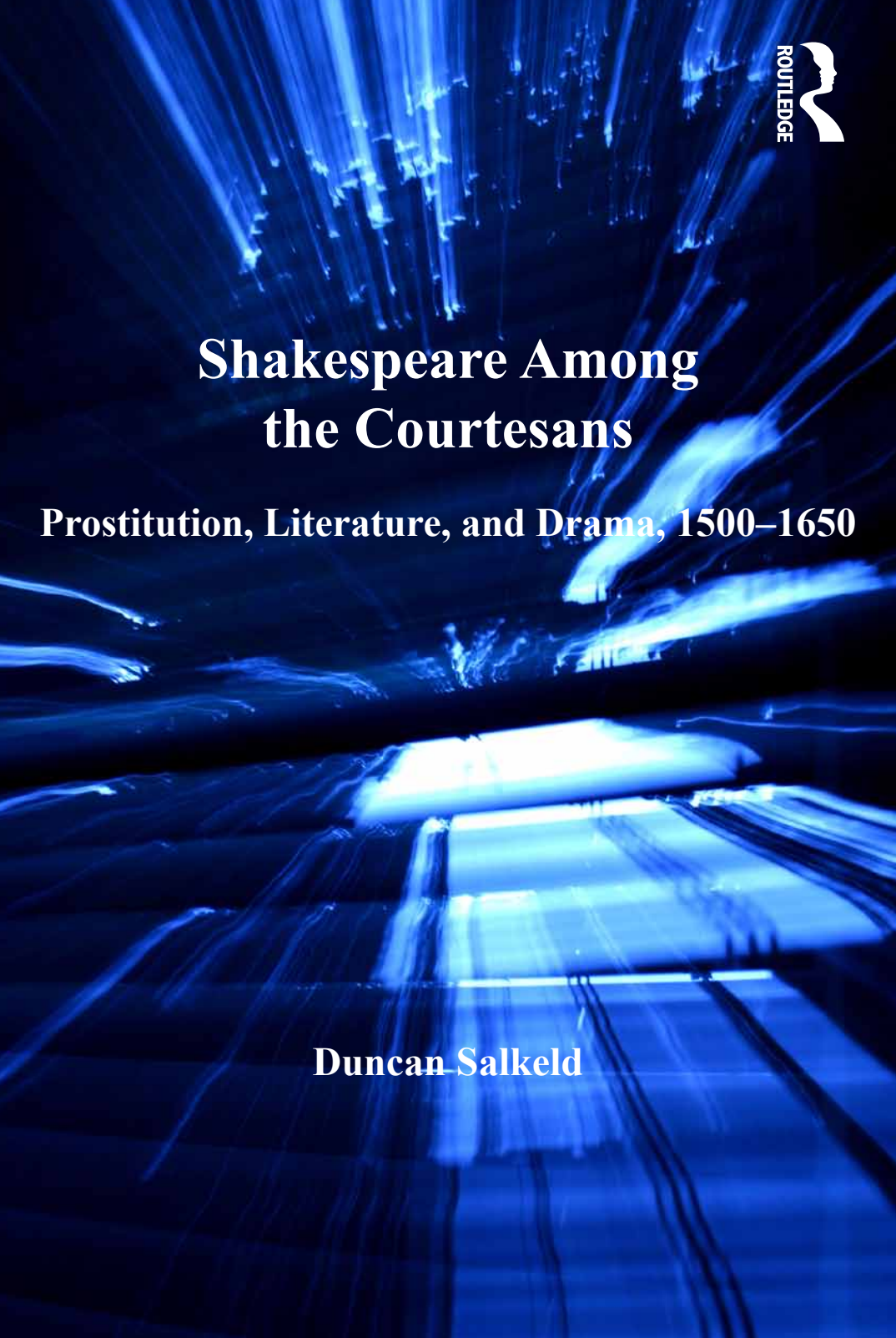

Shakespeare Among the Courtesans

Prostitution, Literature, and Drama, 1500–1650

Duncan Salkeld

SHAKESPEARE AMONG THE COURTESANS

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DUNCAN SALKELD
University of Chichester, UK

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To Tom
With love always

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Acknowledgements

Some years ago, as I was reading about Imperia in Georgina Masson's *Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance* (1975), it occurred to me that I knew of a couple of Imperias in Renaissance drama, and that there might be a connection. The result is this book. I quickly realised that, having small Latin and tourist Italian, sources for a book like this would be hard to access and assimilate. I was extremely grateful, therefore, for the generous help of Ana Garcia Herraez who undertook to translate a few already published Italian documents for me, including the Zoppino dialogue attributed to Aretino. I continued to work on the Zoppino translation for about a year, using every lexicon and dictionary available and finally published it alongside a transcription of the 1584 Bengodi text held by the British Library, the only substantive text from which to make such a translation in the absence of an earlier 1539 edition, apparently now lost. I was further helped in those early days by one of my students, Lynsey Hall, who translated a volume of Latin poems dedicated to Imperia for her excellent undergraduate dissertation. I then had the good fortune of being in contact with Michele Marrapodi, at the University of Palermo, who prompted me to make a book proposal for this series. I am exceedingly grateful to him for the extraordinary patience and generosity he has extended to me as I have written the book. I have fond memories of attending two stimulating international conferences he organised at Palermo. Prof. Marrapodi has been the kindest and most hospitable of editors. I extend sincere thanks also to Erika Gaffney, Whitney Feininger and Seth F. Hibbert, editors at Ashgate, for their generous and friendly support.

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A Note on the Text

When transcribing primary documents, I have supplied letters omitted by contraction in italics, and followed the original pointing (or lack of it). In the early modern period, the New Year began on 25 March (Lady Day), rather than at the start of January as today. For this reason, I give dates between January and 24 March in both old and new styles: hence, a date cited for the year 1602/3 corresponds to 1603 in our calendar. A section of Chapter 1 appeared as 'The Case of Elizabeth Evans' in *Notes and Queries* 50, 1 (March 2003), 60–1. Chapter 3 was first published as 'Alien Desires: Travellers and Sexuality in Early Modern London' in Thomas Betteridge (ed.) *Borders and Travellers in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 35–52. Part of Chapter 4 appeared as ''History, Genre and Sexuality in the Sixteenth Century: The Zoppino Dialogue Attributed to Pietro Aretino' in *Mediterranean Studies*, 10 (2001), 49–116. A few of the details regarding Thomas Kyd given in Chapter 5 were published in 'Shakespeare Studies, Presentism and Micro-History' in *Cahiers Elisabethains,* 76 (2009), 35–43. A section of Chapter 5 appeared in 'Kyd and the Courtesan', *Notes and Queries*, 47.1 (2000), 43–8. Part of Chapter 6 was published in 'Literary Traces in Bridewell and Bethlem, 1602–24', *The Review of English Studies* 2005; 56: 379–85. I am grateful to the editors of these publications for their kind permission to draw on or reproduce material from those articles. I have been greatly advantaged by the availability of digitized resources, including the Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum website, and Early English Books Online. Many of the primary printed texts cited here have been consulted in libraries, but since almost all of them are also available on EEBO, I have abbreviated full details of their printing. All quotations from Shakespeare are cited from the Oxford *Complete Works* (1986), unless otherwise stated.

This book has been written under an ostensibly simple premise: that past inscriptions qualify, shape and condition what can be made of them today. The ramifications of this view can become quite complex, even abstract; they might be viewed as a kind of illocutionary force, an aspect of what old texts perform or *do*. I have avoided theory, however, in favour of particularities and the implications of textual fragments. This is not to trust historical documents entirely: it is crucial to sift what one reads. In following up a few old trails, I have relied as far as possible upon the material stuff of the past and sought to remain open to the impress of words not my own. In 1574, Elizabeth Aprice, being about 25 years old and bearing the child of Thomas Medcalf, asked her lover, 'howe maie wee live for I am a poor mayde & have nothinge' (see Figure 7.1). The tonalities of these words dissipated long ago, but they still have a power to catch us listening, endeavouring to hear anew a different voice.

Abbreviations

BCB	Bridewell Court Minute Book
BL	British Library
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NA	The National Archives

Chapter 1
Introduction: Classical and Early Modern Counterparts

Late in 1539, Maddalena Saltarella left her well-connected Florentine lover, Ugolino Grifoni, and headed for Rome accompanied by two men, a Signior Lactantio and his companion Buondelmonti, each of whom took it in turns to sleep with her. They did not disguise this arrangement: indeed, her entry into the city was pre-announced and showily celebrated. She was thereafter lavishly entertained at banquets and introduced to influential men, in particular a number of elder cardinals whom they regarded, it seems, as contacts worth knowing. She was denounced by the Bishop of Forli as a spreader of syphilis but the slur does not seem to have stuck. Instead, she was fêted by a variety of men and showered with luxurious and expensive gifts. Maddalena received her guests in a gorgeously decorated room surrounded by paintings and tapestries. Such magnificent display proved to any onlooker both her success and her patrons' largesse. She moved in elite circles, won the admiration of powerful men by her graceful singing and dancing, and became, according to letters sent to Grifoni about her, a living object of desire, her body a trophy to be won. And yet a tax document ten years later reveals a woman of the same name paying only a modest rent for her chambers, indicating that this *richesse* was apparently short-lived. She had, it seems, fallen from favour.[1]

Almost sixty years later, on Saturday the first of April 1598, Elizabeth Evans of Stratford-upon-Avon stood facing a more than usually full assembly of magistrates ('governors') at London's Bridewell Hospital.[2] The room in which the hearing was held would probably have been very grand, a reminder of its past as Wolsey's palace, and as an ambassadorial residence. Gathered at the bench were twelve grim-faced London aldermen, including the Treasurer, Master Thomas Box, and two visitors, one of whom was William Fleetwood, the London Recorder, the most

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[1] For Maddalena Saltarella, see Georgina Masson, *Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), 137–8, and Tessa Storey, 'Courtesan Culture: Manhood, Honour and Sociability' in Sara F. Matthews-Grieco, *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 259–62. Masson writes, 'Signora Saltarella's triumphant career was brief; ten years later she was reduced, probably by disease, to living in a mean quarter of Rome in a shack for which she paid a rent of sixteen scudi', op. cit., 138.

[2] Bridewell Court Minute Book (hereafter BCB), courtesy of Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum, Beckenham, Kent, BCB 4.11^{v}–12^{v}. The Bridewell archives are available online at http://www.bethlemheritage.org.uk/archive/web/BCB.htm#BCB-01.

senior of the city's magistrates. To one side sat William Johnson, the hospital clerk who wrote down the case.

Evans had been sent into Bridewell under a special warrant from Fleetwood. He had been tracking her for some days. A week earlier, the court had heard a lengthy witness statement by Mary Holmes, a former serving-maid to Evans, whom she knew as Elizabeth Dudley. Holmes testified that her mistress was 'of ill reporte and an ill woman of her body'. Evans apparently dwelt at 'Tutle' [Tothill] street in Westminster but had moved addresses ever since she arrived in London, some three or four years earlier.[3] According to Holmes, she had slept with John Pears, on one occasion locking him in her room and removing his boots and stockings. When Pears's brother Henry knocked at the door, John grabbed his clothes and hid in an ante chamber. Realising that Evans had been regularly sleeping with John , Henry lamented, 'Oh Lord would she do so I am sorye that eiuer I did speake for her'. Holmes also testified that Evans 'told her she hath three hundred pounds a yeare to live one' [*sic*]. If true, this would have made Evans one of the wealthiest women in England.

The city authorities had taken just a week to find Evans and gather citizens willing to give evidence against her. Thomas Malin, a brown baker, testified that a Master Nixon, silk merchant, asked him to give lodging to one Elizabeth Carew, a woman said to be of good parentage and means, whom he intended to marry. But while Nixon was away, Evans entertained other clothiers, often staying out late at night. Malin eventually threw her out and she lodged in a succession of houses of ill-fame, including one called 'the well occupied house' in Islington. Malin claimed that she received men of 'good abilitye' who 'shortly after became bankrupt and little worth'. She moved to Southwark but her notoriety forced her again north of the river to Abchurch Lane, 'whither resorted unto her one Jones who named him selfe to be a gentleman of Grayes inne', yet even here her sojourn was brief and she had to flee 'secretly'. Two witnesses in this case also came from Stratford-upon-Avon and had known Evans since she was a girl. Joice Cowden, living in Seacole Lane, declared not only that she knew Elizabeth Evans, but that 'she was borne on Stratford uppon hauen and further she saith that she this ex*amin*ate went to schole with the said Elizabeth Evans'. Evans's father had been a cutler in Stratford and was executed for 'quoining' or counterfeiting. The record of the case confirms that, 'the said Joice did go with her the said Elizabeth to schole togither at Stratford uppon hauen'. George Pinder, another Stratfordian in London, corroborated Cowden's facts and testified that Elizabeth Evans had been in London some 'three or foure

[3] Tothill Street ran 'occidens–oriens' just south of St. James's Park, across the Thames from Lambeth. Ralph Treswell shows a line of sixteen houses with gardens and orchards along its northern side around 1585, at least three of which housed the 'tenantes of Chrystes hospitall', see John Schofield (ed.) *The London Surveys of Ralph Treswell* (London Topographical Society, 135: 1987), plate 2. John Stow gives a history of almshouses in this street; see Valerie Pearl (ed.) *John Stow: The Survey of London* (London: Dent, 1987), 420–21.

yeares'. Pinder stated he 'hath hard a verye bad reporte of her', that her friends were poor, that he did not know how she maintained herself so grandly, and that she had asked him to call her by the name 'Carew'.

Having been pursued across London by a network of aldermen, sheriffs, deputies, bailiffs and beadles, the game was finally up for Evans and, brought into court, she was compelled to make the following confession:

> I, Elizabeth Evans, do acknowledge that I am the daughter of Robert Evans who dwelte sometime on Stratford on haven A cutler in Warkeshire I have called my name sometime Dudley and sometime Carewe but I can shewe no reason that I tooke those names uppon me and further I do confesse I have bin about London three or foure yeares and I do acknowledge that I have lived with losse of my bodye with divers persons diverse and sundrye times for w*hi*ch I am hartelye sorrye and do aske god and her ma*jes*tie and all her ma*jes*ties subiectes whome I have offended therebye forgiveness for the saime and do promise by god his grace never hereafter to offend the like fault againe. And in testimonye of the true repentaince and sorrowfullness of my hart and purpose of amendement of my life I have heere set my hand this first day of Aprill 1598 and in the 40 yeere of her ma*jes*ties Raigne that nowe is.[4]

In a delicate, controlled and somewhat showy style, Evans signed her name 'Elis evens'. Her initial capital 'E' is elegantly looped at the top and bottom of the down-stroke, and the signature is impressive, graceful, and even fine. For Evans, this should have been one of the most terrifying moments of her life, but the signature shows a perfect command of hand. She had an ally in court, one more powerful than any civic magistrate – Sir William Howard, brother to the Lord High Admiral Charles Howard, the Earl of Nottingham. The first entry in the case, and probably also the last made, gives the court's judgment as follows:

> This daye Elizabeth Evans who named her name to be Elizabeth Dudley and sometime Elizabeth Carewe being sent into this house by M*aste*r Recorder his warrant was this daye examined by this court as by her examinacion appeareth. S*i*r William Howard brother to the Right Honourable ye Lord Admirall being in court did sewe for her enlargement and desired that she should be spared of her punishment for that he thought she was a kinne to him whereuppon she was delivered to him the saide S*i*r William without any punishment.[5]

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[4] BCB 4.12v. This kind of plea for forgiveness is extremely rare in the Bridewell records, suggesting perhaps the importance the governors attached to Evans's reformation of character.

[5] Ibid., 11v. See 'The Case of Elizabeth Evans' in *Notes and Queries* 50, 1 (March 2003), 60–61. Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 311, 315, and René Weis, *Shakespeare Revealed: A Biography* (London: John Murray, 2007), 23, 403, both mention details from this case but wrongly suggest that Cowden was an accomplice. Weis even suggests that Pinder was Evans's pimp, although the depositions offer little or no support for that inference.

Escaping London's notorious Bridewell was a rare feat indeed (see Figure 1.1). Evans had long run considerable risks but they now seemed to have paid off. Her pseudonyms had Warwickshire aristocratic connections. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, famously entertained the Queen at Kenilworth in July 1575. His brother John was Earl of Warwick, and buried in St. Mary's Church, in the town of Warwick, as he had requested in his will. George Carew, cousin of Sir Walter Ralegh, had married into the Clopton family and was a wealthy Warwickshire landowner. He would later be buried on 2 May 1629 in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford. She had been trading on local aristocratic names. Evans could claim to be the richest woman in London because she was sleeping with the brother of one of the greatest men in the English state. We cannot be sure what subsequently happened to her. On 10 January 1598/9, an Elizabeth Evans was arrested and punished for vagrancy and 'stealing of lynnen clothes out of a garden' with one Martha Marlin.[6] Five years later, a parson, Jervis Scarborough, was alleged to have raped his servant Elizabeth Evans, and his wife to have beaten her.[7] On 25 April 1610, an Elizabeth Evans was sent with one Thomas Gaskine for being 'diseased' to St. Thomas's Hospital 'to be cured'.[8]

These entries may not refer to the same person, let alone the Stratford coiner's daughter (the name would have been quite common): yet they point to a cycle of vagrancy, exploitation and violence that rendered any aspiring courtesan's situation precarious to say the very least. Howard's brother Charles was patron of the star players at Henslowe's Rose playhouse, and Evans may well have met actors on Bankside when she was in Southwark, or among the gentlemen of Gray's Inn where Shakespeare performed in 1594, or at Shoreditch on her way to the 'well occupied house' in Islington. It is barely plausible that Shakespeare did not know of her, or her father, and virtually impossible that she had not heard of him.

For all the cultural differences between their situations, the lives of these two women seem to share a similar trajectory. They rose to become the lovers of powerful men and then, so far as we are able to tell, fell from wealth, status and influence back into obscurity and comparative poverty. This book is largely about this arc or movement, from the lure of the dream that a woman could become fabulously wealthy, secure and protected (so long as she sold or gave her body to the right men), to the starker realities and difficulties of women's lives at this time. Rich men no doubt liked to show off their wealth in gifts to attractive women from whom they expected sex in return. For their part, the women gained all that this uncertain world could offer, the kind of wealth one could scarcely imagine. But many of these women would cruelly awake from this dream and find the world a hard and brutal place once more. The myth of the courtesan can distract even today. Criticism can fall in with the idea that a cultivated, educated and able woman who sells sexual favours might be a pioneer of women's autonomy and

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6 Ibid., 55^{r}. Linen was more expensive than cheaper woollen or fustian clothes.

7 Ibid., 439^{r}.

8 BCB 5.429^{v}.

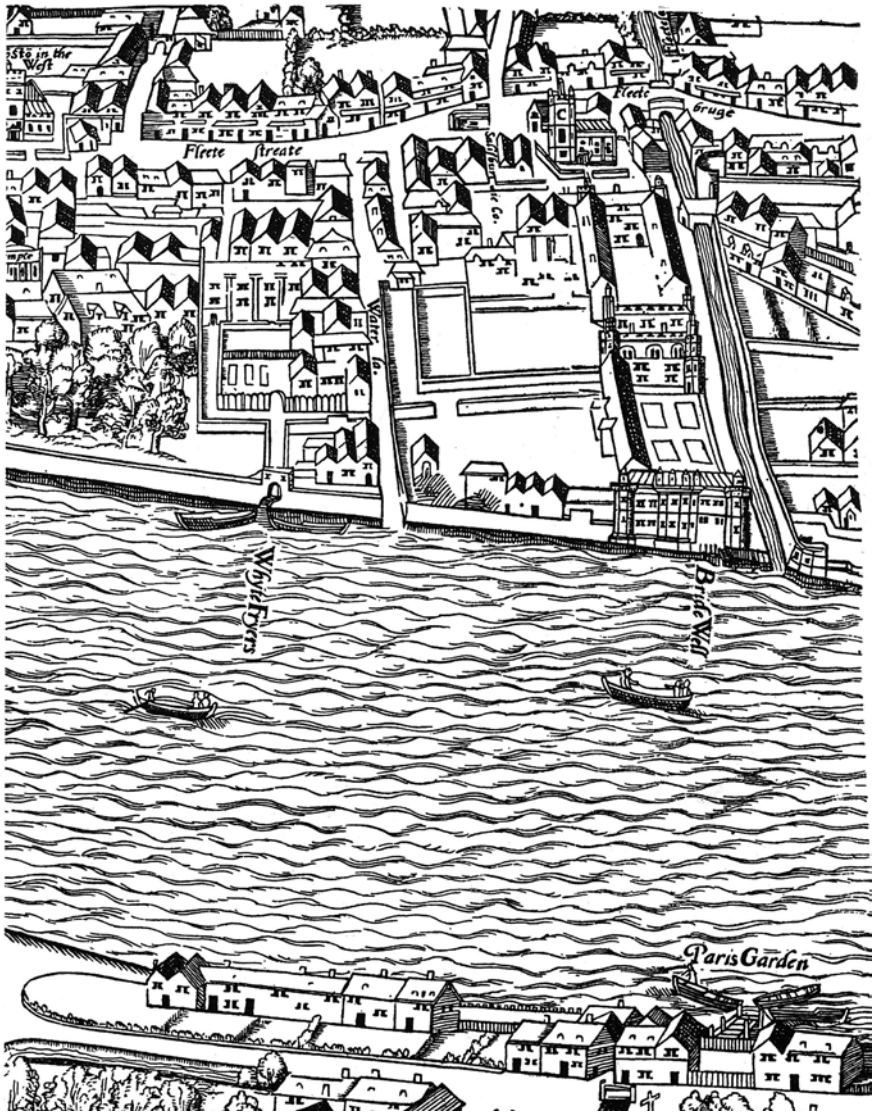

Fig. 1.1 Bridewell Royal Hospital. From the 'Agas' map (1561-70). The middle section originally housed the royal chambers, with the 'greene' or south yard towards the Thames and bounded on the left by the'long gallery'. The River Fleet ran directly on its east side, separating Bridewell from Blackfriars. After 1553, Salisbury Court, just to the west, became the home of the French ambassador (with kind permission from London Metropolitan Archives).

agency in an era of widespread misogyny – a figure to be admired or celebrated. The notion is seductive, but to read the courtesan in this way is to pass over the histories of abuse that often mark their narratives, and to ignore the truth that few women, if any, have ever chosen prostitution as a career because they genuinely liked it. This book addresses both sides of the Renaissance courtesan's story, the myth and the reality in and beyond the drama. It is also about Shakespeare and his contemporaries. One aim of this book is to underline that many of those contemporaries were women. Some of them Shakespeare probably never knew, like Joan Heliker (see below) or Francis Hudson (in Chapter 3), who were not courtesans but found themselves pregnant, abandoned and destitute. Others like Elizabeth Evans, Lucy Negro or Rose Flower (see Chapter 6), we may assume he did know. These women's narratives, with all their lacunae, are also the focus of this book.

The myth of the courtesan is that she transforms sex into art. Cultured, articulate and educated, she is herself an art-object, an icon, and expensive. She seems inevitable, ubiquitous, yet also socially occluded, islanded like Homer's sirens, a chiaroscuro figure in the door-way, or at a window – alluring, inviting but probably deceptive. A dangerous supplement to domestic happiness, she is admired, feared, celebrated and vilified. Augustine and Aquinas regarded prostitution as a necessary evil in a Christian society, and this view seems to have been held quite widely throughout late medieval Europe.[9] Augustine intimated that paying for recreational sex might prove beneficial in mitigating adultery, and Aquinas, it seems, took a similar line, holding that, like a town sink, at least a brothel keeps the dirt in one place.[10] The Greeks referred to such women as 'hetaerae', meaning courtesans, or sometimes 'porne', an approximate match for the English word 'whore'.[11] The equivalent Latin term for 'hetaera' was 'meretrice' (along with its euphemism, 'amicae'), which gives us today the English word 'meretricious', meaning 'alluring by false show' or 'showily attractive' (*SOED*).[12] The courtesan was originally, then, a 'friend with benefits' for which one was expected to pay. She traded in secrets, offered discreet services but required a fee. She was a paradox,

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[9] Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6. Leah Lydia Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society: The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 12, 34–9.

[10] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II.10.11 which cites Augustine, *De Ordine* 2.4.11. See also Jonathan Dollimore 'Shakespeare Understudies: The Sodomite, the Prostitute, the Transvestite and their Critics', in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (eds.) *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2nd ed. 1994), 137–8.

[11] 'Hetaera' means 'friend' or 'companion' and designates a woman of higher social status than a 'porne', or 'whore'.

[12] See also Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879), 1136, 106.

needing to be viewed but also hidden, an autonomous agent and yet evidently used, a brilliant talker but also unspeakable, a public woman for very private acts. What was it, however, that distinguished the 'hetaera' from a 'porne', a courtesan from a whore? Is a courtesan wealthy and empowered, and a whore of poor means and low status, and where exactly might that distinction be drawn? What is it that a courtesan sells, or her client buys: her body, or his pleasure? Is her work *work*? If so, what are the products of her labour – desire, satisfaction, money, status? Precise delineations seem inadequate, and possible responses to these questions are likely to shift with the currents of social attitude or taste. In a study of courtesans in classical Athens, James Davidson has written that 'modern scholars and ancient men have great difficulty in working out precisely where they fit into Greek society'.[13] He argues that courtesans ('hetaerae') 'live in the uncertain economy of the gift', as recipients, gatherers, borrowers and occasionally lenders. To be a prostitute, it seems, is to be a function or site of exchange rather than an autonomous individual.

Courtesans were everywhere in the ancient Mediterranean world.[14] The thirteenth book of Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae*, a second century Roman work written in Greek, provides a detailed discussion of classical courtesans, flute girls, singers, dancers and street workers. Athenaeus himself calls it a 'long, erotic muster roll'. A dinner debate takes place over whether courtesans represent an 'abominable class' of women who 'surpass all the pests in the world'.[15] Myrtilus of Thessaly defends them, while his cynical antagonist, Theodorus, argues that 'a courtesan is a calamity to the man who keeps her'. Theodorus (also known as Cynulcus) details their 'elaborate devices' and 'artful tricks', heightening or lowering their shoes, bulking out their bodices and plastering their complexions with 'white lead'.[16] Myrtilus argues from example: Lais of Corinth, he explains, had been born in Sicily in the town of Hycara but was taken captive. The painter Apelles caught sight of her coming from a well and, astonished at her beauty, invited her to a banquet he was giving for friends. Subsequently she became admired the ancient world over – but also made enemies. She was reportedly beaten to death with wooden footstools in the Temple of Aphrodite in Thessaly by a crowd of outraged women.[17] Phryne, her great rival, attracted notice, according to Athenaeus, by keeping her clothes on and carefully controlling just when and how much flesh should be exposed. Praxiteles, a sculptor, modelled his statue of

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[13] James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (Hammersmith: Fontana Press, 1998), 135.

[14] Ibid., 73–7.

[15] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, trans. Charles Burton Gulick (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1937, rpt. 1993), 5, 17. For a fine account of Athenaeus in context, see David Braund and John Wilkins (eds.) *Athenaeus and His World* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000).

[16] Ibid., 65, 67–9.

[17] Ibid., 177.

Eros on her, adding an inscription: 'The spell of love which I cast comes no longer from my arrow, but from gazing upon me'. She became extraordinarily wealthy and (Athenaeus explains) offered to rebuild Thebes if its citizens would credit her on a plaque with the following words: 'Whereas Alexander demolished it, Phryne the courtesan restored it'. Most famously, she was said to have been saved from a death sentence by the orator Hyperides who, in desperation, tore her tunic, exposed her breasts and thereby successfully won the judges' favour.[18] Beautiful, wealthy and influential as she was, Phryne attracted disparagement. According to Plutarch, the name Phryne means 'Toad', a soubriquet she earned by virtue of her olive skin. Shakespeare's appropriation of her name and reputation is still less complimentary:

> *Timon*: … This fell whore of thine
> Hath in her more destruction than in thy sword,
> For all her cherubin look.
> *Phrynia*: Thy lips rot off! (4.3.61–4).

These sentiments are a far cry from the hedonism and voluptuarism we find in some classical sources. Alciphron's second-century 'Letters of Courtesans' ('Επιστολαε Έταιρικαι') tells of a courtesan invited to make sacrifice to the Nymphs in the countryside with female friends. Amid cypresses and myrtle, the girls ('παιδια'), sport with each other, make up a burnt offering and beg the gods to grant them 'a quarry of lovers'. They lie on clover, trefoil, larkspurs and other flowers, play music, hear nightingales sing as water drops from a crag, drink wine and feast on eggs, lamb, pancakes and 'the fruits of spring'. Pan and Priapus appear as if from nowhere and, retiring to 'a bridal suite' in 'a shady thicket', have sex with the girls. These 'little divertissements with Aphrodite' done, they prepare another meal, with partridges, sweet grapes, mussels, snails, mushrooms, lettuce, celery and more wine, and afterwards, another round of (this times less inhibited) sex.[19]

Alciphron's letter offers an epicurean and voluptuarist fantasy where every appetite is satiated.[20] But this proto-Keatsian dreamscape elides the much harsher social conditions that courtesans actually faced. Eva Keuls has criticized the romanticism that underlies much discussion of courtesans in classical literature. Keuls points out that virtually all classical prostitutes were slave girls who had no

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[18] Athenaeus, XIII, 185–7. See Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes*, 133–4, 338, n. 32. For a witty discussion of Phrynes, both ancient and modern, see Davidson's 'Making a Spectacle of Her(self): The Greek Courtesan and the Art of the Present' in Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (eds.), *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-cultural Perspectives* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29–51.

[19] Alciphron, 'Letters of Courtesans', in *The Letters of Alciphron, Aelian and Philostratus*, trans. Allen Rogers Benner and Francis H. Fobes (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1949), 283–95.

[20] The term 'Voluptuaries' [Ηδωνικων] was a pejorative used for the hedonistic school of Aristippus; see Athenaeus, XIII, 170.

stake or place in a social order that put such value on the citizen class. Theirs was a life of the powerless. Keuls suggests: 'prostitutes were no threat to the social norms, since they were irrevocably outside them'.[21] She adds, moreover, that the conditions in which they were employed would hardly have been the stuff of romance.

Illustrating (literally) this point, Keuls details a number of scenes on Greek amphora which depict either sexual intercourse or encounters with hetaerae. In several of these illustrations, men are clearly depicted in aggressive postures, approaching their courtesans with shoes or sticks. Two partially preserved symposium cups depict 'with brutal realism the forcible coercion of resisting hetaerai'.[22] One of them shows, in Keuls's view, the most pathetic female in classical art published so far:

> Heavy-set, she has a lovely but matronly face and the short haircut of a slave, topped by a banqueter's wreath. She is crouching on the ground; a garlanded, bearded man with a large erection is approaching her from the front, trying to thrust his penis into her mouth. The garment in his left hand is probably hers: perhaps he has just stripped it off. With his right hand he brandishes a stick. The hetaera looks startled, and is making pleading gestures with both hands.

Keuls's readings of such scenes are detailed, sensitive and careful enough to acknowledge that we still know very little about them: did this particular painter work 'in a spirit of criticism, or was he merely being realistic?'[23] Scenes like these were perhaps originally painted for their erotic charge but they counter-balance the kind of connoisseur courtesan-history suggested by Alciphron and tell a plain truth: that no woman took up prostitution because she liked it.

Disdain for courtesans matched expressions of admiration in antiquity. Athenaeus's Cynulcus cites a play entitled *Anti-Lais* that describes Lais as 'lazy', 'bibulous', 'distorted' and ageing. His antagonist Myrtillus counters with 'a catalogue of women' whose decorum, charm, good-manners and quick-wittedness are exemplary, and argues that, 'We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for daily concubinage, but wives we have in order to produce children legitimately, and to have a trustworthy guardian of our property'.[24] He notes their humiliating monikers, from 'Nico, nicknamed She-Goat', Callistion 'the Sow' or 'Beggar-Helen', to Stagonion, Anthis and Nicostratis called 'Anchovy', and Nannion

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[21] Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1993), 154.

[22] Ibid., 180.

[23] Ibid., 182.

[24] Athenaeus, xiii, 95. On this citation of *Against Neara*, attributed to Demosthenes, see Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 143ff.

named the 'Goat'.[25] He even lists a series of diatribes against courtesans: *against Lais*, *against Neara*, *against Philonides*, *against Leocrates*, *against Patrocles*, and *against Aristagora*. Only one of these survives (the speech *Against Neara*, recorded by Apollodorus and attributed to 'Pseudo-Demosthenes'), but their tenor may be inferred from the following passage in Athenaeus:

> Has not Cercope by this time grown to be three thousand years old, and Diopethes' foul Telesis another ten thousand? As for Theolyte, nobody even knows the time when she first came to birth. Did not Lais die at the end from excessive commerce? And have not Isthmias and Neara and Phila rotted away? As for all the Cossyphes, Galenes, and Corones, I say nothing; and concerning Nais I am dumb; she has no molars left.[26]

Against such sentiments, Myrtillus orates a paean to women of extraordinary beauty, courtesans admired or kept by Aristotle and Demosthenes and a host of lesser writers, praising also the Cretans' 'marvellous passion' for boys. He ends with a provocative quip against his banqueting opponents from the comic poet Anaxippus: 'I find philosophers are wise only when it is a matter of words, but when it comes to actions I see they are fools'.[27]

Courtesans feature prominently in classical drama, but only in one genre. Of twenty-one surviving comedies by Plautus, nine include a 'meretrix' among their dramatis personae: *Asinaria*, *Bacchides*, *Casina*, *Menaechmi*, *Mercator*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa* and *Truculentus*. Four of his other plays, *Curculio, Pseudolus, Poenulus* and *The Tale of a Travelling Bag* feature pimps and bawds.[28] Four of Terence's six extant comedies centrally involve courtesans in their plots: *The Girl From Andros*, *The Self-Tormentor, The Eunuch,* and *The Mother-In-Law*.[29] Most of these plays are set in or around Athens. They were performed at public festivals by a company of six men (perhaps with female extras) on raised stages before a back-drop of three house entrances.[30] Quite how courtesans were attired on the Roman stage is not known. An edition of Terence's plays, in Latin,

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[25] Athenaeus, xiii, Nico 143, 153; Callistion 143, 155; Stagonion, Anthis and Nicostratis 161; Nannion 165.

[26] Ibid., 169.

[27] Ibid., 243, 291.

[28] I refer throughout to translations of Plautus by Paul Nixon, and Terence by John Sargeaunt, in Loeb Classical Library editions.

[29] See David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (ed.) *Literature and Western Civilization: The Classical World* (London: Aldus, 1972), 227; and George E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy,* 2nd ed. (London: Bristol Classics Press, 1994). David Konstan, *Roman Comedy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983) gives detailed discussion of individual plays and identifies ways in which their 'narrative paradigms' are adapted, re-worked, inverted or transformed in complex combinations (166).

[30] Daiches and Thorlby (op. cit., 203, 214) cite evidence to suggest that masks or make-up may have been worn by the players.

published at Lyons in 1493 by Johann Treschel, provides a series of striking woodcuts illustrating particular scenes from the plays, including some featuring courtesans. But there seems little distinctive in these visual representations, beyond a rather long head-dress for the courtesan, and there is some doubt as to whether they do indeed represent stage design from the era.[31]

Just about all Roman New Comedy is based upon a conventional set of characters: the father ('senex'), young man ('adulescens'), slave ('servus'), parasite ('parasitus'), girl ('virgo'), courtesan ('meretrix'), pimp ('leno'), soldier ('miles'), mother ('matrona'), and serving-maid ('ancilla). Most involve a young man whose affections are fixed on a dubious young woman whose freedom can only be won by money tricked out of the father. In this, the young man is helped by the witty, ingenious family slave. A courtesan was usually regarded as an alien, a status that prohibited her from marrying a Roman citizen. If she abandoned the profession, rehabilitation was possible, and much Latin comedy, especially in Terence, turns on the discovered legitimacy of a girl previously thought to be a courtesan. This was a trick seventeenth-century dramatists would emulate centuries later (see chapter seven). Attempts to distinguish between certain kinds of courtesan have been only partially successful. Plutarch differentiated 'insolent and bold' *hetairae* from prostitutes who were 'good and love'. Similarly, Donatus, a fourth century commentator on Terence, suggested a distinction between 'mala' and 'bona meretrices'. In 1980, Dwora Gilula questioned the notion that Terence intentionally depicted good whores.[32] More recently, Ortwin Knorr has argued that Terence's courtesan, Bacchis, in *Heautontimorumenos* is a sympathetic character entirely consonant with the kind mentioned by Plutarch and Donatus.[33] Yet these comedies draw few, if any, hard or firm distinctions. In Plautus's *Truculentus* the courtesan Phronesium (helped by her grasping maid Astaphium) mercilessly fleeces her young admirer Diniarchus, and extorts money from Stratophanes, a soldier by whom she pretends to have had a son. By way of contrast, Thais in Terence's *Eunuchus* acts with integrity to preserve her relationship with the man she loves. The plot turns on Thais's ability to redeem a young Athenian flute-girl whom she recognizes as her freeborn step-sister without losing Phaedria: 'My conscience tells me for certain that I have invented no falsehood and that no one is dearer to my heart than dear Phaedria'.[34] For Gilula, Thais is only concerned with

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[31] Terence, *Guidonis Iuuenalis natione Cenomani in Terentium familiarissima interp[re]tatio cu[m] figuris unicuiq[ue] scænæ præpositis* (Lyon: Iohannis Trechsel, 1493), 361. See reproductions of some of these woodcuts in R. A. Foakes (ed.) *The Comedy of Errors* (London: Methuen, 1962), xxxviii-xxxxix.

