe to die, the company boy objects that it will spoil the comedy. The greatest challenge of acting skill must now be set for Rafe: to die onstage, as we have seen in tragedies or parodied by Bottom, requires a certain variety of emotional weight and physical action that serves as a test for any great actor. The ending of the speech especially, punctuated by a series of "O, O, O, &c.," showcases an opportunity for improvisation in performance with tone, length, and range of dying sounds. It is one of his longest speeches in verse, recounting the deeds he has done throughout the play. All of his forms, just like in the narratives of Proteus, come together in a list: grocer, knight, conqueror, lover, partaker in festivity, city captain, and now dead man. He meets "grim cruel Death" while walking "into Moorfields" (5.328-29). The presence of Death in Moorfields speaks to the blackness associated with both death and the Moor figure. Death described as "grim" builds on associations between grime, dirt, and blackness that I will take up in the following chapter on soot. The blackness of Death here cannot be ignored considering this ultimate test of theatrical skill, Rafe's tragic performance. Through the exercise of his dramatic transformational skill, Rafe employs techniques from other performance traditions that inflect the Blackfriars repertory with some overt and other less obvious references to racial difference. All of this spectacle, however, must be read in relation to his role as an enforced laborer, an apprentice under pressure to perform from his master and mistress, whose whiteness undergirds his perceived capacity to transform (as both the character and the boy player underneath).

Conclusion

Stephen Gosson in his antitheatrical treatise *Plays confuted in five actions* mentions

the playhouses at Paul's and Blackfriars specifically when he describes how "the Poet with Proteus cut the same fit to his owne measure" as he writes plays based on "baudie Comedies in Latine, French, Italian, and Spanish."[389] Gosson also writes regarding "swelling" histories like *Caesar and Pompey*, full of drums, that when the original story "afoorded no pompe at al, [the Poet] brought it to the racke, to make it serve." The image of a text being tortured ("brought to the racke") recalls the image of Proteus being held fast, made to change and adapt to suit the circumstances he is in. By putting *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* alongside the *Gesta Grayorum* and *The Tempest*, I argue that transforming tricks were a major site of spectacle in these types of entertainments and that spectacle is continually dependent on both actor skill and conditions of pressure and constraint. These tricks foregrounds what kinds of bodies are deemed capable of change, and which are not. But underneath this skill display are the sinister connotations of why a subject might change, possibly due to great pressure or force. *Pestle* engages the genre of medieval romance to parody the popular public theatre of the time and its status as a parody or burlesque, as well as its reputation as a failure, has redirected critical attention away from its moments of racecraft. Rafe's whiteness, emphasized through his maleness, Englishness and Christianity, sets him apart from others in the play deemed uncapable of change or marked by "otherness." Yet his subject position does not ultimately change either. While he has been temporarily released from their grip, he cannot stray far. The pressure that Rafe (at the behest of George and Nell) puts on the play stretches it outside of the comfortable generic realm of London city comedy and infuses it with strains of medieval romance and the early modern travel drama. The audience of *Pestle* might

[389] Stephen Gosson, *Plays confuted in five actions…* (London: Printed for Thomas Gosson, 1582) http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A01951.0001.001

laugh uproariously at Rafe's antics as they are tricked by the metatheatrical pleasures of Beaumont's complex play. By reading *Pestle* with the full story of Proteus in mind, we can see how tricks of transformation can be used to manipulate and control others in systems of exploitation and oppression.

Chapter 4

Sooty Tricks: Vulcan as Chimney Sweep in May Day

Introduction

Towards the end of Jonson's *Poetaster*, the characters gather for a "heavenly banquet," dressed as Roman gods and goddesses (4.2.4). Captain Tucca admonishes his boy, the first Pyrgus, for the cosmetic failure of his costume for the role of Ganymede (4.5.65-70):

> You should have rubbed your face with whites of eggs, you rascal,
> till your brows had shone like our sooty brother's here as
> sleek as a horn book.

He compares the whiteness of his boy's face with the "sooty" blackness of Albius (an old male character dressed up as Vulcan, the god of fire) who has a young and unhappy wife, Chloe (in the role of Venus, goddess of love).[390] Jonson associates Albius throughout the play with this mythological figure whose blackness, disability, old age, and undesirability (all attributes at odds with the figure of the boy player in our imagination) are present in all his representations in the early modern repertory. Tom Cain glosses these references as being "appropriate to Albius because Vulcan (Hephaestus), the god of fire, was patron of smiths, and was an outsider, thrown from heaven by Jupiter (the cause of his lameness)."[391] Chloe's casting as the miserable wife Venus, synonymous with erotic

[390] The name "Albius" here evokes a connection to both "albus," Latin for "white" and Albion, the ancient name for Britain that refers to the white cliffs of Dover.

[391] Cain, *Poetaster,* 104, 175. For more detailed accounting of Vulcan's mythological presence, see Maura Brennan, "Lame Hephaistos," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 3, no. 2 (2016): 163-181, and Cheryl De Ciantis, "The Return of Hephaistos: Reconstructing the Fragmented Mythos of the Maker" (PhD diss., Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2005). John Lyly's *Sappho and Phao* (performed "by her Majesties Children and the Boyes of Paules," 1584) shows us Vulcan's forge and focuses on his role as a smith. Venus complains bitterly of the "dark smokes" that cloud her vision and create terrible smells (1.1.21-23).

desire, highlights Albius's complete lack of sexual appetite or appeal.[392] Curiously, Tucca compares his page's face not to Chloe or one of the several female characters present (presumably played by boys in similar kinds of white makeup) but to the "sooty brother," Albius as Vulcan, whose black face has what Henry S. Turner defines as "a sheen recalling the translucent horn used to protect a school primer."[393] Tucca is disappointed in the boy not rising to the beauty standards of most courtly women, because he does not "shine."[394] Shakespeare uses this kind of language to refer to the schoolboy's "shining morning face" in *As You Like It*, as if the boy's natural complexion is something that women might have strived to emulate (2.7.153). Tucca's reference to egg whites shows a common knowledge of cosmetic bases, particularly for white makeup. The egg white, according to Richard Blunt, "created a latex-type film over the skin" and "helped the pigment stick to the face."[395] Farah Karim-Cooper writes that this egg glaze was particularly useful not for making color nor just for maintaining the makeup, but "convey[ing] a lustre that is comparable to silver," an important distinction between "paleness or whiteness" and the even more desirable "fairness."[396]

Earlier in *Poetaster,* Chloe strews flowers around their home to improve the smell, and when Albius approaches, she cries, "For Vulcan's sake, breathe somewhere else!" (2.1.21).

[392] Chloe compares him to the "clog to" her "marmoset," and casts herself as the monkey who is weighed down and restrained by her husband from doing as she pleases (4.2.53).

[393] *Poetaster*, ed. Henry S. Turner, in *The Routledge Anthology of Early Modern Drama,* ed. Jeremy Lopez (New York: Routledge, 2020), 100. An apt comparison, given that these performers technically should have been in school. In *Damon and Pythias,* the trickster Jack declares that Grim's face covered in soot "like an inkhorn now shineth so gay," a line that echoes Tucca's line to his page about shining faces and hornbooks (Quoted in Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface,* 112).

[394] Alan Sinfield notes a probable erotic connection between Tucca and his page, given that Tucca's command to "kiss me punk" might conceivably be addressed to Chloe (also a boy actor) or the page. If he is soliciting the page, then Tucca's fear that Histrio will treat his boys as "ingles" is hypocritical, since he already seems to be treating them as such. *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality: unfinished business in cultural materialism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51.

[395] Blunt, "Evolution of Blackface," 226, 230.

[396] Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 11, 178. Richard Dyer's work on whiteness has also shown an emphasis on "cheeks that shine" in ads for twentieth century women's cleansing creams (*White*, 77).

The boys' cosmetic practices in this episode garner attention not only because of Tucca's displeasure at his Ganymede's lack of sheen, but also due to Albius's lack of soot. Later, when Albius tries to keep the peace as tensions arise among the partygoers, Tucca lashes out at him: "thou has not collied thy face enough, / stinkard" (4.5.131-2). While these references to Albius's "sooty" or black face being "collied," fit nicely with the image of Vulcan as the smith god, Tucca's criticisms, that his boy as Ganymede is not shiny enough, nor is Albius black "enough," speaks to the burden placed on cosmetic materials to make legible the bodies to which they adhered. By wanting to "enhance the player's whiteness" (or following Karim-Cooper's argument, "fairness"), Lamb writes, "the racial identity of the boy [in *Poetaster*] is called into question."[397] Callaghan writes of Tucca's speech that "although race is not directly at issue here, the reflective surfaces and textures of difference, 'sleek' and 'shone,' refer to emergent, if displaced, concepts of race, which they help frame, co-ordinate and unify."[398] Is Albius's blackness insufficient because it is not adequately setting off the others' whiteness? Lamb wonders if their status as children makes whiteness especially applicable, "perhaps signifying purity as it frequently did with women."[399] The whiteness of the child player is intensified by the sooty visage of Albius as Vulcan, portrayed by a white child performer who is bearing the signifier of a racialized bodily marker on his face.