[32] For Plutarch and Donatus, see Marvin T. Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950). Dwora Gilula, 'The Concept of the *Bona Meretrix*: A Study of Terence's Courtesans' *RFIC* 108 (1980), 142–65, 144, 150.

[33] Ortwin Knorr, 'The Character of Bacchis in Terence's *Heautontimorumenos*' *The American Journal of Philology*, 116, 2 (1995), 221–35.

[34] Sergeaunt, *Eunuchus*, vol. i, 253.

money, trying to work things so her bills are paid. In *Asinaria*, the mercenary and duplicitous tendencies of the bawd surface repeatedly as one of its most morally questionable features. Cleareta openly professes heartless scheming: 'my policy has been fair give and take – services rendered for cash. … Lovers are as fish to us – no good unless they're fresh. Your fresh ones are juicy and sweet; you can season them to taste in a stew, bake them and turn them every way'. She makes no attempt to hide her wiles: 'This profession of ours is a great deal like bird-catching. … I am the fowler, the girl the bait, the couch the decoy, the lovers the birds. They become familiar through pleasant greetings, pretty speeches, kisses, cooey, captivating little whispers'. But part of the courtesan's function is also to ensure that fathers and sons get their comeuppances when they deserve it, and to pour a heavy amphora of cold water on male ardour. *Asinaria* ends with an excruciating scene as Argyrippus encounters his father Demaenetus dallying with his girl in a brothel chamber. Bothered, Argyrippus tries to get some family perspective:

> *Argyrippus*. Look here, father. Do you love my mother?
> *Demaenetus*. Love her? I? I love her now for not being near.
> *Argyrippus*. And when she is near?
> *Demaenetus*. I yearn for a death in the family.

Plautus ends the play with Artemona, the mother, dragging her husband by the ear out of the brothel. Philaenium, the young courtesan, teases him saying, 'Do give me another naughty, naughty kiss before we part', and the scene closes with Philaenium ushering a now more cheerful Argyrippus through her doorway and into her boudoir.

Elsewhere Plautus makes sparkling comic use of enticing and teasing styles of speech. *Bacchides* begins with the twin Bacchis sisters whispering and giggling in the street. Pistoclerus is wary: 'What have you girls settled on in that session?'[35] 'Something nice,' comes the reply. Pistoclerus is easily befuddled and shows himself intrigued, afraid, aroused and perplexed all at once. The first sister invites him for a drink at their house and 'the nicest sort of kiss, too'.[36] Seeing him hesitate, she says, 'We'll have to soften you. Yes indeed, I'll take you in hand myself …. Do make believe you love me'. This last phrase reads in the original Latin, 'Simulato me amare', and it sums up the classical courtesan's ease in dwelling almost entirely in a world of simulations and ironism. 'These words of yours,' declares Pistoclerus, 'have a pretty sound: but when a fellow takes 'em up and tries 'em they're barbed'. These girls are, however, very inviting, and he quickly gives in: 'I surrender myself to you, lady. I'm all yours. Command me'. Thereafter, he is stupid with desire, calling Bacchis, 'Love, Delight, Venus, Grace, Joy, Jest, Jollity, Chitchat, Kissykissysweetkins' ('Suavisaviatio').[37] Poly-compound words such as these are the great appeal of Plautine comedy. Libanus refers in his opening

[35] Ibid., 333.
[36] Ibid., 335.
[37] Ibid., 336–9.

lines in *Asinaria* to 'the Clubbangian-Chainclangian Islands' (in Latin, 'Apud fustitudinas, ferricrepinas insulas').[38] A similar technique is used at the opening of *Miles Gloriosus* where the braggart soldier Pyrgopolynices bids his servant remind him of the army commander 'Battleboomski Mightimercenarimuddlekin' ('Bumbomachides Clutomystaridysarchides').[39] The courtesan's verbal simulations play a central role in this work, as Acroteleutium, a kind-hearted courtesan, assists the slave Palaestrio to win freedom for Philocomasium, a captive girl kept by Pyrgopolynices (the play's buffoon or 'deridiculum'). Simulation may be the courtesan's art but it is used here, as in Terence's *Eunuchus*, to benevolent effect. 'So long as we're unaware of doing good,' Acroteleutium explains, 'you needn't worry'.[40]

Renaissance writers seemed unsure about whether to praise or condemn Plautus and Terence. On the one hand, there were those like St. Jerome, who, writing of his early asceticism, bemoaned his weakness in taking up Plautus again after weeping over his sins.[41] Robert S. Miola has noted that Benedetto Grasso deemed Terence 'a poisonous plague, by which the minds of tender youths, bewitched, become infected and poisoned in the sewer of the vices'.[42] But there were also defenders of Terence, key among them the humanist Erasmus who devoured his plays as a young novice. In 1489, he wrote to a friend, 'Quid enim sunt comoediae, nisi seruus nugator, adolescens amore insanus, meretrix blanda ac procax, senex difficilis, morosus, auarus?' [What makes for true comedies unless a clownish slave, a young man mad for love, a fair but shameless courtesan, and an awkward, peevish, miserly old man?].[43] In another letter he argued that, 'read in the proper way,' the plays of Terence 'not only have no tendency to subvert men's morals but even afford great assistance in reforming them'. Later, in 1532, Erasmus published an edition of Terence, contributing to a widening awareness that the plays could provide useful examples of conduct to be avoided, fine phrases and admirable dramatic structure.[44]

In the sixteenth century, the universities at Oxford and Cambridge fairly regularly staged performances of plays that included classical tragedies, Biblical and neo-Latin dramas and, especially it seems, the comedies of Plautus and Terence. In Cambridge, *Poenulus* and *Stichus* were shown at Queen's College in

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38 *Asinaria,* vol. i, 128–9.

39 *Miles Gloriosus*, vol. iii, 124–5.

40 Ibid., 217.

41 F.A. Wright (trans.) *The Selected Letters of St. Jerome* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), 125.

42 R.S. Miola*, Shakespeare and Classical Comedy* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1994), 5.

43 E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), vol. iv, 185.

44 Philip Melancthon produced a school edition of Terence (1516). Commentators on Terence included Ioannes Stigelius, Ioannes Rivius, Willichius, Wagnerus, Nathan Chytraeus, and Giraldi Cinthio. See Marvin T. Herrick, op. cit.

1549 and 1554 respectively. Performances of *Menaechmi* (1552), 'a commodye of Plautus' (7 January 1557), *Mostellaria* (1560), *Amphitruo* (1561), *Pseudolus* (1563), *Trinummus* and *Bacchides* (1564) were held at Trinity College. When Elizabeth visited in 1564, *Aulularia* was the first of the plays performed at King's, and *Curculio* had been staged at Jesus the year before. At Oxford, *Eunuchus* had been performed in 1567, and *Menaechmi* in 1568, both at Merton.[45] Although popular interludes like *Jack Juggler* and *Ralph Roister Doister* were based on Latin models, these were regarded as plays for an academic audience, unsuitable by and large for the public ear and eye. Hence Maurice Kyffin's 1588 translation of *Andria* was produced solely for the purpose of educating the son of the Earl of Dorset. Kyffin defends the play for its moral guidance on how not to behave. At the start of the fourth scene, for example, where the mid-wife Lesbia is referred to as a drunkard, he adds a gloss, 'And here Terence gives a lesson, that such especially as have charge of weighty business, ought to eschew immoderate drinking of wine'.[46]

While the universities favoured Roman comedy, anxieties remained elsewhere about their potential to offend. Roger Ascham wrote uneasily in *The Scolemaster* (1570) that he recommended scholars read 'aduisedly ouer' those 'two wise writers' [Plautus and Terence] in whom 'ye shall find … almost in every commedie, no unthrifty yong man, that is not brought there unto, by the sotle inticement of som lewd seruant'. Ascham seems caught between approval and disapproval. He cannot help admiring the expression, the 'stuff so neetlie packed up, and wittely compassed in euerie place' but he also urges that 'skilfull choice must be vsed by the master … in cutting out perfitlie ouer old and vnproper wordes' and in making 'wise choice, first in propertie of wordes … and chieflie in choice of honestie of matter'. Without redaction, Plautus and Terence will only depict (in Ascham's view), 'the thoughtes and conditions of hard fathers, foolish mothers, vnthrifty yong men, craftie seruantes, sotle bawdes, and wilie harlots, and so, is moch spent, in finding out fine fetches, and packing vp pelting matters, soch as in London commonlie cum to the hearing of the Masters of Bridewell'.[47] Ascham was not

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[45] F.S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 18.

[46] *Andria, the first comoedie of Terence, in English, tr. by M. Kyffin.* (London: 1588). The dedicatory letter of this work addresses William, third son of Thomas Sackville, first Baron Buckhurst and first Earl of Dorset, as 'Master' (A3^{r}). William Sackville (1569/70–92) was around eighteen years of age when Kyffin's translation was published. William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke (1580–1630), would have been of a very similar age when Shakespeare's first seventeen sonnets were probably written (the 1609 volume famously dedicated to a mysterious 'M^{r}. W. H.'). The chief argument against Pembroke has been that the *Sonnets* would improperly strip him of his title. On Pembroke as 'M^{r}. W. H', see Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.) *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Thomson Learning, 1997), 52ff, 59. Kyffin also addresses his patron, Thomas Sackville, as 'my verie good L. and Master'.

[47] Edward Arber (ed.) *Roger Ascham, The Scholemaster* (1570/1572) (London: A. Constable and Co, 1897), 143.

the only writer and reader to distance himself from these models. Even George Gascoigne, author of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1573), a collection of courtly pleasantries that included the Italianate *Supposes,* declared in his prologue to *The Glass of Government* (1575), 'A Comedie, I meane for to present,/ No *Terence* phrase: his tyme and myne are twaine:/ The verse that pleasde a *Romaine* rashe intent,/ Might well offend the godly Preachers vayne./ Deformed shewes were then esteemed muche,/ Reformed speeche doth now become us best'.[48]

Enemies of the stage like Stephen Gosson (a former actor and playwright) saw Roman comedy as a contaminating influence. His treatise *The School of Abuse* (1579), dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, allowed that 'many good sentences are spoken by Davus' (the slave in Terence's *Andria*) but quickly asserted that these were simply 'to shadow his knavery'. Gosson regarded the stage as a place of deceptions, where one could see 'chaste Matrons apparel on common Curtesans' and enactments of 'sin so ripe' that they amounted to a kind of civic violation: 'I cannot thinke that Cittie to be safe, that strikes downe her Percollices [portcullises], rammes vp her gates, and suffereth the enimie to enter the posterne'.[49] The 'olde discipline of England' had gone, he lamented, and the country had exchanged 'wreastling at armes' for 'wallowing in Ladies laps':

> We haue robbed *Greece* of Gluttonie, *Italy* of wantonnesse, *Spaine* of pride, *Fraunce* of deceite, and *Dutchland* of quaffing. Compare *London* to *Rome*, and *England* to *Italy*, you shall finde the Theaters of the one, the abuses of the other, to be rife among us.

What offended Gosson especially was that the playhouses functioned as surrogate brothels. English theatre had opened up 'a generall Market of Bawdrie' where 'euery wanton and his Paramour, euery man and his Mistresse, euery John and his Joan, euery knaue and his queane, are there first acquainted and cheapen the Merchandise in that place, which they pay for elsewhere as they can agree'.[50]

Thomas Lodge replied to Gosson's association of theatres with brothels by arguing that light women could take little comfort from watching drama: 'A harlot would seek no harbour at stage plays, lest she should hear her own name grow in question, and the discourse of her honesty cause her to be hated of the godly'.[51] Terence, he argued, restrains himself from portraying the full vice of courtesans, and can even 'finely gird [scorn] them under the person of Thais'. He cites a performance of *Andria* at the Theatre and Curtain playhouses, saying, 'I think

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[48] George Gascoigne, *The glasse of gouernement A tragicall comedie so entituled, bycause therein are handled aswell the rewardes for vertues, as also the punishment for vices* (London: 1575), A3^{v}.

[49] Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse* (London: 1579), B6^{v}.

[50] Ibid., C1^{r}–C2^{r}.

[51] Thomas Lodge, 'A Reply to Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse, in Defence of Poetry, Music and Stage Plays' (London: 1579), 38, reprinted in Tanya Pollard, *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 53.

our theatres fit that Ennius, seeing our wanton Glycerium, may rebuke her'.[52] This debate continued on and off throughout the second half of the sixteenth century. William Gager defended plays as instructive, only to invite a response from the detractor John Rainoldes urging that the stage whore simply taught the audience 'to counterfeit her actions, her wanton kiss, her impudent face, her wicked speeches and enticements'.[53] Rainoldes insisted that because plays depicted misbehaviour, their defenders 'can not deny but sundry lewdnesses were imitated'.[54] Gager urged in response the practical benefits of drama, explaining that both writers and actors aim to 'be well acquainted with Seneca or Plautus; honestly to embolden our youth; to try their voices, and confirm their memories; to frame their speech; to conform them to convenient action; to try what mettle is in every one, and of what disposition they are of'.[55] Perhaps the most articulate of these defences came from the actor and playwright Thomas Heywood who argued in *An Apology for Actors* (published 1612) that comedies depict clowns, 'foolish inamorates', 'pantalones', and 'sometimes of courtesans' in order 'to divulge their subtleties and snares'. Borrowing from Sidney's defence of poetry (a work Heywood cites) he asks, 'Shall we condemn a generality for any one particular misconstruction?'[56]

The courtesan provoked controversy both on and off the stage precisely because she was a symbol of erotic power. In John Lyly's *Campaspe* (1584), Lais is depicted in a short scene near the end. She merrily converses about the pleasures of peace with two soldiers, Milectus and Phrigius, and then threatens to crack the head of the scoffing Athenian Diogenes. Comically, Diogenes is in his barrel to one side of the stage, peeping over the top. Lais recalls him: 'the tyme was thou wouldest haue hadde my companie, had it not beene, as thou saidst too deare'. To this Diogenes retorts, 'I remember there was a thing, that I repented me of, and now thou haste told it, indeede it was too deare of nothing, and thou deare to no bodye.' The play gives us two perspectives on Lais at once: a confident, attractive woman, but a pariah best avoided. Two years after Lyly's play, Geoffrey Whitney portrayed Lais in his book *A Choice of Emblems* (1586). His accompanying poem, in four sestets, begins: 'Heare Lais fine, doth braue it on the stage, / With muskecattes sweet, and all shee could desire, / Her beauties beames, did make the youth to rage, / And inwardlie Corinthus set on fire'. The poem continues with an old saying taken from classical sources: 'Not euerie one, mighte to Corinthus goe, / The meaning was, not all mighte LAIS loue' (or afford). Whitney's final

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[52] Ibid., 54. Ennius, 239–169 BCE, Roman dramatist and poet, author of *Annales*. Lodge's 'Reply' indicates that he had seen Robert Wilson's *Catiline*, now lost. Ennius is a character in Wilson's *The Cobbler's Prophecy*, date of composition unknown but entered in the Stationers' Register on 8 June 1594 and printed later that year.

[53] See Pollard, op. cit., 172–3.

[54] Ibid., 177.

[55] Ibid., 182.

[56] Ibid., 242, 243, 240.

couplet attests to her allure and charisma: 'And hee, that moste the house of Lais hauntes, / The more he looks, the more her face enchauntes'. His opening line, that Lais braves it on the stage, may perhaps refer to *Campaspe* but is more likely to reflect performances of her character in works now lost staged in playhouses or inns. It seems unlikely that so short a scene as Lyly's, and one probably played by children, should trigger the carefully researched, engraved and composed material of the emblem book. As an English Renaissance commentator on a legendary courtesan, Whitney remains surprisingly uncritical. Citing classical sources in his marginalia, he associates the courtesan with a distinctive cultural history, a figure belonging to a world of classical learning and authority, a character whose lure must be acknowledged. Yet there is also a silent caution in the emblem: Lais poses in fabulous attire, alone outside the city among foxes and wild dogs.[57]

Whitney's closing couplet, beginning 'And hee, that moste the house of LAIS hauntes', invites consideration of where the houses of Lais might have been at this time, and who exactly may have haunted them. Contemporary English writers pointed to Italy and they had warrant for doing so. The fullest sixteenth-century description of Italy in English was William Thomas's *The Historye of Italye* (1549).[58] Thomas had enjoyed a colourful life. In addition to being clerk of the Privy Council to Edward VI, he had served Sir Anthony Browne, the master of the horse, and made off to Italy with his money. For three years, he travelled and learned the language but eventually tried to make restitution for his crime. He began his *Historye of Italye* while there and completed it in England, probably just after Browne's death in 1548, dedicating it to John Dudley, Earl of Warwick. Thomas's descriptions of Rome and Venice remark great numbers of courtesans. In his account of Rome, he observes that cardinals would sometimes go under disguise and abuse the very women they would later frequent. He writes:

> For theyr ordinarie pastime is to disguise them selfes, to go laugh at the Courtisanes houses, and in the shrouyng tyme, to ryde maskyng about with theym, whiche is the occasion that Rome wanteth no iolie dames, speciallie the strete called *Iulia*, whiche is more than halfe a myle longe, fayre buylded on both sydes, in maner inhabited with none other but Courtisanes, some woorthe .x. and some woorthe .xx. thousande crownes more or lesse as theyr reputacion is. And many tymes you shall see a Courtisane ride into the countrey, with .x. or .xii. horse waityng on hir.

Thomas estimates (probably wildly) that Rome harboured no less than 40,000 prostitutes 'mainteigned for the moste parte by the clergy and theyr folowers'. So widespread is prostitution, he notes, that anxious Roman husbands scarcely allow

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[57] John Horden (ed.) *Geoffrey Whitney, A Choice of Emblems, 1586* (London: The Scolar Press, 1973), 79.

[58] William Thomas, *The historie of Italie a boke excedyng profitable to be redde: because it intreateth of the astate of many and diuers common weales, how thei haue ben, [and] now be gouerned.* (London, 1549).

their wives outside the home, or even to 'looke out at a lattise wyndow', hence the rather neat little saying he records: '*In Roma vale piu la putana, che la moglie Romana*, that is to saie, In Rome the harlotte hath a better life, than she that is a Romaines wife'. Roman courtesans, he concludes, routinely break conventional sumptuary laws: 'In theyr apparaile thei are as gorgeouse as maie be, and haue in theyr goyng suche a solemne pace, as I neuer sawe'.[59] Rome seems to be able to offer unlimited pleasures, but for a price: 'he that hath money may have there what he liketh'.[60] Thomas seems similarly reluctant to condemn in his description of the ostentatious presence of courtesans in Venice. Conscious perhaps that English readers, including his patron, might regard foreign enticements as vices, he starts with a critical tone. Venetian parents, he suggests, give their children far too much licence: 'But surely many of theim trade and bringe vp theyr children in so muche libertee, that one is no sooner out of the shell, but he is hayle felow with father and friend, and by that time he cometh to .xx. yeres of age, he knoweth as muche lewdnesse as is possible to be imagined'. The numbers of these young men are so great that their 'courtesanes' become extremely wealthy: so rich, he observes, that, 'in a maske, or at the feast of a mariage, or in the shrouyng tyme: you shall see theim decked with iewelles, as thei were Queenes'. Venice, he writes, is *the* European city for its 'numbre of gorgeouse dames'.[61] Not one, he thinks, goes 'olde or yonge vnpeincted' and yet they compel admiration: 'In deede of theyr stature they are for the most parte veraie goodly and bygge women, well made and stronge'.[62]

Of all visits to the 'house of Lais', perhaps the best known to early seventeenth-century English readers was that of Thomas Coryate to the Venetian home of Margarita Emiliana, an account of which he published in *Coryats Crudities* in 1611. Although Coryate's visit has attracted plenty of critical attention,[63] a far more notable visit to a courtesan involved Henri III, King of France and Poland who stayed a night with the renowned Veronica Franco. He took away with him a 'portrait' of her, perhaps an engraving, after his sojourn in the late 1570s. Franco wrote to him, thanking him for his kindness, and sending him a copy of her published *Lettere Familiari* (1580) prefaced with sonnets and a dedication to him.[64] Franco's poems in *terze rime*, already published in 1575, had established her literary reputation but also drawn attacks from men close around her. Patronized by the wealthy Domenico Venier who hosted a literary circle at his

[59] Ibid., 39^{v}.

[60] Ibid., 40^{r}.

[61] Ibid., 84^{v}.

[62] Ibid., 85^{r}.

[63] See for a recent example Michael J. Redmond's discussion of its reception in *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy: Intertextuality on the Jacobean Stage* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 59–64.

[64] Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret Rosenthal (eds.) *Veronica Franco: Poems and Selected Letters* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 24–8.

villa that also included Tullia D'Aragona and Moderata Fonte,[65] she was hated by Maffio Venier, Domenico's nephew, and denounced by him as 'Veronica, ver unica puttana' ('Veronica, truly a unique whore'). Franco's poems could at times grow remarkably personal. To one lover, she wrote, 'Your valor is the steadfast knot/ that can pull me to your lap, joined to you more tightly than a nail in hard wood; / your skill can make you master of my life, / for which you show so much love, / that skill that miraculously stands out in you'.[66] Yet she also portrayed herself as 'oneste' and dignified, an honest courtesan. As Margaret Rosenthal has shown, several of Franco's poems after 1575 engage with Venier's attacks and attempt to return his denunciations against him: 'So now ready paper and ink and tell me without further delay which weapons I must wield in combat. You have nowhere to run from me, because I am prepared for any test and impatiently wait to begin. You may choose everyday parlance or whichever idiom you please, for I am skilled in all'.[67]

In October 1580, Franco found herself in court, charged with having uttered spells and incantations, an allegation she partly admitted. A tutor she had employed for her children made the accusation and labeled her a 'pubblica meretrice', one of the lowest class of whores.[68] In May that year, thieves had robbed her of several household items and the tutor, one Redolfo Vannitelli, was chief among the suspects. So Vannitelli brought charges against her before an Inquisition, alleging that 'having lost the other day certain objects in her house', she had 'recourse to the incantations used by superstitious and frivolous whores'.[69] Vannitelli made the accusations as colourful as possible, adding that she used chalices, holy water, candles and an olive branch to make spells and conjure demons, neglected to attend mass, played illicit games, wore pearls prohibited by sumptuary laws, enchanted German (possibly Lutheran and so heretical) merchants and used children in casting spells.[70] These were serious charges and punishable by severe public whipping and humiliation. Courtesans Emilia Catena and Isabella Bellochio, accused of similar crimes in 1586 and 1589 respectively, were given a harsh flogging in the Piazza San Marco and made to stand on the Rialto bridge with a paper on their heads proclaiming their crimes.[71] Needlessly, Franco admitted that as a child she had spoken charms in order to find things she lost, but no further action was taken against her. On this occasion, as on others, it seems that Domenico Venier proved her protection. By the following month, Michel de Montaigne had arrived in Venice

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[65] Ibid., 5.

[66] Ibid., 69.

[67] Margaret Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 195.

[68] Ibid., 153.

[69] Ibid., 155.

[70] Ibid., 164–5.

[71] Ibid., 158.

on his journey via Switzerland and Germany to Italy. On Monday 6 November 1580, he received 'a little book of letters which she had put together' from 'the Signora Veronica Franca, a noble Venetian lady'. A bout of colic seems to have kept Montaigne from recording his opinion of the gift and he later set down rather unflattering impressions of the courtesans he saw in Venice and Rome.[72] Franco had been brought up by her prostitute mother to be a courtesan. Seeing a friend about to do the same, raising a daughter to sell herself, she wrote a very firmly worded letter, threatening to break off their friendship altogether. Her letter gives a more realistic account of how the life of a courtesan ought to be viewed:

> I'll add that even if fate should be completely favourable to her, this is a life that always turns out to be a misery. It's a most wretched thing, contrary to human reason, to subject one's body and labor to a slavery terrifying even to think of. To make oneself prey to so many men, at the risk of being stripped, robbed, even killed, so that one man, one day may snatch away from you everything you've acquired from many over such a long time, along with so many dangers of injury and dreadful contagious diseases; to eat with another's mouth, sleep with another's eyes, move according to another's will, obviously rushing towards the shipwreck of your mind and your body – what greater misery? What wealth, what luxuries, what delights can outweigh all this? Believe me, among all the world's calamities, this is the worst. And if to worldly concerns you add those of the soul, what greater doom and certainty of damnation could there be?[73]

Courtesans divide opinion. They have admirers and detractors, and are sometimes desired and loathed almost simultaneously. In classical literature, courtesans are exclusively characters that belong to comedy. The Elizabethans turned them into figures of tragedy, and the Jacobeans re-absorbed them by marriage into city comedy. This book is not a comprehensive attempt to trace the evolution of this character type: nor is it a cultural history of the Renaissance courtesan. It is instead a series of studies – combining close reading with micro-historical enquiry – that seeks to identify shifting, often very ambivalent literary and social attitudes towards such women, and to locate aspects of Shakespeare's work within that context. Each chapter carries its own argument but a common thread of the book is that the Renaissance was no golden age for courtesans. However much we might wish it to have been otherwise, prostitution was an unpromising career choice in the early modern era, and there is no optimistic story to tell of these women's lives. If a stellar few were briefly fortunate, the vast majority were driven into it by privation and subsequently caught up in its misery. As Franco's letter to her friend warns, we should not be too sanguine about the possibilities for women represented by the courtesan.

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[72] W.G. Waters (ed.) *The Journal of Montaigne's Travels in Italy by way of Switzerland and Germany in 1580 and 1581* (London: John Murray, 1903), 3 vols, ii, 146–7.

[73] Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret F. Rosenthal (eds.) *Veronica Franco: Poems and Selected Letters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 39.

The second chapter discusses English stage prototypes of the prostitute-figure that would develop into the acquisitive continental courtesan, a character whose venery is surpassed only by the Machiavels she accompanies. Foremost among anxieties about such women was the threat of contamination – both moral and physical – represented by the 'foul disease'. The chapter traces concerns regarding the social and spiritual effects of venereal infection in a number of pre-Shakespearean sixteenth-century dramas. It provides new documentary evidence regarding the owners of the Bell and Cross Keys inns, both early performing spaces, and for the spread of this disease, and shows that post-Reformation English drama warning against the perils of uninhibited desire served to bolster popular anti-continental prejudice on the stage. The chapter indicates ways in which dramatic depictions of sexual infection transformed the classical literary courtesan into a figure of domestic decay and impotence, the symbol of a civic malady that authorities in Rome, Venice and London sought with varying degrees of failure to contain.

Chapter 3 concerns the presence of strangers and foreigners in London, especially Italians, and suggests that if English writers feared contamination from abroad by foreign influences, London harboured plenty of opportunities for vice to any visitor with money or gifts to distribute. Anxieties about the licentiousness of Italian cities may have fed a powerful and xenophobic rhetoric, but the reality, as Thomas Nashe frankly admitted, was that Elizabethan London had its own market of pleasures and readily supplied a constant demand. The chapter assesses the extent to which London and Rome or Venice enjoyed a certain cultural parity in sexual matters, and identifies individuals who ran bawdy houses and loose networks of prostitutes in and around early modern London. The chapter focuses in particular on the trade in children and shows that minors were occasionally offered as a commodity for sale to merchants and strangers, a feature of sixteenth-century London that Shakespeare starkly acknowledges in his collaborative work with George Wilkins, *Pericles*.

Chapter 4 considers the question of what early moderns might have done together beneath the bedcovers. It considers the question of how accurate an historical understanding of personal intimacies might be. The chapter finds simultaneous expressions of admiration and vilification directed towards courtesans in a work of 1539 attributed to Aretino. This text details aspects of the lives and histories of women who worked as 'cortigianae' in early sixteenth-century Rome. The authorship of this dialogue has long been in doubt but there can be no question that its writer was intimately acquainted with Aretino's work, and the principal alternative author so far suggested can be ruled out. Thomas Nashe, the 'English Aretine', acknowledged his literary debt to Aretino and, in 'The Choice of Valentines' provided a detailed description of a visit to an Elizabethan brothel. The chapter finds a 'scopophobic' imagination at work in both texts, an attitude towards courtesans that is both curious and gynophobic, and contrasts this with attitudes and behaviours described in Brantôme's *Les Vies Des Dames Gallantes* and in prosecutions from the Bridewell archives.

Chapter 5 focuses on three very different representations of the continental courtesan: Thomas Kyd's Bel-imperia in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Marlowe's Bellamira in *The Jew of Malta* and Heywood's Jane Shore in the first and second parts of *King Edward IV*. These women are the first major attempts to portray courtesans or concubines of influence and power upon the Renaissance stage. The precise chronology of Kyd and Marlowe's works is difficult to determine but I take Kyd's play first, given that its earliest date could have been 1582. The chapter provides new documentary evidence of a Thomas Kyd, probably a relative of the author, courting a Mistress Gilderson or Gildersand with combs and whistles, and hiding under her bed when her husband arrived. It also argues that Kyd's Bel-imperia was partly modelled on the renown of one of Rome's most successful courtesans, Lucrezia Cognati, a woman referred to by the Aretinian dialogue discussed in the previous chapter as 'la gloriosa Imperia'. The chapter shows Marlowe staging an ironic, racist joke in *The Jew of Malta* as Bellamira dandles the clown Ithamore and wins his service by a promise of marriage. It gives details of black servants in London experiencing difficulty in assimilating with English citizens that suggest Marlowe's humour was topical. It finds in Heywood's play a strikingly sympathetic response to one of the most famous of all English concubines, Jane (Elizabeth) Shore.

Chapter 6 considers courtesans whom Shakespeare may reasonably be thought to have known. Shakespeare's familiarity with the inns of court, especially with members of Gray's Inn, is explored in light of his composition of *The Comedy of Errors* for performance in the Gray's Inn Christmas revels of 1594. A woman named Lucy Negro in the published account of those revels, the *Gesta Grayorum* (1688), has been alleged to have been the infamous 'Dark Lady' of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Historical records regarding Lucy Negro, or 'Black Luce' show her as a particularly successful, and so notorious, brothel madam based in Clerkenwell, who teamed up with a business partner, Gilbert East, who ran a similar bawdy house in Turnmill (or Turnbull) Street close by. The chapter argues that Lucy Negro was present at one *Gesta Grayorum* performance and so too, very probably witnessed Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* which was staged a few days later. It gives evidence for Shakespeare's links with Clerkenwell and Lucy Negro, and provides new source material regarding Rose Flower, a Shoreditch woman also mentioned in the *Gesta Grayorum*, and Thomas Nashe's *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* (1596), who appeared repeatedly before the governors of Bridewell.

Chapter 7 traces the ways in which dramatists of the early seventeenth century – especially Dekker, Marston and Middleton – attempted to recuperate the courtesan socially by converting her into a wife. This was a move hinted at by Marlowe but first broached by Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*. The chapter registers a new concern for depicting prostitution as a societal, and not just a moral, problem, and identifies a sub-set of city comedies in which rakes are forced into the humiliation of marrying a 'punk'. Marriage increasingly became the strategy by which dramatists were able to absorb the courtesan into civic life and so begin her disappearance from the English stage. The chapter questions readings of these

plays that see in them strategies for women's advancement or autonomy. It argues instead that the historical conditions of prostitute or courtesan life in this era tell a far bleaker story than one finds in the drama, and that this departure between the historical and the literary should be acknowledged. A sign of this difference is that, even as the courtesan was vanishing from the English stages, she remained a ubiquitous figure in the streets, alleyways and tenements of the city.

This book studies the prostitute or courtesan (the distinction should no longer distract us) in English Renaissance drama via historical and archival source materials. Some of the women discussed were not strictly courtesans, or even prostitutes: some pimped out their daughters, or ran bawdy houses, or were simply caught destitute and pregnant out of wedlock. The corollary of an anxiety of influence is a pleasure of indebtedness and my own work has been richly informed by a number of studies on the subject of pre-modern European prostitute history, including books by Georgina Masson, Leah Lydia Otis, Ruth Mazo Karras, Lyndal Roper and, more recently, Tessa Storey.[74] Masson's unfortunately unannotated work remains a fascinating and pioneering account of the rise of Italian courtesans to cultural prominence throughout the sixteenth century, and, though something of a coffee-table book, it synthesises a diverse range of documentary sources and does not hide the dangers and risks that these women faced. Nor does it hide its regard for women who took advantage of their associations with powerful Renaissance men. Masson evokes the starlet world of the courtesan in her introduction, stating that, 'many of the courtesans were highly accomplished, particularly in music, and two at least were respectable poets. They also entertained lavishly, and for their charm, their taste in dress, their spirited and witty conversation, they themselves were much sought-after guests at parties, especially in Rome where the papal curia attracted innumerable young men with literary aspiration'.[75] But, as her book also shows, these woman were variously raped, abused, openly attacked, publicly flogged, and driven to suicide, indicating that socially elevated and sexually available young women paid a very heavy price for their renown. A more recent work on the topic focuses on the courtesan's historical relationship to art. This richly interesting and entertaining collection of interdisciplinary essays even comes with its own CD of fascinating and culturally diverse courtesan songs. In *The Courtesan's Arts*: *Cross-cultural Perspectives*, courtesans are defined as women who 'engage in relatively exclusive exchanges of artistic graces, elevated conversation and sexual favors

[74] For Italy, see Georgina Masson, op. cit.; for France, see Leah Lydia Otis. *Prostitution in medieval society: The history of an urban institution in Languedoc* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985); for England, see Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); for Germany, see Lyndal Roper, 'Discipline and Respectability: Prostitution and the Reformation in Augsburg', *History Workshop Journal* 19 (1985), 3–28. Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) provides an impressively analytic study of early modern prostitution in Italy.

[75] Georgina Masson, op. cit., 6.

with male patrons'.[76] For the editors, '[t]heir artistic practices become means of self-promotion – indeed self-preservation – within systems of freedom and oppression, which in turn involve them and their clients in high-level networks of social and political exchange'.[77] Briefly recognizing that '[m]any courtesans now lost in the annals of history endured gang rapes or mutilations as punishment for presumed misdeeds', they focus largely on cross-currents of courtesan artistry, in all its richly various forms of cultural expression.[78] The current book remains sceptical about regarding historical or literary courtesans as 'proto-feminists' or pioneers of female action, and indeed about the documentary evidence for male prostitutes in London.[79] Its primary concern is to elucidate representations of the female prostitute or courtesan in sixteenth and early seventeenth century English drama in the light of what we can learn from a variety of Italian and English sources. It seeks to identify a few of those women hitherto 'lost in the annals' of Shakespeare's era, to locate what might be learnt of their lives, reputations or actions, but not to lionize them as figureheads of social freedom or female agency. It is indebted to many prior studies, especially perhaps to Masson's remarkable study and Tessa Storey's detailed work in the Italian archives. Storey questions Mazo Karras's view that prostitutes were invariably stigmatised and ostracised by medieval towns and cities in England and suggests that the evidence from Rome tends to confirm work by Otis, Roper and others indicating that they were somewhat neutrally regarded in Europe prior to the sixteenth century.[80] This book offers some new documentary material to add to these debates, some of it drawn from Italian texts and manuscripts but much of it from the archives of London's Bridewell Hospital, covering the period 1559 to 1610.[81] Bridewell functioned in practice as a judicial, punitive and carceral space rather than as a therapeutic or charitable institution. Its extensive records preserve the micro-histories of thousands of Londoners, 'ingraunts' or immigrants and vagrants. A few brief lines in the books of recorded prosecutions can highlight major incidents of a life about which nothing further is known, although much may be suggested. We can infer to a certain extent from their gaps but have no warrant to fill those lacunae with speculation, or with fiction. Reading these cases can be perilous: a host of palaeographical obstacles can obscure or inhibit clarification of their meaning. It can be startling to come across the case of a man whose 'farte is abhominable and vilde', only to realise that what looks today like an 'r' should be read as a 'c',

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[76] Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (eds.), *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-cultural Perspectives* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

[77] Ibid., 6.

[78] Ibid., 11.

[79] See Jennifer Panek, ''This Base Stallion Trade': He-whores and Male Sexuality on the Early Modern Stage', *English Literary Renaissance* 40, 3 (2010) 357–92. Panek's fascinating article identifies rakes or lotharios.

[80] Tessa Storey, op. cit., 15, 135–6.

[81] The Bridewell Court Books for 1562–74 and 1579–97 are unfortunately lost.

and that in truth it was William Bilton's 'facte' or deed that was so shocking the governors did not want it set down. Other cases carry an evocative sense of human plight: 'Joane Heliker for stealinge milke from the cowe in Islington fields being w*i*th child was not po*nished.* yet d*elivere*d.'[82] The evidence cited in this book from records relating to early modern London tends to support Karras's view and finds little if any toleration of prostitution or fornication within the civic community: the effort to control, to regulate, or to eradicate prostitution altogether, proved just as persistent as the demand for naked flesh and its supply. One long-standing myth this book should dispel is that the bawdy houses of Shakespeare's London were situated on Bankside near the Rose, Globe, Swan and Hope theatres. This supposition is deep-rooted despite the fact that after Henry VIII closed the licensed 'stews' in 1546, brothel activity on the Bankside was very drastically reduced.[83] When, for example, Shakespeare has Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida* describe a whore as 'some gallèd goose of Winchester' (5.11.54), he is being consciously anachronistic. Instead, houses of ill-fame were to be found north of the river, in Bishopsgate, Shoreditch and Clerkenwell, places Shakespeare knew well – but not only in those places. They could be discovered across the city from Westminster to the Strand, Whitefriars, St. Paul's Tower Hill, St. Katherine's, and almost any lane or alleyway in between. Shakespeare resided mainly north of the river in Shoreditch, Bishopsgate, Silver Street and Blackfriars. He could not have avoided living and working among the courtesans.

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[82] For Thomas Bilton, see BCB 3.196^{r} (6 April 1577); for Joane Heliker, see BCB 3.373^{v} (2 May 1603).

[83] The entry for 'prostitution' in Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 2005) repeats this perception (359).

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Chapter 2
English Prototypes and the 'foul disease'

Amid the many liturgical dramas, interludes, miracle and mystery plays that have survived from the tenth century onwards, the 'Digby' mystery play of *St. Mary Magdalene* is the first known to have broached directly the sins of the flesh. Mary Magdalene is the New Testament's penitent prostitute, and this long work deriving from the East Midlands transposes her story, in one of its episodes, to the alleyways, arbours and taverns of early sixteenth-century England. Structured as a series of scenes that broadly fall across two parts, it allows for over sixty characters, one of whom, named Luxsurya, takes Mary to a tavern. It turns out that this best of all possible inns keeps the finest European wines – Malmsey, Claret, Guelder, Spanish and Italian varieties – a far more exotic range than the usual fare of hippocras, rhenish and mead typically served in English hostelries.[1] The heady mystique, appeal and sensuality that these wines represent are, as one might expect, morally intoxicating. Before long, a gallant newly arrived from the country greets Mary and they leave together for the privacy of an arbour. Waking after a prolonged repast, Mary receives warning from a good angel and joins Jesus at the house of Simon the leper where, repentantly, she washes his feet with her tears and hair. After seven devils have been cast out of her, she resolves to journey afar and convert the King of Marseilles. Part-Biblical, part-imaginative, *Mary Magdalene* offers a lengthy exemplar of a growing vogue for depicting moral and spiritual redemption which characterised English drama prior to the Reformation.[2]

The turning of adolescents away from sin and towards godliness was a topic that preoccupied much sixteenth-century English drama, and it was re-worked

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[1] A.W. Pollard's note in *English Miracle Plays and Interludes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923) gives some explanation of these wines: 'Even with the aid of Henderson's *Ancient and Modern Wines* it is difficult to identify all the different varieties mentioned in the lists in which medieval taverners delighted. Wine of Mawt is possibly Maltese wine rather than wine made from malted barley; Malmeseyn came from Malvasia in the Morea; 'clarry' wine (vin doulce et clarré) was red or white wine seasoned with honey (c Chaucer, *Knightes Tale*, 613); it seems to have been a mixture made as required, as opposed to 'claret' which was manufactured. 'Gyldyr' is Guelder; 'Galles', Galicia; 'at the grome' stands for 'at the Groine', the port in Spain. 'Wyan' is our English way of writing 'Guyenne'; 'Vernage' a wine grown near Verona, and often mentioned, as in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 195.

[2] No English Renaissance play is known to have re-told the story of the best-known Biblical prostitute, Rahab. The *St. Mary Magdalene* drama is recorded in Bodley MS Digby 133, and is hence known as one of the 'Digby' mysteries. St. Mary Magdalene was patron saint of Magdalen College, Oxford, where a performance of *Mary Magdalene* written by John Burgess took place in 1506–1507. It was possibly revived there in 1517–1518. See John R. Elliott and Alan H. Nelson, Alexandra F. Johnston and Diana Wyatt (eds.) *Records of Early English Drama, Oxford Vol. 2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 601.

with growing complexity and ambivalence. The development of institutions that could enforce moral imperatives – the courts, prisons, hospitals, livery companies, guilds and even the playhouses – established new and distinct spaces in which they could be contested. Conversion narratives would prove immensely influential in later drama but even in earlier works, they would be used to offer parables for prodigal sons and daughters as much as to entertain. For many sixteenth-century English men and women, the greatest whore of all was the Church of Rome. As the Cambridge divine William Fulke inveighed in his commentary on 'the sacred and holy Reuelation of S. Iohn' (translated from Latin in 1573 by George Gyffard):

> But the sinagoge of Rome, whiche aboue all other herisies hathe inuented false and idolatrouse worshippinge of God, may as it were by her owne proper righte chalenge to her selfe the name of a greate whore. Which although she doeth please and flatter her selfe and her louers, as thoughe she were a bewtifull wife, yet neuerthelesse by the iuste iudgement of God, she is condemned to eternall shame, and dishonor as a most filthy harlot.[3]

For Fulke, the Romish church's claim to being the 'bride of Christ' would make the Redeemer a cuckold, and this goes some way to accounting for his tone of indignation. The phrase 'sinagogue of Rome', a favourite of Fulke's, connects the Roman church in general with the heresy of Judaism and associates both with 'false' and 'idolatrous' inventions, self-obsession and flattery, all of which mark Rome out as 'a great whore'. Rome is the archetype of the beautiful but faithless wife discovered to have played false. It was in Rome, after all, that travellers could see '[o]pen Stewes so deerely rented: so many thousande Cortegianes so wel regarded'.[4] Puritan texts abounded with references to the 'purple', 'Babilonish', 'strumpet', and 'errant' 'whore of Rome'. These associations of popery with prostitution, widespread in reformation polemics, surface especially in texts that urged English young men and women to restraint. Hints of these shifting geo-religious attitudes arise in the anonymous *Enterlude of Youth*, a drama composed it seems for a large northern household on a major feast day in 1513–14. Onto the make-shift hall-stage strides a brash English 'adulescens', heir to his father's lands, who announces, 'By the mass, I reck not a cherry / Whatsoever I do' (l. 55–6). Charity greets him but fails to win Youth to godliness and so leaves to consult with his brother Humility. Youth meanwhile encounters first Riot, then Pride and then Lady Lechery whom he thinks to marry.[5] In an exchange that anticipates

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[3] *Praelections vpon the sacred and holy Reuelation of S. Iohn, written in latine by William Fulke Doctor of Diuinitie, and translated into English by George Gyffard* (London: 1573).

[4] John Jewel [Bishop of Salisbury], *A replie vnto M. Hardinges ansvveare by perusinge whereof the discrete, and diligent reader may easily see, the weake, and vnstable groundes of the Romaine religion, whiche of late hath beene accompted Catholique* (London: 1565).

[5] Ian Lancashire (ed.) *Two Tudor Interludes: The Interlude of Youth, Hick Scorner* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980) conjectures that a boy might have doubled as the mutually excluding Humility and Lechery (25).All quotations are from this edition.

Dr. Faustus's lascivious need of a 'wife' (5.139–40), Pride introduces Youth to 'Luxuria' whom he welcomes 'as the heart in my body' (l. 396). Courteous but direct, Lechery offers an assignation: 'Sir, I thank you, and at your pleasure am. / Ye be the same unto me' (l. 397–8). Youth invites her to a tavern for a conversation and a drink, the public space where all 'sorts' or degrees of society mingle.

Lady Lechery in this drama is what the Tudors would have called a 'naughtie pack'. When Riot greets her by name, she grows angry: 'Well, wanton, well! Fie, for shame, / So soon ye do express my name! / What, if no man should have known? / Iwis, I shall you beat, well, wanton, well!' (ll.407–10). Lechery may well attempt a box on his ear at this point but is held up to ridicule since Riot has already announced her name prior to her entrance. This sense of the ludicrous is heightened by her gaudy costume and mincing gait: 'A pretty little nysot, / Ye be well nice, God wot! / Ye be a pretty pie; / Iwis, ye go full gingerly' (ll. 411–14). The nonce-word 'nysot' is glossed by editor Ian Lancashire as 'wench, cocquette', probably a variant of the French diminutive 'nice'.[6] The phrase 'pretty pie' evokes a long established association of food and sex in English tavern life. Lechery is clearly no common strumpet. Youth declares, 'Verily, well she pleased me, / For she is courteous, gentle and free' (ll. 424–5). In other words, she is a woman with class. She fares well, both economically and in bed: 'I do well enow, / And the better that you will wit' (ll. 429–30). By the end of this particular encounter, an arrangement is sealed between Lechery and Youth for occasional and opportunistic sex (ll. 466–70). But, as tends to be the way of sixteenth-century moralizing drama, those encounters never happen and Youth turns contrite and to a holy life.[7] With her dubious associates, her provocative behaviour and an obvious willingness for sex, Lechery fits the model of the classical courtesan well enough, but whereas in Latin comedy the only thing a meretrix could ruin was a young man's pocket, in Tudor drama she heralds ruin for a whole society.

Hick Scorner, another interlude very nearly contemporary with *Youth*, re-shapes the morality play for a London audience. Lancashire dates this work to between March and September 1514 and makes a detailed case for regarding it as having been sponsored by Charles Brandon, Marshal of the King's Bench, whose house lay near his place of work in Southwark, a site the play mentions. Lancashire builds a case for regarding the eponymous Hick Scorner as a scarcely veiled representation of Richard de la Pole, notorious brigand and arch-rival to the Tudors. The identification may not be watertight but the range of historical evidence he adduces is substantial. As Lancashire shows, the author of *Hick Scorner* drew fairly extensively upon *Youth* for source material, for example in the corruption scene and in adapting Pride the pander from *Youth* into Scorner as a pimp. Another source is Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale,* evoking 'yonge folke that hauntedyn folye / As ryot hazarde stewys and tauernys'.[8] *Hick Scorner* has a

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[6] Ibid., 130.

[7] Lancashire, op cit., sees the interlude's criticisms of Youth as an indirect attack on the profligacy of the young Henry VIII (28–30).

[8] Ibid., 45.

localism and topicality that *Youth* lacked, referring realistically to specific London places, such as Westminster, Shooters Hill, the Bell and Hart's Horn stews, the King's Bench and the gallows at St. Thomas-a-Watering. Although the interlude includes no female part, it mentions several prostitutes. Free Will mutters about his latest conquest, 'Beshrew your heart, Joan!' (l. 172) and reports salacious gossip about 'Sir John and Sibley, how they were spied in bed together' (ll. 179–80). Hick Scorner states that he 'kept a fair shop of bawdry' and ran 'three wenches that were full pretty, / Jane True, Ann Thriftless and Wanton Sibley'. The last of these *noms de guerres* is said to have been well-earned: 'She is so sure in deed. / Ride, and you will, ten times a day, / I warrant you, she will never say nay' (ll. 397–9). A thoroughly London-based play, *Hick Scorner* registers disquiet concerning the city's moral deterioration. Imagination explains that 'of the stews I am made controller, / Of all the houses of lechery' (ll. 898–9), and Pity reflects, 'Worse was it never' (ll. 553, 557, 561, 597, 601). Lancashire's dating of the play, and his conjecture that the interlude was privately sponsored by a wealthy London household, cast an intriguing light on Pity's open complaint against civic decline: 'Mayors on sin doth no correction …. And many with harlots at the tavern haunt' (ll. 578, 587). The identities of 'Sir John' and 'Sibley' remain unknown but by far the most prominent 'Sir John' in London at the time was Sir John Tate, mercer, who served as lord mayor from June to October 1514, an unusually short period of time. (This was his second term of office after an earlier election in 1496). He had been knighted in 1497 and died in January 1515.[9] When Imagination speaks of 'Sir John and Sibley' caught in bed together, he may allude to weaknesses of the flesh that occasionally even London aldermen or their sons were heir to. If so, it would have been a risky manoeuvre since this particular Sir John was still very much extant. Even without specific historical allusion, *Hick Scorner* achieves an unusual measure of social critique, pointing up the need for reform not only within city houses, tenements and taverns but pointedly, it seems, within the mayoralty itself.

This drive to reform the city would gather serious momentum in the later years of Henry VIII and into the reign of his young son Edward VI. At great expense (over £20,000), Wolsey had built an imposing palace on the northern bank of the Thames at the ancient site of St. Bride's Well between 1516 and 1523. It stamped his power close to London's centre, just west of Blackfriars beyond the city wall, looking southwards across the Thames to Bankside and Paris Garden. After Wolsey's disgrace and death in 1530, Henry ensured that Bridewell and Hampton Court palaces were transferred to the Crown, and the former was subsequently used as an ambassadorial residence.[10] The accession of Edward VI presented an

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[9] The *ODNB* gives an erroneous date for Tate's death.

[10] Bridewell palace had served as a venue for Henry's divorce negotiations in the mid-1520s. Holbein famously portrayed Jean de Dintville, and George de Selve at Bridewell in his painting entitled 'The Ambassadors'. See E. G. O'Donoghue's quaint but still useful *Bridewell Hospital, Palace, Prison, Schools from the earliest times to the end of the reign of Elizabeth* (London: The Bodley Head, 1923); L.W. Cowie, 'Bridewell', *History Today*, Vol. 5, No. 5, May 1973, 350–58, gives a general historical survey; Alfred James Copeland cites some examples of torture used at Bridewell, though the court minute books give

opportunity for Protestant enthusiasts to realise their theology in hard, practical social policy. In 1552, Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, wrote to Cecil, secretary to the young King, urging that,

> Master Christ … hath lain too, too long abroad (as you do know), without lodging, in the streets of London both hungry, naked and cold. Now thanks be to Almighty God, the citizens of London are willing to refresh him, and to give him both meat, drink, cloathing and firing. But alass! Sir, they lack lodging for him …. Sir there is a wide, large empty house of the King's Majesty, called Bridewell, which would wonderfully well serve to lodge Christ in if he might find such good friends at court to procure in his cause.[11]

Ridley was subsequently invited to preach before the King at Westminster on the subject of charitable provision for the indigent. Edward's response was to authorize a letter to the lord mayor appealing for help with poor relief, and a committee of knights, aldermen and citizens was set up to consider the matter. The ensuing proposal was a remarkably prescient, bold and co-ordinated attempt at social planning. It aimed to deal with 'three sundry sorts' of needy person: 'the succourless poor child, the sick and impotent, the sturdy vagabond, or idle person'.[12] A house in Southwark, founded in memory of Thomas à Beckett would become St. Thomas's Hospital for the sick; a neglected Fransiscan convent near Greyfriars, Newgate, would become Christ's Hospital for orphans; and the Bridewell palace west of the river Fleet would serve as the Royal Bridewell Hospital, a great house where the destitute and idle would be 'set on work', and given training for future gainful employment.

The grant of Bridewell took place in the spring of 1553. One of Edward's last acts was to sign letters patent giving over control of the three hospitals to the City of London, authorizing their charters and bestowing an annuity of 4,000 marks for their provision. It established the three hospitals, Christ's, St. Thomas's and Bridewell, in a structure where 'each one serveth the other … and whoso thinketh not well of all, thinketh well of none'.[13] A few days later, Edward was dead. After

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virtually no indication of its use, in *Bridewell Royal Hospital, Past and Present* (London: Wells, Gardner, Darton and Co, 1888); Gordon Humphreys briefly describes Bridewell's early charitable status in *Goodly Heritage, A History of King Edward's School, Witley, 1553–1953* (Witley, 1953). For more detailed and recent accounts of Bridewell's functions as a hospital and prison, see Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and Paul Griffiths, 'Contesting London Bridewell, 1576–80', *Journal of British Studies*, 43, (2003), 283–315 and *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550–1660* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[11] R.H. Tawney and Eileen Power (eds.) *Tudor Economic Documents, Being Select Documents Illustrating the Economic and Social History of Tudor England* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1924), 3 vols, ii, 312.

[12] Ibid., 307.

[13] Ibid., 309–10.

some delay, Mary Tudor confirmed the charter and the London aldermen, led by the liveryman and first Treasurer of Bridewell, Richard Grafton, approached the worshipful companies for financial contributions. So began one of the most formidable and feared of all English civic power-bases.

It was during this extraordinary set of social and political developments that R[ichard] Wever penned *An Interlude called Lusty Juventus*, a short drama sympathetic to the prevailing Puritanism of Bridewell's founders. This play-text enjoyed considerable longevity by way of citation in later works by Saker, Fraunce, Barnfield, Heywood, Jonson, and even in the composite *Boke of Sir Thomas More*.[14] Its three undated early imprints show signs of adaptation to shifting political conditions. The final prayer in an edition printed by Abraham Vele asks that 'our noble & virtuous king' might rule as 'a worthy c[aptain]'. In editions published by Wyllyam Copland and John Awdely, the prayer is for the 'quene' to rule 'as a worthy servant'. Given that its sentiments are viscerally anti-Roman, the king can only have been Edward VI, and the 'quene', Elizabeth. The alteration gives some hint of the drama's dates of printing. J.M. Nosworthy, the interlude's Malone editor, provides evidence for regarding Vele's as the earliest, with Copland and Awdely's following in succession.

Lusty Juventus re-works concerns for individual penitence and godliness already evident in *Youth* and *Hick Scorner*, and suitably addresses itself to a 'good Christian audience' (l. 178). Juventus begins the drama with a brief ditty of spring, youth and pleasure, and looks about him for gaming or dancing partners. Good Counsel warns him that no such pleasures are sanctioned in 'the Scripture', and treats him to a short sermon on covenant theology. Juventus is even given a copy of the New Testament to read for himself (l. 280). Fortunately for the plot, the Devil and his son Hypocrisy lurk nearby to lead Juventus astray once more. True to its anti-papal line, the interlude has Juventus, the Devil and Hypocrisy swear ungodly oaths ('By the mass', By God's mother', 'By dog's precious wounds') and Hypocrisy mocks Juventus as having turned 'a New Gospeller' (l. 464), at the same time openly spelling out his many Romish tricks for deceiving the flock into idolatry:

> As holy cardinals, holy popes,
> Holy vestments, holy copes,
> Holy hermits and friars,

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[14] *Youth* and *Lusty Juventus* are cited together in the anonymous *A new and mery enterlude, called the triall of treasure* ... (London 1567). Lusty Juventus is referenced in Austin Saker, *Narbonus The laberynth of libertie* ... (London: 1580); Abraham Fraunce, *The third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch Entituled, Amintas dale*... (London:1592); Richard Barnfield, *The affectionate shepheard Containing the complaint of Daphnis for the loue of Ganymede* (London: 1594); Thomas Heywood *The vvise-woman of Hogsdon* (London: 1638); Ben Jonson, *The divell is an asse* (London: 1641). For the interlude's relations to Sir Thomas More, see J.M. Nosworthy (ed.) *An Interlude Called Lusty Juventus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966/1971) xxiii–xxiv. All quotations are from this edition.

Holy priests, holy bishops,
Holy monks, holy abbots
(ll. 412–16)

The first two lines of this unusual sequence, which continues for another thirty, are incomplete in Vele's edition (as indeed are the four preceding lines) so Copland at least, if not Awdely, seems to have had access to an independent manuscript from which to set the play. It was evidently popular.

Abhominable Lyving, the prostitute/courtesan in *Lusty Juventus*, is deployed as part of the Devil's stratagem to 'work some crafty feat or policy' and lead Juventus to damnation. As a trickster, she has something of a Plautine function, but she is clearly bait. Hypocrisy, appearing under the guise of Friendship, hopes to 'infect him with wicked company, / Whose conversation shall be so fleshly, / Yea, able to overcome an innocent' (ll. 502–504). One of nine speaking parts in this play, Abominable Living is reported to be 'a girl nice' (l. 512), a term of disapprobation. A direction makes clear on the title-page that, 'Foure may play it easely, taking such partes as they thinke best: so that any one tak of those partes that be not in place at once'. This instruction allows players fewer options than one might think. Abominable Living's part could be doubled only by the Messenger, Knowledge or Satan, the latter perhaps an appropriate (though not the only) choice. She is introduced under a pseudonym as 'Unknown Honesty' (l. 790), and teases Juventus for being too shy for kissing. Her reverse psychology quickly takes effect. Transformed to his earlier, loose-lived self, he hints at cunnilingus: 'I could find in my heart to kiss you in your smock' (l. 804). Sixteen lines later, Vele's edition has a marginal stage direction: 'Juventus he you kisseth' (l. 820–821). Nosworthy offers no comment on this singular direction but it would seem to confirm Vele's text as the earliest, deriving as it probably does either from an original part or from a prompter's copy. Copland and Awdely render the stage direction more formally: 'Juventus kisseth Abominable Living'. Hypocrisy makes crowd-pleasing grotesquery of this moment: 'Smick smack, and all this gear! / You will to tick-tack, I fear … I can tell / That such smock-smell / Will set your nose out of tune' (ll. 826–7, 830–32). 'Tick-tack' was a version of the game of backgammon which used holes for pegs to count the score. Its French version was, and is, known as 'trictrac'. Here, as in Lyly's *Mother Bombie* and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure,* it is used as a metaphor for sexual intercourse.[15] The scene may be merry but it carries a darker tone: the prostitute's stinking lap is a sign of venereal disease, an infection reputed to make one's nose eventually drop off. Immune to her own odours, Abominable Living is clearly open to offers (l. 835), and a second kiss is signaled a few lines later (l. 850): 'he kisseth Abominable livying'. None of this incontinent behavior lasts very long and by the play's end, Juventus has realised he was on 'the path, which leadeth unto hell' and prays, not

[15] John Lyly, *Mother Bombie* (London: 1594), H1^{v}; Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (1.2.178–9).

only for the king/queen but also for 'those whom [h]is grace hath au[thorized] / To maintain the public wealth over us' that they 'may seek a reformation, and se[e] it redressed' (ll. 1164–69). In these closing lines, *Lusty Juventus* recuperates its more ribald elements into what amounts to a validating drama *par excellence* for the new institutions governing social conduct, all of them now under the jurisdiction of the lord mayor and court of aldermen.

One of the incomplete lines in Vele's edition has Hypocrisy speak of his resort to 'al[l] kind of filthy --------- ' (l. 407). The missing word, which must rhyme with 'idolatry', is 'sodometry', a term denoting the kind of execrable sin that would routinely be covered by the word 'abominable'. Sometimes writers would use the two words together: Thomas Becon wrote in 1542 of God saving the Israelites from 'the fylthy & abhominable Sodomites'.[16] The word 'abominable' usually implied unwriteable acts of gross sexual indecency, such as anal and bestial sex or incest, and it rapidly became associated with the Babylonish whore of Rome. An early play by the converted Carmelite friar John Bale entitled *A comedy concernynge thre lawes, of nature Moses, & Christ, corrupted by the sodomytes. Pharysees and Papystes* (1548, reprinted 1562) presents a dialogue between the female Infidelitas and her male companion Sodomismus, in which he confesses of Rome's prelates,

> Beades, rynges, and other gere,
> With their abhomynacyon.
> Idolatry with wyckednesse,
> And Sodomy with fylthynesse.
> To hys most vtter dampnacyon.
> Detestynge matrymonye,
> They lyue abhomynablye,
> And burne in carnall lust.[17]

But abominable living was not just an Italian vice or a fictional character. It was suspected as occurring much nearer to home among London's tavern parlours and bed-chambers. In this connection, the diary of Henry Machyn records a carting of five offenders on 12 June 1560:

> The xij day of June dyd ryd in (a) care a-bowtt London ij men and iij women; one man was for he was the bowd, and to brynge women unto strangers, and on woman was the wyff of the Bell in Gracious-strett, and a-nodur the wyff of the Bull-hed be-syd London stone, and both wher bawds and hores, and the thodur man and the woman wher brodur and syster, and wher taken nakyd together.[18]

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[16] Thomas Becon, *A potacio[n] or dri[n]kynge for this holi time of le[n]t very co[m] fortable for all penitent synners* (London: 1542), L5^{v}.

[17] John Bale, *A comedy concernynge thre lawes, of nature Moses, & Christ, corrupted by the sodomytes. Pharysees and Papystes* (London: 1548), C1^{v}.

[18] John G. Nichols (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London* (London: Camden Society, 1848), 238.

The Bridewell Hospital 'books of record', as the governors called them, fill out and corroborate Machyn's brief details. The brother and sister taken 'nakyd together' were Henry Mallory and Sibyl Chaplain, apparently caught in the act that very day:

> Henry Mallory and Sibill chapeleyn brought into this house the xii of June 1560 for that they being brother and sister were taken in naked Bed, and for that the fact is abhominable they were adiudged to ryde in a carte thesayd daye and were.[19]

Another offender carted with them – the 'wyff of the Bell in Gracious-strett' – is of particular interest. Machyn's entry has long been the earliest known reference to the inn that would become, in 1583, one of two licensed city playing spaces for the newly formed Queen's Men. The proprietor of the Bell at 'Gracious' (now Gracechurch) Street has hitherto remained unknown, but on 8 June 1560, the Bridewell clerk entered the following record into his Minute Book:

> Cecely denyce the wife of Thomas denyce dwellinge at the signe of the Bell in Gracious strete brought into this house the viii of Juyn 1560 for that she is declared to be a com*m*on Bawde, but dothe yet stoutly denye yt, & therfor com*m*ytted to this house.[20]

It is likely that Denyce would have been forced to spin or beat hemp, the two principal hardships set for women prisoners. Her 'diett' would have amounted to 8oz of bread (denied to spinners), a dinner or supper of 8 oz of bread, 'the fiveth p*ar*te of a pound' of beef and 'a messe of porredge', and 'a pottle of beer for the whole day'. Denyce spent five days in Bridewell. A marginal note against the 8 June entry records that she was 'Carted the xii of Juyn 1560', as Machyn also records.[21]

On 13 June 1560, Denyce was 'called up' from the cells again to hear conditions for her release. John Levenoth and Henry Rasshall, both tailors, put up sureties to guarantee her compliance with an order of expulsion from the city and her future 'honest life and con*ver*sacon'. The conditions are recorded as follows:

> Cecely denyce the wife of Thomas denyce dwellyng at the Bell in Gracious strete at the sute of John Levenoth taylo^{r} inhabiting in the parish of S*aint* Savyou^{r}s in Sothwark and Henry Russhall taylo^{r} inhabityng in the parishe of S*aint* Christophers who have taken upon them and eu*er*y of them that from hencefoorth thesayd Cecely shall not only depart this citie of london and libertyes of thesame and neu^{r} hereafter to remayn and inhabit in the same, and that upon the payn of forfeyture of ether of them of the some of x pounde*s* w*hi*^{c}h they knowledge to owe unto the lord Maio^{r} and Gou*ern*o^{r}s of this house to be leuyd of their goode*s* or their bodyes to be com*m*ytted to prison, and for lack of payment to abyde soche further punishment as to thesayd gou*en*o^{r}s shall be thought mete. But also ~~upon lyke peyn and penaltye~~ the sayd parties contenteth their selfs

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19 BCB 1.85^{r}.

20 Ibid., 1.83^{r}

21 Ibid., 1.83^{v}. Orders for prisoners' diet are given on 31 January 1600, BCB 4.212^{v}.

> and eu*ery* of them to stand bound in lyke sort and upon lyke pay*ment* and share as aforesayd, that from henceforth the sayd Cecely denyce shall be of honest life and conu*er*sac*i*on w*ith*out com*m*yttyng or consentyng to any Whordom, Bawdry or lechery. And thesayd Cecely for her selfe standeth lykewise bound by this p*re*sent upon peyne of whipping at a cartes tayle to obs*erve* & kep*e* the pr*o*misses. In witness etc the xiiii of Juyn 1560.[22]

Denyce never again appears in the Bridewell Minute Books and so her association with the Bell is unlikely to have continued beyond the summer of 1560. But the case was proof, if ever it were needed, that the early playing locations had a reputation for debauchery, an infamy they would never lose. On the day of Denyce's release, the proprietor of the Cross Keys was also brought in. A summary of his case is recorded as follows:

> Gracious street
>
> Richard Ibytson hosteler at the croskeyes in ~~Lombard stret~~ brought into this house the xiiii of Juyn 1560 for that the same Richard was accused to be a com*m*on whoremong*e*^{r}, and beyng examyned did stoutly denye thesame although it was most manifestly affirmed to his face, and in thend he confessed he had com*m*ytted whordom sundry tymes, but he denyeth the Bawdry, Whipped and p*ai*^{d} to the wharfe xl^{s}.

This is the earliest reference we have to Ibotson and the Cross Keys, though he features later in a quite distinct case involving Richard Burbage in 1579. Burbage had been arrested for debt while on his way 'down Gracious street' to watch or perform in a play at the Cross Keys. Ibotson is recorded as a citizen and brewer, residing at the inn.[23] We may infer from the Bridewell report that he is likely to have been moderately wealthy. Since Bridewell's southern face overlooked the Thames, access from the south was easiest by water, and a wharf was needed to receive lighters and watermen ferrying raw materials such as lime for brick-making, sea-coal for fuel and other provisions.[24] The governors raised funds for its construction by charging prisoners deemed asset-worthy forty shillings per fifty feet of it, and Ibotson's punishment included this levy.[25]

As in *Lusty Juventus*, the perils of venereal infection could serve as a useful deterrent in warning young men against sexual misconduct. According to Stephen Bateman in his 1582 translation and revision of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, venereal disease was first known, around 1493, as 'the Spanish pox'. A section of this work supplied by Bateman entitled 'De Morbo Gallico. Of the French Poxe' explains that the disease first took hold among Frenchmen at Naples and since became 'the euill to change Countryes'. It is

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[22] Ibid., 1.86^{r}.

[23] Chambers, *ES*, ii, 383.

[24] This wharf was to be managed by Ephraim Andrewes and would become known as 'Ephraim's Wharf' (BCB 4.178^{r}).

[25] See.BCB 1.82^{r} where Anthony Pope paid the same fine.

caught, Bateman avers, by drinking with foreigners, from sitting on their privies, or ('soonest') sharing their beds. The disease, he writes, exhibits a variety of symptoms:

> some be moyst, some bee weasing watrishe, some bee drye, some bee like Kingwormes, some bee fistuled, some be festered, some cancarous, some bee lyke Wennes [lumps], some bee lyke Biles, some bee knobbed and knurred, and some bee vlcerous, hauing a drye scabbe in the middle, some haue ache in the ioyntes, and no outwarde signe of the Poxe, and there is smal Poxe.[26]

One of Erasmus's dialogues, originally published in his *Colloquies*, presents a conversion narrative entitled '*A pithy Dialogue betweene a Harlot and a godly yong man*' (c.1523-33). Sophronius urges the prostitute Lucretia not to remain 'a common sincke' for 'euery base, filthy, and scabby companion to resorte vnto, and to emptie his filthinesse in thee'. He further warns her that, 'if you be yet free from the contagion of that leprousie which they call the Spanish Scab, or French poxe, you cannot long be without it'. It is difficult to assess just how accurate this remark might have been in mid-sixteenth century England but the idea of prostitutes as carriers of an execrable foreign disease caught the public imagination, and like an infection, spread. Having been thrown out of Norwich for preaching a controversial sermon at the city cathedral on 21 December 1589, the reformer William Burton devoted his time to the first English translation of this and other Erasmian dialogues, which he published in 1606 as *Seven Dialogues both pithie and profitable* and dedicated to the city magistrates.[27] In the years between Erasmus's composition and Burton's translation, the French pox came to dominate attitudes towards prostitution. It internationalized sex as a vice and, like Catholicism, spread covertly.

In the anonymous *A Pretty Interlude called Nice Wanton*, written during the reign of Edward VI but revived for performance before Elizabeth, a connection between prostitutes or courtesans and disease is again strikingly realised.[28] The play was first printed by John King in 1560, the year in which he also registered *Lusty Juventus*.[29] The interlude's prologue indicates that it was written, like *Juventus*, in Edward's time, espousing: '[a]n honest quiet life, correspondent always / To God's law and the king's' (ll. 7–8).[30] Slightly adapted for its later royal performance, the play ends with a prayer for the queen (awkwardly foregoing a

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[26] *Batman vppon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended* (London: 1582), fo. 114^{r}.

[27] Burton's translation was printed by Valentine Simmes for Nicholas Ling as *Seven dialogues both pithie and profitable* … (London: 1606). The quotation is from sig. K3^{r}.

[28] All quotations from this interlude are from Glynne Wickham (ed.), *Four Moral Interludes* (London: Dent, 1976).

[29] No edition by King survives and only two printed copies of his *Nice Wanton* are extant.

[30] The word 'king's' remains in the Prologue, Judge Daniel's second speech and Ismael's reply.

rhyme with 'things)', and a final song on the pleasures of merriment and a pure conscience. What happens in the interim is an updated version of the *Youth* and *Juventus* narratives, based very loosely on Bible characters.

Nice Wanton was in all likelihood written for the Children of the Chapel, Hamlet's 'little eyases' who would eventually take up residence in converted rooms at the old monastery at Blackfriars. The short songs and eleven non-speaking parts for the jurors point to performance by choristers. The play comes in two sections of roughly equal length. An interval probably allowed for time passing and a striking costume change for Dalilah. Barnabas, the good child, urges his wayward brother Ismael and sister Dalilah to conduct themselves soberly and attend school. Instead, they truant and seek out 'sport', 'lusty companions' and 'good wine, ale and beer'. After their mother, Xantippe, has proved ineffectual, Dalilah and Ismael meet up with Iniquity who encourages them to play dice and pick purses. Dalilah requires little grooming for work as a whore, but she is also 'shrewd' (l. 257). When she mocks Ismael for his promiscuous 'minion doll' (l. 155) and promises to tell him who else 'putteth a bone in your hood' (l. 159), he gives her a box on the ear. And when Iniquity sings, 'Gold locks, / She must have knocks, / Or else I do her wrong' (l. 192–4), Dalilah responds with the same mocking thought: 'Then by the rood, / A bone in your hood. / I shall put, ere it be long' (ll. 201–203). Iniquity quips, 'Ah sirrah, I love a wench that can be wily, -- / She perceived my mind with a twink of mine eye' (ll. 233–4). Anticipating that Dalilah may have ideas of her own, he tries beating her, '[i]n the way of correction, but a blow or two'. Dalilah leaves the stage indignant and angry at such treatment: 'Correct thy dogs, thou shalt not beat me' (l. 247–8).