The presence of Vulcan at the Blackfriars in the Children of the Queen's Revels repertory, both as a literal personation in Jonson's *Poetaster* and a more abstract representation in George Chapman's *May Day* (the main focus of this chapter),

[397] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 49.
[398] Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women,* 85.
[399] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 49.

underscores the use of blackness, alongside class and disability, to highlight the children's performative skills through intertheatrical spectacle. As Arthur L. Little Jr. writes, "theatrically, blackness becomes a kind of racial testing ground of whiteness, most immediately for the white actor."[400] Vulcan's blackness, disability, age and sexual inadequacy make him a potent figure accreting these intersecting facets of identity that are broadly antithetical to the idea of the young white boy player as discussed in relation to the figure of Cupid in chapter 1. The use of a blackened chimney sweep disguise in *May Day* likewise evokes associations between blackness, class, age, ability, and sexuality that make him an interesting analogue to Vulcan in the boys' performance. Early modern performance presented the shared blackness of Moors and the sweep in the spectacle of blackened faces. Soot was a material used in the blackening of bodies in early English performance, later replaced on the professional stage by black paint or walnut juice.[401] Anthony Barthelemy notes that "the character who disguises himself as black brings into the play all the various meanings that blackness itself conveys."[402] That the boy actor in *May Day* uses the same materials to impersonate Snail the sweep as were used to impersonate characters like Othello on the early modern stage immediately puts the two performances of class and race in dialogue with each other. By evoking multiple plays and characters in this chapter, I also follow Erik Wade's formulation of "race as a series of citational performances that constantly cite previous performances in order to

[400] Little Jr., *Shakespeare Jungle Fever*, 78.
[401] For more on the materials used for stage blackness, see Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks"; Karim-Cooper, "The Materials of Race," and Elizabeth E. Tavares, "A Race to the Roof: Cosmetics and Contemporary Histories in the Elizabethan Playhouse, 1592-1596," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 34, no. 2 (2016): 193-217.
[402] Barthelemy, *Black Face*, 144. The plays he discusses with white people disguised as Moors are *The White Devil, The Devil's Law-case, The Parliament of Love, The Lost Lady,* and *The English Moor* (136).

create ideologies of race."[403]

In Chapman's play, blackness is used as a disguise, a trick that transforms the body of the white old man from a noble status to one blackened by his trade. Previous chapters in this project have addressed how age, size, movement, and acting style can all enable "race tricks," strategies of early modern racecraft in performance that have been hitherto undertheorized. In this chapter I address the most familiar signifier of performing racial difference on the early modern stage: the painted black face and body of the actor. I analyze how materials like soot and black paint when applied to the white actor's body can evoke intertheatrical associations with the spectacle of racialized performances like those of Aaron and Othello, as well as presentations in plays and masques of Vulcan, the Roman god of fire. I will examine the perceived gaps between the figures of the young, versatile, desirable, white boy player and the old, dramatically limited, sexually frustrated, black(ened) male character, and argue that the use of soot in *May Day* is the ultimate race trick. It is a material that masks the work it is doing in early modern racecraft while literally acting as a mask that hides the character's identity.

This representation of Vulcan in *Poetaster* in the form of an aged and blackened boy actor is repeated later in their repertory with the character of Lorenzo in *May Day*. Performed by the Children of the Queen's Revels at Blackfriars around 1604, *May Day* is a fairly typical children's company play.[404] Most noteworthy in modern scholarship for its slippery presentations of gender and sexuality, the play also opens up questions about

[403] Erik Wade, "*Ower Felaws Blake:* Blackface, Race, and Muslim Conversion in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*," *Exemplaria* 31, no. 1 (2019): 30. Even though some of the plays discussed here were written after *May Day* was first produced, repeat performances in the repertory system makes for a rich network of meaning that works backwards and forwards in time for audiences who might be seeing or reading plays out of chronological order.

[404] Wiggins and Richardson's "best guess" date of performance is 1604 (*British Drama, Volume 5*, 139). The play was first printed in 1611 but it was performed by the children before they were disbanded in 1608.

age, class, and status. Munro observes that the boy company's "performance of age helps to prevent their performances of gender and class from becoming fully naturalized within the narrative fiction."[405] These performances, I argue, also include a visual citation of racialized stagecraft: the spectacle of a blackened face. The pairing here of cross-dressing and blackface disguise in this festive context recalls Claire Sponsler's work on medieval laboring men's performances of femininity and racial difference that served as "powerful signs of racial alterity" that "could mask as well as flaunt their identity."[406] The sheer number of disguises in *May Day*, including a women disguised as a man (who later pretends to be a woman) and a man disguised as a woman, point to the significance of disguise, as Sponsler defines it, as "a hiding of identity that permits potentially disturbing social trespassing."[407] Simone Chess likewise ascribes the gendered disguises in *May Day* with "the capacity to trouble gender and sex categories more broadly."[408] The cross-class disguise of the chimney sweep needs to be included in these discussions of disguise in the play, as it builds upon ideas of identity formation and material prostheses that mark bodies as gendered, classed, and raced in early modern performance.

In *May Day*, the old Venetian nobleman Lorenzo desires Francischina, the wife of the swaggering soldier Quintiliano (a similar type to Captain Tucca in *Poetaster*). Angelo, a servant, convinces Lorenzo to disguise himself as a chimney sweep named Snail in order to visit Francischina undetected.[409] On his way to her house, he is waylaid

[405] Munro, "Queering Gender," 229.
[406] Claire Sponsler, "Outlaw masculinities: drag, blackface, and late medieval laboring class festivities," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Routledge, 1997), 336.
[407] Sponsler, "Outlaw masculinities," 329.
[408] Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing*, 20.
[409] The manifold associations of the moniker "Snail" gesture towards the sweep's potential houselessness (he might "carry his house on his head" as Rosalind in *As You Like It* suggests, 4.1.59), his slow pace (potentially due to his age), and his horns (which in this case represent both the shape at the top of the

briefly by his friends, who have heard of the whole plot from Angelo and have come to mock him. Thinking that he has escaped unrecognized, Lorenzo arrives at Francischina's, only to be thrust into the coalhouse until her husband Quintiliano comes back and chases him out into the street. In Lorenzo's absence, his daughter Aemilia has been meeting secretly in their house with her lover Aurelio, and when Lorenzo returns (still in his black sweep disguise), he sees them and becomes furious at his daughter's disobedience. (Of course, to make matters even more confusing, Aurelio later swaps clothes with Francischina to double-cross Lorenzo again). The play ends with a May Day celebration, where Lorenzo appears with a clean face, and where his friends discuss bringing Snail (the real one) to be part of the night's entertainment. Thanks to some quick thinking on Angelo's part, Lorenzo is spared that confrontation (or, potentially, the opportunity for a repeat performance).

The comparisons of Lorenzo's sooty disguise in the play to two theatrical figures – a blackface Moor and the god Vulcan – evokes tensions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, both onstage and off, that permeated early modern English society. Lorenzo enters with a black "pot of painting" (not actual soot) and applies it to his face onstage (SD 3.1.78). Angelo compares Lorenzo's process of "beautifying his face" with black paint to the sight of a "lady [painting] her lips": "for as of Moors so of chimney sweepers, the blackest / is most beautiful" (3.1.8-12).[410] This simile comparing Moors and chimney sweepers plays upon gendered and feminine associations that echo Kim F. Hall's

sweep's poles, and the attempted cuckolding of another man). Another potential connection between the name "Snail" and the sweep is that soot, according to Gervase Markham, can also be used for the killing of snails, giving the name a somewhat malevolent connotation. *The second booke of the english husbandman…* (London, 1614), 46.

[410] All *May Day* quotations from *The Plays of George Chapman: the Comedies,* ed. Allan Holaday (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1970), 317-379.

argument that "poetic discussions of blackness, racial difference, and beauty practices" are "one way in which the discourse of blackness is a gendered one."[411] There are multiple early modern plays that refer to African characters, usually women, as "chimney sweepers."[412] Shakespeare aligns the chimney sweeper with "Ethiops" based on their shared blackness in the description of Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*: "To look like her are chimney sweepers black...And Ethiops of their sweet complexion crack" (4.3.264-6). This ridiculing rhyme puts Rosaline in the company of other poetic "dark ladies," figures that Hall argues embody a specific challenge to their male authors: "positing a mistress as dark allows the poet to turn her white, to refashion her into an acceptable object of Platonic love and admiration."[413] The fact that boy actors played these female roles like Rosaline might have also strengthened the link between chimney sweeps as being "like" black women, as sweeps were depicted as boys in plays like Fletcher's *Women Pleased* (and Lorenzo in *May Day* is played by a boy actor as well).

The boy player, as I have previously discussed in this project, is often heralded as an ambiguous, unmarked or unformed body, capable of taking on many different characters and performing different skills and tricks, like Amorphus in *Cynthia's Revels*. Figures like Vulcan and the chimney sweep, by contrast, are marked in their labors by a sooty substance that created a much more lasting mark on the actual laboring bodies to which it adhered in this period. Akhimie has identified a strong link between such "stigmatized" bodily markers of class and race, and she defines such markers as "an

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[411] Hall, *Things of Darkness,* 130.
[412] See *All's Lost By Lust, The Knight of Malta, The Fair Maid of the West Part II*; Othello's so-called "sooty bosom" and Aaron's "coal-black" likeness; Mason's *The Turk,* a Whitefriars children's play, refers to "cole blackmoores" (3.4.2). For more sooty references, see Morwenna Carr, "Material / Blackness: Race and Its Material Reconstructions on the Seventeenth-Century English Stage." *Early Theatre* 20, no. 1 (2017): 81.
[413] Hall, *Things of Darkness,* 67.

arbitrary bodily sign that has taken on a specific and negative significance."[414] According to Akhimie, certain individuals in early modern society were deemed incapable of "cultivation"; in other words, they were unable to implement "strategies for self-improvement through coded conduct" that allowed privileged others to advance in early modern society.[415] These lower class individuals often acquired and maintained somatic bodily markers that were perceived as indelible both to them as an individual and the social group to which they belonged. They were "bruised and beaten, wasted, hardened by toil, and darkened by exposure to sun."[416] It is in this manner of marking, Akhimie argues, that the subjugated body is associated with the black body, when a darker skin color becomes a somatic mark synonymous with coerced labor, violence, and oppression. A sweep's continual contact with dirty chimneys made the darkening of his skin and clothes a daily reality. Charles Phythian-Adams describes eighteenth century sweeps as "permanently stained with soot" and the young apprentices "said in many cases to have worked for four or five years without once being washed."[417] While soot as a substance could be easily washed off, the frequent comparisons discussed below of the dark skin of Africans with that of chimney sweeps in this period shows that even if the mark of soot could literally be removed, the association between sweeps and blackness was permanent.[418]

I contend that the stain of soot on the chimney sweep, like the examples in

[414] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 4.
[415] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 8.
[416] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 27.
[417] Charles Phythian-Adams, "Milk and Soot: The Changing Vocabulary of a Popular Ritual in Stuart and Hanoverian London," in *The Pursuit of Urban History,* eds. Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 98. For more about sweeps in later literature, see Claire Lamont, "Blake, Lamb and the Chimney Sweeper," *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* 76 (1991), 109-119.
[418] For use of soot in medieval performance, see Blunt, "The Evolution of Blackface," 222-23.