After the (presumed) interval, Dalilah enters completely transformed. A stage direction states, '*Dalilah cometh in ragged, her face hid, or disfigured, halting on a staff*'. She laments, 'Full of pain and sorrow, crooked and lorn: / Stuff'd with diseases, in this world forlorn' (ll.263–4). Yet no words Dalilah is given to speak quite equal the stark visual realism of the stage direction. Aspects of *Nice Wanton* take verse drama in new directions, and Dalilah's hideous image is certainly one of them. Others include the use of new or rare expressions such as 'tiddle' (to indulge), 'tidlings' (spoilt children), 'brawling iron' (a fist), 'hodypeak' (a blockhead), 'eaten with pox', and 'strong whore', and the fact that it is the first English play known to dramatise a jury, all of which lend the play its valuable newness. Moreover, it dramatises an evident concern not only for the moral conduct of citizens but equally for the effective regulation of prostitution in England's major cities. Dalilah bemoans her physical state:

> My sinews be shrunken, my flesh is eaten with pox;
> My bones full of ache and great pain;
> My head is bald, that bare yellow locks;
> Crooked I creep on the earth again (ll. 265–9).

She has become a social threat 'in this world forlorn' (l. 264), a 'wretch' (l. 304), and 'foul and horrible to see' (l. 274). Dalilah makes much of the fact that in

her youth her parents neglected to give her 'correction' (ll. 278, 312, cf. 246–7, 493). Following the presumed success of London's Bridewell, an Elizabethan Act of 1575-1576 (Statute 18) ordered that, 'in everye Countye … one Two or more Abyding Howses … shalbe provided, and called the Howse or Howses of Correction for setting on worcke and punishinge.of suche as.shalbee taken as Roges'. By the late 1580s these houses were also familiarly termed 'bridewells' (*OED*). The interlude's Messenger opens his prologue with a saying by 'prudent Prince Solomon': 'He that spareth the rod, the child doth hate' (l.2). We do not need to invoke the spectre of Michel Foucault to recognise that London's Bridewell, and all those off-spring houses of correction, institutionalized the rod. Any number of cases of 'correction' by whipping might be cited but two memorable instances involving children include '23 Aprill 1575, Symon Graunthe A little boye servant to Mr Hartoppe in Chepesyde sent in by Mr Gardener is a comon pilferer had by order correction with roddes and for that he is an Orphan he is del*ivered* forthwith'; and '22 October 1576, Tho*mas* Murfett a litel boye roge sent in by m*aste*r dicher for beinge a roge & filching a 1lb weight is whipped with roddes'.[31] In dramatizing a tribunal (with Iniquity as the dubious beadle or 'Baily Errand'), *Nice Wanton* conflates prosecutorial spaces such as Bridewell, Newgate, the Assizes, Sessions and wardmote inquests in a scene that endorses their efficacy. Bridewell had no jury system and did not condemn offenders to death, but since its routine work involved the detention and 'correction' of prostitutes, pimps, players at dice, cutpurses, scolds and corrupt bailiffs, Dalilah, Ismael, Iniquity and Xantippe are precisely the kind of characters its court would hunt down. Dalilah, now 'stuff'd with diseases', acknowledges that she is 'foul' and 'filthy' and ends her life 'dead of the pox taken at the stews' (ll. 264, 461). The licensed stews had been closed by Henry VIII, but the term survived as a literary designation for any bawdy house. Her disease indicates, however, popular recognition of a growing social problem – the inexorable spread of the 'French pox' or 'foul disease'.

A play that has seen renewed critical interest in recent years, one that also depicts women's demise through continental sexual corruption, is Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London* (c. 1581), written for the Queen's Men.[32] Lady Lucar is visited by men from 'Italy, Barbary, Turky, Iury [Jewry]: nay from the pagan himself' (ll. 16–17). She employs Fraud, Dissimulation, Usury and Simony as serving-men (the last of these states he was born in Rome). Mercadore, an Italian merchant, forms a pact with Lucar to export from England 'good commodities' in

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[31] BCB 2.97^{r}; BCB 3.80^{r}.

[32] Quotations from *The Three Ladies* are cited from Lloyd Edward Kermode (ed.), *Three Renaissance Usury Plays* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009). Quotations from *The Three Lords* are taken from H.S.D. Mithal (ed.) *An Edition of R(obert) W(ilson)'s The Three Ladies of London and The Three Lords and Ladies of London* (PhD Diss.1959, reprinted New York and London: Garland, 1988). See also Scott McMillin and Sally Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121–7, and the introduction to Kermode op. cit., 28–39.

exchange for 'trifles' and baubles. The clear implication is that England's economic strength is being wasted or spent and lucre enriched. Love and Conscience, the other two 'ladies of london' complain and Conscience describes Lucar as 'like a whore full of deadly hate' (l. 1082). Amid a rising dispute between Mercadore and a Jew named Gerontus, Conscience and Love are in turn persuaded to adopt Lucar's 'harlot' ways (l. 1339). Lucar sends Usury to bring her 'the boxe of all abhomination', a property 'prettie to show' but containing ink which Lucar then uses to spot Conscience's face. A stage direction proposes, 'Here let Lucar open the boxe and dip her finger in it and spotte Conscience face' (l. 1404–405). The play ends with a tribunal scene in which Lucar, Conscience and Love face censure and imprisonment. Conscience is asked 'how thou commest so spotted, / Whereby many by thee hath bene greatly infected' (l. 1917–918). She answers that dearth and 'extremitie' have compelled her.

Wilson's sequel, *The stately Morall of the three Lords of London* (c. 1588–90) sees the ladies restored by a combination of quackery and miracle. The three lords ('Pleasure, Pollicie and Pompe') seek the ladies out for clemency and marriage. Nemo, the judge, refers to the fallen women as, 'Loue, Lucre, Conscience, wel deseruing death, / Being corrupt with all contagion: / The spotted Ladies of that stately towne' (ll. 493–5). The three ladies appear hooded and are led by Sorrow who 'sets them on three stones on the stage' (l. 659–60). These are 'sweating stones' endowed with a property of drawing heat from the sitter and, in a process of theatrical alchemy, administer soothing, curative effects. Soon, Love and Lucre declare, 'My double face is single growen againe' and 'My spots are gone, my skin is smooth and plain' (ll. 722–3). Tempted by Simony (a Roman), Dissimulation (half-Italian, half-Dutch) and Fraud (half-French, half-Scottish), the ladies resist all blandishments: 'Who once are burned, the fire will euer shun' (l. 845). This burning is, of course, a reference to venereal infection. The stones have worked their magic of sweating 'scalding drops, like bitter brinish teares' (l. 916) and the women find themselves fully restored to health, clearing the way for them to reveal their faces and for Conscience to marry Pleasure, Love to marry Pollicie, and Lucre to marry Pompe. Although the sequel makes a brief reference to 'the old French disease' (l. 1361), it does so without explicitly specifying that this has been the ladies' affliction. Nevertheless, the symbolism would not have been lost on the audience: the women's disease speaks of a moral and social decay, figured by prostitution, that poses a threat to both city and nation.

By the mid-1570s, 'the foul disease' had become synonymous with venereal infection and those with a medical interest in curing it proposed a variety of cures.[33] The following remedy from Konrad Gesner's *The Newe Jewell of Health* (1576, trans. George Baker) is representative of recommendations by herbalists, physicians and quacks for the curing of pox:

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[33] For a 'literary' analysis of the antinomies faced by contemporary medical treatises on the pox, see Bruce Thomas Boehrer, 'Early Modern Syphilis' in *The History of Sexuality* 1, 2 (1990), 197–214.

> There be some which affirme, that they can cure the persons infected with ye french disease, within three or ii […]. dayes, after this maner. They include or set the pacient within a Pype or Butte (that his head may be quite without) & sitting on a stoole boored with many holes, vnder which they laye a thicke plate of Iron meanly or but lightly heated, & on the same straw of ye pouder, that the fume of it may ascend & compasse about all the body, & enter into the body by the lower partes, & they will the pacient thus to sweate there for three howres, if he can beare or suffer it, but if (in no wise) he cannot, then let the pacient the oftner repeate this kind or maner of sweating. For in so many dayes space shal the fowle disease be wholly cleared.[34]

Wilson does not have his three ladies sweating in a tub, as Lyly would have Diogenes, but the stage business in the play is unmistakably designed to represent a cure for syphilitic infection. Historically, the only recourse for persons afflicted by syphilis was one of the London hospitals, if not St. Bartholomew's or St. Thomas's, then Bridewell, though the latter would often simply transfer them to the beadles of the former to be 'cured'.

Elizabeth Hoer was brought in to be whipped and then sent to St. Thomas's 'to be cured of the fowle disease' in December 1598, and a cluster of cases occur early in the new century.[35] On 3 January 1603, Sicelie Bennett was brought into Bridewell by her mother as 'incontinent' and having caught the 'fowle disease' from 'Abell hurley a Brewer in hogg lane nere St Katherins'. Joan Hinson alleged she was raped by an unnamed serving-man from whom 'she gott the fowle and lothsome disease'. She was sent to St. Bartholomew's Hospital for examination and punishment.[36] Bridewell would routinely exchange prisoners with other prisons and hospitals, especially Newgate, St. Thomas's, St. Bartholomew's and (in the case of orphans) Christ's. On 5 June 1605, Samuel Jackson was 'brought from St Bartholomew's having the fowle disease to be punished *whi*ch was done accordingly and is delivered back againe to one of their beadles'.[37] The fact that St. Bartholomew's also employed beadles (or Wilson's 'Baily Errands') meant that it could take prisoners under guard from Bridewell. On 3 July, four men were punished at Bridewell for having the 'fowle disease'. Their cases were recorded as follows:

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[34] Konrad Gesner, *The newe iewell of health wherein is contayned the most excellent secretes of phisicke and philosophie, deuided into fower bookes. … Faithfully corrected and published in Englishe, by George Baker, chirurgian* (London: 1576). See also, William Bullein, *Bulleins bulwarke of defence against all sicknesse, soarenesse, and vvoundes that doe dayly assaulte mankinde: which bulwarke is kept with Hilarius the gardener, [and] Health the phisicion, with the chirurgian, to helpe the wounded soldiours* (London: 1579); A. T., *A rich store-house or treasury for the diseased*… (London:, 1596).

[35] BCB 4.52^{v} (9 December 1598).

[36] BCB 5.3^{r} (28 November 1604).

[37] Ibid., 34$^{v.}$

> Nichas Skynner being brought from S*ain*t Bartholomews hospitall by one of their beadles exa*min*ed howe he caught the ffr*ench* poxe saith & confesseth that hee had thuse & carnall knowledge of the bodie of a woman in S*ain*t John streete whose name he knoweth not ; ordered to be ponished and delivered back againe by one of the beadles of the said hosp*ital* of S*ain*t Bartholomew.
>
> Thomas Daniell another havinge the said ffowle desease brought from the foresaid hospitall to be ponished w*hi*ch was done accordingly, ordered by courte to be delivered back by ye beadles.
>
> Fraunce Vaughan another brought from S*ain*t Bartholomews by one of their beadles exa*min*ed howe he caught that filthie desease he said in the low countries ponished & delivered back againe by the same beadle.
>
> John Wilkinson brought in by the same beadle, po*nished* being suspected to have the fowle desease on him ordered to be delivered to the same beadle to be restored back to S*ain*t Bartholomews hospitall.[38]

Mary Guy was yet another brought in 'by one of the beadles of St *Bartholomews* hospitall to be ponished she havinge ye fowle desease by order of the court ponished & delivered to the beadle againe'.[39] There were, of course, many other kinds of 'foul disease' at this time, typhus, smallpox, diphtheria, scabies, as well as leprosy and plague. Bale's *Comedy* has Natura Lex say of the Devil, 'By hym haue I gote thys fowle dysease of bodye. / And as ye se here, am now throwne in a leprye'.[40] But by the early seventeenth century these had an increasingly familiar companion – syphilis.

These historical examples help to clarify some of the ways in which the 'foul disease' trope operates elsewhere in Renaissance drama. Dressed like Kyd's Hieronimo, in his night-gown, the insomniac King Henry, in *Henry IV Part Two*, wonders why 'sleep' can 'lie with the vile / In loathsome beds' but desert a king. He remarks of his body politic, 'How foul it is, what rank diseases grow' and links these musings to Neville's prophecy, 'The time will come that foul sin, gathering head, / Shall break into corruption' (3.1.15–16, 38, 71–2). The lines associate venereal infection with civil war and follow directly after the long brothel scene in which Falstaff has told Doll Tearsheet, 'you help to make the diseases, Doll. We catch of you, Doll, we catch of you' (2.4.43–5), itself a line expanded to considerable dramatic effect in *The Winter's Tale*.[41] Leonato's condemnation of Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* hints not merely at her moral stain but also to the possibility of her contamination: 'O she is fallen / Into a pit of ink, that

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[38] Ibid., 41r.

[39] BCB 5.42v (10 July 1605).

[40] Ibid., 42v. John Bale, *A comedy concernynge thre lawes, of nature Moses, & Christ, corrupted by the sodomytes. Pharysees and Papystes* (London: 1548).

[41] See the exchange between Camillo and Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale* (1.2.379–93).

the wide sea / Hath drops too few to wash her clean again, / And salt too little which may season give / To her foul tainted flesh' (4.1.140–44). Images of the sea as insufficient to wash away taint or balm were preferred by Shakespeare.[42] But he also drew on the language of foul infection to remind his audiences that duplicity or hypocrisy can be a kind of political disease. Claudius, in *Hamlet*, rues his forbearance of the prince after hearing of Polonius's death:

> But so much was our love
> We would not understand what was most fit,
> But like the owner of a foul disease,
> To keep it from divulging, let it feed
> Even upon the pith of life (F 4.1.18–22).

Editors neither query nor explain why the owner of a 'foul disease' might want to keep it from 'divulging' but by now the reason should be clear enough. Claudius, characteristically bound to 'double business', seeks the 'desperate appliance' of sending Hamlet abroad: 'Do it, England, / For like a hectic in my blood he rage, / And thou must cure me' (4.3.10, 67–8). The world may seem to Hamlet 'rank and gross' or as 'a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours' (1.2.136; 2.2.305), but he too is bound to a 'double business', as Claudius's infection, mining all within.

We find the terms again at work in *King Lear* where their fuller implications have largely gone unremarked. Once Kent has already declared Lear 'mad' and fallen to folly, he dares go further:

> Do, kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow
> Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,
> Or whilst I can vent clamour from my throat
> I'll tell thee thou dost evil (F 1.1.164–7).

The force of Kent's retort is that Lear is acting as one who murders his physician and spends his fee in a bawdy house, contracting the disease. Kent's implication falls just short of alleging that Lear is syphilitic. Some have questioned, on the basis of Lear's powerful speech on 'Adultery' (4.6.107–27), the ending of *Troilus and Cressida*, and the final poems in Shakespeare's sonnets, whether by 1608 the poet himself may have caught a venereal infection.[43] Katherine Duncan-Jones, editing the sonnets has written, 'In light of the two final sonnets, the reader may discover also an implication that the speaker has 'fallen' sexually through infection'. She elaborated further on this view in her biography *Ungentle Shakespeare*, suggesting that Shakespeare's associations with George Wilkins

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[42] 'Not all the water in the rough rude sea / Can wash the balm off from an anointed king' *Richard II* (3.2.54–5); 'All the water in Wye cannot wash your majesty's / Welsh plood out of your pody' *Henry V* (4.7.101–2). Cf. *Titus Andronicus* (3.2.18–20; 4.2.100-102) and *King Lear* (1.1.258–9F).

[43] For example, Jeffrey Stern, 'King Lear: The Transference of the Kingdom', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41, 3 (1990), 299–308, 303.

had 'left him with an unwanted legacy of infection', a conjecture she qualified with the possibility that Shakespeare may only have believed himself infected.[44] Stanley Wells is more sceptical. He writes, 'it seems to me that there is no reliable evidence whatever that Shakespeare suffered from a venereal infection'.[45] It would indeed have been difficult for Shakespeare to have avoided the pox if he was, as he seems likely to have been, somewhat promiscuous in London. Yet we do not need to settle this particular question in order to know that Shakespeare was surrounded by men and women variously involved in sexual misdemeanours, and that this sometimes led him close to the scene of the whipping house. By the time *King Lear* was written, or indeed *Measure For Measure* where Lucio cracks jokes about Mistress Overdone's syphilitic hips, Shakespeare's company had already had a serious brush with the officers and beadles who, as Robert Greene had once put it, lashed the poor whores in Bridewell. His fellow actor Christopher Beeston, was brought before the masters of Bridewell in 1602, and charged with rape: Beeston brought friends into court, 'his confederates plaiers' who 'did verie unreuerentlie demeane them selves to certen governors and much abused the place' (see Chapter 6). Shakespeare expresses similarly 'unreuerent' attitudes towards civic and local forms of authority. Only a lunatic king, or an actor/writer in the King's Men, could get away with uttering such contempt for the vassals, beadles and petty constables who sought out persons deemed for any reason to merit punishment:

> Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand;
> Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back,
> Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
> For which thou whip'st her (Folio 4.6.156–9).

In *Henry IV Part Two*, written some six years earlier, Shakespeare had Mistress Quickly and the pregnant Doll Tearsheet dragged into prison by beadles. The women rail against their arrest ('You bluebottle rogue, you filthy famished correctioner') but cannot escape the lashing-post and Bridewell's 'whipping-cheer' (5.4.5–20). Pistol reports their fate to Falstaff: 'Thy Doll, and Helen of thy noble thoughts, / Is in base durance and contagious prison, / Haled thither / By most mechanical and dirty hand' (5.5.33–6). The lines strike a sour tone of dissent, and empathise, it would seem, with a poor London Helen rudely thrown into a place of infestation. The character speaking is, of course, swaggering Pistol, but the lines express public disdain for London's 'Baily Errands' that will harden, by late 1604, into the more powerful antipathy expressed in *King Lear*. Sir John promises to achieve what Sir William Howard managed to accomplish for Elizabeth Evans,

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[44] Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.) *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Thomson, 1997), 418; and *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes From a Life* (London: Thomson Learning, 2001), 224.

[45] Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, Sex & Love* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 76. Wells leaves open the question of how 'reliable' the evidence would need to be.

declaring, 'I will deliver her' (5.5.39). Shakespeare elicits compassion for the prostitute and cynicism towards officers of 'contagious prison'. London, as Nashe averred in *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem* (1607), was a place where prostitution and infection went hand in hand, and he noted it especially in the northern suburbs: 'In Gray's Inn, Clerkenwell, Finsbury and Moorfields, with mine own eyes have I seen half a dozen of such lamentable outcasts' .[46] But disease was no respecter of places or persons. The necklace that adorns Sir Thomas Wyatt's elusive courtly lover, in his post-Petrarchan sonnet 'Whoso list to hunt', famously declares, 'Noli me tangere', or 'do not touch', words sacredly uttered by the resurrected Christ. In a sophisticated discussion of the poem, Stephen Greenblatt observed that the woman's *agility* has become for the poet 'the subtlety of the courtesan'.[47] Aimed it seems at Anne Boleyn, the words also carry a tart insult within their veiled innuendo, for, as a clutch of sixteenth-century medical texts shows, 'noli me tangere' was a term denoting a particularly virulent kind of ulceration that, just like syphilis, rotted the nose.[48] This vengeful ambiguity is symptomatic of the fact that wherever such women lay – in the city or at court, in a king's or a drunkard's lap, a tenement bed-chamber, or a prison cell – pleasure came at a new cost in the economy of the courtesan: foul disease was now a currency in the wages of sin.

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[46] R.B. McKerrow (ed.) and F. P. Wilson (ed.) *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 5 vols, ii.160.

[47] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 149.

[48] For example, see Sir Thomas Elyot, *Bibliotheca Eliotae Eliotis Librarie* (London, 1542), Ii^{r}; also Konrad Gesner, *The treasure of Euonymus* ... (London, 1559), 187, 279 and 336. Jean Goeurot, in *The regiment of life, whereunto is added a treatise of the pestilence* ... (London 1550), advised, 'For cankers, vlcers, and Noli me tangere. Forasmuch as Noli me tangere chaunceth often in the nose or aboute the face, begynnyng of a lytle harde and round kirnel, or knobbe, and ful of paine, declyning toward a pale and leady colour, ye may iudge that disease verye perilous, notwithstanding it is good to annoynte it as hereafter foloweth, and also to applye therto other remedies, as thus. / Take Vnguentum album two or thre ounces, the iuce of plantayne and nightshade, of eche halfe an ounce, Tutie [a zinc oxide] the weyght of halfe a crowne, mingle them togyther, and make an oyntment whyche is good for y^{e} same disease' (Cii$^{r\text{-}v}$).

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Chapter 3
Travellers and the Sex Trade in Early Modern London

Master Caisho Burroughs was, according to John Aubrey, 'one of the most beautiful men in England', reputedly valiant, proud, and bloodthirsty. An Italian lady in London fell 'extreamly in Love with him' and let him enjoy her 'which she had never let any Man do before'. She died, and, having earlier been sworn to secrecy, Caisho spoke about her openly at a tavern. As he was 'going to make water, the Ghost of the Gentlewoman did appear to him'. So troubled was he by this apparition that his father sent him to Florence where he had 'an Intrigue with a beautiful Courtisan'. Hearing of it, the father tried to have him murdered; he fled to London, and his mistress committed suicide. Thereafter, until his own death, he would every night shriek out in his dreams, '*O God! Here she comes, she comes*'.[1] The story may not be entirely true but it imagines a certain cultural parity between English and continental attitudes to sexual mores: what happens in Italy also happens in England.[2] And to some, this was an extremely disturbing thought. Famously, two chief anxieties in the mind of humanist educator Roger Ascham seem to have been sex and Italy: both stood in the way of a wholesome education. 'I am affraide,' he wrote, 'that ouer many of our trauelers to Italy, do not exchewe the way to *Circes* Court'. Some, he knew, 'neuer had gone out of England, but onelie to serue *Circes*, in *Italie*'. Ascham was particularly exercised by the idea that travellers to Italy would bring home 'Papistrie or worse … the enchantments of *Circes* brought out of Italy to marre mens maners in England', and, moreover, that London bookshops were selling 'fonde bookes, of late translated out of Italian into English … to corrupt honest manners'. He feared a cultural contamination that only properly guided education could prevent. And he felt he should know about such things: 'I was in Italie my selfe: but I thank God, my abode there, was but ix. Dayes: And yet I sawe in that litle tyme, in one Citie, more libertie to sinne, than ever I hard tell of in our noble Citie of London in ix. Yeare'.[3]

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[1] Oliver Lawson Dick (ed.) *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 134–5. Caisho Burroughs is omitted in Andrew Clark (ed.), *'Brief Lives,' chiefly of Contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey, between 1669 & 1696* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 2 vols.

[2] Burton's view that 'Your hot and Southern countries are prone to lust, and far more incontinent, than those that live in the North, as *Bodine* discourseth at large' was, as this chapter shows, somewhat inaccurate, see Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1923), 3 vols, iii, 67.

[3] Edward Arber (ed.) *Roger Ascham, The Scolemaster, 1570, 1572* (Westminster: A. Constable and Co., 1897), 77–9, 83. Ascham visited Venice in 1552.

For Thomas Nashe, writing twenty years after Ascham, it was London that offered the greatest 'libertie to sinne'. Structured around the seven deadly sins motif, Nashe's *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil* (entered in the Stationers' Register 8 August 1592) reserves its condemnation of lechery for London: 'tell me, is there anye place so lewde, as this Ladie *London*?' Pierce's supplication, sent to the Devil via the Knight of the Post, concludes,

> *Lais*, *Cleopatra*, *Helen*, if our Clyme hath any such, noble Lord warden of the witches and iuglers, I commend them with the rest of our vncleane sisters in *Shorditch*, the *Spittle*, *Southwarke*, *Westminster*, and *Turnbull streete*, to the protection of your Portership: hoping you will speedily carrie them to hell, there to keepe open house for all young Diuels that come, and not let our ayre be contaminated with theyr six-pennie damnation any longer.[4]

Satirical sentiments like these chimed with Puritan denunciations of sin in the face of plague outbreaks, and were echoed in a number of pamphlets and plays at the time.[5] Strikingly, Nashe conflates the rarified stratosphere of classical learning with much more local and noisome areas in and around the city. The icons of lechery were more readily to be found not in plays, epic poems and translations, but all around, in places Nashe knew well. In characteristically Aretinian vein, his poem *The Choice of Valentines* (date unclear) describes a visit to the upper chamber of a brothel in just such an area, and in realistic detail. It is thus something of a paradox that studies of prostitution in early modern London have hitherto tended to rely upon literary rather than historical sources.[6] I propose to address Nashe's implicit question, 'if our Clyme hath anye such' with some additional historical material: was there, in fact, anything like this kind of cultural parity? Were there any English Laises, Cleopatras and Helens, and, if so, who were they? Did visitors to England

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[4] R.B. McKerrow (ed.) *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, reprinted from the original edition with corrections and supplementary notes edited by F. Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 5 vols, i. 117.

[5] Peter Lake, 'From Troynouvant to Heliogabalus's Rome and back: 'order' and its others in the London of John Stow' in J.F. Merritt (ed.) *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype 1598–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 217–49.

[6] See for example, Paul Griffiths, 'The Structure of Prostitution in Elizabethan London', in *Continuity and Change* 8 (1993) 39–63; Jyotsna Singh 'The Interventions of History: Narratives of Sexuality' in Dympna Callaghan, Lorraine Helms and Jyotsna Singh (eds.) *The Weyward Sisters: Shakespeare and Feminist Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter Lake, 'From Troynouvant to Heliogabalus's Rome and Back: 'Order' and its Others in the London of John Stow' in Merritt, op. cit. Moulton gives a fine discussion of Nashe as the 'English Aretine'. Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) gives examples from historical sources, including the Bridewell Minute Books.

make recourse to such women, as some English travellers to the continent clearly did when abroad? How then did these more intimate cultural exchanges occur, and what were their consequences?

Before addressing these questions in detail, it is worth outlining the dangerous context in which early modern travel to and from England took place.[7] International relations were no less murderous in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras than in any other time. Elizabeth's reign was marked by a series of well-known cataclysmic difficulties, the Northern Rebellion, the Ridolfi Plot, a potential coup by Mary Stuart, the Armada, the Irish question and Essex's demise, and the deepening problem of succession. But while these challenges constituted the headline events of her reign, they occurred amid a feverish atmosphere of religious and political unrest sponsored largely from abroad. Such were the pressures that government could only proceed, her Privy Council seems to have judged, by suppression. The Elizabethan conflict between recusant discontent and protestant loyalty surfaced in unexpected ways – in events of national crisis as in 1588 and 1599, but also in more sudden, local and disparate contexts. Regions slow to adopt the new religious settlement, like the north-west, could readily be identified, but it was virtually impossible to predict exactly where the next threat to political stability would arise, or how great its consequences would be. Reports of new and rapid concentrations of soldiers at foreign ports, for example, were taken extremely seriously, but could quickly come to nothing. In 1580, John Gilpin described in a letter meeting six Spanish merchants who asked him news of the Spaniards in Ireland. Replying that there were 'but a few Italians lately landed there', he was told, 'Ah, mon ami, sont tous Espaniolls, et entre peu de jours, vous voires beaucoup les autres la, pour chastier la bone damoiselle d'Engleterre.' Gilpin records similar 'insolent speeches' recently emerging from Venice.[8] Expressions of Catholic loyalty could arise anywhere: William Hart, priest at York, was reported to have exhorted his congregation, in 1584, to 'stand fast to the catholic faith'; a confiscated *Book of Miscellanies* similarly urged, 'England, take this monition, / Be wise, change thy condition'; prophetic verses were printed, one declaring, 'Behold, for out of

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[7] See also Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 2–3. Valuable studies of aliens in early modern London also include G. D. Ramsay, *The City of London in international politics at the accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), Robin D. Gwynn, *Huguenot Heritage: The History and Contribution of the Huguenots in Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), J.L. Bolton, *The Alien Communities of London in the Fifteenth Century: The Subsidy Rolls of 1440 & 1483–4* (Stamford: Richard III & Yorkist History Trust and Paul Watkins, 1998), and Jacob Selwood, *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

[8] *Calendar of State Papers*, *Domestic Series, of the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., Addenda, 1580–1625* ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1872, rpt. Lichtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 20–21.

Philip's blood a worthy brood shall rise, / Who shall redeem the world's misdeeds with warlike enterprise'.[9] Faced with an uncertain political and religious situation at home, and with a steady rise in the number of continental immigrants, the Privy Council ordered from 1561 onwards a series of surveys of aliens in London, the liberties, Southwark and Westminster 'to searche out & learne the holl number of Alyens & Straungers aswell Denizens as other dwellinge and resiaunt [*sic*] at this p*rese*nt'.[10]

Rumour was a powerful political tool and a worrying enemy. Richard Hakluyt wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham in 1585, 'The Spanish ambassador, Pope's Nuncio, and Jesuits blaze about, by their swarms of spies, anything that happens in Christendom on their side, but spread false rumours, and conceal anything against them'.[11] Exiled to Paris, Charles Arundel was reported to have pawned his wealth to raise money in support of Mary Queen of Scots, and gathered the Earl of Westmoreland, Don Bernadino the papal nuncio in France, and the Bishop of Glasgow in support of a landing near Poole. Anticipating Mary's execution, plots were laid for revenge at Brussels.[12] The years leading up to the Armada were a period of especially intense diplomatic and intelligence activity. Rumours of assassination plots against Elizabeth surfaced repeatedly.[13] In the years of Elizabeth's decline, the Jesuit threat from the continent persisted.[14] Even before he had left Scotland, James attracted an immediate threat of assassination from a group led by Secretary of State Sir Griffin Markham, which included two priests named William Watson and William Clerke, and Anthony Copley, who sought to 'destroy the King and all his cubs' by poison, in an anti-Jesuit yet politically pro-Spanish conspiracy to put Lady Arabella Stuart on the throne.[15] The plot, code-named 'the Bye and the Main' since it involved two factions, famously brought down Sir Walter Ralegh, Lord Cobham and Lord Grey. Early modern travel was thus undertaken in a context of intense political, diplomatic and religious suspicion. Travellers had need of discretion – sometimes secrecy – and they would cultivate it in matters of politics, religion and sex.

Edward Chaney's *The Evolution of the Grand Tour* provides a valuable study of early English travellers abroad, presenting detailed accounts of the sojourns of Sir Thomas Hoby, Robert Dallington, Inigo Jones, John Milton, and others, in Italy and Sicily. Chaney outlines the impressions recorded by Sir Thomas Hoby, Castiglione's first English translator, of his journey to Italy and Sicily, meeting

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9 Ibid., 108.

10 Cited in Yungblut (18). The contraction means 'this present instant'.

11 *Calendar of State Papers*, op. cit., 141.

12 Ibid., 157, 190.

13 Ibid., 200-1.

14 Ibid., 412-13.

15 *Calendar of State papers, Domestic Series, of the reign of James I. 1603-1610,* ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1857, rpt. Lichtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 20-34.

with English scholars at Padua along the way, among them Sir Thomas Wyatt the Younger. Later, Hoby joined a company of Englishmen to witness a papal election at Rome in 1549.[16] Ranging widely, both topically and topographically, Hoby's diary provides detailed accounts of the towns, cities, landscapes and manners of Italy and Sicily, in what amounts to an early contribution to the travel genre. But English travellers to Italy were not just tourists. Jonathan Woolfson's study of English scholars at Padua and the role played by the University there in cultivating the growth of English civic humanism has shown the extent to which Italian education permeated the upper echelons of English society. Patronised by the Republic of Venice, the academy at Padua had considerable experience in training foreign scholars. Among its better-known English alumni were statesmen, ecclesiasts, humanists and physicians, including Francis Walsingham, Henry Wotton, Reginald Pole, Cuthbert Tunstall, Thomas Starkey, Richard Morison, Richard Pace, Thomas Lupset, William Latimer, Thomas Linacre, John Caius and William Harvey. As Woolfson explains,

> The sheer numbers frequenting the Paduan *studium* before or after spells in Germany, Switzerland, other places in Italy, and France, suggest that foreign travel was becoming an educational institution no less real than the places of learning in England where most travellers had spent some time immediately prior to their departure. Travel was also a rite of passage for the young and self-consciously English gentleman … And consequently travel to Padua became politicized, with a closer relationship between students there and the English government emerging particularly in the 1590s, when survival of the law university's matriculation register enables us to see its real extent.[17]

In a valuable appendix, Woolfson supplies a 'Biographical Register' of 350 scholars from England and Wales known to have visited Padua in the period. These include members of parliament, Marian exiles, law and medical students, priests, translators, intelligencers and diplomats, tourists, soldiers, and perhaps most influential of all, educators. There were also, of course, those like Ascham who condemned educational travel, especially to Romanist Italy, and Hoby's manuscript diary, revised throughout the early 1560s, was written at a time of increasing English national isolation from Catholic countries in Europe. Even so, Ascham praised Hoby's translation of *Il Cortegiano*, observing that it 'would do a yong ientleman more good, I wisse, then three yeares trauell abrode spent in *Italie*'.[18]

English grammar school boys would have come across courtesans in works by Plautus and Terence at school, customarily in their third year. If they took a

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[16] Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Relations since the Renaissance* (London: Portland, Or: Frank Cass, 1998), 64.

[17] Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy, 1485–1603* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 124.

[18] Chaney, op. cit., 76. Ascham, op. cit., 66.

grand tour to Italy, they could hardly avoid encountering courtesans in the flesh. Fynes Moryson, in *Itinerary Containing his Ten Years Travell* (written 1606-1617, published 1617), noted vast numbers of courtesans in Venice.[19] Moryson had begun a six-year period of travel in 1591, visiting Prague, the Low Countries, Denmark, Poland and Vienna. He arrived in Padua in late 1593 where he stayed to study Italian throughout 1594. At Padua and elsewhere he noticed 'Harlotts called Cortisane … goe in the Company of young men to the Tennis-Court in mens Apparrell and Racketts in their handes'.[20] Unusually, Moryson offered some moral explanation for male recourse to courtesans, arguing (after St. Augustine) that sexual propriety so intensifies male frustration that relief provided by prostitutes is the only realistic consequence. 'Men of all sortes', he wrote, are compelled,

> with fierce affections to forbidden lusts, and to these most which are most forbidden, most kept from them, and with greatest cost and danger to be obtayned. And because they are barred not only the speech and conversation, but the least sight of their loue (all which are allowed men of other nations) they are carryed rather with a blynde rage of passion … to adore them as Images, rather than loue them as wemen. And as nowe they spare no cost, and will runne great dangers to obtayne their lustfull desyres, so would they persue them to very madnes, had they not the most naturall remedy of this passion ready at hand to allay their desyres, namely Harlotts, whom they call Curtizans, hauing beauty and youth and whatsoeuer they can imagine in their mistres.[21]

Moryson declines to specify precisely which 'lusts' he deems 'most forbidden' and his view may well have been informed more by his reading of classical comedy than by observed experience.

Perhaps the best-known historical encounter of an English traveller with an Italian courtesan is Thomas Coryate's meeting with the Venetian prostitute, Margarita Emiliana, vividly related in his *Coryat's Crudities* (1608). Coryate reckoned that there were more than twenty thousand prostitutes in Venice when he visited the city in 1608: 'As for the number of these Venetian Cortezans it is very great. For it is thought there are of them in the whole City and other adjacent places, as Murano, Malomocco, &c. at the least twenty thousand, whereof many are esteemed so loose, that they are said to open their quivers to every arrow'.[22]

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[19] Charles Hughes, *Shakespeare's Europe, unpublished chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary, Being a survey of the condition of Europe at the end of the 16th century* (London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1903). Moryson exaggeratedly suggests that courtesans may have numbered sixty thousand in Naples (411).

[20] Ibid., 463.

[21] Ibid., 409–10.

[22] Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities hastily gobled up in five months in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some part of high Germany and the Netherlands; newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe in the Countyof Somerset, to the nourishment of the travelling members of this kingdome* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905), 402.