Akhimie's work of Dromio's bruises in *Comedy of Errors*, Caliban's pinched skin in *The Tempest,* or the hard hands of the *Midsummer* mechanicals, became a somatic marker in this period that brings negative associations of working-class individuals and foreign ethnicities together, just as the figure of Vulcan does. This cross-class disguise becomes racialized by the language used to describe Lorenzo and the spectacle of his black painted face that looked the same as the painted faces of other stage Moors, like in *Othello* (which might have premiered around the same time as *May Day*), and Vulcans as seen in the previous Blackfriars children's repertory.[419] What begins as a cross-class masquerade becomes a spectacle akin to what Ian Smith has termed "racial cross-dressing," and a performance that highlights a repertory system using repetition of stage images to render its stagecraft more legible to its audience.[420] This repertory system also, I will conclude, marked the bodies of its boy actors as they developed their performance skills, not only with a "queer residue" as Chess has argued, but also as performers whose whiteness was codified by ever-shifting perceptions of their age, class, and ability.[421]

Vulcan(s) in Performance

I will begin this discussion of the boy playing Vulcan/a Vulcan-like type by situating the figure of Vulcan in the early modern performance repertory, as he appeared in a range of early modern dramatic performances from Tudor entertainments to Jacobean court masques. Vulcan is also frequently referenced in children's plays like *Cynthia's Revels*, *All Fools*, *The Fawn*, and *Law Tricks*, and he appears as a character in two plays associated with the first children's company at Blackfriars in the 1580s: George Peele's

[419] For comparison of *May Day* and *Othello*, see Bart van Es, "Shakespeare versus Blackfriars," 100-120.
[420] See Ian Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks."
[421] Simone Chess, "Queer Residue: Boy Actors' Adult Careers in Early Modern England," *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 242-264.

The Arraignment of Paris and John Lyly's *Sappho and Phao.*[422] He shows up again in adult company performances like Thomas Heywood's *The Brazen Age* (1613) and *Love's Mistress* (1634), plays clearly indebted to Chapman's translations of the Iliad and other earlier mythological drama like that of Lyly and Peele.[423] Shakespeare's *Othello* also contains some significant similarities to Vulcan's mythology, namely the presence of a black(ened) man afraid of being cuckolded by his young and beautiful wife. Recurrent references to Vulcan and his foulness – associated with bad smells, blackness from soot, physical disability, and lower-class labor – therefore created a looming presence in the early modern repertory.

Seeing with and through repertory recognizes the power of the "theatergram," Louise George Clubb's term for "moveable theatrical units such as dialogue structures, plot motifs, character dyads and topics," or as Robert Hornback adapts it, "transferable theatrical units."[424] Hornback in his study of racist theatergrams describes the recurring presence of the Harlequin character from medieval performance and commedia dell'arte all the way to antebellum American minstrelsy. The character of Harlequin, known for his black mask and comic behavior, grew out of the medieval tradition of blackened "foolish stage devils" as well as "natural fools," linking mental deficiency ("childishness") with blackness.[425] Hornback argues that "racism recycles/reinscribes a

[422] *Law Tricks* features a tapestry of "Venus kissing Adonis" while "the cuckoldly knave Vulcan stands sneaking behind the brake-bush to watch 'em." This play also has a character like Albius in *Poetaster* called Lurdo, who hides behind the arras as he is being cuckolded.
[423] Charlotte Coffin's analysis of the "triangulation" between Shakespeare, Chapman, and Heywood with the incorporation of classical materials into their texts (especially in the case of *Troilus and Cressida*, his translation of the *Iliad* and the *Age* plays respectively), shows the "complex interactions" of intertextual and intertheatrical networks at play in the early seventeenth century. See Charlotte Coffin, "Heywood's *Ages* and Chapman's Homer: nothing in common?" *Classical Receptions Journal* 9, no. 1 (2017): 64.
[424] Quoted in Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface,* 35.
[425] Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface,* 37-38.

proto-racist archive of sources and ideas."[426] A similar theatergram, in the mode of Harlequin, and one that also depends on raced and classed somatic markers, is this figure of Vulcan. While I have traced intertheatrical figures in this project from literal characters (Cupid) to more metaphorical appearances (apes and Proteus), here I combine the approach by looking at how Vulcan is used both as a character (mostly in Heywood's *The Brazen Age* and later Peele's *Arraignment of Paris*) and a metaphor/reference that reveals a technique of intertheatrical meaning-making and shorthand for its audience.

Angelo in *May Day* makes a direct reference to the luster of Lorenzo's blackened face and the story of Vulcan, with language very reminiscent of Tucca and Albius in *Poetaster*: "how you / shine in this smoaky cloud? Which you make the golden net to em-/brace Venus" (3.2.14-16). One of several classical references in this exchange of dialogue, the allusion seems to slip past Lorenzo, who does not acknowledge it. Maybe the line is offered as an aside, out of earshot, like Angelo's earlier line about Hercules' labors (according to a modern edition of the play). Perhaps Lorenzo, upon hearing of Venus and "the golden net" immediately casts himself as Mars, the amorous suitor who sleeps with a married woman, since he believes that is what he is about to do. Angelo cleverly combines the two roles of Vulcan and Mars in the line above by first invoking Vulcan, the one who "make[s] the golden net," and then Mars, the one who "embrace[s] Venus." The original purpose of Vulcan's net was not to embrace the goddess but to ensnare her with her lover Mars and expose their infidelity.[427]

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[426] Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface*, 28.

[427] "Vulcan, the god of the forge, the unlikely, misshapen husband of Venus, caught the lovers in bed with a finely wrought net, in most versions a net of gold." in H. David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: a dictionary of allegorical meanings* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998), 207.

Other allusions to Vulcan in early modern plays also describe him as black due to his proximity to smoke and soot in the blacksmith's forge: "besmeared / As black as Vulcan in the smoke of war" (*Twelfth Night,* 5.1.48-49). Chaucer in "House of Fame" refers to "his face…ful broun."[428] Patricia Parker writes of Hamlet's reference to Vulcan's "foul stithy" (3.2.79-80), among many others of blackness in the play: "The soot associated with Vulcan, blackness, and blackface as its cosmetic counterfeit, as well as with sin, was…at the same time part of the humoral discourse of melancholia, already associated with blackness and Moors."[429] In *May Day,* Lodovico calls Lorenzo in his blackface disguise "melancholy" when he stops singing the sweep's song: "Poore uncle, he begins to be melancholy" (3.1.190). Melancholy here is also clearly associated with old age.[430] By conflating and eliding associations of blackness, layering one on top of the other, Vulcan's presentation on the early modern stage brought multiple discourses of class, age, and race together.

While not a children's play, Thomas Heywood's *The Brazen Age* (1613) features the story of Venus and Mars getting caught in the net of Vulcan's creation. *The Brazen Age* was performed at the Red Bull playhouse by the Queen's Men (another theatrical company patronized by Queen Anne, like the Children of the Queen's Revels). Heywood introduces this version of Vulcan with the story of his fall from Olympus, and his "deformity" is foregrounded alongside his blackness as another way his body is "marked." Vulcan says that Jove, his father, dropped him by accident from the heights of Olympus onto the island of Lemnos. Jove's negligence in this version was occasioned by

[428] Chaucer, "The House of Fame," in *The Wadsworth Chaucer*, 350.
[429] Patricia Parker, "Black *Hamlet*: Battening on the Moor," *Shakespeare Studies* 31 (2003): 139.
[430] Anthony Ellis, *Old Age, Masculinity, and Early Modern Drama: comic elders on the Italian and Shakespearean stage* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 20.

Phaeton's disastrous ride in the sun chariot, which "set the world a fire" and when Vulcan's father "saw heavens bases smoake" and "Th'earth burne," he lets the boy Vulcan fall by mistake. This myth of Phaeton, who was himself an Ethiopian in Renaissance mythology, also would explain to early modern audiences how Africans became black, as they were "scorched" by the sun coming too close to the earth.[431] Placing Vulcan in the context of this myth associates him not only with fallen angels (now blackened devils) but also with racialized others, given that he falls into a world where blackness has emerged as a somatic marker of difference. The inclusion of Vulcan's bodily difference in this representation as it is aligned with his blackness shows an intersected view of blackness and disability that runs throughout discussions of early modern "deformity" and villainy. Physical deformity serves as metaphor for evil for Richard, Duke of Gloucester: "since the heavens have shaped my body so, / Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it" (*3 Henry VI,* 5.7.79-80). Using similar language, Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* argues that blackness of skin leads to blackness of soul: "Aaron will have his soul black like his face" (3.1.208). But Vulcan crucially is not a villainous character despite his associations with both bodily markers, leading to a more nuanced understanding of how blackness and disability could interact in the dramatic context.

Jay Dolmage's discussion of Vulcan (Hephaestus) emphasizes his skill (*metis*) and the way this godly figure defies assumptions about the way disability was treated in the past: "his body was celebrated, not despite his disability, but because of his embodied

[431] Hall, *Things of Darkness,* 96-97. See also Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605) and Little, Jr., *Jungle Fever*, 76.

intelligence…he provides an image of disability as valued by ancient society."[432] *Metis* presents in its etymology "a kind of trick: the Greek words *me* and *tis* mean 'no man' or 'no one,'" and thus "label…the sort of person whose identity can be elusive, who is unpredictable but resourceful and clever."[433] That the only physically disabled god would be so gifted in art and craft speaks to the connection that scholars make between his disability and his ability, or his *metis*, a Greek term for "cunning, intuitive intelligence," or an ability to think nonlinearly, creatively, just as his gait is not direct, but ambles or circulates.[434] This kind of knowledge speaks to what Hobgood refers to as "disability gain" within the Renaissance, the "unique resources that incite important, alternative ways of knowing and being."[435]

Vulcan's style of movement is remarked upon in multiple plays and set at odds with the skills needed to portray the stalking tragic Moor as discussed in chapter 2. Vulcan's purported dancing ability, for instance, actually aligns more with the skills of the boy player, who was known for his musical abilities. While he does not appear in person in Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, another play by the Blackfriars Children from the 1580s, Jupiter tells Ganymede that "Vulcan shall dance to make thee laughing sport," a reference that reminds us of the perceived comic potential of the disabled body in motion as well as the similarity with "dancing" apes or other animals

[432] Jay Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 151-152.
[433] Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric*, 195.
[434] De Ciantis, "Return of Hephaistos," 35. A more involved definition of metis is "A complex but very coherent body of mental attitudes and intellectual behavior which combine flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years. It is applied to situations which are transient, shifting, disconcerting and ambiguous, situations which do not lend themselves to precise measurement, exact calculation or rigorous logic." Quoted in de Ciantis, 48, from Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1978), 3-4.
[435] Hobgood, *Beholding Disability*, 3.

that caused laughter or derision in their early modern audiences. Robert Wilson's *The Cobbler's Prophecy* (1594) indicates in the opening stage direction the entrance of a host of mythological gods and goddesses, including Jupiter, Juno, Mars and Venus, followed by "Vulcan limping," the only type of action specified other than Diana "wringing her hands." Calypho in *Sappho and Phao* describes his master's gait as "halting" (3.2.56). Heywood's *Love's Mistress* features "*a dance of Vulcans and his Ciclops*," and the play concludes with Vulcan's declaration to "dance, sing, and skip and quaff / And with his smoaky jests make Cupid laugh." Adam Benjamin calls Vulcan "a famed dancer" known for "his hobbling 'partridge dance' [that] has accompanied the storytelling traditions associated with the art of metal work" and found "as far afield as West Africa and Scandinavia."[436] Vulcan's artistry, both material and physical, then connects to the skills needed to portray him on the early modern stage.