Marin Sanuto, an early sixteenth century Venetian administrator, estimated in his *Diary* that there might be as many as 11,654 prostitutes in Venice in a total population of 100,000.[23] Whatever their exact number, courtesans were clearly a noticeable feature of Venetian city life at the time. When Coryate witnessed a 'comedie'at one of the city playhouses, a 'beggarly' place in comparison with the theatres he knew in London, he saw women acting upon the stage, and noted masked courtesans and their 'favourites' among the audience.[24] Lest his topic provoke disapproval, Coryate hastily explains to 'carping Criticks, who I think will taxe me for luxury and wantonnesse' that it constitutes 'a thing incident and very proper to this discourse, especially because the name of a Cortezan of Venice is famoused over all Christendome'. And to give his readers as exact an impression of his encounter with this woman as possible, Coryate included an engraving of the richly attired and bare-breasted Emiliana greeting him with open arms and bosom 'made in that forme as we saluted each other'.[25] So wealthy was she, Coryate explains, that Emiliana paid for the building of 'a faire Monastery of Augustinian Monkes'. In a concluding observation to this part of his journal, Coryate notes without a hint of disapproval that if courtesans become pregnant, they may legally abandon a child at the city wall so long as it is sufficiently small to fit into the space provided.[26]

No licence of this kind applied in England. Those arrested for abandoning children were severely punished. On 11 September 1574, Mabel Wilkinson was charged with 'laying a childe at the dore of Thomas Rowland', whom she believed to be the child's father. Anthony Harrison stood accused of 'laying a child in Shoe Lane' on 20 May 1603, and on 19 July 1603, Marie Barber, suspected that she 'lay a childe in Carter Lane at Sermon lane ende', denied the charge, saying 'she knowes not whoe laid the child there'. Upon physical examination ('She standes upon her maidenhead'), the Court found her 'too light', and put her to punishment which amounted in each of these cases to several lashes with a whip.[27] Even members of the aristocracy faced punishment for what was routinely termed 'getting a childe in whoredome'. The example of the Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford is a case in point. Aubrey tells a famous tale of him: 'This Earle of Oxford, making low obeisance to Queen Elizabeth, happened to let a Fart, at which he was so abashed and ashamed that he went to Travel, 7 yeares. On his returne, the Queene welcomed him home, and sayd, My Lord, I had forgot the Fart'.[28] Perhaps less well known is that once in Italy, De Vere became greatly admired.

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[23] See Margaret F. Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11.

[24] Ibid., 386–7.

[25] Ibid., 401–402.

[26] Ibid., 406–407.

[27] BCB 2.37^{r} (Wilkinson), 4. 380^{v} (Harrison), 4. 397^{r} (Barber).

[28] O. L. Dick, op. cit., 357.

While in Palermo, he challenged 'al maner of persons whatsoever, & at all manner of weapons, Turniments, Barriors with Horse and armour, to fight and combat with any whatsoever, in the defence of his Prince and countrey'. The challenge drew him great credit since no one dared meet it, and so, as one contemporary wrote, 'al Italy over, he is acknowledged ever since for the same, the onely Chivallier and Noble man of England'.[29] On his return to England, he incurred shame once more by taking a mistress, Anne Vavasour, sister to one of the Queen's maids and described by Elizabeth's biographers as a 'drab', and was confined to the Tower for some weeks when she bore him a son.[30]

Elizabeth's father had put an end to the licensed English 'stews' in 1546, and the legacy of the Reformation, formalised in civic institutions, did much to suppress illicit sexual activity. At court, there would always be women who constituted an equivalent to the celebrated courtesans of Italy. As the eponymous Italian recently fled to London advises his daughters in Edward Sharpham's *The Fleire* (1607), 'Your whore is for your euery rascall but your Curtizan is for your Courtier' (2.1.184–5), though, as the play shows, the distinction was hard to maintain.[31] According to Aubrey, Elizabeth Broughton was 'an exquisite beautie, as finely shaped as Nature could frame; had a delicate Witte. She was soon taken notice of at London, and her price was very deare – a second Thais. Richard, Earle of Dorset, kept her (whether before or after Venetia I know not, but I guess before). At last she grew common and infamous and gott the Pox, of which she died'. The 'Venetia' to whom Aubrey referred was Lady Venetia Digby, née Stanley: 'She had a most lovely and sweet turn'd face, delicate darke-browne haire. She had a perfect healthy constitution; strong; good skin; well-proportioned; much enclining to a *Bona Roba* (near altogether)'. Sir Kenelm Digby, Aubrey recorded, 'maried, much against his Mother's consent, that celebrated Beautie and Courtezane, Mrs. Venetia Stanley, whom Richard Earle of Dorset kept as his concubine'.[32] The home of the Earl of Dorset, it might be noted, stood directly west of Bridewell.

Attitudes towards aspiring courtesans divided in England, as they did in Italy, between admiration and denigration, a divide that had much to do with wealth, degree, social class and the commodification of sex. Fleire's daughters, Florida and Felecia, in Sharpham's play, are outraged to be called 'whores', but proud

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[29] Chaney, op. cit., 10–12.

[30] Alison Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998), 332–3; see also Alan Haynes, *Sex in Elizabethan England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 39–40. Haynes includes a portrait of Anne Vavasour (41), courtesy of the Master and Wardens of the Armourers and Brasiers Company).

[31] Christopher Gordon Peter (ed.) *A Critical Old Spelling Edition of The Works of Edward Sharpham, Together With Critical Introductions Comprising a Study of the Relationship of His Works to The Tradition of Their Age* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1986), 180. Vavasour scandalously later became the long-term mistress of Sir Henry Lee who commissioned the Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth. For Lee's association with Lucy Negro, see chapter six below.

[32] O. L. Dick, op. cit., 142, 190, 188.

to be named 'Curtizans' (2.1.180–3). If Italian courtesans were regarded as a snare awaiting English male wayfarers, English courtesans awaited travellers from abroad. First-hand accounts of England by overseas visitors prior to the seventeenth century are relatively few. Eleven *relazione*, or diplomatic reports, from 1498 to 1557, give formal accounts of the English court, life and manners from the perspective of returning Venetian ambassadors or their secretaries. In general, these reports tend to be derivative but one, dated to around 1500, strikes a distinctly personal note:

> Although their dispositions are somewhat licentious, I have never noticed anyone, either at court or amongst the lower orders, to be in love; whence one must necessarily conclude either that the English are the most discreet lovers in the world or that they are incapable of love. I say this of the men, for I understand it is quite the contrary with the women, who are very violent in their passions. Howbeit the English keep a very jealous guard over their wives, though anything may be compensated in the end by the power of money.[33]

The last line in this indictment of Tudor sexual mores is perhaps little more than a knowing nudge to a readership back home, but it records a rare perception of the English. Later accounts of English manners decline to generalise on matters of intimacy. Although André Herault, Sieur de Maisse, Henry IV's Ambassador Extraordinary, claimed to have observed at close hand Queen Elizabeth's open dress and exposed bosom, he nowhere addresses matters of English intimacy in his journal of 1597.[34] Thomas Platter, a Swiss visitor to England in 1599, recorded merely that women's dress is much the same in fashion to the French and that 'no nation can compare with the English for virtue and comeliness'.[35] Horatio Busino, Chaplain to the Venetian ambassador Pietro Contarini, offers a counterpart to Coryate's tale of an Italian playhouse but uses it self-deprecatingly to signal his disinterest. His friends played a jest on him at a London theatre in 1617 when he suddenly found himself surrounded by 'a number of young ladies'.

> After I had been seated awhile a very winning dame in a mask took her seat beside me and spoke to me as if I had been her husband. She asked me for a rendezvous in English and French, and as I turned a deaf ear to both, she showed me some fine diamonds which she wore removing no less than three

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[33] Charlotte Augusta Sneyd (trans.), *A Relation, or rather a true account, of the Island of England; with sundry particulars of the customs of these people, and of the royal revenues under King Henry the Seventh, about the year 1500* (London: The Camden Society, 1847), 24. See also Donald E. Queller, 'The development of Ambassadorial Relazione' in J. R. Hale (ed.) *Renaissance Venice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 174–196.

[34] G. B. Harrison and R. A. Jones (trans. and ed.), De Maisse, *A Journal of all that was accomplished by Monsieur de Maisse, Ambassador in England from King Henri IV* to Queen Elizabeth , Anno Domini 1597 (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1931), 25.

[35] Peter Razzell, *The Journals of Two Travellers in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Hampstead: Caliban Books, 1995), 45–6.

> gloves which she wore one over the other. She was richly dressed from head to foot. I also had from her eyes a few modest glances, perhaps from surprise at seeing an extraordinary and old and ugly phiz. Nevertheless these gallantries have scarcely shaken off my lethargy.[36]

Between the last of the *relazione* in 1557 and the diary of Lupold von Wedel in 1584, the only known description of England from a foreign perspective is by Alessandro Magno ('Alexander the Great'), a Venetian merchant, who visited between August and September 1562. A substantial excerpt of this account was translated by Claire Gobbi, and published jointly with Caroline Brown and Christopher Coleman in *The London Journal* in 1983. Recording much of what he saw, Magno noted that,

> Men are forbidden to become involved with women who are not their wives, and if any man is found to have transgressed in this way he is taken out on a cart through the town and rotten eggs and stones are thrown at him. He is then given a severe punishment, and the woman is put in a house called bridewell [*berduel*] where she is dressed in grey and has to work for the Queen. She cannot leave that place unless someone takes her as a wife.[37]

Though not entirely accurate, Magno's report observes not only a major London institution that other visitors ignore, but also its methods of regulating sexual conduct in and around the city.[38] Carting tended to be a sporadic rather than routine form of punishment in sixteenth and seventeenth century London, probably because it took time and labour to organise. In the period 1559–1603, for example, the Bridewell archive records relatively few carting sentences, including those on 12 June 1560, 11 May 1575, 19 December 1576, 29 December 1576, 9 January 1576, 11 October 1578 and 20 July 1598.[39] The gender ratio of these punishments was not quite as Magno has it: a total of six women and four men were carted in these particular instances. More often, both male and female sexual offenders in London were whipped and either imprisoned or delivered. Greene refers to unfortunate 'whoores, when Fouler gives them the terrible lash', alluding to David Fowler, ironically a skinner, appointed chief beadle of the London hospitals on 20 June 1588.[40] When foreigners were prosecuted for similar offences, however, the same laws did not always apply.

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[36] Ibid., 122.

[37] Caroline Barron, Christopher Coleman and Claire Gobbi (eds.), 'The London Journal of Alessandro Magno 1562' in *The London Journal*, 9, 2, (1983), 136–152, 144.

[38] Platter describes walking past a 'prison' near Blackfriars, probably Bridewell, but gives no further comment; see Razzell, op. cit., 42.

[39] BCB 1.85^{r}, 2.102^{v}, 3.110^{v}, 3.137^{r}, 3.150^{r}, 3.345^{r}, 4.26^{v}.

[40] Greene, op. cit., 38; *Repertories of the Court of Aldermen*, courtesy of the Guildhall Library, London, Rep 21, fo. 566^{r}, BCB 4.42^{r}. Fowler was described as a 'poore olde beadle of Christs hospital … & nowe is in adge & sicknes' in March 1605/6, BCB 5.93^{r}.

The Bridewell Hospital, along with London's other great Tudor hospitals – St. Thomas's, Christ's, and St. Bartholomew's – was fundamentally a product of the Reformation. In a remarkably progressive attempt at a social welfare policy, Bridewell was turned in 1553 from a palace to a prison that would house the idle and the vagrant poor, and set them to work, milling, shovelling sand and lime for brick-making, fustian weaving, beating hemp for flax and rope, and making pins or nails. Bridewell's Court of Governors operated under the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen. It sat on Wednesdays and Saturdays, excepting holy or fast days, though the number of week-day hearings seems gradually to have increased throughout the 1570s. The governors were drawn from the highest levels of the worshipful companies, and in addition to overseeing aspects of the institution's work and administration, they presided at its court, hearing cases mainly against vagrants, prostitutes, pimps, adulterers, pickpockets and runaways. In a few of the Bridewell prosecutions, light is shed on a number of 'straungers' and 'ingraunts' [immigrants] who associated with the criminal underclass of early modern London.

It is only as the Governors pursued an informal network of criminal activity that aliens were picked up among the Bridewell hearings. From them, we get a glimpse of the way in which sexual liaisons involving travellers and immigrants occurred at private dwellings rather than alehouses or taverns. George Smerken testified on 23 March 1576 that the house of one Blount in St. Katherine's, east of the Tower, hosted 'many dutch men, Italians – straungers and shipmen and that the house is neve^{r} wi^{t}houte whores sometymes more or lesse'. Blount would 'fayne himself drunke as though he weare not one that woulde knowe any such', though he charged a high sum of £1 8^{s} a week for the prostitutes' board and lodging. Among women at Blount's were Ann Levens, probably the highest earning of all Elizabethan English prostitutes, and Elizabeth Kelsey, both of whom frequently served overseas visitors.[41] The authorities finally caught up with Ann Levens on 15 December 1576 when, under examination, she gave details of precisely where and with whom she had slept for the past three years. She had sex with 'a french gent*leman*' named Mandreant, at Mistress Clarke's house at Tower Hill 'for five shillings' and at 'one Goddes wyddowe in Grobstreate'. She slept also with Alexander Palavasyne, most recently at the house of notorious brothel madam Mistress Esgrigge of Whitefriars, and with Mathias Vanbargen of the Steelyard (a centre of trade for Hanseatic merchants) at midsummer to whom she lent the substantial sum of £10.[42] As Lawrence Stone's study of the Genoese merchant Horatio Palavicino makes clear, Alessandro Palavicino (Horatio's uncle) was the most powerful Italian importer in London in the years 1575–76. Born to an influential aristocratic family, Alessandro held the Elizabethan monopoly of imports to London of alum, a crystalline sulphate widely used in dyes and cosmetics at the time. On 16 March 1578, Gilbert Pereman, of St. Nicholas's Lane, former

41 BCB 2.188^{r}.

42 BCB 3.96$^{r\text{-}v}$. For further details of Ann Levens, see Chapter 6 below.

servant to 'Oratio Palavasyne' proclaimed himself 'innocent and unacquainted', 'lothing lewde whoredome', yet knew his master had 'committed whoredome' with one 'Jenetta a venition woman w*hi*ch lieth aboute Ludgate' at his house in 'mynsing lane'.[43] Pereman declared further that his master deliberately sought out virgins, and that 'one Bonefacio ffusio and his wiffe', visiting their friend, 'knowe of the harlotts' that come to his house. The Palavicinos enjoyed immense wealth and influence in England. Horatio was close to Walsingham and, by the 1590s, had virtually adopted England as his home country. In 1595, he and his brother Fabritio were in a position even to lend money to the Queen.[44] Levens had stayed for six weeks at a bawdy house in Clerkenwell where 'the ffrenche captayne had thuse of her body many tymes'.[45] Another high-class prostitute in residence there was 'Mary Dornelly', or Donelly (the spelling may be an indication of her Irish accent), who 'had a silke gowne and was ther abused and kept especially by gentlemen and welthyemen with velvett gaskens and rich apparel and not for the common sorte'.[46]

Two days after Levens was examined, 'Little Kathryn Jones' confessed to prostitution at Jane Fuller's house where she was frequented especially by 'Palavasyne' and the French ambassador's steward, one Captain Augustine. She and Fuller divided the money they received equally between them.[47] Augustine was steward to Michel de Castelnau, a soldier, diplomat and French ambassador in London, 1575–85. Throughout his tenure, Castelnau had to negotiate a delicate path in the controversies between Elizabeth and the Scots Queen, yet at the same time, he also faced the difficulty of having repeatedly to keep his steward out of prison.[48] William Mekyns, a pimp, testified on 17 December 1576 that Alice Furres was kept by Augustine, and that Furres also slept with one 'mandrell', possibly identifiable with 'Mandreant', who visited her in Clerkenwell and 'gave her a dogge w*i*th silver Bells and gave her xx^{s}'. A court held on 9 April 1577 heard that 'one that is a p*er*fumer a tall fellow dwelling with my Lorde

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[43] Lawrence Stone, *An Elizabethan: Sir Horatio Palavicino* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 47. n. 1. For Pereman's examination, see BCB 377^{r-v}. Ian Archer, op. cit., gives entertaining detail from this case but gives Pereman's name and the date of the minute erroneously (232). Relatively minor errors in transcription are likely to occur when reading difficult English hand. Haynes, op. cit., repeats the story from Archer.

[44] Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, 23, 523^{v} (26 March 1595).

[45] BCB 3.97^{r}.

[46] See BCB 3.279^{r}. For further details regarding Mary Dornelly or Donelly, see Chapter 6 below.

[47] BCB 3.101^{v}.

[48] For the French ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, see John Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 9–11, and *Under the Molehill: An Elizabethan Spy Story* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002). I have found no further trace of 'Capteyne Augustyne' but he may have been replaced by 1583 when Jean Arnault became secretary of the embassy, see Bossy, *Under the Molehill*, (14).

the French Embassador at Salusburyes courte had thuse of Besse Kirkman that was cokes mayde in the house last lent'. On the same day, the Court noted 'iii or iiii Venicyans' residing at 'the blacke boy' in Candlewick (now Cannon) street.[49] A year later, the Governors were still trying to close down this sex-market for tourists. In the process, they uncovered clandestine activities by Italian, French and Dutch visitors. Asked, at an afternoon hearing on 7 June 1578, if they knew of any 'lewde persons', 'whoremongers' or 'fornicators about this cittie', Richard Watwood and Robert Barlowe, both pimps, named 'Anthonye Fetheringoe Italian in Berebynder lane' as 'a comen whoremonger and hath whores come to his garden in hogge lane very lothsome whores hedge whores'. They further named 'Peter Demaryn Italian of Sethinge lane' who also kept a garden in Hogg Lane, 'and ther cometh manye whores one w*hi*^{c}h he abused and gave her but xii^{d} and she stole a pewter pynte pott he sayeth theyr is nev*e*r an honest woman in Englande'. Another Italian, 'Diogines Ffraunciscine' they declared, 'kepeth M*istri*s cradocke in Bedlem he cometh home to her and she to him and divers men & other whores resorte to his house in Sethinge Lane and Barthlemew his man is his bawde and fetcheth him manie harlotts'.[50] Bethlem was a precinct with tenements at this time and so it is unlikely that the lunatic asylum is referred to in this case. Recalling Levens's former housemate, William Mekyns declared on 30 November 1576 that 'm*ist*res Elizabeth Kelsy w*i*^{t}h a perle in her eare is an arrant ~~bawde~~ whore & she lyes in gardynors howse in whit chapell she carr*ies* the fashion w*i*^{t}h dutch french spanish Italians & all'.[51]

Some visitors took English wives, perhaps with the intention of taking out papers of denization. On 8 December 1602, Agnes, 'the late wife of Domenick Manori Italian' confessed to having slept with 'Alviza Pavanela Italian', though showing penitence, her punishment 'was p*er*formed yett with some moderation'. Pavanela entirely denied the charge and was delivered upon sureties for his good behaviour, though he was not so fortunate six months later when he was punished and detained for bedding Elizabeth Parker alias Favour, a prostitute well known to the Bridewell court.[52] Gifts, presents, rings and handkerchiefs frequently feature in accounts of Italian courtesans, and so also they occur in the Bridewell records.[53] Alice Haynes, serving-girl to Thomas Fowkes, a pimp dwelling in Mutton Lane, Clerkenwell, testified on 27 January 1603/4, that Alice Farewell lay all night in an upper chamber with an Italian 'whome shee called her Love, whoe gave her a Ringe of goulde, a paier of shoes and a paier of Slippers, w*hi*^{c}h now shee hath

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[49] BCB 3.202^{v}.

[50] BCB 3.317^{v}.

[51] BCB 3.92^{v}.

[52] BCB 4.337^{r}; BCB 4.397^{v}.

[53] See Guido Ruggiero*, Binding Passions: tales of magic, marriage, and power at the end of the Renaissance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

on her feete'.[54] On another occasion, John de Lane, 'a ffrenchman' gave Amey Bennett, a serving-girl, two rings, 'thone was a gould gemoll and thother was a dyamond and promised her marriage w*hi*ch said Rings as this ex*amin*ate the said John tooke from her againe after he had had his desire of this ex*amin*ates bodie and would not restore them againe'. De Lane escaped punishment by paying a kind of child benefit for the baby Bennett was now carrying.[55] It seems that foreign visitors with sufficient cash could avoid the whip with some ease. When Tosin de Valois of Flanders was charged with getting his servant Margerye Mollett with child, he begged that he might avoid a sentence 'which might much impare his credit' by offering to pay the court 20 shillings 'to buy canvesse', and also to put in sureties for the child until it was delivered and churched, 'which the Courte is content to accept for that this is his first offence'.[56] First offences were rarely treated so lightly.

Dutch visitors also came to the attention of the bench, as Mekyn's testimony against Elizabeth Kelsey has indicated. John Shawe ran an infamous brothel at Finsbury to which Richard Watwood 'broughte divers straungers very often'. Alice Wickham dwelling at the Bear in Wood Street, deposed on 23 February 1576, that in the week before Christmas, 'one Peter a dutch man had thuse of the bodye of the said wilsons wyfe in the lower roome called the pomegranate at the same beare and Flood sett upon the chiste agaynst the dore that nobody should come in'. The identity of 'Flood' is not made clear and it seems that the Bridewell governors' ability to track down these individuals was somewhat limited; the court relied upon poorly paid beadles and constables, several of whom had little inclination to pursue their duties rigorously and were anyway open to bribery.[57] No further details in this case are recorded. Some attempt was ordered on 3 March 1598/9 to trace 'the eldest sonne of a dutch marchant dwelling in Busse Lane' for having had 'thuse and carnall knowledge' of Mary Danby at midsummer in 1598, but there is no indication that it was successful.[58] Attempts at naturalisation through marriage seem to have been relatively few. Destitution, hunger, poverty and isolation awaited the single pregnant woman. In the afternoon of Wednesday 23 October 1606, the court clerk noted a remarkable micro-biography: 'ffrancis Hudson vag*rant* beinge w*i*th childe by John Goulser dutchman and as she sayeth is gon away by Sea. And afterwards she put her self in mans apparel and so would have followed him. She was ponished by order of Court and kept'.[59] Pregnant women were sometimes spared the whip for fear of miscarriage, but no clemency was shown to Hudson whose crimes included vagrancy, whoredom, fornication, cross-dressing and deception.

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[54] BCB.4.429^{v}-431^{v}. Haynes added that 'one Captaine Kate' kept a bawdy house and 'hath one whome shee calleth love [that] doth maintaine her' (4.430^{v}).

[55] BCB 4.10^{r}.

[56] BCB. 3.330^{v}.

[57] BCB 3.176^{r}. For officers' corruption, see BCB 3.280^{r}.

[58] BCB 4.67^{r}.

[59] BCB 4.141^{v}.

Historical records of prostitution in England and Italy generally tell stories of human misery. As much as the records preserve occasions for bawdy merriment, exchanges of money and goods, or opportunistic moments of impulse, they also highlight an unsettling fact about the Italian and English sex markets – that they also traded in children. This unpleasant aspect of international commerce features strikingly in Shakespeare's *Pericles*, a work co-written with George Wilkins, owner of a tavern (and perhaps brothel) in the notorious 'Cow Lane' and Turnmill (also known as 'Turnbull') Street area near Clerkenwell.[60] *Pericles* has survived as a poor-quality text, with verse written as prose and vice-versa. It is probably a memorial reconstruction and was omitted from the First Folio but eventually included in the 1663 Third Folio. Whatever its textual defects, the work proved popular in the bookshops, running to six reprints before 1642 and becoming a substantial hit on the early Jacobean stage. In this play, Shakespeare and Wilkins depict the world of pimps and bawds as dangerous and cruel, especially for young people, for caught up in the midst of this appalling exploitation is a child – Marina, Pericles's long-lost daughter. As Stanley Wells has pointed out, 'the most extensive depictions of brothel life in Shakespeare's plays come in *Pericles'*.[61]

Without a hint of compassion, the Pander in *Pericles* jovially remarks to a brothel madam in Scene 16 that, 'The poor Transylvanian is dead, that lay with the little baggage'. Boult, a pimp, agrees, 'Ay, she quickly pooped him; she made him roast-meat for worms' (Scene 16. 20–23).[62] The implication here is that their diminutive in-house prostitute ('the little baggage') 'burned' (gave venereal infection to) her client, a 'straunger' or visitor from overseas. The Pander rues the times, 'O, our credit comes not in like the commodity, nor the commodity wages not with the danger' (ll. 28–9). Now almost 'wenchless' (l. 5), the pimp and pander need new flesh and are pleased to have Marina unexpectedly offered to them by pirates. As she is cried through the market-place, a Spaniard salivates and takes her memory to bed with him, a Frenchman groans for her, and her captors realise she will bring in good money: 'if we had of every nation a traveller, we should lodge them with this sign' [i.e. with Marina's image] (ll. 109–110). We are not explicitly told Marina's age, although Shakespeare seems to have imagined her as fourteen.[63] Her unique selling point is that she is 'never plucked yet'. But, although Marina's

[60] For Wilkins, see Roger Prior, 'The Life of George Wilkins', *Shakespeare Survey*, xxv (1973), 137–52, and 'George Wilkins and the Young Heir' *Shakespeare Survey*, xxix (1976), 33–40. For reflections on Shakespeare's literary association with Wilkins, see Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes From His Life* (London: Thomson Learning, 2001), 205–13.

[61] Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, Sex and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 223.

[62] All quotations are from Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (eds.) *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). See also Suzanne Gossett (ed.) *Pericles* [Arden 3] (London & New York: Thomson Learning, 2004) where the name Boult is given its more phallic modern form, 'Bolt'.

[63] See Gossett, op. cit., 46–7.

virtue is assailed, the pimps do not get their way. True to her aristocratic birth and bearing, her radiant virtue so puts customers off that she is said to 'freeze the god Priapus' (Scene 19.12–13). The wealthy and powerful governor Lysimachus is especially struck by her goodness, and asks her history: 'Were you a gamester at five, or at seven?' (ll. 77–8). A voyeur, fantasist and possibly paedophile, he is met by Marina's stoic innocence and refusal to be debauched.

A number of questions arise from these scenes: do they have much connection with historical realities? Were children used like this in prostitution or is the play being sensational and extreme? Are these scenes that English audiences might uncomfortably recognise, or dismiss as the base venery of foreigners? Perhaps the most widely known text about prostitution involving a child is Pietro Aretino's *I Ragionamenti* (or *Sei Giornate*) (1536–38), a series of bawdy dialogues on Italian sixteenth century sexual mores. In the second of these dialogues, Nanna instructs her sixteen year old daughter Pippa in the arts of a courtesan. Prostitution could be lucrative work, especially for girls who attracted notice from the wealthy, but Aretino's text is more a caustically satirical portrait of cardinals, prelates, friars and stewards than a work of titillating pornography. Its status as historical evidence for child prostitution is also questionable: unconvincingly, Aretino's Pippa openly wants to be a prostitute.[64]

A rather different Italian text, the anonymous 'Catalogo di tutte le principali et più honorate cortigiane di Venezia …' is a unique document – a trade directory giving the names, addresses and even prices of 210 prostitutes in Venice.[65] The list, made around 1566, includes a young Veronica Franco, worth just 2 scudi (8 shillings) a time, and her mother Paola who charged the same amount. A few others commanded vastly higher fees, especially Paulina Filacaneva who fetched 30 scudi and Livia Azzalini who required 25. Franco was, at this time, just one of thirty-eight girls on the list hired out for sale by their mothers, sisters or other family associates. The 'Catalogo' gives no ages for the girls but in all likelihood most if not all were teenagers. Boatmen, neighbours, guardians, god-parents, and family members acted as go-betweens to girls or young women quartered amid the narrow Venetian waterways. Prostitution may have offered a way out of poverty but it carried considerable risks. Aretino writes admiringly in his letters of the Venetian courtesan, Giulia (or Angela) Del Moro, otherwise known as La Zaffetta. On 6 April 1531, Zaffetta was gang-raped at the instigation of her jealous lover in a ritual known as the 'trentuno', or 'thirty-one'. In fact, Zaffetta was given the 'trentuno reale', an ordeal apparently involving some seventy-nine men. On her return to Venice, she found graffiti on the canal walls declaring that, 'Angela Zaffetta on 6 April 1531 satisfied everyone'. A cruelly mocking poem by Aretino's protégé Lorenzo Venier, *Il Trentuno di Zaffetta* (1535) tells in scornful detail

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[64] Raymond Rosenthal (trans.) *Aretino's Dialogues* (London: 1971), 165.

[65] The 'Catalogo' is reproduced in Antonio Barzaghi, *Donne o cortigiane? La prostituzione a Venezia: documenti di costume dal XVI al XVIII secolo* (Verona: Bertani, 1980), 155–167.

the humiliating story of her rape at the hands of a line of common tradesmen.[66] According to Aretino, Zaffetta was, by 1548, in her thirties. If so, she would have been young when the rape took place, probably in her early teens. Despite it, she remained a celebrated beauty and is said to have been the subject of a portrait by Titian's pupil, Paris Bordone, a painting held at the National Gallery, London. The portrait depicts an attractive young woman, semi-exposed, with braided red hair and carnations in her sleeves and right hand.[67]

It was not uncommon for Italian mothers to bring up their daughters as prostitutes or aspiring courtesans skilled in music and poetry as well as sex. Tullia d'Aragona, the celebrity Roman courtesan who ran her own intellectual academy was similarly guided by her mother Guilia Ferrarese. The name of another well-known courtesan, 'Matrema no vuol' ['My mummy doesn't like it'] plays on an acknowledged connexion between mothers, daughters, sex and money. A dialogue attributed to Aretino gives details of other girls forced into prostitution by family members, including a mother whose three daughters – Laura, Bona and Bernardina – were said to have initiated an influx of girls into Rome: 'Ever since then, as the number of daughters increased to satisfy the whole court, lots of them have come over and filled the whole of Rome'.[68] If prostitution offered a preferred career choice, it was a path chosen by the parent rather than the child. There remains, however, a question as to what constituted childhood in early modern Europe. Since Philippe Aries argued in *Centuries of Childhood* that medieval children were regarded as adults-in-waiting, debate has centred on whether it is possible to draw parameters for early modern childhood.[69]

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[66] For a discussion of this poem, see Daniella Rossi, 'Controlling Courtesans: Lorenzo Venier's *Trentuno della Zafetta* and Venetian Sexual Politics' in Allison Levy (ed.) *Sex Acts in Early Modern Italy: Practice, Performance, Perversion, Punishment* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 225–40.

[67] Georgina Masson, op. cit., 147. For a recent discussion of Venier's poem, see Daniella Rossi, 'Controlling Courtesans: Lorenzo Venier's *Trentuno della Zaffetta* and Venetian Sexual Politics', in Allison Levy op. cit., 225–40. Masson reproduces the painting in a not very clear black and white photograph. The National Gallery list the work as 'Portrait of a Young Woman. Probably 17th century. Oil on canvas. 98 x75 cm. Inventory No. NG2097. Not on display.'

[68] See 'History, Genre and Sexuality in the Sixteenth Century: The Zoppino Dialogue attributed to Pietro Aretino', *Mediterranean Studies,* x, (2001), 49–116, 111.

[69] Evidence from Bridewell indicates that the hospital governors used a varied vocabulary for young people, including 'young' or 'litle' children, 'girl', 'maid', 'wench', 'single woman', 'boy', 'stripling', 'fellow', 'very young man'. Philippe Aries in *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, Robert Baldick trans. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962) baldly stated that 'in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist' (125). For critiques of this view, see Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) and I. H. Forsyth, 'Children in Early Medieval Art: Ninth through Twelfth Centuries', *Journal of Psychohistory*, 4 (1976), 31–70. See also, Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995), 30–40.

Prostitute mother-daughter relationships are rare in English archives. In 1576, the Bridewell Hospital governors heard that 'There laye a dutch woman and her daughter at Shawes a sennight past and they were carted about the town'.[70] Ten days later, the court gave order that, 'margaret Fallantyne widowe dwellinge nere Tower strete for that she is a bawd to her owne daughter & others shalbe carted up & downe the towne according to the custome of this citie w*i*th basons an order latelie taken by my Lo*rd* maior when the gov*er*nors were w*i*th hym'.[71] Anne Flower, 'a filthy adulterous woman', confessed in 1603 that she resided at 'widdowe hills house' and that 'there hath beene a footman committing filthiness w*i*th the womans daughter one Judith hill and because she is a filthy and diseased body she was po*nished* and sent to St Thomas Hospitall'.[72] The authorities, however, seem to have had few qualms about attributing carnal sin to youngsters. Margaret Freman, recorded as being 'of thage of x yeres' was said to have 'wholly given her self to most abhomynable lyving and hathe comytted filthynes w*i*t*h* one Rogers a hosyer in the tower royall, who abused her in his owne house'.[73] No punishment is recorded in this case and perhaps none was served. Bridewell clerks reserved the term 'abominable' for the most morally shocking crimes; hence Shakespeare's very deliberate irony when in *Pericles*, Boult complains that Marina has 'spoken holy words to the Lord Lysimachus', and the Bawd replies, 'O abominable!' (Scene 19. 157–9). Shakespeare's unnamed 'little baggage' who spread venereal infection was not an entirely imagined figure either: 'Jane Eaton the wyf of John Eaton dwelling in Fletelane brought into this house the xxiiii of February 1560 at the commandment of m*aste*r Calver for that Elizabeth ffetts a wenche of thage of xiiii yeares was found in her house burned in her pryvye place for w*hi*ch she was committed to the labor of the house tyll the matter come to examinacon'.[74]

When Shakespeare imagined foreigners – a Spaniard, a Frenchman and the Greek governor Lysimachus – showing interest in Marina, he acknowledged the trends of his own metropolis. An early prosecution involves a Dutch visitor who raped and infected a young girl:

> John Gosset ducheman brought into this house the xi of Januarie 1559 and upon examynacon of y*e* matter it apereth that he hathe most lewdly deflowered and defyled Jane Amphyll the s*erva*nt of Thomas Saundyrs of Salisbury court beyng a young chyld and of lytle status in her sayd masters house and burned her, for the which he was here ponyshed and comytted to the labo*r* of this house.[75]

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[70] BCB 2.110^{v} (19 December 1576).

[71] BCB 2.137^{r}, (29 December 1576).

[72] BCB 4.373^{r} (30 April 1603). It is just possible that 'Anne' Flower was a scribal mistake for the infamous 'Rose Flower' (see chapter six).

[73] BCB 1.22^{r}, (15 September 1559).

[74] BCB 1.137^{v}, (24 February 1560/61).

[75] BCB 1.50^{r}, (11 January 1559/60).

The crime of rape, as we usually understand it today, is fully articulated in this record, and yet the entry affords no acknowledgement of the child's distress or possible resistance, nor does it speak of any support for the victim. It does, however, stress the offensiveness of the crime and distinguishes it from those routine cases of 'use and carnal knowledge' with which the court dealt at just about every hearing. It is not that magistrates could not recognize rape when they encountered it, but rather that they did so inconsistently and with prosecution of the criminal in mind rather than consideration for the victim. A case in 1578 states that,

> George hudson sent in by mr deputye Bragge for that he hath ravished and abused the body of one Isabell Sparahawk a little wenche of ix yere olde in one Cowles house in puppingey alley her father in lawe the same George doeth confesse that he hath abused her bodye as he is chardged on Wensday last at night.[76]

Imprecisely, the magistrates judged that the offence of John Parker against an eleven year old girl stood 'w*i*thout the compas of a rape' and so whipped and detained him until he could put in sureties for his 'good behaviour'.[77] Two years earlier, the wealthy and influential Alessandro Palavicino had been in Bridewell accused of similar crimes. He was reported as having 'dyvers other yonge wenches betwene Algate and whyte chappell of xiii & xiiii yeres old as the said Alex him selfe reported to a potecary [apothecary] betwene M*aste*r sheringtons & the farm next Gracechurche'.[78] One of his favourites was 'litle Kathryn', who received clients at the houses of Jane and Anne Fuller, two notorious bawds in 'hounsditch'.[79] As in George Hudson's case, details of any punishment served are omitted.

Child abuse may have been a crime committed by strangers, but it was also home-grown. Repeatedly, the governors' bench failed to see victim from offender. 'Correction' as recorded in the Minute Books could be a prolonged whipping.[80] Again in 1576, the governors prosecuted, flogged and exiled a child for alleged sexual activity: 'Jane Jackson a litle wenche about xiiii yeres who for that she hath played the whore with John Harryson feltmaker ii yeres hath correccion and is sent away into Essex'.[81] A fortnight later, Melcher Pelse, a notorious pimp, confessed that one 'M*aste*r Crosse' in Whitecross Street 'kepes ii daughters *tha*t be whores' and that 'very many straungers resort thither'. Another, a Mistress Jones 'is a bawd & hath ii daughters Elizabeth is maryed and Alice unmaryed and they

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[76] BCB 3.285r (5 February 1577/8).