Adapting Vulcan in *Othello* and *May Day*

Even if in some arenas Vulcan's distinctive body was seen in a positive light, Venus in Heywood's *Brazen Age* apparently has mocked his "polt-foote," a common description of Vulcan's "club foot" or deformity, and attributed her lack of desire for him to that as well as his blackness and the product of his labors. When asked about Venus, Vulcan speaks of her reluctance to be with him:

> …the very smoake my Fordge doth cast
> Choakes her, the very aire of *Lemnos* (man)
> Blasts her white cheekes, she scarce will let me kisse her,
> But she makes vergisse faces, saith my visadge
> Smug'd thus with cole-dust, doth infect her beauty,
> And makes her weare a beard…

[436] Adam Benjamin, *Making an Entrance: theory and practice for disabled and non-disabled dancers* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 24. Quoted in Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric*, 170.

Heywood might very well by paraphrasing the complaints of Lyly's Venus in the earlier *Sappho and Phao*, who says it is "unwholesome" for Venus "to sojourne with Vulcan in / a smithes forge, where bellowes blow in steede of sights, [and] dark smokes / rise for sweet perfumes (1.19-22). Heywood, however, adds another element: that of Venus's whiteness being endangered or "infected" by Vulcan's blackness. That Vulcan's coaldust-smeared face might rub off on Venus as he kisses her conjures up potential fears not only of miscegenation but of gender ambiguity: the soot "makes her weare a beard." The blackening of the boy player threatens his performed femininity, marked by his fairness and whiteness, and thus troubles both the race and gender of his character. This marking of Venus also speaks to the materiality of theatrical cosmetics and their potential misbehaviors as they transfer from one player to another, which matches Morwenna Carr's assessment of cosmetics as "physically and conceptually unstable, prone to movement from one surface to another."[437] It is reminiscent of the infamous shot of Maggie Smith's face as Desdemona, smeared with paint from the blacked-up Laurence Olivier's face and body.[438] Did the early modern boy player who played Desdemona in *Othello* or Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* also have to worry about the bottom half of their face looking like a dark "beard" after kissing their scene partners? The spectacle of the white child actor Venus being "threatened" by the black adult Vulcan in this scenario leads naturally to thinking about other interracial couples on the early modern stage, and how dynamics of race are enacted through images of color as well as age difference in such pairings. By looking at how the Vulcan myth is adapted in both *Othello* and *May*

[437] Carr, "Material / Blackness," 80.
[438] See Lois Potter, *Othello: Shakespeare in Performance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 29–31.

Day, as well as the resonant moments of skill and spectacle that bring these plays by Shakespeare and Chapman together, I argue that the boy player's whiteness is continually tested, and the limits of his characterization explored.

Othello is connected to Vulcan's story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in several ways. Ovid tells the story of how Vulcan weaves an intricate "net of Wire" to catch his wife Venus in bed with her lover Mars. When he catches them, he calls all the gods to see their "shame" and the gods laugh at them. The setting of the majority of *Othello* is on the island of Cyprus, a place associated with the goddess Venus. Marjorie Garber sees Iago as "the Vulcan figure, a tortured looker-on" who exposes the affair and Othello as "the war hero," despite Othello's position as the husband, not the lover.[439] Lisa Hopkins reconfigures Garber's casting by placing Cassio in the Vulcan position because he is "lamed" at the end of the play, and because giving Iago Vulcan's position gives him a more defined motivation (jealousy over Othello's supposed affair with Emilia) than Shakespeare's text suggests.[440] Catherine Bates compares Vulcan and Iago's "workmanship," noting the connection between Vulcan the blacksmith's forge and forgery, or fabrication, the net of Iago's deceit.[441] Bates calls the association of Othello with both Mars the war hero and Vulcan the jealous husband a "confusing conflation," one that shows how Shakespeare's "web of textual reference, leav[es] us entangled, enmeshed in knots of allusion and metaphor which threaten to perplex the more we try to unravel them."[442] None of these discussions make a connection between Vulcan and

[439] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 589.
[440] Lisa Hopkins, "Love and War on Venus' Island: *Othello* and *The Lover's Melancholy," Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 25, no. 1 (2016): 53.
[441] Catherine Bates, "Weaving and Writing in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Survey* 46 (1993): 52.
[442] Bates, "Weaving and Writing," 53, 54.

Othello's shared blackness and/or disability.[443]

In adapting the story, Shakespeare separates Vulcan's skill from his blackness and bestows it on different characters, giving the white Iago the skill and leaving Othello with the pain and rage of a cuckolded husband who fears being laughed at. Lorenzo's role as a Vulcan "type" in *May Day* is similarly confused but palpable. His disguise as the blackened sweep and his old age align him with Vulcan, but he is the one who wants to cuckold a foolish husband, and ultimately, as I discuss below, he occupies the role of a betrayed father like Brabantio in *Othello*. The tangled enmeshment of these two plays shows the power of the repertory system in recycling moments of skill and spectacle on view for similar audiences at similar times.

Lorenzo's blackened face is not the only dramatic element, or theatergram, that connects *May Day* with *Othello*. Lodovico calls Angelo in *May Day* a "notable villain," akin to Iago, for tricking the old man. van Es notably argues that the tragedy of the Moor of Venice haunts this children's play.[444] Or rather, that this play might haunt *Othello*, given that it was likely performed before *Othello* was or at least around the same time. van Es writes that it is "impossible to determine precedence, but the two plays are undoubtedly the product of the first few years of intensive competition between the boys' companies and the adults'."[445] The most notable connections van Es finds between *Othello* and *May Day* are the setting of Venice and the use of Italian comedic

[443] Justin Shaw reads Othello as a black and disabled character. See Justin Shaw, "'Rub Him About the Temples': *Othello*, Disability, and the Failures of Care." Early Theatre 22, no. 2 (2019), 171-84.
[444] Lorenzo also calls Angelo "a honest man" with "an honest face" (5.1.5, 15). Angelo's response: "Both my hand and heart sir, shall be ever at your service" echoes Iago: "Witness that here Iago doth give up / The execution of his wit, hands, heart, / To wrong'd Othello's service!" (3.4.528-530). When reading or viewing *May Day* today, a reader or audience member would undoubtedly be more familiar with *Othello* than this play, and thus feel that *Othello* was being referenced, not the other way around.
[445] Van Es, "Shakespeare versus Blackfriars," 111.

conventions, most notably the appearance of cuckolds. He suggests that Chapman's play serves as "an implicit oppositional presence in Shakespeare's play," where Shakespeare used two main modes, the satirical Italian comedy of the children's companies and the domestic tragedy of the adult companies, to form a hybrid structure.[446] van Es in his comparison does not include Angelo's reference to Moors in Act Three nor the three scenes where Lorenzo (who he equates with Roderigo as the rich ineffectual suitor duped by the sly Iago/Angelo) is in full blackface as a potential link between the two plays. This erasure of Lorenzo's racialized performance as the chimney sweep appears to me proof of its status as a "race trick," a spectacle that clearly participates in racecraft that has been ignored in modern scholarship, possibly because of the lack of modern performance history of the play that would render these meanings visible.

Whether or not Lorenzo's blackface disguise served as an intentional reference to adult actors performing characters like Othello, Muly, Aaron, or Vulcan, the stage image remains the same. Lorenzo's lines while wearing this disguise resonate differently when put in league with other blackface villains of the early modern dramatic repertory. As Lorenzo in the guise of Snail walks to Fransischina's house, he responds to his friends' mockery in an aside, calling for "vengeance, I beseech the black father of vengeance" (3.1.188-89), a line that recalls Aaron from *Titus Andronicus*: "Vengeance is in my heart" (2.3.38). Lorenzo describes feeling "a villainous fear" that "shook" him, worried that his "tongue would have licked away the soot" from his face (3.2.45). This "villainous fear"

[446] Van Es, "Shakespeare vs Blackfriars," 111, 116. Michael Bristol has argued that, for Shakespeare's playgoers, Othello in the type of blackface familiar from traditions of carnival "would confront the audience with a comic spectacle of abjection rather than with the grand opera of misdirected passion." There is, he claims, a burlesque element to *Othello* which critics have been reluctant to notice because of their desire to recuperate Othello as tragic hero. *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 10. Quoted in Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women,* 87.

naturally associates him with stage villains, who were at this time often blackened like Aaron or Muly. The fact that his rage in this moment seems to threaten his cosmetic mask raises the question of other racialized stage villains, like Eleazar in *Lust's Dominion*, having the same problem. Did the excessively emotional acting style associated with these types render their black makeup vulnerable to sweat, tears, and spit? Maintaining the mask must have been a concern for these actors, unless part of the audience's pleasure was watching it become distorted over the course of the play. (Of course, they also could use egg whites to set the makeup more firmly, a la *Poetaster*.)

When Lorenzo returns from his thwarted encounter with Fransischina and discovers his daughter's liaison with Aurelio, he has this outburst (4.2.48-59):

> Lorenzo: How now? Whom do I see? My daughter and a yonker together? Passion of death, hell and damnation, what lecherous capricorn reigns this unhappy day? Old and young in a predicament? O fie of filthy sin and concupiscence, I will conceal my rage a while that it may break forth in fury; I'll shift me presently *Angelo,* and go fetch the Provost.
>
> Angelo: O unspeakable madness, will you for ever dishonour your daughter, and in her your self sir?
>
> Lorenzo: Talk not to me, out upon this abominable concupiscence, the pride of the flesh, this witchcraft of the Devil: talk not to me, justice cries out an't in the streets, and I will see it punish't, come good *Angelo* to help to shift me.

The phrases Lorenzo uses recall Othello's own exclamations ("death and damnation!", "Goats and monkeys!", "filthy deeds," "O Devil!") along with the rages of the more stereotypical Muly. Angelo calls this outburst "madness," just as Iago classifies Othello's epileptic fit which is brought on by jealous rage. The character in this moment is experiencing a fit of "tragic rage, or furious vociferation," as Tiffany Stern labels it in her

discussion of tragic acting styles.[447] Tragic rage is also associated with a vocal quality of roaring (often linked with black devils in the medieval repertory), railing and ranting. The spectacle of a child actor in blackface attempting to mimic the vocal quality of an Alleyn or a Burbage may well have provoked laughter, as I discuss in the second chapter regarding acting style and the question of whether the children could "measure up" to adult roles and characterization. Lorenzo's repeated direction to Angelo to "help to shift me," to lose the disguise, also draws attention to his current blackened state. We do not see the removal of the paint onstage, like we saw the application, and so we are left with the image of black Lorenzo raging at his daughter for several scenes until he reappears for the final act in his normal dress.

While van Es argues that *Othello* "inverts…core conventions of the children's repertory," reading this scene in the context of *Othello* presents a wildly inverted version of Shakespeare's first scene — a blackfaced man, outside his house, rages at his daughter's being found inside his house with an unsuitable gentleman.[448] Rather than a Brabantio inside his house being called out to denounce a black character as a devil who has bewitched his daughter, Lorenzo in this scene conflates both characters, the enraged father and, in a sense, the spurned lover (since his assignation with Francheschina went so horribly awry). The ire unleashed and put on display is made legible to the audience because he is now recognizable as a villainous, angry Moor type. His blackened face heightens this parody of a tragic performance. Whether *May Day* came before or after *Othello,* both plays were taking the mold of the Moor figure that had developed in the late sixteenth century and presenting him in a new form, whether it was satirical comedy

[447] Stern, "Early Modern Tragedy and Performance," 498.
[448] van Es, "Shakespeare vs Blackfriars," 117.

or domestic tragedy or some hybrid thereof. The placing of this dramatic character type in new positions and situations then opened doors to new types of virtuosic performances, performances reliant on the audience's awareness of the white male actor underneath the paint.

As I discussed in chapter two, the figure of the Moor as presented in *Poetaster* is one of tall stature and distinctive movement linked to his long legs. Height is therefore linked with age here, as the child players are often referred to as "little." Unlike the excessive, oversized figure of the Moor, however, Lorenzo in *May Day* is described as a "little old man." [449] While Chess and Witmore recognize the play as a gender-bending comedy, *May Day* also deals overtly with the performance of age and the contrasts of old age and youth.[450] But, as Shakespeare observes, part of taking on the role of the old "slippered pantaloon" was his voice "turning again toward childish treble" (*AYLI* 2.7.169). Thus seeing the boy player in an old man part may well have been fitting, as Tribble has argued, and valued as "one of the most prized skills of boy players on the early modern stage."[451] Lamb notes that *May Day* itself is chock full of the "stereotypical imagery of old age" that becomes both "humorous and degrading" in its satire.[452] The very title evokes spring, the blossoming of youth, and it begins with a song and dance done by the children ("Chorus Juvenum") that is immediately contrasted with the entrance of Lorenzo, who compares himself to "old father January" (1.1.7). Gasparo, the elderly suitor to Lorenzo's daughter Aemillia, is described as bald, and his appearance

[449] Wiggins and Richardson, *British Drama, Volume 5*, 139.
[450] Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing*, 55-59. Witmore, *Pretty Creatures*, 101.
[451] Evelyn Tribble, "Kinesic Intelligence on the Early Modern English Stage," in *Movement in Renaissance literature: exploring kinesic intelligence*, eds. Kathryn Banks and Timothy Chesters (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 218.
[452] Lamb, *Performing Childhood*, 23.

horrifies Aemillia, who refers to him as an "ugly and monstrous spectacle" when he "comes crawling by with his crooked knees" (2.2.46, 88-89). Munro calls the play notably suited to a company of boy players for this reason: "the performance of an all-boy ensemble facilitates Chapman's playful deconstruction of the conventions surrounding gender, social status and age."[453] The "mutability" of the boy actor should also be extended, therefore, to a kind of racial performance, one in which the whiteness of the boy player is designated a kind of flexibility and variance to play a character like Lorenzo who dons a blackened face.

Othello, like Lorenzo, is often depicted as being older, adding another layer of transgression to his match with Desdemona. Not only is Othello "declined into the vale of years" (3.3.269-70) but Desdemona is "a child to chiding" (4.2.117). Thompson recognizes the relationship's similarity to "the familiar plotline of the older husband who is cuckolded by his younger wife."[454] Modern performance has also emphasized the age gap by casting an Othello in his fifties and a Desdemona in her twenties.[455] It becomes another binary at work in their relationship: Othello is old, Desdemona is young. Her whiteness and her youth are matched together, along with her perceived sexual appetite, being framed as excessive in contrast with her older husband.[456] Janet Stavropoulos argues that Othello is connected with Desdemona's father Brabantio in this manner, that

[453] Munro, "Queering Gender, Age, and Status," 234.
[454] Ayanna Thompson, "Introduction," in *Othello* (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016), 11.
[455] See productions with Adrian Lester (NT) and Hugh Quarshie (RSC). Thompson, "Introduction," 96: "What would it mean if directors and actors moved away from assumptions about Desdemona's youth and presented the newlyweds as having a less visible age gap? This might fruitfully challenge assumptions about the cultural significance of Desdemona's sexual knowledge and could present a more feminist-leaning interpretation of the play."
[456] See Philip D. Collington, "Sans Wife: Sexual Anxiety and the Old Man in Shakespeare" in *Growing old in early modern Europe: cultural representations*, ed. Erin Campbell (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 185-207

Shakespeare constructs a "paradoxical affiliation" between the two characters where "both father and husband reject Desdemona for her alleged transgression."[457] By blackening the face of Lorenzo in *May Day*, did the actor then appear older in the eyes of the audience, who were not used to seeing children on the professional stage who were not white? Lorenzo's smaller size belies him throughout, however, and belittles (literally) the usual presence of the blackened character to one of diminutive size.[458] By engaging with the ways that perceptions of skin color, size, and age interact across the early modern repertory in this interlocking performances of Vulcan, Othello, and Lorenzo, I acknowledge the "confusing conflations" that accompany such discourse, while teasing out how moments in performance can highlight the skills associated with performing race on the stage, particularly in moments of parody and intertheatrical reference.

Vulcan's "Sooty Brother": The Sweep

Whether disguised as Vulcan (*Poetaster*) or a chimney sweep (*May Day*), these characters in the children's repertory link sooty blackness with markers of age, class/labor, gender, and race. Portrayals of blacksmiths, chimney sweeps, and colliers are all part of these associations in early modern performance. Vaughan recognizes one such figure, also known as Grim the collier of Croydon, as a "stock intertheatrical" type who appears across different entertainments, including Richard Edward's *Damon and Pithias*, a play written for the first iteration of the Children of the Chapel and printed in 1571.[459] While Vaughan argues that this figure is "not overtly associated with blackness in the

[457] Janet Stavropoulos, "Love and Age in Othello," *Shakespeare Studies* 19 (1987): 125, 129.
[458] Angelo repeatedly calls him the "little squire" (2.4.16 and 4.3.86, 88, 91, 97).
[459] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness,* 23. Michael Shapiro speculates that Grim might have been played by an adult actor because he references singing in his own "man's voice" (*Children of the Revels,* 105) While this would support the idea that child players were not accustomed to playing this raced/lower classed roles, it could also be an ironic reference to the child's voice. Other appearances from Grim include the interlude *Like Will to Like Quoth the Devil to the Collier* (1587) and *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (1600).

play texts themselves," the name "Grim" appears to derive from "grime," meaning since at least the fifteenth century (according to the OED) to "blacken" or "befoul."[460] Clack, a character in *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (1600) compares Grim's face to "the outward side of an old iron pot or a blacking box."[461] *Damon and Pithias* features the "blackening of a vain gull" named, predictably, Grim the Collier of Croydon.[462] Vowing to make Grim a "noddy" (a fool or simpleton), Jack rubs Grim's face with a wet piece of coal, saying that it is soap, and blackening Grim's visage in the process. This use of marking the face with blackness to show foolishness and vanity is repeated, Hornback argues, in the scene where Lorenzo applies his chimney sweep disguise in *May Day*.[463]

The blackface disguise of the chimney sweep in the play might also have its roots in festive traditions such as medieval mumming and Morris dancing, which used blackened faces and disguise in their performances at festive times of year, including May Day celebrations.[464] *May Day* begins with the customary dancing and youthful spectacle of a May Day celebration from its outset, where the old Lorenzo celebrates the "lusty bloods" of the children after their song and dance, "fit observance for / this May

[460] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness,* 23.
[461] Anonymous, *Grim the Collier of Croydon, or The Devil and His Dame with the Devil and Saint Dunstan,* in *Five Anonymous Plays,* ed. John S. Farmer (London: Early English Drama Society, 1908).
[462] Jack, the young trickster, gets Grim drunk and offers to shave him but robs and humiliates him instead. This type of gulling by shaving scene is repeated in the later Children of the Queen's Revels play, *The Dutch Courtesan*. Another possible reference might be the line in Jonson's *Epicene* where Truewit mocks the barber Cutbeard: "Or, that he never be trusted with trimming of any but chimney-sweepers."
[463] Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface,* 113.
[464] Andrea Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin: the painted body in early English drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 91. While it seems to have become a critical commonplace to reference blackface in the context of early modern morris dancing, John Forrest questions the relationship between "Moor" and "morris" in *The History of Morris Dancing, 1438-1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 365-67. For more on morris dancing and race, see also Sponsler, "Outlaw masculinities"; Dennis Austin Britton, "From the *Knight's Tale* to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*: Rethinking race, class and whiteness in romance," *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 6 (2015): 64-78; and Ndiaye, "'Come Aloft."

morning" (1.1.1-2).[465] The use of the chimney sweep as the disguising figure in the play translates this custom to the urban setting and combines English anxieties about foreignness with a nostalgia for "the English rural past."[466] Sujata Iyengar calls the Morris dance "at once a quintessentially English tradition and a sharp encounter with the foreign."[467] May Day observances in England evolved over time, and in the second half of the eighteenth century, the holiday become one specifically featuring the chimney sweep as part of its celebrations.[468] The fact that *May Day* features a chimney sweep a hundred and fifty years before sweeps are linked to the celebration of May Day in London shows that there is a precursor for this association that centers on blackness, situated at the intersection of race and class.