[77] BCB 4.284v (23 January 1601/2).

[78] BCB 3.33r (2 July 1576).

[79] BCB 3.101v. A further entry on the same folio states that, '[Richard] watwood carryed Kathryn Jones from Fullers to divers places to plaie the whore and he was then bawde'. We do not know the age of 'litle Kathryn'.

[80] Derick, the Newgate executioner, suffered 'fower and twenty lashes' on 12 July 1606, BCB 5.116r.

[81] BCB 3.96v (8 December 1576).

be both whores.[82] Almost thirty years later, a more public punishment was meted out to a girl whose abuse began when she was just eleven years old. The court recorded that,

> Margery Bushopp a litle queane about theage of xiii exa*min*ed saieth she was borne in St Clem*en*t danes p*ar*ishe and som*e*time dwelt with one Clarck a silkeweaver in Bishopsgate street who about ii yeares since had thuse of her body and did spoile her and her m*ist*ris cured her It is ordered she shall be ponished at the crosse w*hi*^{ch} was p*er*formed.[83]

There were attempts at enticement too, one of which is unusual since it briefly records testimony by some of the children involved. The precise allegation against serving man Thomas Savington or Sowthington is not entirely clear, but Bridewell's aldermen were sufficiently confident of his guilt to detain him. The case reads as absurd but for its pathetic, meagre plausibility:

> Thomas Sowthington sent in by mr deputy Caldwell was this day called upp and examined and he saith *tha*t hee had a bird w*hi*^{ch} he carried into his masters chamber and one mary harman aged seaven yeeres followed him with other of ye neighbors children into his m*aste*^{rs} chamber: he this exam*in*at confessed he tooke this mary harman and threwe her on the bedd for that she medled with his bird this he saith was true, there was in the chamber Mary Crewe tenne yeres oulde and other children w*hi*^{ch} said Mary Crue sawe all that he did. Kept at worke.[84]

Three days later, an entry in the Minute Book notes that Thomas Savington was punished and released with a warrant to go to St. Thomas' Hospital 'to be cured of his sore legge'.[85] Perhaps the most vicious case was that courageously alleged by the victim, Johan [Joan] Weekes, against Robert Adams:

> [Margin: Johan Weekes] a little girle of x. or xi. yeres olde saithe thatone [*sic*] Rob*er*te Adames al*ia*s vynegar Assauted hir to Ravishe hir three or fower tymes, but especiallie on this daye three week*e*s he forced hir and had the use of hir bodie, And at the doinge thereof he helde a knife in his hande & threatened hir that yf she either tolde or cried he wolde sticke hir.[86]

From such evidence, we do not need strict definitions of what constituted early modern childhood to understand that sexual abuse of children occurred at the time, as it does today. Drawing comparisons about sexual conduct across early modern communities is an imprecise, probably unhelpful, task. At the most general level,

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82 BCB 3.130^{v} (23 December 1576).

83 BCB 4.419^{v} (3 December 1603).

84 BCB 4.565^{v} (17 October 1604).

85 Ibid. 565^{v}.

86 BCB 2.128^{r} (6 July 1575).

we can assume that what went on in Italy similarly went on in England despite the different cultural and historical conditions that prevailed. In London, there seems to have been some relatively systematic attempt by the civic authorities to police sexual activities of all kinds, and not just those that involved children. In its hospitals and prisons, the city had institutions independent of the court to carry out that work. Italian city states, too, struggled to bring the problem of prostitution under control, but ran into conflicts between ecclesiastical reforms and civic opposition.[87] *Pericles* is an unusual work for thematic as well as textual reasons: it unsettlingly, indeed uniquely acknowledges the emerging sexual value of children in a world of commodity and capital. It is difficult to ascertain just how widespread the use of children in prostitution was in Europe's major cities but, as far as London is concerned, there is little evidence to support the idea that organized networks of abusing adults systematically attempted to groom or abuse children.[88] In Italy, there were undoubtedly prostitute households and in England, mothers-as-bawds were hardly unknown: Middleton represents them in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *A Mad World, My Masters*.[89] Some males, like the Palavicino clan, did indeed seek out minors but child prostitution was relatively rare and followed no identifiable pattern in early modern London. Did *Pericles* represent to its audience members a local or an alien, continental brothel society? The evidence suggests they would have regarded Boult's world as theirs too, though they are perhaps likely to have done so reluctantly. Finally, we might ask, 'did child abuse have a Renaissance?' The answer to this rather broad and ill-defined question is that sadly it did. An expansion in international trade and a rising presence of foreigners in cities made children a commodity. Economic gain combined with the darker impulses of the human heart to ensure that the value of children would be measured by some in shillings, scudi, or in sudden opportunities for gratification. Shakespeare's *Pericles* depicts Marina as an exploitable asset offered to a world governed by 'credit' and 'commodity'. The play may hold her up as a beacon of chastity but she is in fact a far more disturbing symbol in the history of desire's demand and supply.

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87 See Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce*, 67–114.

88 Lena Cowen Orlin gives further examples from 1560–61 in *Locating Privacy in Early Modern England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 218–219.

89 Jennifer Panek, 'The Mother as Bawd in The Revenger's Tragedy and A Mad World, My Masters', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900,* 43, 2 (2003), 415–37.

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Chapter 4
In Between Renaissance Sheets: Making Contact

Renaissance writers may have eulogized and reviled courtesans by turns but few took the risk of illustrating exactly what they did behind closed chamber doors. An author might hint, suggest, employ less than delicate symbolism, or rhyme with innuendo, but only a few rare texts in Italy and England addressed the intimacies of sexual union. Most of these sources are fairly well-known, and they include works by Pietro Aretino and his circle (in Italy), and writings by Thomas Nashe (in England). What none of these texts provide, however, is a disinterested history of human contact. Their widely differing genres and social purposes inevitably shape and qualify the details they disclose. They do, however, depict courtesan culture in Italy and England as a field of contested attitudes towards women, sexual behaviour, masculinity and literary authority. The sixteenth-century courtesan is no longer simply a Plautine trickster, or a carrier of physical or spiritual disease: she is a provocative figure who combines divided attitudes of attraction and revulsion, desire and humiliation, admiration and resentment. The texts that I shall focus on include a dialogue attributed to Aretino, the prose writings of Pierre de Bourdeille (Abbé de Brantôme), a poem by Thomas Nashe, and some legal records from the Bridewell Hospital archives. This diverse and disparate range of sources illustrates an uneven terrain of attitudes towards courtesans in the period, from the pre-gothic extremes of the 'Aretinian' text, the picaresque tales of Nashe, and the gossipy anecdotes of Brantôme, to scandalous case details recorded in legal prosecutions. While the literary sources have their own separate agendas, it is the legal texts that seem to take us closest to what the early moderns did behind closed doors, principally because they involve witnesses who were proximate to the events described.[1]

Perhaps the most widely-known of these sources is an Italian work of 1524 known as *I Modi* (in English,'The Postures' or 'The Positions'). This work was initially a collection of sexually explicit engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi, made from original drawings by Raphael's pupil, Giulio Romano. As soon as the Vatican came to hear of its publication, it had Raimondi thrown into jail and the books destroyed. Aretino intervened and secured Raimondi's release and then, fully knowing it would add fuel to the flames, set about writing poems to accompany the pictures. A second edition was subsequently published, and encouraged a series of wood-cut imitations, but again, these were almost all

[1] On the question of historical 'proximity', see 'Shakespeare Studies, Presentism, and Microhistory' in *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 76 (2009) 35–83. See also Chapter 7 below.

suppressed. A single copy of the wood-cut text has survived and provides the basis for modern editions.[2] This joint work between Raimondi and Aretino presented its readers with a series of sixteen images of sexual coupling, each accompanied by a bawdy sonnet by Aretino to animate the scene portrayed. By the late sixteenth century, the scandalous *I Modi* would be known across Europe, and referred to in England as 'Aretine's pictures'.[3] The notoriety of this publication, together with his satirical plays and bawdy *ragionamenti* (dialogues, or more precisely 'arguments'), ensured that Aretino rapidly became a by-word in England for all that was decadent and corrupt about Renaissance Italy, this notwithstanding the fact that he had been a vocal supporter of Henry VIII in England's dispute with Rome.[4] Together with Machiavelli, Aretino symbolised the very incarnation of decadent Italy.[5] Ian Frederick Moulton writes, 'Without a doubt the *sonnetti* were the most infamous erotic verses in early modern England'.[6] Aretino's infamy travelled faster than his books (all of which were placed on the 1559 Papal Index of prohibited works) and no English translations of his writings appeared before the late seventeenth century.

The sonnets read as vivid snatches of breathless dialogue between lovers locked in carnal embrace. Known disparagingly as the *sonnetti lussuriosi*, they have posed problems for modern translators. Despite Aretino's repeated insistence that his speakers talk frankly in plain language without embarrassment, there have even in fairly recent years been some rather coy renderings of his works. Bette Talvacchia's edition of *I Modi* has been the most successful in dispensing with these anxieties.[7] In their day, the scandal of these sonnets was heightened by the fact that they named real people, describing them as enjoying intercourse with lively vulgarity and mounting passion. Sonnet 13 intensifies line by line in gasps of pleasure that reach a climactic moment where words break down: '"I thank

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[2] This work is reproduced and discussed in Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Lynne Lawner, *I Modi: The Sixteen Pleasures. An Erotic Album of the Italian Renaissance* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988). On, the printing and suppression of the work, see Talvacchia, op. cit., 4–5. Lawner's was the first to reassemble the textual and graphic materials of the original production, although her decision to leave Aretino's bawdy slang untranslated has met with criticism, see Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[3] See, for example, John Marston, *The metamorphosis of Pigmalions image And certaine satyres* (London: 1598), 'Satyre Two', where 'Aretines pictures' are associated with 'paints and poysonings' and 'Venis venery', 48.

[4] See Michael Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 68–9.

[5] Richard Harvey, younger brother of Nashe's antagonist Gabriel, wrote, 'Yet *Machiauel* not so ill as *Aretine,* yet *Machiauel* too ill, God knoweth' in *A theologicall discourse of the Lamb of God* … (London: 1590) , 97.

[6] Moulton, op. cit., 123.

[7] See Talvacchia, op. cit., xiii, for a justification of her more explicit rendering.

you dear Lorenzina" ... "Now, now, I'm coming, my dear man; now I've done." / "And I." "Oh my". "Oh god".[8] Lorenzina, Aretino tells us elsewhere, was a girl from a humble background who started out as a market-stall maid who went hoop-dancing from inn to inn with her mother, and eventually became renowned for wearing ridiculous clothing and making a great show of going to church. The same source suggests that another courtesan,'Ciavittina', used to sell herself in the markets by wiggling her bottom and wrinkling her nose, as though everyone she saw 'smelt of shit'. Courtesans lend satirical realism to these sonnets because they, perhaps better than any court flatterer or toady, knew the by-ways to favour with powerful men.[9]

Shakespeare had a professional interest in the visual arts but he seems not to have been directly acquainted with the works of Raimondi, or even Aretino. Shakespeare makes an allusion to Giulio Romano (but as a sculptor, rather than a painter or engraver) when at the close of *The Winter's Tale* Leontes 'discovers' the statue of his wife Hermione (5.2.96) after some fifteen or sixteen years. A wealthy lord in the induction of *The Taming of the Shrew* bids his servants carry the drunken tinker Christopher Sly to his 'fairest chamber' and 'hang it round with all my wanton pictures' (Ind 1.44–5). When Sly awakens from his stupor, the servants call him 'your lordship' and 'your honour', inflate the length of his apparent lunacy to some fifteen years (adding that they feel like thirty), and invite him to enjoy the pictures: Adonis settled by a running brook, watched by Venus hidden among rushes that wave at her breath; Io being turned by Zeus into a heifer; Daphne fleeing through the woods as her Apollo looks on and weeps. These images, recalling Shakespeare's singular piece of ekphrasis in *The Rape of Lucrece*, are a far cry from Aretino's positions, but they demonstrate Shakespeare's close interest in the performative image, and in the aesthetics of 'wanton pictures'.[10]

Aretino's later prose dialogues developed the voices of the *sonnetti lussuriosi* and so too his increasingly notorious reputation. The first of these, published in 1534, occurs between a prostitute Nanna and her sister Antonia. The latter insists on calling a spade a spade, taking a bold, unembarrassed approach to sexual language:

> Antonia: Oh, I meant to tell you and then I forgot: Speak plainly and say 'fuck', 'prick', 'cunt', and 'ass' if you want anyone except the scholars at the university of Rome to understand you …. [W]hy don't you say it straight out and stop going about on tiptoes.[11]

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[8] Ibid., 219.

[9] See 'The Zoppino Dialogue' in *Mediterranean Studies* 10 (2001) 96–111 for an English translation of the 1584 Bengodi/John Wolfe edition, the only reliable text in the absence of an earlier 1539 edition.

[10] See 'Silence, Seeing and Performativity' in Michele Marrapodi (ed.) *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theories* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 247–63.

[11] Raymond Rosenthal, *Aretino's Dialogues* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 43–4.

After the invention of printing with movable type, sex became a literary genre, and Aretino's accounts of the sexual practices of cardinals, friars, nuns and prostitutes were among the earliest books to supply the new market. Private imprints of early sixteenth-century texts by writers celebrating or denouncing courtesans of Rome and Venice added to a growing collection of *porno-graphia*, or writings about prostitutes. These texts enjoyed a wide but secretive distribution. In 1536, the German cabbalist Henry Cornelius Agrippa recalled in his influential book *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum atque artium* ['Of the Vanitie and uncertaintie of Artes and Sciences'] having read such a work, though (in the manner of the much later Pepys and his lewd book, *L'Ecole des Filles*), he states that it 'were more fit to be committed to the fire':

> Nay, I my self have seen and read under the Title of *The Curtesan,* publish'd in the *Italian* Tongue, and printed at *Venice,* a Dialogue touching the Art of Bawdery, wickedly explaining the Veneries of both Sexes, which with the Author were more fit to be committed to the fire. I omit to rehearse the most detestable vice of Buggery, which the Great *Aristotle* so much approves of, and which *Nero* solemniz'd with a publick Wedding; at which time St. *Paul* writing to the *Romans,* denounces the anger of the Omnipotent against them. For on them shall God certainly rain Brimstone, and Coles of fire shall be the portion of their Cup. Against these the Emperour commands the Laws to arm themselves, and with exquisite torments to inflict capital punishment upon them, the Sword being the Executioner; but now adays they are burnt with Fire. *Moses* in his Laws ordain'd most severe punishment for this Crime: and *Plato* extirpates it out of his Republick, utterly condemning it in his Laws. The Antient *Romans,* as *Valerius* and others witness, inflicted most severe penalties on those that us'd it. Examples whereof were *Quintus Flaminius,* and the Tribune slain by *Caelius.* But that we may not farther vex the honest Ear, let us return from this monstrous Lust and beastly uncleanness, to our first Subject. For the Love of women is common to all, & there is no person that at one time or other does not feel the Fire thereof.[12]

Carried away on a flight of rhetoric about 'the detestable vice of buggery', Agrippa returns to his theme, a dialogue on 'veneries' published in 'the Italian Tongue' and printed in Venice. Since Agrippa mentions that this was a 'dialogue touching the Art of Bawdery', the work referred to was in all likelihood a version of Aretino's *Sei Giornate* [Six Days], or *I Ragionamenti* ('The Arguments'), a series of pseudo-Platonic dialogues composed between 1534 and 1539, probably as an antidote to what Aretino regarded as the pretentiousness of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1513). The volume seen by Agrippa seems to have gone under the title of Aretino's 1525 play *La Cortigiana* ('The Courtesan'), and Aretino is almost certainly the author Agrippa would have wished committed to the flames.[13]

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[12] Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences* (1536) (originally in Latin, English translation London 1684), lxiii, 190–91.

[13] A variant edition prepared for a readership was published in 1534.

Aretino's play 'The Courtesan', though utterly mocking of Castiglione, was unlikely to have elicited such strong antipathy. A sparkling political satire based broadly on Plautine and Terentian principles, it represents largely conventional character-types – masters, wily, courtesans and gulls – in a series of practical jokes. A minor character, the pimp Zoppino, persuades Aloigia, a courtesan, to trick a dull-brained courtier into hooking up with a mere baker's wife instead of his alluring Petrarchan beauty.[14] Castiglione's notion of courtly self-fashioning is parodied as Messer Maco is led to the baths to sit in what he is told are 'moulds' that will transform him into the very model of a courtly figure. Believing himself to have been literally moulded into a courtier, the dim-wit Maco now cannot wait to try bedding the celebrated courtesan Camilla Pisana: 'I want to be Pope and I want to screw Camilla. Now! Now! Let's get moving. I'm in a hurry! … Nonsense, I say. I want to screw her, I tell you! … Christ, but I want to screw her!'[15] The play repeatedly attacks the court as riddled with duplicity, intrigue, bribery, and sexual hypocrisy. A fishmonger deceived of his wares complains, 'Damn Rome, the court, the church, everyone who lives here, and everyone who believes in it!'[16] Messer Andrea declares, 'whenever you hear someone saying anything good about the Roman court, tell him he's not telling the truth'.[17] And an old court attendant, Valerio, concludes, 'You never see a face at court that's not a sham'.[18] Although the play mentions well-known courtesans of the era, including Camilla Pisana, Angela the Greek, 'Matrema non vuol' ('Mummy doesn't want me to'), Lorenzina and Beatrice Paregia, these women are not the play's central concern, and so probably not the work Agrippa saw. Instead, that particular text was probably from the stable of Aretino, perhaps a rendering of his discourse between a bawd, Nanna, and her sister, Antonia, or a draft of a work eventually published under Aretino's name in 1539.

Aretino's dialogues, *Sei Giornate* or *I Ragionamenti*, were covertly printed but enjoyed quite a wide circulation, broad enough to warrant their listing on the Vatican's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* of 1559. *I Ragionamenti* was initially composed of two dialogues, the first between Nanna and Antonia, and the second between Nanna and her daughter Pippa. An edition of the *Ragionamenti* held in the British Library (shelfmark C.107.aa.32), and wrongly dated 1584, contains a third dialogue absent from earlier editions yet attributed – along with the first and second parts – to Aretino (see Figure 4.1). The authorship of this third part has long been in doubt. Under conditions of secrecy, it would not have been difficult for a printer to include a separate dialogue in the publication, and pass it off as

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[14] Aretino seems to have regarded lesser professions, such as fishermen or bakers and their females, with some satiric disdain.

[15] Quotations are cited by page number from J. Douglas Campbell and Leonard G. Sbrocchi (eds.) *Cortigiana* (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2003), 123, 127.

[16] Ibid., 72

[17] Ibid., 75.

[18] Ibid., 126.

SEGVITA IL PIACEVOL
RAGIONAMENTO
DE L'ARETINO,
NEL QVALE
Il Zoppino fatto Frate, e Lodouico puttaniere trattano de la vita, e de la genealogia di tutte le Cortigiane di Roma.

LV. NE più ingrato, ne men liberale son stato io sempre teco Zoppin mio, che molti, i quali tu hai di mille dolci pratichette prouisti. Che Diauol di vergogna è egli, che già due mesi la testa ti rompo di Lucrecia, e mai ne per mie preci, ne per l'vtile, che tu, & ella tratto ne haresti, habbi saputo far tanto, che io ne restassi contento?

ZO. L'habbito, nel qual mi vedi, ti doueria pur distorre di cercar da me quello, che non ben conuiensi a questi panni: sotto i quali non alberga più il Zoppino, ma deuota persona; e benche peccatrice quella sia stata, borè al seruiglio di Christo. Per il che Lodouico io ti conforto a non turbar col male la mia quiete. Egli non è più il tempo, che tutto il dì con questa mia stampella, correndo le poste, mi dauano le sporche industrie il mio

Fig.4.1 The first page of the Zoppino dialogue (printed in 1584), as the third part of the *Ragionamenti* (1535–39) and attributed to Pietro Aretino (by courtesy of The Provost and Fellows of Worcester College Oxford).

Aretino's own. The volume's title page states that it was printed in London in 1584 by John Wolfe, but (according to the British Library catalogue) the work was more probably published on the Continent after 1600. In 1971, Raymond Rosenthal omitted this third dialogue from his English translation *The Dialogues of Aretino*, perhaps because he considered its Aretinian provenance weak. The Italian historian Umberto Gnoli took a different view. In 1941, he wrote,

> Apollinaire, following Bonneau and then Lanfranchi, considers the Zoppino dialogue, which is frequently cited because it contains most of the names of the courtesans then fashionable in Rome, not to have been written by P. Aretino. But this does not seem to me demonstrable.[19]

Guillaume Apollinaire had published in 1909 a French edition of Aretino's dialogues, following that of Alcide Bonneau in 1882, and both expressed doubt that Aretino could have been its author.[20] In an introduction to the first single Italian edition of this dialogue, published in 1922, Gino Lanfranchi argued that the author was not Aretino but the Spanish *émigré* Francisco Delicado. He based this claim on the circumstantial grounds that Delicado moved first to Rome around the turn of the sixteenth century and then to Venice after its Sack in 1527, and, more generally, upon what he called its 'gloomy spanish flavour'.[21] We may, however, rule this attribution out. The earliest edition of the Zoppino dialogue appears to have been printed in Venice by Francesco Marcolini in 1539. Paolo Bertani, in *Pietro Aretino e le sue opere* (1901) refers in a footnote to this printing, stating that the Zoppino dialogue constitutes a 'third part' of the *Ragionamenti*, with the earlier two parts being the dialogues between Nanna and Antonia, and Nanna and Pippa respectively.[22] Unfortunately, the only British Library copy of the 1539 edition appears to have been lost.[23] The first and second parts of the *Ragionamenti* were written in 1534 and 1536 respectively, with the Zoppino dialogue added at some time between 1536 and 1539. Delicado died in 1534 or 1535, and since the Zoppino author echoes phrases and lines from the two earlier dialogues, he clearly could not have been responsible for verbal parallels with the second part.

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[19] Umberto Gnoli, *Cortigiane Romane, Note e Bibliografia* (Arezzo: Edizioni Della Rivista, 1941), 18, n. 1.

[20] *Les Ragionamenti*; *Sonnets luxurieux: traductions nouvelles et morceaux traduits pour la première fois du divin Aretin*; introduction et notes par Guillaume Apollinaire (Paris, 1909). *Les Ragionamenti ou Dialogues du divin Pietro Aretino. Texte italien et traduction complète par le traducteur des Dialogues de Luisa Sigea* [i.e. Alcide Bonneau] (Paris, 1882).

[21] Gnoli, 99.

[22] Paolo Bertani, *Pietro Aretino e le sue opere* (1901), 362. See also Giovanni Aquilecchia, *Sei giornate: Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia (1534), Dialogo nel quale la Nanna insegna a la Pippa (1536) by Pietro Aretino* (Bari: Laterza, 1969).

[23] The late Giovanni Aquilecchia mentioned to me that he had consulted it: private communication.

Moreover, Marcolini was the first to attribute the Zoppino dialogue to Aretino, a writer with whom he was on excellent personal terms. Aretino had assured him in a letter that, 'bit by bit you will be the heir to all my talent may produce'. Aretino had opportunity enough to dispute Marcolini's attribution of the dialogue to him after 1539, but is not known to have done so.[24]

The Marcolini letter and Gnoli's caveat notwithstanding, there is a considerable vein of scepticism about Aretino's responsibility for this particular work. The Zoppino dialogue may belong with other known pseudo-Aretinian works such as *La Puttana errante* and the *Dubbii amorosi* and *altri Dubbii* – all of them (adapting Gianfranco Contini's phrase) the 'attribuibili' of Aretino, lesser works associated with his name, the authorship and provenance of which remain in doubt.[25] It lacks the dash of Aretino's *lettera*, and yet it also carries numerous incidental and striking Aretinian verbal echoes. As is often the case with stylistical evidence for authorship, a good deal can pass on overall impression, and so, in the absence of substantive proof either way, the question of authorship must remain open.

The Zoppino dialogue offers a sixteenth century version of Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae*, the thirteenth book of which discusses numerous courtesans from the classical era.[26] Although Zoppino presents biographical details of a number of Roman courtesans whose existence might otherwise have remained unknown, his argument is principally a satire designed to excoriate and ridicule not only prostitutes but women in general. What seems to disgust Zoppino more than anything is the fact that women have bodies. The woman's body, as Zoppino imagines it, has a quasi-demonic power to corrupt and destroy. Unlike the convivial Athenaeus, who muses at length on the pleasures of gourmet banqueting, wine, music and women, Zoppino's author combines vocabularies of witchcraft and disease to create a socially effective revulsion for prostitute women. The text is rhetorically coercive, urging its view that courtesans are especially loathsome because they conceal their filth under a veneer of beauty. The dialogue occurs between Zoppino, a former pimp, now turned friar, and Ludovico, a pimp who has tempted him with a young courtesan called Lucrezia. After an expression of remorse for his former ways, Zoppino launches into a fierce attack upon the tricks and skulduggery – the meretriciousness – of the courtesan. He insists on 'how cunning, miserly and dirty they are', and how artful too. He states, 'They know how to work things so well that no man can resist them – they're so skilful. If by chance they notice you falling behind in your gifts and donations, they suddenly turn to enchantresses and sorceresses'. In Zoppino's fetid imagination, the courtesan's skills at enticement and acquisition are turned into dark arts of carnivorous scavenging and fetish collecting:

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[24] George Bull, *Aretino, Selected Letters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), 91.

[25] Gianfranco Contini, *Il Fiore e Il Detto d'amore / attribuibili a Dante Alighieri* (Milano: A Mondadori, 1984).

[26] Charles Burton Gulick (trans.) *Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists* (Cambridge, Mass: Loeb, 1937), xiii.

> I've seen countless of them along the by-ways, laden with the bones, heads and clothes of the dead. And many more carrying pincers, scissors or pegs, filling their pockets with teeth extracted from the rotted jaws of hanged men, from whom they often lift the noose, and shoes too. I've also seen them carrying whole pieces of decayed flesh which they afterwards serve up for you to eat, dressed in such pretty words and ways. I have watched those you consider the loveliest women cutting at dead and naked bodies and shaving off their hair. And I've spotted them in the witching hour, wild and dishevelled – or even completely naked – gesticulating weirdly like witches and uttering words I shudder to recall.[27]

Zoppino goes on to outline the ways in which midnight gatherings of courtesans diabolically re-work church rituals, anointing and kissing each other and keeping tokens of hair, teeth, ribs, eyes and umbilici from the exhumed dead. After this attempt to shock Ludovico out of his womanizing, Zoppino's mood lightens as he and Ludovico trace through the courtesans they have known and their more attractive 'charms'. Among these is Gianna the baker's daughter from Bologna who, when asked what her secret was for winning so many suitors, replied, 'I only take men between my arse-cheeks, and so they stick with me, and never go anywhere else'.[28] 'Matrema non vuol' ('Mummy doesn't like it'), a 'sunny and spirited' girl whom Zoppino claims to have nicknamed and introduced to rich men, is said to have learned the poems of Petrarch and Boccaccio by heart and to recite 'countless verses by Virgil, Horace and Ovid'. Her eloquence could, he says, match that of Cicero, since twenty-five professional orators could not speak as ably as she.[29] Beatrice, of the Campo Marzio suburb near the Vatican, was daughter to a poor washer-woman who allowed a quack doctor to dress her in boys' clothes and take her 'horsey-style'. Nicknamed Cicalina ('she who talks a lot and nicely'), she was favoured by a number of prelates. Another, Angela Greca ('the Greek') arrived in Rome in the pontificate of Leo X. She had been kidnapped by ruffians and dumped at an inn, after which she was cared for by a Spaniard, De Alborensis, and became much admired of a Vatican steward. Beatrice of Ferrara, daughter of a 'poor Spanish woman', arose from 'filthy conditions' to become 'one of the most attractive and classy women in Rome'. The famous Tullia d'Aragona fled Rome for Siena and there brought up her daughter as a courtesan, claiming that the cardinal of Aragona was her father. 'Personally,' remarks Zoppino, 'I think that, at most what happened was that the cardinal's mule used to have a shit at Tullia's

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[27] This passage echoes a similar one in *La Cortigiana* (1525), 84. Extravagant similes, pseudo-etymologies and experiments in dialect are also characteristic of Aretino. Quotations from the Zoppino dialogue are taken from a translation by Ana Garcia Herraez and Duncan Salkeld that follows 'History, Genre and Sexuality in the Sixteenth Century: The Zoppino Dialogue Attributed to Pietro Aretino' in *Mediterranean Studies*, 10 (2001) 49–116, 92–3. I refer to this work in subsequent notes as *Zoppino Dialogue.*

[28] Ibid., 94.

[29] Ibid., 107–108.

house; however, it is in just such ways that courtesans achieve nobility'.[30] Zoppino goes on to discuss Angioletta who lived in the Banchi district and fell in love with a dark-haired man 'who had a dick the length of your forearm'. He enriched her father who set up Rome's earliest bank with the money she gained. Others cited include Tina Baroncella, Nicolosa the Jewess, Angela 'the slow', Antea 'the scarred', Annuzza 'the cross-eyed', two sisters from Piedmont nicknamed 'the Piemontesian executioners' after their father's occupation, and finally, Imperia (Lucrezia Cognati), the most renowned of all Roman courtesans. Richly attired and surrounded by 'servants, pages, monkeys and parrots', the most successful of these courtesans seem to have acquired significant wealth and some status. Yet Zoppino also states, 'Most of them are not able to pay the rent for more than three months'.[31]

The Zoppino dialogue affords a glimpse into the aspirations and misfortunes of women in sixteenth-century Rome and Venice, and as such is a significant social document of its time. A few of these women were able to rise from poverty, destitution and abuse to become well-off, and even wealthy or powerful. Yet its repeated claims to be exposing facts are undermined by the corrosive nature of its satire. Zoppino is determined to shock. Among the many details he recounts are that courtesans sleep with gloves on to keep their hands soft; that they wash themselves with pine-water, put toxic creams on their faces, have sex during menstruation, and use tablecloths as sanitary towels; that they wash their genitals with herb water and brush their teeth; that they may have as many as four men a night; that they kiss with their tongues; that they fake orgasms; and that they have sex in a variety of postures, including anal sex. Sex is depicted in this text, as in *I Modi*, as a repertoire of behaviours rather than as a single act, and this pluralism is confirmed by the several references to courtesans who act 'in strange ways' or 'like a Moor', dropped in to lace the dialogue with an exoticism that would impress the unknowing. Far from presenting a disinterested knowledge of sex, what Foucault called a 'scientia sexualis', the dialogue offers a series of darkly fantasized images of female sexuality. Lurid, intrusive, and intentionally unpleasant, its obscenity derives from a circular insistence upon female corruption as a narcissistic validation of its own anti-feminist nausea, a misogyny doubled by its simultaneous expression of lust and loathing towards women who live and work as prostitutes. The dialogue is, at times, almost pathological in its scopophobic fascination with women as objects of hate.

Zoppino's name means 'little lame one' and is taken from a character in Aretino's play *La Cortigiana*. Throughout the dialogue, Zoppino is at pains to persuade Ludovico of the horrific truth about courtesans and female sexuality in general. The dialogue purports to give the 'facts' about a number of historical women, many of whom would otherwise have passed without trace. Zoppino

[30] Ibid., 108–109.

[31] Ibid.,110–113. Aloigia, the bawd, in *La Cortigiana* speaks of having owned monkeys and parrots (op. cit. 101).

comes to bury them but also to exhume them once again and appal the imagination of his audience. In a relentless effort to destroy the erotic potential of the female body, he boasts that even the finest of these women are as physically horrifying as they are morally corrupt:

> [D]o you think that just because they have soft faces and breasts, the rest of them is the same? Their bodies get wrinkled and puckered from over-use; their breasts are so languished, they look like deflated blisters hanging off them. And these are the ones you consider the most beautiful, who spend the whole day setting their hair with pine-water. At night, if sleeping alone, they wrap them in bandages to keep them pressed. What's more, they sleep wearing gloves to remove any dirt and scabs they have, so they'll have soft hands. That way, if some impotent fellow comes along, even if he can't get himself up, with the soft hands these women have, he'll still get an erection and they can lead the 'one-eyed-man' to drink from the fountain.[32]

Zoppino presents himself as one who has penetrated their secrets, a *conoscente*, the insider who understands courtesans' most intimate practices and is determined to make them known – not (as he claims) to preserve the health and livelihoods of young men, but for the voyeuristic and satirical value of doing so. Nausea is not for him an existential condition; it is a consequence of the courtesan's body, a product of her pleasure, or at least this is what he claims: in truth, it is the effect that his own virulently anti-Petrarchan rhetoric is designed to provoke:

> And what about all those pestilent, toxic creams they put on their faces, lips and teeth, so that, sometimes, you'd be better off kissing a sewer rather than their faces? And what about those rags with grey and red stains that always speckle and stain their blouses? What causes that? Moss? If you only knew about the powder and crushed glass they put inside their vaginas in order to absorb that moisture inside. And it rubs on thousands of poor young men, making them seriously damage their cocks. Usually, they have lice and crabs too; so, if you knew a thousandth of what I know, you'd never want to see their faces again. It'd be the same if you'd seen them as I have, in household after household. I've seen them taking a shit in the evening and making such a noise as if they were firing off all the artillery of the Castel Sant' Angelo, or else, setting off a Catherine wheel. It sounded like the great clamour of unborn souls issuing from their arses.[33]

The passage laces satire with savagery, farce with barely suppressed aggression. At the heart of these self-answered questions lies a fear of contamination by the feminine. Courtesans were women who achieved power through transgression, and that power is acknowledged in Zoppino's supposition that female allure might hide all kinds of dangerous, threatening objects and diseases. It is also the reason,

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[32] *Zoppino Dialogue,* 98.

[33] Ibid., 99.

perhaps, why his tirade is so unremitting. Whereas Ludovico would exploit such women for the pleasures they may afford, Zoppino exploits them for the unpleasure he seeks to create by exposing them in all their vermicular ghastliness. The method is relentless. Identifying the courtesan with disease, corruption and filth, the female body is not merely denaturalised as demonic, putrifying and mutilated, but gynophobically reduced by self-harm, disease and waste to a pure excrescence. Vaginal use of objects like cloth, towels, glass, and cosmetics adds further sensationalism to the fetishistic tokens Zoppino claims these women hack from the dead on gibbets or in charnel houses, all of which transforms the courtesan from bad mother to cadaverous witch. As it develops, the dialogue conducts a work of rhetorically violent anatomy, opening up the clefts, passages, cavities, the interiority of the female body, to a total visibility of surfaces. The female is emptied out, her secrets and ruses made known, her beauty a mere cosmetic film over fleshly hideousness. So insistent is this attempt to demystify the secrets of female sexuality that an equivalent mystification is put in its place: the seductive body has become a body of terror, a diseased corpus on which death already has manifest hold. These fantasized images of a grotesque, self-corrupting and destroyed female body haunt Zoppino's imagination, and will later haunt the English Renaissance stage in figures like Delilah, Marlowe's Bellamira, and Marston's Franceschina. Still later, they will become the gothic.

After dwelling at some length on the courtesans' lack of bodily hygiene, Zoppino sets out to expose their techniques of entrapment:

> Let me put you straight. Sure, when they're in bed, they put one of their thighs over you and the other one under you, and they lay one hand on your neck and the other one on your bottom. And then, in a hundred different ways, they offer you their tongue, sometimes shamelessly and others subtly, or they draw closer to you, using their lips, or not, and in so many other ways, they go after your wealth …. But because men turn up at their door, they attend on them, play to them, and for yet further pleasures, act the moor. If the man livens up too quickly, the cunning woman tells him not to hurry, to slow down and wait for her, so that she is not left without making it. Then she tells him to do it first slowly and then quickly, and so, she pretends that they've actually made it twice. And then she doesn't want it to be finished until they've made it three times, at which point she gives signs of having got there at last, such as sighing, moving her tongue, trembling violently at the wrists or squinting her eyes …. Sometimes they show off their legs, or put their thighs wide apart, or gather over you, or do it the Ginetta way [on top[34]], or the Turkish way [anal], or with their legs in the air, or turtle-fashion with their clothes over their head. At other times, they lie on their side or on their stomach and, often in very strange positions and, ultimately, in all the ways which they think will please men. They pretend to love and long for all of them and, better still, to be consumed with desire for them.

[34] A jennet is 'a small Spanish horse' (*OED*).

> When these women happen to find an elderly man who tends already to lack natural warmth, they grab him by the wrinkled skin of his limp dick and then stroke it on their arse, stomach or rub it at length between their tits. Then they force it inside their thing; they love to be penetrated and keep it there. They start kissing him sweetly, caring neither about his disgusting cough, nor about his catarrh caused by worm-eaten teeth. They don't care either about the filthy slobber that smears his teeth, since the hope of gain makes everything look clean.[35]

Satirical exaggeration in such passages confirms the sense that here we have a distinctively narcissistic take on illicit sex. Zoppino's fantasy of the vicious courtesan identifies the desirable woman as an object of unpleasure. His desire is expressed as loathing, and his revulsion reads as something close to an obsession. If he seeks to horrify Ludovico out of his wicked ways, Zoppino plays a double game: like Melanie Klein's paranoid-schizoid patient stunted between longing and horror for the breast, the Zoppino dialogue overlays voyeurism with extreme distaste, a split symbolised by the two speakers.[36] The narcissism of this double-standard is quite evident since it is the fantasized body of the courtesan that constitutes the ground for Zoppino's prurient contempt. The text is always double-voiced. His aversion is no longer an alternative to his fascination: the two have fused to become parts of the same affect. He desires the death of that which he desires, and in this respect at least, the text is presciently and prototypically gothic.

The tenor of Aretino's writings, if not their detail, shaped English literary depictions of courtesans towards the end of the sixteenth century. The English controversialist, playwright and pamphleteer Thomas Nashe was not only a great admirer of Aretino, but also aspired to be remembered as the 'English Aretine'.[37] Both writers scandalized their readers, both satirized their opponents, and both drew on an energetic mix of dialect, polysyllabic game-playing and wild verbal flourishes. Both penned works of pornography and aimed their pasquinades at real individuals. Of all Nashe's extant works, his most Aretinian composition was a risqué poem, 'A Choise of Valentines', a composition probably never intended to reach the printer's shop. Having read it, Gabriel Harvey wrote contemptuously in *Pierce's Supererogation* (completed by the end of April 1593), 'I will not heere decipher thy vnprinted packet of bawdye and filthy Rymes, in the nastiest kind: there is a fitter place for that discouery of thy foulest shame, and the whole ruffianisme of thy brothel Muse, if she still prostitute her obscene ballats, and will needs be a young Curtisan of ould knavery'.[38] Dedicated to 'the Right Honourable the Lord S' (probably –according to Nashe's editor Robert McKerrow – Ferdinando

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[35] *Zoppino Dialogue*, 102–103.

[36] Melanie Klein, *Our Adult World and Its Roots in Infancy* (London: Tavistock, 1960).

[37] For Nashe as the 'English Aretine' see Moulton, op. cit., 158ff.

[38] Cited in G.R. Hibbard, *Thomas Nashe: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 55.

Stanley, Lord Strange, the Earl of Derby), the piece seems to have been a privately commissioned work.[39] It currently exists in three manuscripts, none of which are in Nashe's hand. One of these, held in the Bodley Library, Oxford, carries the title 'Nashe his Dildo'.

The first imprint of McKerrow's edition of Nashe's works (1904–10) omitted 'The Choise of Valentines', offering only a regretful note of it in Volume 5, under the heading 'Doubtful Works', and stating, 'There can, I fear, be little doubt that this poem is the work of Nashe' (v.141). Since then, it has been sporadically reprinted and discussed, but only fairly recently taken more seriously.[40] The poem could never have been more scurrilous than in its own day. Nashe begins by asking pardon of his addressee, the 'fairest bud the red rose ever bare' (the Stanleys had historic Lancastrian allegiances), pleading that he not be blamed for 'loose unchastity'. He seems to regard the poem as hack-work, declaring, 'better lines ere long shall honour thee', but then launches in to a wry, Chaucerian tale of 'jolly roguery'. A young man sets forth on St. Valentine's Day to find his lover and tracks her down to a 'house of venery', a place to which she has fled from 'Good Justice Dudgeon-haft and Crabtree-Face', two city beadles. A brothel madam, a 'foggy three-chin'd dame', takes his deposit, leads him upstairs and shows him a pair of 'pretty trulls'. Passing them up, he asks for 'Mistress Francis', his beloved, and is ushered to her chamber. Getting into the mood, Francis kisses her 'Tomalin' on the lips, and then 'fast about the neck me colls and clips'. The phrase 'colls and clips' echoes, or is echoed by, Abraham Fraunce in *The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch. Entituled, Amintas Dale* (1592), a poem similar in tone to Nashe's which offers an Ovidian pastoral version of the seduction of naked Hermaphroditus by the goddess Salmacis. Showing passionate physicality, Salmacis pins the object of her desire to the ground and effectively rapes him: She 'weighs him downe at last, and there lies all to be wrapped, / All intangled lies, all intermingled about him'. Going for him without restraint, she '[c]asteth away her Lawnes, and flings her selfe to the water, / Takes hold, embraces, clips, colls, clasps *Hermaphroditus* (Striuing and strugling and wrestling *Hermaphroditus*)'. Fraunce includes a Nashean pun, likening Hermaphroditus to any post-coital male: 'That who goes in a man, comes

[39] Strange is thought to have been the 'thrice noble Amyntas' addressed by Nashe in *Pierce Penniless*, a soubriquet perhaps deriving from Thomas Watson's Latin verses entitled *Amyntas* (1585) or Abraham Fraunce's popular but unacknowledged English translation of them (1587).

[40] Quotations from Nashe are taken from R.B. McKerrow (ed.) *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (1904–10); repr. with corrections and notes by F. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1958). 'A Choice of Valentines' was reprinted in J. B. Steane, *Thomas Nashe: The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) 458–68, but not in Stanley Wells (ed.) *Thomas Nashe* (London: Arnold, 1964). Lorna Hutson's *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) omits any mention of it. G.R. Hibbard op. cit. gives useful discussion of its possible sources in his critical introduction. Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography:* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) provides an illuminating discussion of the poem.

alwayes foorth but a halfe-man'.[41] Nashe too began 'A Choice of Valentines' in pastoral mode and may well have had Fraunce's (probably) already printed text in mind as a model he might out-do for licentiousness.

But for all the colling and clipping, Tomalin grows unexpectedly limp. Mistress Francis dandles him (the pronoun's referent is ambiguous) and, revived, he sets to work with renewed vigour, 'as he were wood'. Another untimely wilt means that 'his triumph now must fall', and Francis resorts instead to using a dildo. Tomalin's swagger now turns to discomfiture at being cuckolded by a glass tube: 'Bedash'd, bespirted, and beplodded foul, / God give thee shame, thou blind misshapen owl'. The line mixes envy with disdain and puns obliquely on a predatory night-creature and the shape of a carpenter's awl. Satiated, Francis 'lies breathless' while he is 'taken down', led from the upper chamber to the parlour door, and made to pay the full fee 'scot and lot'. Nashe would again use the phrase 'scot and lot', which refers to 'parish or borough rates or taxes', in *Have with You to Saffron Walden*.[42] This brothel visit may have flopped by reason of unwanted detumescence but it still incurs a cost as ineluctable as any other city tax. That he has not enjoyed his money's worth is his own failure, and it stings. While her 'waves do swell', her 'tides climb o'er the banks', he walks by the Thames, and rhymes his hurt, 'Judge, gentlemen, if I deserve not thanks'.

G.R. Hibbard has remarked, without a traceable hint of irony, that Nashe's tale of impotence, 'adds nothing to his literary stature'. He adds, 'the story it tells has no real point and part of it is downright silly'. Exactly which part lacks point and seems so silly he declines to say (though we might guess). Writing in the wake of the Lady Chatterley trial, he observes that, 'Its bawdry is of the elementary, direct, indecent kind'. Hibbard identifies a certain weakness in the work, noting that only 'some attempt is made to give it a poetic colouring', and he is bewildered at Francis's use of a dildo: 'Why a prostitute, of all people, should be driven to such extremes Nashe does not explain'. The question itself is touching, but the point surely is that Francis has a new toy, and so no longer needs her Tomalin. Surveying the poem's sources in Ovid, Spenser and Chaucer, Hibbard concludes again with apparent seriousness, 'Valueless as poetry, *The Choice of Valentines* is, nevertheless, of some interest as an example of Nashe's way of going to work'.[43] The poem is, of course, of considerable value for the social colour and observation it suggests. The irony in its title lies in the fact that Francis's 'choice of valentine' is a mere object, a dildo, and not the gallant youth who sallied forth. She has come to realise the benefits of this handy 'knave':

> A knave that moves as light as leaves by wind,
> That bendeth not, nor foldeth any deal,
> But stands as stiff as he were made of steel,

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[41] Abraham Fraunce, *The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch. Entituled, Amintas Dale* (London: 1592), 50, N3^{v}.

[42] McKerrow, op. cit., 330.

[43] Hibbard, op. cit., 55–6.

> And plays at peacock twixt my legs right blithe,
> And doth my tickling swage with many a sigh.
> For, by Saint Runyon, he'll refresh me well,
> And never make my tender belly swell.

The dildo has qualities Tomalin lacks: it is easily positioned, always at the ready, reliably usable, adaptable, will not make her pregnant, and every one of these reasons fills Nashe with an anxiety about his own redundancy. The dildo is an interloper, a foreign usurper, who slyly inserts himself and kills off cupidity by means of a sinister auto-eroticism:

> Behold how he usurps in bed and bower,
> And undermines thy kingdom every hour,
> How sly he creeps betwixt the bark and tree,
> And sucks the sap, whilst sleep detaineth thee ..
> He fortifies disdain with foreign arts,
> And wanton-chaste deludes all loving hearts …

However much he berates this little device, he envies it too: 'Curse eunuch dildo, senseless, counterfeit / Who sooth may fill but never can beget'. Yet it is he who is made a 'eunuch', cut off from his mistress by this 'dwarf', 'secretary', 'youth', charioteer, 'jolly rider', 'misshapen owl' 'lady's chamberlain' and, perhaps more tellingly, 'beardless blab'. A dildo of course lacks hair but so too did Nashe who was famously beardless.[44] Unable to grow facial hair, he had an unusually youthful appearance. Moulton has noted that Mistress Francis is rendered in male terms in the poem: she has a 'mannely thigh', her vagina is a fountain with briars at *his* mouth or a mouth that gains *his* 'full sufficience'. Moulton reads these details as symbols of effeminacy reflecting wider social anxieties about sex as weakening male virility. Lack of potency is linked, he suggests, to a loss of gender identity, all of which signals a 'troubling emasculation rather than an indifferent androgyny'. For Moulton, Tomalin's attitude to the dildo evokes Gabriel Harvey's view of Nashe – skilled in 'forraine artes' yet a 'weakeling'.[45] Yet there is also a sense in which Nashe identifies with the dildo, for it is the dildo that makes contact with his object of desire. Writing himself into the poem as 'Tomalin', he does so again as the dildo, as if at once to recover his prowess and to acknowledge his own writerly impotence. The tube is a 'blab', not in this instance a spewer of words, but a bubble, a vacuity. He muses, 'I penn'd this story for myself, / Who giving suck unto a childish elf, / And quite discouraged in my nursery …. Sufficeth, all I have I yield her whole, / Which for a poor man is a princely dole'. Tomalin's

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[44] Charles Nicholl writes in his entry on Nashe in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (accessed online at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19790), 'This perceived boyishness was also due to his lack of a beard, unusual among Elizabethans. He speaks of 'my beardlesse yeeres' and the 'minoritie of my beard'; he did not wish 'to have my cheeks muffled up in furre like a Muscovian'.

[45] Moulton, op. cit., 185.

gesture of emptying his pockets and paying off the brothel dame with a charitable 'dole' interleaves with his own wasted talent and his patron's 'princely dole to a poor man', the 'childish elf' with his empty bubble of a poetic idea. So Nashe's tall tale of cuckoldry by a dildo serves also as a smarting reminder of his own dearth in writerly servitude. Asking at the end if he 'deserves not thanks', Nashe strikes a vexed and almost vengeful, tone. His claim that 'I penn'd this story for myself' is clearly belied by the text's dedication to 'Lord S', and yet he finishes with the feeling that he might just as well have done. Anti-Petrarchan scourge of love-rhymers, Nashe would neither admit nor deny Gabriel Harvey's charge that he was a journalistic whore, that he had been 'prostituting [his] pen like a Curtizan'.[46] He would admit elsewhere to his occasional impotence as a writer. His dedication to Lady Elizabeth Carey at the start of *Christ's Tears Over Jerusalem* (entered into the Stationers' Register on 8 September 1593) confesses that, 'My woe-infirmed wit conspired against me with my fortune; my impotent care-crazed style cast off his light wings, and betook him to wooden stilts; all agility it forgot, and graveled itself in gross-brained formality. Now a little is it revived'.[47] 'The Choice of Valentines' strikes a similarly piteous, self-deprecating tone, acknowledging that poor and ineffectual though it is, his pen is still mightier than his penis.

However much censure or opprobrium Nashe's poem would have risked in the early 1590s, it remains of considerable historical and critical interest today. Its tale of a bawdy house run by a madam, with two, three or maybe more girls available for a price in its upper chambers, is entirely plausible, as also is what happens between the lovers, even though it is expressed in rather awkward and sometimes coded terms. Nashe's ostensible purpose in writing the poem was to amuse a relatively small circle of 'gentlemen' associates. It was composed not for all time, nor even for an age, but for a brief moment. As a literary work, it perhaps should be regarded as imaginative rather than factual. Yet whatever the literary games it plays, it remains unique in several respects: in detailing an English early modern sexual encounter, in contravening just about every sixteenth-century civic regulation regarding sexual propriety, and in revealing London as it actually was – a labyrinth of clandestine opportunities for sex.

In Nashe's picaresque tale of villains out-doing one another, *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), the narrator Jack Wilton encounters three devious Italian women in turn: Tabitha the Temptress, Diamante, a cast-off spouse, and Countess Juliana, the Marquis of Mantua's wayward spouse. The first of these is a stereotypically false, inveigling and dangerous Venetian courtesan. The other two are thrown-off wives whose fates intertwine in the undoing of their enemies. In this wildly fictional tale, Jack Wilton, Nashe's alter-ego, sets out for Venice with his master, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. They stop at Wittenberg where they dispute

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[46] Thomas Nashe, *Haue vvith you to Saffron-vvalden. Or, Gabriell Harueys hunt is vp Containing a full answere to the eldest sonne of the halter-maker* (London: John Danter, 1596), Nashe was unimpressed by the charge: 'well it may and it may not bee so', sig. E3v.

[47] McKerrow, op. cit. II, 9.

with scholars ('Why should I go gadding and fiz-gigging after firking flantado amphibologies?')[48] and admire 'that abundant scholar' Henry Cornelius Agrippa at the Holy Roman Emperor's court. With a hop and a heave, and having swapped clothes and identities, they arrive in Italy: 'To cut off blind ambages by the highway-side, we made a long stride and got to Venice in short time'. In no time at all, they are led by a pander to 'a pernicious courtesan's house named Tabitha the Temptress's'. The home is meticulously tidy, with not a tell-tale sign of clothes, a pillow-case or bed-sheet out of place, and yet, Wilton observes, 'she was a Turk and an infidel, and had more doings than all her neighbours besides'.[49] Tabitha proposes to the man she supposes is the Earl's servant and offers to marry him if he will kill his 'master'. 'It was a crafty quean,' Wilton remarks, because her real plan was to accuse the servant of the murder and take all their money for herself. When the time comes for the Earl's (that is, Wilton's) assassination, his master drops the pistol and Wilton loudly exclaims 'Murther! Murther!' The commotion makes 'goodwife Tabitha ready to bepiss her' in shock.[50] Wilton seizes the Earl/servant by the collar and, demanding the truth, hears him betray the wicked Tabitha and her crony. On this pretext, they compel Tabitha and her man to buy their silence with a hoard of counterfeit gold crowns. In a neat *coup de grace*, Nashe nicely demonstrates home-grown English wit out-foxing an Italian's dissembling.

Nashe builds on these improbabilities by attaching to Wilton and the Earl, a rejected spouse named Diamante, who has striking 'black eyebrows' and a 'lickerous rolling eye'. Temperately, the Earl decides to revere her as a Petrarchan beauty, and misses an opportunity. Wilton (for Nashe's part) wastes no time in bedding her, getting her pregnant and ending up in prison for it. Just as he had done on Raimondi's behalf in reality, 'Monsieur Pietro Aretino' intervenes to win Wilton's reprieve in fiction. Arrested, Tabitha and her man confess and are 'for example sake executed'. At this point in his narrative, Wilton stops to speak authorially as Nashe and eulogize Aretino as 'one of the wittiest knaves that ever God made'. Aretino wrote, Wilton (Nashe) declares, with 'the spirit of ink … His pen was sharp-pointed like a poniard', the pages on which he wrote 'a burning-glass to set on fire all his readers'. He was, for Nashe, a verbal magician, able 'to make a man drunken with admiration'. His nerve for saying whatever he wished was something Nashe seems to have envied and even sought to emulate: 'His sight pierced like lightning into the entrails of all abuses … He was no timorous servile flatterer of the commonwealth wherein he lived'.[51] By this time, Nashe is speaking as himself, denying Aretino's authorship of works like *De Tribus Imposteribus*,

[48] J.B. Steane, *Thomas Nashe: The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 293.

[49] Ibid., 297, 300.

[50] Ibid., 302.

[51] Ibid., 309–310.

which Gabriel Harvey had fiercely denounced.[52] For this work, 'one of Machevel's followers' must have been responsible and 'filched it forth under Aretino's name'. Soon, however, Nashe returns to Wilton's voice, reminding himself, 'My principal subject plucks me by the elbow'. But Nashe is not quite finished with the skulduggeries of courtesans, and he mixes up a particularly sensational concoction of villainy. Diamante's pregnancy is now evident and, aided by Aretino, she and Wilton leave Venice to travel 'Italy throughout'.[53] In Rome, they are attacked by a rapist/murderer employed by the Pope, and Diamante is dragged off to the house of the Jewish doctor Zadoch, where she is discovered 'kissing very lovingly with a prentice'. Zadoch hopes to sell Wilton for dissection to his fellow doctor Zacharie, but Madam Juliana, a 'lusty *bona roba*' and mistress to the Pope, espies the shackled Wilton though her window and requests that Zacharie sell him to her. In this tale, Jews and courtesans vie with one another for wickedness: Juliana replaces the doctor's *spiritus vini* with a poison in the hope of inheriting his estate, which will include Wilton. By now, we cannot tell which is worse – the Jew's anatomy-chamber or the courtesan's bed-chamber. In a complicated dénouement, Zadoch is brutally tortured for vowing to set the city on fire, Juliana attends a St. Peter's Day procession and Wilton and Diamante rob her house and flee.[54] In a rage, Juliana mistakenly drinks the poison and dies and the heroic couple escape to Bologna where they witness another killing, that of the rapist/murderer they encountered earlier. In the end, 'abjected and daunted' by the violence they have witnessed, Wilton and his whore Diamante marry (Nashe's last sour joke) and escape 'the Sodom of Italy', a society of confederates in sex, money, usury and murder.[55]

While the Zoppino dialogue aims to unsettle, Nashe's tale of Italian bandits and tricksters is essentially farcical. A less sardonic or bitter approach than either of these is found in the writings of Pierre de Bourdeille, Abbé de Brantôme, which show none of the virulent misogyny displayed in Zoppino or the brutalities of Nashe. Brantôme's tales are worth considering because they show a remarkably modern sense of enjoyment when it comes to salacious gossip and bawdy misdemeanour. Born around 1540, Brantôme became a French diplomat and spent most of his life amid the court circles of Marguerite de Navarre, Mary Queen of Scots, Pope Pius IV and Philip II of Spain. He was a prolific author, mainly of prose works, but also of an extensive collection of over 250 poems and sonnets.

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[52] Gabriel Harvey, *A new letter of notable contents* ... (London: John Wolfe, 1593), sig.D^{r}. *De Tribus Imposteribus* [*The Three Imposters*] was an apparently atheistical work rather than a book of scandalous sexual content. An English 'version' was published by John Evelyn in 1669 under the title, *The history of the three late, famous impostors, viz. Padre Ottomano, Mahomed Bei and Sabatai Sevi*, although it is unlikely that Evelyn's work reproduces much, if any, of the original.

[53] Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller* in Steane, 310–312.

[54] Ibid, 347–61.

[55] Ibid., 370.

In 1584, he had a riding accident and thereafter retired to write at length about the gossip, sexual and otherwise, he had picked up around those various courts, until he died in 1614.[56]

Brantôme relishes anecdote. His lengthy work *Les Vies des Dames Gallantes* ('The Lives of Gallant Ladies') collates a vast array of hearsay, gossipy stories, historical examples and literary allusions, most of which concern the sexual exploits of socially prominent women. Lillian Faderman, in *Surpassing the Love of Men*, dismissed Brantôme's work as pornography, a judgement that rather distorts the tenor and interest of his work, since his sympathies invariably side with the women he describes.[57] Brantôme may not be an entirely reliable source but he is almost the only Renaissance writer to give explicit recognition to expressions of same-sex desire between women. In the first essay of *Les Vies des Dames Gallantes*, Brantôme recalls that Isabella da Luna, a famous Roman courtesan, 'took another courtesan named Pandora as lover, one of the loveliest of the time in the whole of Rome, who had just been married to a butler of the Lord Cardinal d'Armangnac, though without relinquishing her old trade … and she was kept by this Isabella and regularly slept with her'.[58] Brantôme struggles with the terms by which such Sapphic women were known: Lucian, he notes, calls them 'Lesbians'. They are otherwise termed 'tribades', 'a Greek word derived, so I have been told by Greeks, from "tribo", "tribein" which means to rub or fret or mutually fret, and those who play at this game of *donna con donna* as seen today, are called "tribades" or in French, "fricatrices" or frickers'. Brantôme relates the story of two 'lovely, estimable girls of good family' who having slept in the same bed together for three years, 'became so accustomed to this fricking that in the end they decided it was very meagre and faulty compared with what a man could provide and so started to try doing it with men'. 'These feminine love-makings,' he writes, 'are practised in two different ways, some by *fricarelles*, and as the poet put it, by *geminos committere cunnos*. This method does not harm, some men say, as it does when they make use of a device'.[59] Throughout *Les vies des dames gallantes,* Brantôme is intent on eulogising those he calls 'estimable ladies' or 'great ladies of pleasure', but it is not passivity that he admires so much as action. He extols the courage of women who defended the besieged towns of Pavia, Rochelle, Rhodes, St. Riquier, Peronne, Sancerre, Vitre, and Carthage: 'O fair ladies of Rhodes,' he declaims, 'your name and your fame have never faded and you never deserved to come under the dominion of barbarians'.[60] Even where Brantôme's primary concern is mainly to offer an amusing anecdote, it is women's appropriation of conventionally masculine codes that serves the purpose:

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[56] Alec Brown (trans. and int.) *Pierre de Bourdeille [Seigneur de Brantôme], The Lives of Gallant Ladies* (c. 1580–1614) (London: Elek Books, 1961).

[57] Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (London: Women's Press, 1985).

[58] Brown, op. cit., 128.

[59] Ibid., 133.

[60] Ibid., 455.

> I have also known lovely, estimable ladies who said and insisted that when their husbands had ill-treated them or been discourteous to them, taking to task or censuring them, beating them or doing some other mischief or outrage, it had been their greatest pleasure to cuckold them, and as they did it to keep them in mind, lampooning them and making mock of them and laughing about them with their lovers, and they even went so far as to say that they got a greater appetite and a quite indescribable enhancement of pleasure out of this.
>
> I have heard tell of one beautiful, famous lady who, when once asked whether she had ever cuckolded her husband, replied: 'But why should I ever do so, when he has never beaten or threatened me?' As if to say that, had he done either, the champion she carried between her legs would soon enough have avenged her.[61]

If Brantôme's bawdy writings on women and sexuality seem a little predictable in our day, they were certainly not in his own. They may read as salacious gossip spiced up as near pornography, but they also mix into their rompish sense of the ridiculous a wish to recognise other forms of desire. Acknowledgement of same-sex love between women may not be fully articulated here, set as it is alongside assumed heterosexual norms, but it is not ignored. There is an undoubted element of vanity and male fantasy in Brantôme's 'tell-all' genre, but what makes it distinctive is not just his depiction of same-sex love between women, but also his evident pleasure in attributing power to the female body, and humiliation to the male.

There has been a tendency in early modern studies to identify respects in which literary writings match historical sources, as though the historical should validate what the literary text has been deemed to suggest. There is good sense in this approach and an argument can certainly be made for blurring distinctions between the two since historical sources often have a narrative shape and their own poetics. But it is also the case that historical and literary genres can serve different social purposes, and may well have more to divide them than aspects they share. The fluid relation between the literary and historical is pointed up by a detail from Nashe who, early on in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, makes an obscure reference concerning the surrender of the French town of 'Turwin' [Térouanne]: 'Turwin lost her maidenhead and opened her gates to more than Jane Trosse did'.[62] Legal records show that Jane Trosse was probably the most unruly and infamous woman of her time. Her criminal career first comes to light on 20 June 1576 when she was brought to Bridewell from the Sessions house 'for her lewd liffe'.[63] Her release is not noted but in December that year, she was brought in again, this time from the 'Compter' [the Counter] having been apprehended in Holborn.[64] A few days later, brothel-owner Thomas Wise testified that she had lain with 'one Peter' at the house

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61 Ibid., 74.

62 McKerrow, op. cit., ii.209.

63 BCB 3.18^{r}.

64 Ibid., 95^{r}.

of one Stephen French, another pimp, and filched 'iiii doble pistoletts' [Spanish gold escudos] from the house. French himself testified that she lay at his house with a Spaniard for twenty shillings and then stole a further seven pounds from him in the middle of the night.[65] Security at the 'Compter' seems not to have been particularly tight. A confession by Robert Bingham taken on 2 January 1576/7 states that he heard, while she was there, that 'she was a fine wenche' and was promised that if he lent her twenty shillings, he might take his pleasure of her, which he later did at a buttery where the owner locked them safely out of view. He also gave her a ring, a pair of gloves and ten shillings to 'clere her oute of the Compter'. Trosse promised herself to him on any day of his choosing.[66] Her behaviour attracted attention for, on 9 March 1576/7, she was arrested, this time for dressing in men's clothing: 'Jane Trosse being taken in unsemely appell more manlyke than woman like and folowed from taverne to Taverne was brought into this house the ixth of Marche 1576'. Four days later, a witness told the court that 'a little black fellow' named Myles, servant to a Mr. Osborne, and another serving-man wearing a 'lyon tawnye cote' fetched clients to her, and also brought her a 'lamperne [eel] pye'. The deponent in this case was Elizabeth Adnett who confessed that Trosse lay 'in bedd' with her and her husband. Joseph Adnett also confirmed that Trosse 'lay in bed with him and his wyfe'.[67] Trosse proved a troublesome Bridewell inmate. She and a fellow prisoner were punished in May 1577 for swearing, talking filthily, refusing to work, attempting to escape and in 'dyvers wayes begynne and use evill rule in the house'.[68] In late August, she was released under a bill signed by six of the governors. That this release was occasioned by growing weariness with an uncontrollable inmate is hinted at in a memorandum later in the year when, exasperated as to what to do with her, the governors brought her father in: 'Jane Trosse came hether w*i*th her father upon p*ro*mise of m*aste*r Thr*easure*r that she sho*u*lde not be staied her father was offered that if he woulde be bounde that she should avoide the cittye then she sholde have the things w*hi*ch she lefte here she refuseth to goe w*i*th her father or d*epar*te the cittye'.[69] The tactic failed. In February the following year, she was arrested once more as, 'A horrible strumpet being taken about vi or vii A clocke in the night and A broyle made about her ther And for that she did brake out of this house at her last being here and spoiled and toke awaye A kercher and the shetes and things of the house'. A week later, she was whipped again 'for strickeing and beatinge the matrone and for that she will not worke'.[70] Still in Bridewell in May 1579, she was no less troubled, this time

[65] Ibid., 103r, 107r. An earlier statement taken in late June 1576 declared that she had slept with one Peter, a Spaniard, and stole 'vi duble pistelotts oute of his poket' (BCB 3.29v).

[66] Ibid., 142r.

[67] Ibid., 183v, 184v, 185r. The original foliation is mis-ordered here.

[68] Ibid., 217v.

[69] Ibid., 351v.

[70] Ibid., 366v , 368v.

punished for 'abhomynable sweringe and evill behavior in the house and other evill usage not mete to be wrytten'. A couple of months later she won her freedom by getting herself pregnant by one Robert Newman, who promised to pay twenty shillings to cover the cost of her food and provide for her child, and collected her belongings, including a 'cappe' and 'glasse'. After this release, she disappears from view.[71] Was Nashe eliding the historical and the literary in making a risqué quip about her? Although she was undoubtedly a colourful character whose life might have made a good tale, Nashe's point was, I suggest, not to fictionalize Trosse as a Tabitha, Diamante or Juliana, but to puncture his fable with an element of material reality, with reference to a life whose hazards and hardships were very clearly not a fiction.

Directly following the final record of Trosse in Bridewell appears the case of apprentice Stephen Holt who engaged in a Renaissance threesome with his wife and 'a widoe woman in his masters house'. He was whipped for 'other sodometicall synne not mete to be wrytten' and delivered. But the governors or clerk were not always so modest. Occasionally, they would hear cases that went into some detail about intimacies observed by a curious neighbour. Margaret, the apparently respectable goodwife of citizen and stationer Henry Brown, gave testimony of what she had seen while spying through a hole in her upstairs chamber wall. The objects of her gaze were her neighbour Clement Underhill and a friend, Michael Fludd, who made his visit while her husband was away:

> Margaret Browne the wife of Henry Browne citizen and stacioner of London dwelling in hounsditch in the parish of St. Botolphe without Bishopsgate in the ward of Bishopsgate London sayeth that uppon the thirtenth daye of this present moneth of Maye 1598 being Saturdaye Michaell ffludd and Clement Underhill the wife of John Underhill were making merry together in the house of the said John Underhill being the next house to this deponents house in the parish and ward aforesaid he the said John being from home and as they were eating their victualls Underhills wyfe said unto fludd theis wordes eate no more chease for that it will make your geere short and I mean to have a good turne of you soone. Ymmediattlye after that he went upp into her chamber and laye uppon her bed and there continued untill sixe of the clocke or thereabouts att what tyme shee shutt in her shopp windowes and went upp unto him with a Rapyer in her hand and asked him whether he had spoken withall his friends or not he came to her and tooke the Rapyer out of her hands laying it A side tooke her in his armes and brought her to the beds feete and tooke up her clothes and she putt her hand into his hose and he kissed her and pulled her uppon him uppon the beds feete And after that they went to the beds side and he taking her in his armes did cast her uppon the bed he pluckt upp her clothes to her thighes she pluckt them upp higher (whereby this deponent sawe not onlye her hose being A Seawater greene colour and also her bare thighes) then he went upp to her uppon the bed and putting down his hose had carnall Copulation with her and having so don he wyped his yard on her Smocke and this deponent had in the meane tyme called

[71] Ibid., 387^{r}, 404^{v}.

> upp the said Henrye Browne the husband of this deponent to see deede who came and sawe fludd come from the bed with his hose downe whereuppon this deponents husband sawe the said ffludd to go to a payle or a Tubb of water in the same Chamber and washed his yard then Underhills wyfe departed from him to fetch A pott of beere and out of the Cubbord in the table tooke bread and butter w*hi*ch they did eate togither and then she lifted the pott and said to him heere now I drink to thee.[72]

As a story of adultery, naughty fun and neighbourly disapproval, the account comes close to a modern bedroom farce, and is perhaps the most vivid Bridewell entry of all. Like a merry tale from a jest book, it all builds up to a jolly climax of bread, beer and a chinking of pots. But it was no dream. The following day, Underhill and Fludd abjectly confessed it all to be true and resigned themselves to the inevitable: Clement was whipped, and Fludd discharged on condition that he pay 'xx^{s} towardes the relief of the poore of this hospitall'.[73] As the case indicates, the Elizabethans had a fondness for cakes and ale with their sex (or in this instance, bread, beer and cheese). There are several other cases recorded of merry gatherings where meat or bread, ale or wine would serve as preliminaries to a prospective bedroom encounter. Henry Boyer reported preparations for a 'banquett' prepared by a Master Sharlock 'one of my L*ord* of Oxfordes men' at the Dolphin on the 'backsyde of olde Fishstreat' to which two 'comon bawdes' were invited.[74] Jane Fuller, a notorious prostitute living in 'Hounsdich' near London Wall, confessed to meeting up with Anthony Bate, goldsmith, at the Sun in Cripplegate and enjoying 'a pynte or a quart of wyne' with him. After she took him home, they were joined by another frequently arrested prostitute, Alice Furres, who 'rosted them a brest of mutton & they supped together & paide ii^{s} for the supper'.[75] The pander William Mekyns brought 'one Thomas Baker a gentlemans clerke' to the prostitute Mary Dornelly 'who theare and then had thuse of her bodye once but he gave her nothinge howbeit he gave Mekens monye And he fetched a pottle of wyne A pounde of fegges and a pound of Almondes which they had togethers'.[76] In a rather tangled tale, Susan Holland, alias Greaves, living with one Master Nevell 'in hogge lane without Bishopsgate' told how Mistress Nevell

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[72] BCB 4.23^{r} (30 May 1598). An earlier version of this statement was entered under the date 20 May 1598 (BCB 4.21^{r}) where Fludd is named 'William Floyd' and his occupation given as a 'Bayley'.

[73] BCB 4.23^{v}. This case and other opportunities for spying through Elizabethan peepholes are usefully discussed by Orlin, op. cit., 177–8. She also gives details of the prosecution of Bridget Church, caught in bed with a younger man named Amos Crosley: '"Can you hit it?" Bridget demanded. "Yes, straightaways", Crosley replied. "Immediately" after, Bridget said, "Why now you are in"' (Orlin, 190–91). See also Bernard Capp, 'Life, Love and Litigation: Sileby in the 1630s', *Past and Present* 182 (2004), 55–83.

[74] BCB 3.117^{v} (21 December 1576); BCB 3.134^{v} (31 December 1576).

[75] BCB 3.129^{r} (30 December 1576).

[76] BCB 3.198^{r} (6 April 1577).

begged an apple from two passing bricklayers named Peter Tucke and John Frye in return for a bottle of ale. The bricklayers agreed, entered her house and Tucke went upstairs. Nevell brought ale and Holland took up cakes, for which Tucke paid sixpence. Tucke asked Holland for sex 'and she was content'. While she was with Tucke, Nevell chatted with Frye below in the parlour. In due course, Tucke went down, while Holland 'went for a payle of water' and Frye came up and offered her another sixpence for sex, to which she agreed. They then joined the others below 'and there drancke altogether'. At this point, another bricklayer named Thomas Walton and 'one dick whome they call a Spaniard for that he is black' espied them through the window. Tucke and Frye 'consented to make the sayd Walton drunck w*hi*ch they effected accordingly'. Seeing this, the 'Spaniard' 'feigned himselfe in a swoone because he would not heare yt'. Tucke and Frye sent the intoxicated Walton upstairs, and Holland after him, urging her to 'cosen him of some money'. Walton 'offered to use her bodye and pulled upp her clothes she being at the beds feet but by reason that he was drunck he could not effect his purpose'. After this, they 'went all to the signe of the blew anker in hogge lane & there they dranck together'.[77] No punishment is recorded for Holland, or indeed those she mentions.