While more commonly associated today with the young sweeps of Victorian London, the occupation of chimney sweep originates much earlier, around the same time as the two-story house, which necessitated the chimney itself. Benita Cullingford writes that it was a sign of status to have a house big enough to hire a sweep in the first place. Because smoke from the fire would cause a "sooty residue to form through the entire length of the flue," sweepers would be brought in with brooms and scrapers to clean the chimney by removing the soot.[469] The soot could then be sold for fertilizer, or it might

[465] For more on holiday practices in early modern playing, see Erika T. Lin, "Popular Festivity and the Early Modern Stage: The Case of *George A Greene," Theatre Journal* 61, no. 2 (May 2009): 277.
[466] Sujata Iyengar, "Moorish Dancing in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 20 (2007): 87.
[467] Iyengar, "Moorish Dancing," 87.
[468] George L. Phillips, "May-Day is Sweeps' Day." *Folklore* 60, no. 1 (March 1949): 217-227. Charles Phythian-Adams wonders whether this association might date from earlier than the eighteenth century, and if it is "entirely coincidental that the tools of the sweep in the seventeenth century appear to have comprised a bundle of *hawthorn* twigs and poles tipped with *cow*-horn," as hawthorn bushes and milking (along with milkmaids) were other notable May Day symbols of the time ("Milk and Soot," 97).
[469] Benita Cullingford, *British Chimney Sweeps: five centuries of British chimney sweeping* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Press, 2000), 5-6.

have been sold to dyers to blacken cloth, which could have been used on the stage to signify black skin, as Ian Smith has shown.[470] Sweeping was menial labor and workers often paired it with other odd jobs to support themselves. For instance, at Hatfield House in Hertfordshire in the mid-seventeenth century, a man was paid one year's allowance for "sweepeing chymneis" *and* "killing rats and mice."[471] In 1618, there was a petition to the King from "the Poor Chimney Sweeps of the City of London," who were "ready to be starved for want of work," to enforce more strict ordinances that would require people to have their chimneys swept in order to prevent fires.[472] While the King was in favor, the Mayor rejected the petition due to its cost. Sweeps could be travelers, technically "vagabonds," who roamed the area looking for employment.[473] Jacobean preacher Thomas Wilson in reference to the chimney sweep proclaimed that "how base soever their trade be," it was still "a lawfull vocation."[474] The chimney sweep when Chapman is writing *May Day* in the early 1600s is clearly associated with precarity and poverty.

Finding steady employment could be difficult in early modern London, and the working classes often had anxiety about foreign workers and others not native to the city joining the labor force. The language of Elizabeth I's (unfulfilled) 1596 proclamation on the expulsion of "divers blackamoors" from England reflects this resentment, that there are "too many" Moors while many "people of our own nation…for want of service and means to set them on work fall to idleness and to great extremity."[475] As Francesca T. Royster and Kim F. Hall have explored, Elizabeth's statement came at a time of great

[470] Anonymous, *The Chimney-sweepers Sad Complaint* (London: Printed for John Johnson, 1663), 4; See Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks."
[471] Cullingford, *British Chimney Sweeps,* 8.
[472] Quoted in Cullingford, *British Chimney Sweeps,* 9.
[473] Cullingford, *British Chimney Sweeps,* 7.
[474] Thomas Wilson, *Saints by calling: or Called to be saints*...(London: Printed by W. Iaggard, 1620).
[475] Quoted in *Race in Early Modern England,* 136.

"economic stress" brought on by famine and plague where "foreigners were obvious scapegoats."[476] A title like "May Day" also invokes histories of violence against immigrant populations in London. Tensions between the English and foreigners erupted on "Evil" May Day of 1517, where London workers, mostly young apprentices, rioted in protest of the growing urban population of French and Dutch immigrants ("an insurrection of youthes against Aliens" according to John Stow).[477] The same terminology is used in 1641 for a petition to Parliament by "poore trades-men and artificers" references workers who have had to rely on charity or to "turne Porters, Day-labourers, Waterbearers, Chimney-sweepers, and the like," while "the Aliens are cherished, and many of them get great and unknowne estates, as it were even out of the subjects mouths."[478] To "turne" sweep was clearly a position of degradation but one that Englishmen were compelled to take as a last resort, according to this xenophobic rant.

But sweeps may well have come from abroad, if the depiction in John Fletcher's *Women Pleased* (first performed around 1620) can be trusted. There two young chimney sweeps speak in heavy French dialect, and one is addressed as "Monsieur Black," a moniker that suggests a linkage between non-Englishness and blackness.[479] This

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[476] Royster, "White-Limed Walls," 439; Hall, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?," 92.
[477] John Stow, *A Survey of London. Reprinted From the Text of 1603,* ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908), 99. This event curtailed May Day celebrations in London over some time for fear that the violence would be repeated.
[478] *To the Right Honourable the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses Now Assembled in Parliament. the Humble Petition...in the Behalfe of the Multitude of Poore Trades-Men and Artificers, in and about the Cities of London and Westminster…* (London, 1641). According to Lloyd Edward Kermode, the term "alien" in early modern England referred to someone from a foreign country, which included Scotland and Ireland at this time. See Kermode, *Aliens and Englishness in Elizabethan Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2. For more on immigration in early modern London, see also Lien Bich Luu, *Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2005) and Ruben Espinosa and David Ruiter (eds.), *Shakespeare and Immigration* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).
[479] Act 4, Scene 3. John Fletcher, *Women Pleased* in *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, Volume VII*, ed. Alexander Dyce (London: Edward Moxon, 1844): 74-75. In *Masque of Flowers*, the sweep appears alongside Kawasha, an "Indian" figure of the "New World." The figure of the chimney sweep across theatrical texts highlights intercultural contact as well as class difference.

inclusion of non-English chimney sweeps makes it possible to imagine the more likely scenario that foreigners were not taking labor away from native workers, as stated above but were scraping by on the bottom rungs of the social ladder alongside them. Depictions of chimney sweeps in early modern entertainments also trade on associations with other laboring and exoticized performing bodies. Francis Kynaston's 1635 Caroline masque *Corona Minervae* features a dancing chimney sweep alongside other rustic laborers like a sheepshearer, a "drunken butcher" and a fisherman.[480] The 1613 Gray's Inn *Masque of Flowers* at Whitehall also features a chimney sweep dancing on the "side" of Kawasha, an "Indian" figure of the "New World" associated with tobacco (for tobacco users were also called "chimney sweepers").[481] The figure of the chimney sweep across theatrical texts highlights intercultural contact as well as class difference and often does so through the display of skills like singing and dancing, adding to the spectacle of his signifying attire, props (like brooms, sacks, and scrapers), and his blackened face.

Somatic Marks and Chromatic Metaphors

Just as the mythological Vulcan is marked by soot, the chimney sweep in early modern London became a symbol that linked blackness with lower-class labor. I categorize the black soot on the sweep's body as an example of "somatic marking," which, by Akhimie's definition, is "an active and violent process of degradation that produces a stigmatized somatic mark, which is later imagined to be innate and hereditary" and "is used in both class and nationalist racism."[482] Certain individuals in

[480] Sir Francis Kynaston. *Corona Minervae, Or A masque presented before Prince Charles His Highnesse…* (London 1635). Accessed online: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A04959.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext
[481] *The maske of flowers, presented by the gentlemen of Graies-Inne, at the court of White-hall, in the Banquetting House, upon Twelfe night, 1613…* (London, 1614). Accessed online: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A07228.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext
[482] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference*, 24.

early modern society were deemed incapable of "cultivation"; in other words, they were unable to implement "strategies for self-improvement through coded conduct" that allowed privileged others to advance in early modern society.[483] These individuals often acquired and maintained somatic bodily markers that were perceived as indelible both to them as an individual and the social group to which they belonged. They were "bruised and beaten, wasted, hardened by toil, and darkened by exposure to sun."[484] It is in this manner of marking, Akhimie argues, that the subjugated body becomes associated with the black body, when a darker skin color becomes a somatic mark synonymous with coerced labor, violence, and oppression. Lorenzo's attention to cosmetic detail in applying his painted disguise betrays his ignorance of this reality. Snail "never was...so be-smeared," Angelo tells the audience, but Lorenzo takes great pains to apply the marks that Snail's labor naturally acquires, and he has the leisure to do so (3.1.9). This careful application of a cosmetic is nothing akin to the natural process of markings that the sweep's body accumulated through their labors, yet the spectacle remains very similar.

The English chimney sweep became associated with the blackness of foreign figures like the African and Moor not only through material spectacle but also through simile and metaphor, significant rhetorical tools used in the cultural formation of identity categories including gender and race. Colleen Rosenfeld describes "simile" as a figure of speech that "exerts an organizing force on the world" and "remakes the elements of that world according to 'like.'"[485] Ian Smith identifies metaphor as a vital part of early modern racemaking that made ideas more legible for English audiences. In response to

[483] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 8.
[484] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 27.
[485] Rosenfeld, *Indecorous Thinking,* 174.

Thomas Browne's 1646 description of "Aethiopians" as "coal-black," Smith calls the "persistent connection of 'soot' to Africans" a "dominant metaphor" that is "resonant and comprehensible for Browne's audience."[486] "Coal-black" had early usage in the medieval period to describe the fallen angels in the Wakefield Cycle: "We, that were angels so fair, / and sat so high above the air, / Now are we waxen black as any coal."[487] Blackness here is evoked as the ultimate contrast to both fairness of complexion and height of social stature. The comparison also appears in early narratives of English contact with Africa, such as George Best's 1578 description of "an Ethiopian as black as a coal."[488] Sir Thomas Herbert's 1638 African travel narrative also describes the people he encountered there as "chimney sweepers," a label he deems fit to describe the entire continent, equating them all with the lowest rank of English common laborer: "let one character serve them all: they look like chimney sweepers."[489] Later in the eighteenth century, we also see the reverse effect, in which sweeps are compared to Africans; Edward Ward in 1706 refers to sweeps as having "Negro Hands and Face."[490] The emergent visibility of the African presence in London in the seventeenth century shows a shift from categorizing black people as "like coal" or "like sweeps" to the sweeps becoming "like Africans" or "Negros."

When audiences encountered these rhetorical figures linking sweeps with Moors, those terms shaped one another and created a specific conceptual blend, much like the child and the ape discussed in my second chapter. In this case, the Moor becomes

[486] Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks," 51-52.
[487] "The Creation," in *The Wakefield Mystery Plays*, ed. Martial Rose (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 63.
[488] Quoted in *Race in Early Modern England*, 108.
[489] Sir Thomas Herbert, *Some yeares travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique…* (London: Printed by Richard Bishop, 1638).
[490] Quoted in Cullingford, *British Chimney Sweeps*, 213.

"classed," the sweep "raced." Jean Feerick associates this emergence of understanding early modern racial difference with evolving discourses of class or "social rank": "differences of colour emerge, as it were, in dialectical relation to social rank, allowing social tensions originating with the difference of rank to be resolved, mitigated, or exploited with reference to this emerging difference of colour."[491] Metaphorical associations in *May Day* and elsewhere racialize the blackness of the sweep's sooty stain, a somatic mark identifying a laboring body, and link his color with that of an African. When Angelo proclaims that "the blackest is most beautiful," Robert Hornback recognizes the "supposed celebration of blackness" as "steeped in cruel irony."[492] These comparisons across time are a site of racist and classist harm, just as somatic marking is "an active and violent process of degradation," and contributes profoundly to the formation of raced and classed identities in this period.[493] The recognizable sooty black face of the English chimney sweep became a useful analogue to the black face of the African, and how the sweep was treated reflected upon the African, and vice versa. As Imtiaz Habib writes, "racism is not only a colonial reflex fashioned to deal with the distant other but a part of the very making of Europeans themselves."[494] These encounters between sweeps and Africans shaped ideas of Englishness, whiteness, and class for centuries to come.

Writing on the comparisons of chimney sweeps and Moors or Africans in this time is doubly challenging due to the lack of historical records concerning both

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[491] Jean Ferrick, *Strangers in Blood: relocating race in the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 5.
[492] Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface*, 123-24.
[493] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference*, 24.
[494] Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: imprints of the invisible* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 12.

populations. There was no official guild for chimney sweeps in the seventeenth century, so there are few official early records of the profession. It is hard to find out many details of the sweeps' lives and they occupy a similar status to the "unsettled" poor and other day laborers of the time.[495] That scarcity of information also affects the histories of people of color in early modern England, as Habib's *Black Lives in the English Archives* has shown. The difficulty of recovering histories that have been erased or never recorded at all leads, Habib argues, to the "historical reality" of people of color "fad[ing] under the deformative force of cultural metaphor" and becoming "exotic fiction."[496] While this section is focused on metaphor and the ways that language and spectacle in early modern repertory performance influenced ideas about race and class, I do want to acknowledge the lived realities of the Africans present in London at this time and the work of scholars of color like Habib who have advanced the crucial study of early modern race in England.

By focusing on blackness in this chapter, I am also not implying that skin color has ever been the sole marker of racialization; it is but one component among many including family lineage, nationality, and religion, that constitute what Ayanna Thompson calls the "unstable, inconsistent, erratic, unbalanced, mercurial, and seemingly capricious" nature of early modern racecraft.[497] By contrast, early modern concepts of social differentiation, like rank, degree, and estate, are usually categorized as determined; despite "individual mobility," Keith Wrightson explains, the social hierarchy was "deemed to be unchanging in its essential structures."[498] The early modern stage, and

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[495] See Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: the culture of mobility and the working poor in early modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
[496] Habib, *Black Lives*, 7.
[497] Thompson, "Did the Concept of Race Exist," 8.
[498] Keith Wrightson, "Class," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 134.

especially the children's repertory, put pressure on this idea of fixity by featuring many depictions of cross-class mobility and disguise and emphasizing the performative aspects of class, where an ordinary player could portray a king. In thinking about the performance of race and class together, Jean Howard wonders if "racialized figures" can even have "stable class positions in early modern drama" and whether "race in some way determine[s] class or…obliterate[s] class distinctions."[499] By engaging with blackness as a symbol of class difference that then becomes racialized, I see class and race in early modern London as what Mark Netzloff calls "mutually constitutive categories," shaping one another and reflecting old anxieties while also creating new tensions.[500] *May Day* and its festive performance of racialized disguise illustrates through metaphor and spectacle how racial difference becomes legible through (and linked with) a depiction of social inferiority. Blackness in this case is the conduit through which we can see race and class collide as it produces influential ideas about social identity formations that extend even into the present day.[501]

The Chimney Sweep in *May Day*

When Lorenzo suggests that he'll "smurch / [his] face like a chimney sweeper," he uses language reminiscent other cross-class disguises in the early modern repertory,

[499] Jean Howard, "Race and Class: Is Black so Base a Hue?" in *Shakespeare in Our Time: a Shakespeare Association of America collection*, eds. Dympna Callaghan and Suzanne Gossett (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 108.
[500] Mark Netzloff. *England's Internal Colonies: class, capital, and the literature of early modern English colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4.
[501] Ayanna Thompson discusses the 2001 comedy *Zoolander* which features the main character, Derek (played by Ben Stiller), going to work in a coal mine where his face becomes completely blackened with dust. As a joke, he jumps out of hiding to scare lookers-on by making what she identifies as a "minstrel blackface expression (broad, big, and larger than life)" (*Blackface,* 56). For another example of covert blackface and a hearkening back to the genealogy of minstrelsy in recent film, see Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, "'Mary Poppins,' and a Nanny's Shameful Flirting with Blackface," *New York Times*, January 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/movies/mary-poppins-returns-blackface.html ...

such as Celia in *As You Like It,* who pledges to "with a kind of umber smirch [her] face" to portray the shepherdess Aliena (1.3.118), and Edgar in *King Lear,* who "grimes" his face "with filth" in the guise of the beggar Poor Tom (2.3.9). Benjamin Minor and Ayanna Thompson argue that Edgar dons a blackface disguise as Poor Tom that traffics in English anxieties about beggars, criminality, and racial identity. Edgar fears that tears will "mar [his] counterfeiting" because they will smear his darkened visage and reveal his face underneath.[502] Lorenzo in *May Day* likewise acknowledges the vulnerability of his cosmetic mask: "I was afraid my tongue would have likt away the soote of my / face, and bewrayed me" (3.2.5-6). This danger of washing their skin clean and thus revealing their true status is indicative of the power ascribed to whiteness as that which makes dirt visible.[503] This ability to shapeshift, to change their status in a way that does not ultimately harm their gentility within the dramatic fiction, is a privilege only really afforded to upper-class characters like Edgar and Lorenzo.[504] Yet there are also expressions of concern for Lorenzo's choice to masquerade as a lower-class (and racialized) individual. His friend Honorio uses language of deformity when he wonders "to what end…wil [Lorenzo] dis-/figure himselfe so?" (3.1.30-31). Gasparo, another old nobleman who is interested in marrying Lorenzo's daughter, worries that Lorenzo might be called to sweep a chimney "in earnest," thus making him not just a lower-class pretender, but the thing itself (3.1.75). This thin line between performing another social position and actually adopting it echoes anti-theatrical fears of actors becoming like the

[502] Benjamin Minor and Ayanna Thompson, "'Edgar I Nothing Am': Blackface in *King Lear*," in *Staged Transgression in Shakespeare's England,* eds. Rory Loughnane and Edel Semple (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 160.
[503] See Dyer, *White*, 75.
[504] Rarely does a servant successfully rise through the ranks and stay there (even though Mosca in Jonson's *Volpone* gets quite close.) And we can't forget, of course, that the actors themselves were performing characters high above their social status.

parts they played, and Lorenzo's appearance as himself at the end of the play mitigates this fear of permanent damage to his standing.

The chimney sweep disguise is so attractive to Lorenzo in *May Day* because the sweep occupies a similar role to the beggar as a subject often present but unremarkable. Minor and Thompson describe Edgar's ability in his beggar's disguise to "circulate outside of the strictures and structures of proper society" as "not unseen but unremarked," thus making "the socially invisible subject visible."[505] Lorenzo and Angelo choose this disguise specifically because of his ability to move into restricted spaces: such an "abject" (as Lorenzo calls Snail the sweep) would "have free egress and regress into men's houses without suspicion" (2.4.138-41). This access linked the profession with criminality; in the nineteenth century, "chimney-sweeping and stealing often went hand in hand."[506] This disguise plot also resembles the typical "disguised Moor" tropes of later Jacobean drama where, as Virginia Mason Vaughan observes, "the European character adopts the role of a black servant," thus giving them an "ability to maintain a kind of invisibility while participating in complicated sexual intrigues."[507] Chimney sweeps also were associated with excessive sexuality and "often believed to make the most of amorous opportunities."[508] The language used to describe the sweeps' relationship to the maids in *The Chimney Sweepers Sad Complaint* (1663) is heavily suggestive: "we having liberty to wait…every morning for imployment, whether the *London* Lasses and Virgins of the City repaired upon all occasions…to make clean their Chimneys, and sweep the sut

[505] Minor and Thompson, "'Edgar I Nothing Am," 153, 158.
[506] George L. Phillips, "Two Seventeenth-Century Flue-Fakers, Toolers, and Rampsmen." *Folklore* 62, no. 2 (June 1951): 289.
[507] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness*, 110.
[508] Cullingford, 211. Gordon Williams has collected references to chimney sweeps as sexual figures in *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature: Volume 1, A-F* (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), 234.

and dust out of all their private Corners."[509] Lorenzo's use of the typical chimney sweep's "crie" as he walks to his hoped-for assignation with Francischina evokes the same kind of innuendo: "Maids in your smocks, / Set open your locks…Let chimney sweeper in: / And he will sweepe your chimneys cleane" (3.1.104-108). As we see later, however, it is Lorenzo's attempt at mimicking the inappropriate desires of the chimney sweep that gets him into the most trouble. It also puts him in line with other black figures like Aaron the Moor and Eleazar in *Lust's Dominion* associated with excessive sexuality.

Another link between Vulcan and the chimney sweep, aside from their shared sooty blackness and labor, is their association with sexual desire. While I discussed above that Vulcan is in many ways emasculated by Venus' cuckolding and desexualized by her lack of interest in him, another depiction of Vulcan in a children's play from the Blackfriars repertory tells a different story. In George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* (c. 1583) written for the first Children of the Chapel company, Vulcan is a black and deformed figure. Upon his first entrance, he is seen chasing one of Diana's nymphs and calls out to her thus (4.1.1-4):

> Why, nymph, what need ye run so far? What though but black I be?
> I have more pretty knacks to please than every eye doth see;
> And though I go not so upright, and though I am a smith,
> To make me gracious you may have some other thing therewith.

Vulcan here is portrayed not as an old, cuckolded husband, but someone with sexual desire and a drive of his own. He calls himself "lusty Vulcan" and asks, "why may not Vulcan tread awry as well as Venus doth?" (4.1.8). He pursues an unattainable chaste love object (the nymph), yet he attributes her disinterest not to her status as a follower of

[509] *The Chimney-sweepers sad complaint, and humble petition to the city of London…*(London: Printed for John Johnson, 1663), 6.

Diana, but to his blackness, physical deformity (he is "not so upright"), and his occupation/classed position as a smith. He offers her "pretty knacks," tokens of his craftsmanship (as well as sexual innuendo). He presents himself in this situation as a kind of sexual type, what DiGangi labels as "a familiar cultural figure that renders sexual agency intelligible as a symptom of the transgression of gender, social, economic, or political order."[510] This type could also include the chimney sweep, whose blackness and lowered social status provide him access to places that others may not go. The child's performance of Vulcan here haunts the later appearance by Albius in *Poetaster* and Lorenzo in *May Day*, linking the two repertories of the Blackfriars children just as Lyly's Cupid does by reappearing in later plays by Jonson. Here we can see how it is not only race being formulated through these performances, but assumptions of criminality and sexuality are also implicated in this representation of the sweep.

The chimney sweep's cry to advertise his services necessitates that he is not altogether invisible in public spaces: he must be seen and heard to sell his labor. As Lorenzo experiences, this signaling of his presence invites the potential for violence, both physical and verbal. In the blackened guise of Snail, Lorenzo becomes a figure vulnerable to violence and ridicule. When warning Lorenzo's friends of the old foolish man's coming, Angelo declares that "in this, we shall / have the better sport at a Beare baiting," and it is with that sadistic spirit that the men encounter him (3.1.21-22). His nephew Lodovico wishes that he could "get boyes to pinne cards at [Lorenzo's] / backe, hang squibs at his tayle, ring him through the towne with / basons" and "besnowball him with rotten eggs" (54-57). They promise to "make...sport" with the old man and compare

[510] DiGangi, *Sexual Types*, 6.

him again to a "blind Beare" who "deserved to be bayted" (3.1.51-52). Rebecca Ann Bach's work on early modern bearbaiting as a metaphor for English colonialism, domination, and mastery ties these references back into emergent discourses of race and oppression.[511] Boy players were often compared to animals (especially apes, who also participated in types of baiting), and there is an uncomfortable potential for violence in the possible coerced labor of the boy players themselves.

As Lorenzo walks to Francischina's house, his sweep's cry calls forth his nephew Lodovico, and other nobles Honorio and Gasparo, in turn to mock him. Rather than attack him physically as they had fantasized, however, the men make fun of his age and lack of sexual ability. Lodovico accuses "Snail" of being too familiar with his uncle Lorenzo's maid, and when "Snail" (aka Lorenzo) denies it, Lodovico speculates that perhaps it is Lorenzo himself who is dallying with her, only to dismiss the thought due to his uncle being "as gentle as an Adder that has his / teeth taken out" (3.1.134-35). Honorio likewise emphasizes Lorenzo's age: "his very age would make him asham'd to be overtaken with those / goatish licences" (144-45). These comments do not dampen Lorenzo's resolve to cuckold Quintiliano, but when he arrives at the house, he is immediately thrust into the dark coal-house due to the scheming alliance of Angelo and Francischina to make "the old flesh-monger fast for his iniquity" (3.2.34). This action recalls *Twelfth Night,* where Malvolio the steward is punished for his aristocratic pretensions to marry the countess Olivia and thrust into a dark, enclosed space. Lorenzo's sexual desire also leads him to betraying his class identity, but in this case, he is punished for moving down the social ladder in his blackface disguise, not aspiring to move up.

[511] Rebecca Ann Bach, "Bearbaiting, Dominion, and Colonialism," in *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance,* ed. Joyce Green Macdonald (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1997), 19-35.

His attempt at mimicking the inappropriate desires of the chimney sweep is what gets him into the most trouble. When caught in the house by Quintiliano, Lorenzo narrowly escapes being stuffed in a coal sack and "hung up for a sign" after he has been confined for some time in the coal-house (4.1.73). In these scenes, therefore, we see Lorenzo ostensibly being ridiculed, threatened, and punished for his sexual desires that are inappropriate for his age, while wearing the black guise of a classed and racialized character associated with sexual desire and cuckoldry (simultaneously one who cuckolds and one who is cuckolded). Lorenzo is a blackened figure who is completely desexualized and emasculated. The threat of his blackness, as well as the "egress and regress" of gentlemen's houses allowed by his occupation, is diminished by his foolishness and incompetence at maintaining his disguise. While Quintiliano accuses him of "creeping" into his "wive's cole-house" (4.1.56-7) and being "an old luxurious hummerer about wenches" (71), the audience knows that while Snail might be those things, Lorenzo in the guise of Snail presents an effectual version of the type.

While Lorenzo later washes his face and rejoins the Venetian upper crust in the final act of the play, the real character of Snail must remain only in the audience's imagination. We never actually meet the sweep in the play. Towards the end of the play, after Lorenzo has removed his black face paint, the gentlemen at the feast wonder if they should send for Snail to dress him up in a "Magnificoes sute of the Citty" (5.1.37). This hearkens back to the representations of sweepers and other "laboring bodies as entertainment" at court, such as the reapers in the *The Tempest* wedding masque.[512] This tempting possibility, that the real Snail might appear, is thwarted by Angelo's shrewdness

[512] Akhimie, *Cultivation of Difference,* 34.

and Lorenzo's embarrassment. Just as actors donned blackface to portray racialized others who were not physically present, the representation of Snail in *May Day* is likewise a false one. His absence on the stage gestures toward the archival absences of the working poor and scholarship by Habib referenced above. While Lorenzo, a white male magnifico, can masquerade (however unsuccessfully) as Snail, Snail is not here allowed to even attempt to "pass" as Lorenzo and, if he did appear, it would be for the amusement of these upper-class men, like the Lord who dresses up Christopher Sly in the induction of *Taming of the Shrew*. But Lorenzo is not allowed to "pass" as Snail in any real sense; all who encounter him, except for Quintiliano, are in on the joke. It is remarkable that in a play full of successful gender disguises, Lorenzo is not allowed to metamorphosize so easily. Edel Lamb uses the example of Lorenzo's ineffectual disguise to contrast with the gender disguises: a boy player could easily shift his gendered representation, but when a boy player took on a role that was so marked – aged, classed, and racialized – that performance had to be easily dismissed as fake.[513]

Conclusion

A play mostly known today for its representations of gender and cross-dressing, Chapman's *May Day* featured presumably a slightly more experienced and cohesive company of players than the boys who performed *Cynthia's Revels* or *Poetaster*. The image of the sooty disguise of Lorenzo in *May Day* would have recalled this earlier moment of black-faced Albius in *Poetaster*. This image is also reminiscent of other stage Moors, like Muly in *The Battle of Alcazar* as discussed in the second chapter, and Othello. Lorenzo in *May Day* becomes linked to both soot and deformity through a

[513] Lamb, *Performing Childhood,* 34.

Vulcan-like disguise, but instead of impersonating a god (like Albius), he goes to the other end of the social spectrum in taking on the role of Snail, the chimneysweep. With his face completely blackened as to hide his identity from onlookers, Lorenzo then suffers a humiliating rejection from the woman he wants to sleep with and unleashes a fit of rage when he finds out his daughter was dallying with a gentleman in secret. This fit of anger, I argue, is made more virtuosic by the fact that his face is still completely blackened. He looks the part of the storming, roaring adult tragedian who is completely out of place in this light farce. Repertory becomes an essential tool in recognizing these theatergrams which affect the audience's perception of the performance in a more visual way than the language of the metaphor does.

This project has moved from the infancy of the Children of the Chapel company, as embodied by the boy god Cupid, through different phases of its theatrical life (the imitating student/ape, the versatile apprentice/Proteus) and ended with a depiction of old age in the form of the blackened Vulcan/sweep figure in *May Day*. The boys grew and developed through their time with the company and inevitably became "marked" through their theatrical labors, either physically or in terms of their reputations as former child actors. Simone Chess's work on the later careers of boy actors notes that "the queerly gendered aspects of their performances" were "coded in the actors' gestures, voices, and bearing" and that "at least some of them carried a queer residue into their adult roles, implicitly or explicitly performing feminine, androgynous, or otherwise queer roles."[514] Uncovering the "coding" of racialized performance in these same gestures has been my aim here, to investigate how performances of gender, queerness, ability and disability,

[514] Chess, "Queer Residue," 246-47.

and class can create a constellation of racemaking techniques onto the bodies of these performers as they move through the early modern repertory. Their whiteness is seen most clearly in this final chapter that engages with the materiality of blackness and cosmetic practices on the early modern stage. Arthur Little writes that "the white actor's inability or ability to play black presumes to become, in a final analysis, a very real testament to the stability or adaptability of whiteness."[515] The spectacular failure of these performances – the inability to let the audiences really see the child "play black" (Little's term) – shows a certain resistance to imbue the child's body with this somatic marker but it also then troubles, as Little suggests, the "stability" of their whiteness. But not allowing the children to exercise these particular skills on the stage also shows a reluctance to ascribe the qualities of childhood (and indeed, humanity) to non-white individuals. This contradiction is the basis of the race trick, theatrical moments that can both occlude and reveal racialized meanings, through the player's skills of imitation and transformation. The nature of the trick is its ephemerality, resistant to our grasp and faded into history. Only by seeing through repertory can the picture of early modern racecraft come fully into focus.

[515] Little Jr., *Shakespeare Jungle Fever*, 97.

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