Lena Cowen Orlin has shown that while early moderns may have desired privacy, many regarded it with suspicion, fearing what closed doors or shuttered windows might hide. Peepholes, chinks, gaps through walls or fences, or raised painted cloths could prove the undoing of many engaged in illicit liaisons. Someone who might have taken more care to secure her window-shutters was Amey Medley, married to Richard Medley and living in a narrow alleyway near Newgate. Just six days before Margaret Browne's testimony, the magistrates heard that,

> Margaret Stansbye the wyfe of John Stansbye dwelling in the p*ar*ish of Christ church in Harrowe Alley neere unto Newgate London Pewterer saieth that she going up into her Chamber went to her windowe and looked forth of it and sawe by chance into the house of one Richard Medley over against her in the said Alley where one Richard Lee a Spurrior[78] lying uppon the bed of the said Medley in his Chamber upon Amey Medley his wife neare the beds feete and kissing of her and saw the bed shake.[79]

Without any corroborating evidence, we have no way of telling whether Stansbye was telling the truth or being especially vindictive, but doubtless beds were often rickety then just as now. In 1575, Thomas Clarke deposed that his mistress entertained one Master Farmer in her chamber, and that he heard 'M*aste*r Farmer give a great puffe & w*i*th the same the bedd gave a great cracke'.[80] Indelicacies were usually avoided by the Bridewell clerks but, in an effort to get to the truth of a

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77 BCB 4.47r (15 November 1598).

78 Spurrier: one who makes spurs.

79 BCB 4.22r (24 May 1598).

80 BCB 2.196v (21 December 1575).

matter, the court would want details recorded. References to oral sex are relatively rare in the drama and even rarer in historical sources,[81] but there is, finally, the instance of Mistress Keyes, a 'flaxewife', who in 1610 entertained one Robert Worrall at her house near the 'Compter' in Southwark. Alerted to the possibility that Keyes may be up to no good, a neighbour named Marie Clunes went to the fence or 'pale' of Keyes's house, spied through a gap, and saw the kitchen door still open, the couple together, and 'his hande under her clothes gropeing her'. Clunes called over a friend, Margaret Usherwoode, to witness what was happening: 'the said Keyes his wife put of*f* all her clothes, and he viewed her bodie rounde (a buckett of water standinge by) and then he kissed her privities before, and her bodie rounde about And then Keyes his wife said to him twice or thrice, doe as a bid you whereupon he put of*f* all his clothes, and then both of them went up togither into the Chamber and there were together aboute an howre'.[82] Clunes and Usherwoode eventually found a constable who caught the pair in bed.

Were it not for the miserable punishments the defendants faced, these cases might seem like episodes in a farcical drama. They have a narrative form that lends itself very readily to fiction but also a strong particularity that offers an intimate perspective on the past: like Stansbye, Browne and her husband, or Clunes and her neighbour, peeping through chinks and gaps, the records make voyeurs of us all. We cannot be physically close to these events but we are made vividly aware from the records of those who were. Comprehending such witness statements creates an effect of 'nearness-by-proxy'. Mark Saber Philips has suggested that 'temporal distance' functions as 'a defining condition of all forms of historical representation'. He argues that historians are compelled to work with varieties of 'distance-shift' in their 'affective, ideological and cognitive' mediations.[83] The concept of 'temporal distance' is perhaps more a matter of metaphor than logic, but it is commonly invoked. It reminds that our access to the past is broadly (though not entirely) epistemic rather than ontic. Reading these allegations, we note not just their 'hear-say', anecdotal status, but also the relative proximity of their earliest known teller to the events described, and so we aim to assess the reliability or otherwise of the information disclosed. A kind of contact with the past is possible since texts and objects survive to facilitate it, but the mediating or 'distancing' effects of time and process mean that this contact only happens under alienating conditions. From the proximity of other people to past events arises our own sense of being witness to, or eavesdropping in on, words spoken and written long ago, but we are close only to marks upon a yellowed page. Virtually all of these cases were reported, heard, repeated, shaped by the procedures of the court, declared to the Governors' bench,

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[81] Stanley Wells, op. cit., citing Alan Nelson's biography of the Earl of Oxford gives one possible example of fellatio as 'passa pecora' (37).

[82] BCB 05.438^{r-v} (18 June 1610).

[83] Mark Saber Philips, 'Distance and Historical Representation', *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004), 123–41, 125, 127. See also his 'Histories, Micro- and Literary: Problems of Genre and Distance', *New Literary History* 34 (2003), 211–29.

recorded in legal formulae by the clerk, copied up in a fair hand, and corroborated according to the same pattern. A confession or witness statement may, of course, conceal as well illumine. For all their seeming directness, the records cannot short-circuit time. Yet it would be a mistake to imagine that these records have nothing reliable to tell us, or have lost their potential or capacity to signify through the distortions of age.[84] The energies that drove them have long since dissipated, their voices fallen silent, and all that can be known of them today remains buried amid the strata of intervening life. And yet they also translate.

The almost schizoid Zoppino dialogue presented divided views towards courtesans: Ludovico admired them as figures of beauty and sensuality, while Zoppino loathed them with an antipathy that neared fixation. Nashe's Jack Wilton seemed to reflect a fundamentally ambiguous attitude towards Italian women in general, but made it hard to decide who was worse, the Jew or the courtesan. If Brantôme suggests a different tone, he does so from the relatively private and secure position of a wealthy country abbot and squire, largely immune either to privation or scandal. The ineluctable conclusion one draws from the Bridewell hearings is that women who used sex for gain could only realistically expect to be caught and to suffer. And for this reason, if for no other, it is important to be able tell history and fiction apart. By the end of the sixteenth-century, the courtesan had become a gaudy spectacle in English drama, but writers took surprisingly different approaches to their presentation. They are a show-character but could be portrayed with notable sympathy. Apart from Shakespeare's courtesan in *The Comedy of Errors*, a gentle if acquisitive Plautine character who says very much less than she does in *Menaechmi,* the courtesans who paraded on the Elizabethan stage in the last decade of the sixteenth century were women depicted by Kyd, Marlowe and Heywood. These characters not only represent divided strategies adopted by English dramatists in staging courtesans, both foreign and domestic, near the end of the sixteenth century, but they also open up strikingly different histories.

[84] I regard the 'potential to signify' as intentional. For a defence of literary intentionality, including Shakespeare's, see 'Shakespeare and the I-word', *Style*, 44, 3 (2010) 328–41. Adapting Seamus Heaney, we read the past to set the darkness echoing.

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Chapter 5
Courtesan Culture in Kyd, Marlowe and Heywood

Unlike their classical antecedents, English dramatists of the 1590s portrayed the courtesan as a socially elevated figure belonging principally to tragedy. Between George Whetstone's two-part *Promos and Cassandra*, Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* and John Lyly's *Campaspe*, works that date to 1584, and Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, performed a decade later during the Christmas season 1594, two plays stand out for their differing depictions of Italianate courtesans. These are Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582–92) and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1588–92). Both of these plays open up for their audience an exotic Mediterranean world of corruption at court, military threat from outside, sexual intrigue and personal motivation for revenge. But in doing so, they also connect with their historical moment in different ways. Kyd's tragedy is famous for its non-mention of the 1588 Armada, which might suggest that it was written before that event, though that inference is inevitably drawn from silence. The earliest surviving imprint of Marlowe's play is an edition by Nicholas Vavasour in 1633 but an entry in the Stationers' Register for 17 May 1594 grants a licence for Nicholas Ling and Thomas Millington to publish 'The famous tragedie of the Riche Jewe of Malta', a curious title given that the story was, it seems, not famous at all. A line in the Prologue declaring, 'now the Guise is dead', indicates that it post-dates the assassination of the French Duke of Guise on 23 December 1588, and Marlowe's death in 1593 provides an obvious *terminus ad quem*. Kyd and Marlowe's plays (I shall take them in that order) depict a particularly rich sixteenth century Mediterranean and Italian culture but those appropriations largely screen out the plays' historical origins. Kyd, I argue, transformed the Italian courtesan into a figure of striking dignity and strength of character. Marlowe was content to follow the pattern established by Aretino and Nashe and depict his courtesan as a Machiavellian schemer. At the end of the century, Thomas Heywood (perhaps writing in collaboration with Michael Drayton and/or Anthony Munday) staged a broadly sympathetic portrayal of a native-born English courtesan in his two-part historical drama *King Edward IV, 1 and 2*. These plays were licensed on 28 August 1599 and printed in 1600 as *The First and Second Partes of King Edward the Fourth*. Unlike Kyd and Marlowe, Heywood went out of his way to draw attention to historical precedents for his story. The title page of his work attracts its audience with a promise to show the king's 'loue to fayre Mistresse Shoare, her great promotion, fall and miserie, and lastly the lamentable death of both her and her husband'. Just six years earlier, the anonymous *True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (1594) had offered to display 'a lamentable ende of Shores wife, an example for all wicked women'. Heywood, it seems, was out to set her record straight.

There is, it has to be said, not much that is obviously Spanish about *The Spanish Tragedy*. The play's resonant little phrase 'pocas pallabris' (3.14.118, parodied by Shakespeare's Stratford tinker, Sly), its character-designations of Castile and Portugal, and its allusion to the Azores island of Terceira (1.3.82-3), are all (besides its title) that locate the play in the Iberian Peninsula. Instead, a good deal of the play is Italian in origin. It has unmistakable Senecan and Ovidian echoes, and its central villain, Lorenzo, is clearly a 'machevil'. There are other Italianate elements too. The nexus of relationships involving Horatio, Bel-imperia, Lorenzo and Balthazar follows a similar arrangement to that described in a French tale set in the Italian city of Mantua, Lombardy, translated by Henry Wotton. The names of Isabella, Serberine and Bazardo appear to derive from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) where they are given as Isabella, Zerbino and Branzardo. A number of verbal parallels between Ariosto's and Kyd's depictions of madness also suggest a connection. Marlowe, Peele and Greene all variously drew on Ariosto, and Kyd had enough Italian to translate Tasso's *The Householder's Philosophy* in 1588, and so, too, to read *Orlando Furioso* in the original, prior to Sir John Harington's English translation of 1591. Nashe had satirized Kyd in his 1589 preface to Greene's *Menaphon* as one of Seneca's 'famished followers' who likes to 'intermeddle with Italian translations' and Kyd's meddling with *Orlando Furioso* would probably date the play to between 1587–90.[1] Sources and dating aside, the most striking Italianate feature of *The Spanish Tragedy* is its transformation of Rome's most renowned courtesan into a fiery and powerful tragic heroine in the figure of Bel-imperia, for Kyd named and partly fashioned his heroine after a Roman woman named Lucrezia Cognati who liked to style herself under the name 'Imperia'.[2] A memorable 1997 Royal Shakespeare Company production of the play, starring Siobhan Redmond as Bel-imperia, presented her character as a combination of the sensual and fiery, at one point leading her lover, Horatio, by hand off the stage. Editors of the play have drawn attention to her foxiness, as though she were a female 'machevil'. She is Amazonian, yet her ferocity is qualified by finesse. The arbour scene (2.4) forms a blissful prelude to the approaching violence, and finds Horatio mildly surprised yet pleased to discover that Bel-imperia is already acquainted with the arts of enticement:

> *Bel-Imperia*: If I be Venus thou must needs be Mars,
> And where Mars reigneth there must need be wars …
> *Bel-Imperia*: Then ward thyself, I dart this kiss at thee.
> *Horatio*: Thus I retort the dart thou threw'st at me.
> *Bel-imperia*: Nay then, to gain the glory of the field,
> My twining arms shall yoke and make thee yield.
> *Horatio*: Nay then, my arms are large and strong withal:
> Thus elms by vines are compass'd till they fall.
> (2.4.34–45)

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[1] See 'Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and *The Spanish Tragedy*', *Notes and Queries*, 38, 1 [236] (1991), 28–9.

[2] See 'Kyd and the Courtesan', *Notes and Queries*, 47, 1 [245] (2000), 43–8.

Bel-imperia's stichomythic courtesies invite him to win 'the glory of the field', and then make Horatio 'yield'. His reply has all the coded eroticism of manly vigour followed by detumescence, her body entwined with his like a vine around an elm. The liaison has been arranged in secret, a trait already established in Don Andrea's opening speech of the play: 'In secret I possess'd a worthy dame, / Which hight sweet Bel-imperia by name' (1.1.10–11). The play carries early hints that Bel-imperia is not entirely singular in her affections: she describes Andrea as 'my garland's sweetest flower' (1.4.4). Even at its most intense and volatile point, when Hieronimo's play 'in sundry languages' is performed before the court, her sexual vitality becomes a joke between the Viceroy and Castile:

> *King*: See, Viceroy, that is Balthazar, your son,
> That represents the emperor Soliman:
> How well he acts his amorous passion.
> *Viceroy*: Ay, Bel-imperia hath taught him that.
> *Castile*: That's because his mind runs all on Bel-imperia.
> (4.4.20–4)

Her suicide in this scene puts an end to the series of parts she has thus far performed, from Andrea's secret mistress or Horatio's Venus, to her role in Hieronimo's tragedy as the 'chaste and resolute' Perseda, lover to Erasto. Throughout, her sensuality has sustained the rivalries of the male protagonists of the Spanish court.

Roughly a decade after Kyd's play, a second Imperia appeared on the Elizabethan stage, this time designated explicitly as a 'curtizan', in the comedy *Blurt, Master Constable* (1602), attributed formerly to Thomas Middleton but more lately (by Thomas L. Berger) to Thomas Dekker. In this work, Violetta and her lover, the French captive Fontinelle, take shelter in Imperia's elaborate bordello as they seek to escape the conspiracies of her overbearing brother. The Imperia in *Blurt* contrasts strongly with Kyd's: she is fussy, over-anxious, breathless and flustered, a prototype perhaps for Congreve's much later Lady Wishfort:

> Flaxen hair, and short too; O, that's the French cut! but fie, fie, fie, these flaxen-haired men are such pulers, and such piddlers, and such chicken-hearts (and yet great quarellers) that when they court a lady they are for the better part bound to the peace! No, no, no, no; your black-haired man (so he be fair) is your only sweet man, and in any service the most active. A banquet, Trivia; quick, quick, quick. (2.2.127–34)

In his critical old-spelling edition, Berger notes that 'the romantic plot of the play re-works *The Spanish Tragedy* into a comedy'. The name of the courtesan, Imperia, he adds, 'alludes satirically to Bel-imperia, the chaste heroine of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*'. Dekker's Imperia, Berger remarks, is of Roman derivation and belongs to a complex textual history: 'Imperia may owe something to the courtesan Talanta in Aretino's *La Talanta,* but she owes at least as much to Chaucer's Wife of Bath and Shakespeare's Doll Tearsheet'.[3] He cites a cryptic remark in Robert Greene's

[3] Ibid., 33.

Blacke Booke's Messenger (licensed 21 August 1592) for this Italian connection: 'Venice, why it is nothing, for they have intelligence from it every houre, & at every worde will come in with Strado Curtizano, and tell you of such miracles of Madam Padilia and Romana Imperia, that you will bee mad tyll you bee out of England'.[4] The quip suggests that Imperia's name was already circulating among London's dramatists as a byword for sensational gossip when Kyd's play was performed by Lord Strange's Men on 14 March 1592 at the Rose.

A small collection of legal documents and a will are all that remain to attest to the actuality of Imperia's life. Apart from these few sources, Imperia exists only as a siren figure in a scattering of literary texts ranging from elegies upon her death to comic tales by Balzac.[5] Nothing certain is known of her appearance or character. A poem written soon after her suicide in 1512 described Imperia's typically Petrarchan 'broad white brow crowned with golden hair', a cliché consonant with Kyd's sparse indications as to the appearance of Bel-imperia (cf. 3.10.89–91). Although Kyd and Dekker seem to have drawn upon little more than a name and reputation for their Imperias, much as Greene had done in his cursory, single reference to her, Kyd was the first early English dramatist to present a real prostitute on the Renaissance stage (a move tentatively followed by Dekker, Webster, and Middleton). Unusually, he was the only playwright to transform such a potentially scandalous figure into a powerful and dignified woman. But by and large, Kyd screens out of the play this historical reality. Lucrezia Cognati was born on 3 August 1481 to a prostitute Diana Cognati. At the age of seventeen, Imperia bore a daughter, also called Lucrezia, whom she placed in the care of nuns at the Convent of St Mario in Campo Marzio: she had a second daughter, Margherita, by the wealthy banker, Agostino Chigi.[6] Her mother, Diana, and stepfather, Paolo Trotti, put their names to a conveyancing document of 1507 in which 'Lucrezia' was made heir to their estate. By 1510, Lucrezia was undertaking property deals

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[4] Ibid., 33, n. 4.

[5] Imperia's will and related legal documents are reproduced in Umberto Gnoli, *Cortigiane Romane, Note e Bibliografla* (Arezzo: Edizioni delfa Rivista, 1941), Appendix, 60–106. See also *Imperiae Panegyricus*, British Library C.57.c.1, (trans. Lynsey Hall; unpublished undergraduate dissertation, University of Chichester, 1997). Imperia is made a fictional character in a number of later works. These include Francisco Delicado, *La Lozana Andalusa* (1528), Books LX and LXII; John Reynolds, *Triumphs of God's Revenge Against the Crying and Execrable Sinne of Murther* (London 1622) [British Library C.59. fo.24]; Honoré de Balzac, 'The Fair Imperia' and The Married Life of Fair Imperia', in *Contes Drolatiques*, trans. Alec Brown (London: Folio, 1961); Hugh Farrie, *Imperia and other prolusions in verse* (Liverpool, 1899). Gnoli's chapter on Imperia is entitled 'La Bella Imperia', op. cit., 40–61. A bibliographical search undertaken with the help of the Bodleian library staff, Oxford, revealed the following entry: 'Carlo Selvagem, "A bela imperia": comedia em 2 actos (1969)'.

[6] See Masson, 34–58; Umberto Gnoli, 46–60; Pio Pecchiai, *Donne del Rinascimento in Roma* (Padua: Cedam, 1958), 11–57; *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Roma, 1982), 638–9.

herself and leasing land under her own name as the 'nobilis mulier d.na Imperia'. A 1511 contract, between Imperia and Aeneas Piccolomini, great-nephew to Pope Pius II, leased a carucate in exchange for her perpetual right to enjoy free, luxurious accommodation, and a plenteous supply of food, wine, and fuel. These terms might only be cancelled upon a generous settlement, or in the event of her, or her daughter's, death. Within two months of this deal, Imperia had bought herself another villa near the Old Appian Way complete with a cottage or barn and a fresh water supply.[7] Her lovers included men of considerable power and some danger. Giacomo Sadoleto and Filippo Beroaldo, rivals with Chigi for her love, both held high office in the Vatican state: Sadoleto as secretary to Leo X, and Beroaldo as prefect of the Vatican Library.[8] In 1506, the Mantuan ambassador reported that a Venetian, Giacomo Stella, had been murdered in Rome by an assassin hired by one Alberto, and that the 'reason for this homicide was due to no other cause but jealousy over a courtesan called Imperia' whom he thought would get off lightly in the affair 'owing to the favour she enjoys among certain cardinals, whom one cannot mention'.[9] Another, Angelo del Bufalo, a friend of the writer Matteo Bandello who met Imperia in Rome in 1506 and composed a novella about her, is said to have provoked her suicide, for on 13 August 1512 Imperia drank poison. Her will, made in the name of 'Imperia de Paris Romana', bequeathed twenty-five ducats to each of her servants and one hundred ducats to her mother, stipulating that the latter 'could claim no more, and that with this she should be fully content and satisfied'. Imperia left dresses and rings to 'a certain Margherita', but all her property to Lucrezia, her daughter, described in the will as 'a chaste and modest virgin, placed and at present residing, in the Venerable Convent of the nuns of S. Maria in Campo Marzio'.[10] Two days later, on 15 August, she died amid a thunderstorm of hail and lightning and was subsequently buried in the church of St. Gregorio on the Coelian Hill, near the Colosseum, as she had requested in her will. The tomb Chigi erected for her bore the following inscription: 'Imperia Cognata Romana / Quae Digna Tanto Nomine / Rarae Inter Homines / Formae Specimen Dedit / Vixit Annos XXXI Does XII / Obiit MDXII DIE XV Avgusti. [Imperia Cognati of Rome / Worthy Of Such A Name / Who Yielded Up A Beauty / Rare Among Mankind / She lived XXXI Years and XII Days / She Died in MDXII On August XV'.[11]

Masson, following Gnoli, conjectured that Imperia committed suicide in a turbulent end of her affair with del Bufalo.[12] But the circumstances of her death are muddied further by lines in a volume of poems by pseudonymous admirers

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7 Masson, 50–51; Gnoli, 55, 67.

8 Masson, 43–5; Pecchiai, 19–21.

9 Masson, 37; Gnoli, 65–6.

10 Gnoli reproduces the Latin text of the testament in full, op. cit., 69–70. Masson gives brief extracts in English translation, here cited, op. cit., 54.

11 Pecchiai, 49; Masson, 55–6.

12 Masson, 54; cf. Gnoli, 57.

containing five panegyrics and two elegies printed in Naples in 1512.[13] These poems make a series of allusions to the classical rapes of Leda, Europa, and Danae, and include a coded denunciation of Pope Julius II, all of which implies (though uncertainly) a belief that Imperia had been the victim of a sexual attack by someone closely associated with the Vatican. In the lament of Germanicus Silvanus, Cytherea (Venus) condemns Julius by name for his mendacity: 'Non sic eripies terris ia numina luli / Certe alias curas subditurus eris. / Fraus tegitur lachrymis … Si tibi fata licet / fatorum / & uiolare statuta / Orbis quis Romae colla subacta dabit?' ['Thus Julius you did not steal the power of the gods from the earth but certainly you have been subdued by other concerns. Deceit is hidden by tears … If it is permitted for you to violate the laws of fate, who will give subdued peoples to the world of Rome?'].[14] If the political allegory here remains veiled, the poem seems none the less to imply a degree of papal culpability in Imperia's death. It is, perhaps, fanciful to imagine that Julius himself, whose mistress Aretino named as Masina, had attacked Imperia in such a manner as to cause her to take her own life, but, whatever the circumstances, the poem ascribes a 'violation' to his name. While rape may not have been an unusual hazard in the life of a prostitute, one might reasonably think that it was hardly less traumatic for a courtesan than for any other woman; and though mediocre Latin poetry may serve as a very poor guide to any sort of historical event, it is at least evidence of a kind.[15]

Matteo Bandello visited Rome in 1506 and later wrote a short novella about Imperia under the following lemma: 'Showing how an action, though in itself uncivil, may be commendable according to time, place and purpose'.[16] Bandello began the piece with a tribute to both Imperia and his friend del Bufalo who was Imperia's lover at the time of her death, an event he skirts around assuming a certain acquaintance with rumour on the part of his readers:

> Methinketh the most part of us know, either by sight or report, who was Imperia, the Roman courtesan, and how fair she was in her time and beloved without end of the greatest and wealthiest men. Amongst others who loved her supremely was Signor Angelo del Bufalo, a man doughty of his person, gallant, debonair and very rich. He kept her many years in his power and was most fervently beloved of her, as her end showed.[17]

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[13] *Imperiae Panegyricus*, BL C.57.c.1, see n. 11 above.

[14] Ibid., sig. C4^{v} (translation by Lynsey Hall).

[15] On Masina, see Aretino, *La prima parte de Ragionamenti di M. Pietro Aretino* ... (London: John Wolfe, 1584), 397; also *I Ragionamenti* (Sampietro Editore, 1975), 262. According to the British Library catalogue, the Wolfe edition is a spurious imprint and probably printed on the continent in the early seventeenth century. See also note 27 below. The entry for 'Cognati, Imperia' in the *Dizionario Biografica*, 639–40, describes the collection of elegies as 'una esercitazione poetica piuttosto fredda, ma un latino abbastanza elegante' ['a rather cold poetical exercise but in quite elegant Latin', trans. Ana Garcia Herraez].

[16] John Payne, *The Novels of Matteo Bandello Bishop of Agen now first done into English Prose and Verse* ..., 6 vols (London: Villon Society, 1890), vi, 22–4.

[17] Ibid., 22.

Bandello's remark that del Bufalo was 'most fervently beloved of her, as her end showed' forms the basis of Gnoli and Masson's conjecture about her suicide. But nothing in the novella imputes culpability regarding her death to del Bufalo. Indeed, Bandello goes into considerable detail to emphasise how lavish this 'mighty and liberal' Roman gentleman had been with his money on Imperia's behalf. Del Bufalo, he writes,

> entertained her in a house most worshipfully arrayed, with many servants, men and women, who applied without cease to her service. The house was furnished and equipped on such wise that whatsoever stranger entered it, seeing the array and ordinance of her servants, thought that a princess dwelt there. Amongst other things was a saloon, a chamber and a closet so pompously adorned that there was nothing to be seen save velvet and brocade and costly carpets underfoot. In the closet, whither she withdrew, when visited by some great personage, the walls were all hung with three-pile cloth of gold, wrought with many fair and goodly embroideries, and surmounted by a cornice, all overlaid with gold and ultramarine, masterly wrought, and adorned with goodly vases of alabaster, porphyry, and serpentine and a thousand other precious matters. About the place were many coffers and presses, all richly carved and of exceeding great price, and in the midst stood a little table, the goodliest in the world, covered with green velvet, whereon still lay a lute or a ghittern and other musical instruments, together with books of music and others, Italian and Latin, richly adorned.[18]

Bandello may be elaborating somewhat but his description of her boudoir clearly illustrates the economic power that distinguished Imperia as a courtesan from the underclass of prostitutes from which she appears to have risen. Imperia 'took no little delight', Bandello reports, in 'vernacular rhymes' and in composing 'sundry sonnets and madrigals', in which she was tutored by Niccolo Campana, nicknamed Strascino. The novella tells of a visit to Imperia's villa by the Spanish ambassador, Enriques de Toledo, who 'marvelled amain at the lady's beauty no less than at the pomp and magnificence [of the place] and abode with her good while'. Later on in the proceedings, the ambassador suddenly felt the need to spit and so turned to his attendant and spat in his face, saying: 'let it not mislike thee, inasmuch as there is no fouler thing here than thy face'. Imperia, Bandello observes, took this remark as a compliment and bade the ambassador spit on a rug she had laid out just for this purpose (and so, it appears that an 'uncivil' action turns out to be 'commendable'). The story, Bandello admits, is probably apocryphal.[19]

A search of documents relating to Imperia's life and death has not disclosed any contemporary reference to her as 'la bella Imperia', though secondary sources frequently use that appellation. Marques de Villa-Urrutia, writing in 1924, stated that, 'en las memorias de su tiempo aparece frecuemente su nombre, acompanado siempre de un encomiastico adjetivo, la gloriosa, la celeberrima, la virtuosa, la

[18] Ibid., 22–3.

[19] Ibid., 23–4.

bellisima, la gentil Imperia' [in the reports of her time, her name appears very often, always together with a praising adjective, the glorious, the most celebrated, the virtuous, the most beautiful, the graceful Imperia].[20] The 1539 dialogue attributed to Aretino, between Zoppino and Ludovico, on 'the life and genealogy of all the courtesans in Rome' bears the comment out. Ludovico disagrees with his friend's view that the wealthy often die miserably: 'I have never seen anybody dying of being rich. I am thinking of the glorious Imperia, whose reputation still survives; you know that she had a nice death, being rich, in her own house and honoured by everybody'.[21] Elsewhere, in the title of a contemporary poem, Pietro de Cicilano, alias de Capadolce, refers to her as the 'pulcherime Imperie'.[22] Versions of a poem by Fausto Evangelista Maddaleno Capodiferro were addressed variously as 'Ad Divam Imperiam' or 'Ad Imperiam augustam'.[23] Kyd may well have been aware of these or similar epithets and hence adopted the full character name, Bel-imperia.

Uniquely, *The Spanish Tragedy* avoids vilification of a celebrated but scandalous woman and instead, transforms her into a character that fuses female pride and sexual inclination in bold yet subtle ways. Bel-imperia is distinctive for her initiative not just in taking more than one lover, but in doing so secretively, and then actively participating in their revenge. More imaginative construct than historical re-creation, Bel-imperia is a rare figure in the social and cultural history of the sixteenth-century courtesan, as it filtered via travellers, diplomats and intelligencers out of Italy and France, and into English dramatic consciousness. Greene's allusion to her occurred by way of warning against the fantastic and improbable tales of strangers and tourists. Kyd's play connects with the scandal of Lucrezia Cognati not only through a shared name but also in her independent female sexual agency, a characteristic Bel-imperia retains without any of the vicious imputations of whoredom one finds in works by comparable dramatists, including Marlowe, Dekker, Marston and Webster. *The Spanish Tragedy* may, like most Renaissance plays, centre on sexual access to its heroine, but it remains unequalled for verve in blending historical reality with fictive femininity.

But it seems that in writing his play, Kyd screened out a more personal and local history. We know relatively little of his early life. His father, Francis, was a scrivener or scribe, lived in Lombard Street in the parish of St. Mary Woolnoth where Thomas was baptized on 6 November 1558, and served as churchwarden in 1575–76. Thomas had a brother named William whose death is recorded in a burial entry in 1602. It is thus of unusual interest that we find a 'Thomas Kydde'

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[20] Marques de Villa-Urrutia, *Cortesanas Italianas del Renacimiento* (Madrid: Fransisco Beltran, 1924), trans. Anna Garcia Herraez.

[21] Aretino, *La prima parte de Ragionamenti di M. Pietro Aretino* … (London: John Wolfe, 1584, spurious imprint), 397; Aretino (Sampietro Editore, 1975), 262; trans. Ana Garcia Herraez.

[22] 'Fundana visio super obitum nimphalis corpusculi pulcherime Imperie excogitate a pres. Pe. De Ciciliano alias de Capadolce' reproduced in Gnoli, 77.

[23] Gnoli, 82.

appearing at Bridewell on 7 April 1576, to answer questions regarding the serving-girl of a Master Gildersand or Gilderson: 'Thomas Kydde sent in by m*aste*r Rigges deputie for that one Johan being late servante w*i*th one Thomas Gildersande dwelling in the p*ari*she of Allhallows was w*i*th childe & she conveyed awaye, he saieth he cannot tell where she is nor who is father of the child she goeth w*i*th'. A warrant was issued to bring in 'Thomas Gilderson & his wife, Thomas Kyddes wife And the olde kydde father to the said Thomas Kydde'.[24] The phrase 'olde kydde' is particularly resonant. Kyd, the dramatist, is not known to have married and would have been only eighteen years old at this time (the age at which Shakespeare married). Six days later, Gilderson's wife, Eleanor, was detained at Bridewell for seeking Kyd out. The governors suspected an improper relationship between the two and it did not take long to draw a confession from them both. Kyd and Eleanor Gilderson made their statements one after another:

> Thomas Kydd saieth that Johan Cowp*er* is at St. Edes [St. Ives] in Huntingdon shier at a midwiffes house and saieth he hath had the use of the bodie of Ellin Gilderson twise, and the First tyme was when hir husband was in Barbarie in hir husbandes owne bedd, and the other tyme about half a yere agoe, beinge aboute hallowtide last in the same place, and also saieth he hathe had the use of the bodie of Johan Cowp*er* twyse, the firste tyme was aboute shroftyde was xii moneth, and the last was aboute whitsontide last in his owne house upon a cheste.
>
> Ellin Gilderson nowe confesseth that the saide Thomas Kydde that had the use of her bodie twise as he hathe confessed in her owne house, & she saieth, it was nev*e*r but twise, and is for this tyme ordered to dep*ar*te uppon condicon that she appere here to morrow.[25]

On the following day, both Kyd and Gilderson made open confession in court, were punished and ordered to avoid each other in future:

> Thomas Kydd hathe confessed that he hathe had the use of the bodies of Johan Cowp*er* and Ellin Gilderson in suche order, as he before hathe confessed, and that he gott the same Johan w*i*th childe and that he putt the same awaie And the saide Tho*mas* Kydd and Ellin Gilderson do bothe of them nowe openlie confesse the same before the Gov*e*rnors, and for the same they bothe had correction, and are ordered not to come in companie together anye more.[26]

'Olde Kidde', father to Thomas, made his appearance in court the same day to hear his son again confess to his misdemeanours and witness the court's demands that 'Johan Cowp*er*s childe shall be kepte from the charge of the Citie, and to be of

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[24] BCB 2.250^{v}.

[25] Ibid., 252^{v}.

[26] Ibid., 253^{r}.

good behavior', and that 'Will*ia*m Kydd haberdasher and Thomas Kydd Cowp*er*' are 'bounde in xx li for the p*er*formance of the saide condicons'.[27]

Kyd and Gilderson seem to have found each other irresistible, even if the former seems to have made most of the running. Employment of servants drastically reduced domestic and personal privacy, and Kyd ultimately appears unable to have kept his movements from notice. About two years later, he was once more in Bridewell, suspected again of paying rather more attention than was proper to Eleanor Gilderson. Edie Bradley, a serving-girl now out of the Gildersons' employ, felt free to speak her mind when she testified before the governors on 3 June 1578 (see Figure 5.1):

> Edie Bradley late servant w*i*th Thomas Gilderson at Freshe wharffe being exa*min*ed she sayeth that one Thomas kidde a Cowp*er* doth resort often to her m*ist*ris and giveth her combes and whissells and other things the said kidde often frequenteth her companye in the feildes and other places she sayeth that before Christmas a good while he came up unto her m*ist*ris chamber to her m*ist*ris when her m*aste*r was gone forth and when her m*aste*r came up he crepte under the bedde.

Bradley reported that, on another occasion, when her master had gone out to 'ringe in the morninge', she awoke to find that Kyd had entered the bed-chamber and was kneeling beside her sleeping mistress. She reported that, since his last detention, Kyd had frequented the house and taken Mistress Gildersand to an ale-house at Tower Hill, where they spent time alone together. She recalled further that when her mistress was drying clothes in the fields, 'the said kidde woulde come often tyme and bringe rost meate and fodde w*i*th him and wine to her m*ist*ris'.[28] At a hearing held that afternoon, Kyd denied the allegations and, for her part, Gilderson denied 'every poynete of it' too. The case stretched into June with Bradley adding to her testimony, alleging before Kyd's face that 'an other tyme kidde beinge in the chamber w*i*th her m*ist*ris her masters brother came up and kidde hidde him on the side of the bedde under her masters free gowne'. Again, Kyd was ordered to avoid Gilderson's company.[29] This is the last we hear of Kyd in Bridewell, hiding under the bed or a gown and pursuing a woman who undoubtedly encouraged his attentions, although the prison will feature again in the life of the dramatist.[30] But do these cases refer to a youthful, 'sporting' Thomas Kyd, future writer and author of *The Spanish Tragedy*? Nashe famously if cryptically alluded to him as one who left 'the trade of *Nouerint*' [scrivener] but the dramatist is not known

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[27] Ibid., 255r.

[28] BCB 3.315r.

[29] Ibid., 318r. Page numbers are duplicated at this folio: citation is from the second folio marked 318.

[30] See Rebekah Owens, 'Thomas Kyd and the Letters to Puckering', *Notes and Queries* 53, 4 (2006), 458–61 for reasoned doubt regarding the orthodox view that Kyd was tortured in Bridewell after his arrest in 1593.

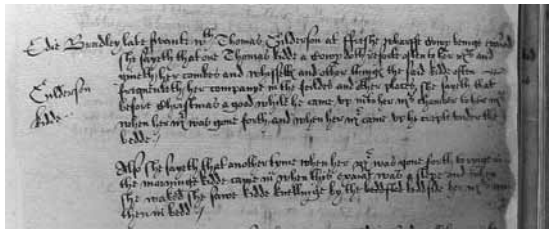

Fig. 5.1 The testimony of Edie Bradley, 3 June 1578, BCB 3.315[r] (by kind permission of the Bethlem Art and History Collections Trust).

to have been a 'cooper'. Nor is he known to have married. Unfortunately, the wife mentioned in the case fails to make an appearance at these hearings. He is known to have had a brother named William but his father, Francis, was too young plausibly to be called 'olde kidde'. The account books for the coopers' company, 1529–71, list a Thomas Kyd making irregular quarterly payments of between 'xvi[d]' and 'iiii[s]' in the years 1570–78. In these records, Kyd is listed as a 'free journeyman', one who has served an apprenticeship but has yet to set himself up as a master cooper in his own right. Kyd, the dramatist, could not have completed his apprenticeship by 1570 at the age of twelve years. Crucially, there was another, slightly older Thomas Kyd to whom these entries may refer. The charred parish registers of Christ Church Greyfriars, Newgate, record in very faint and water-damaged ink a marriage on 31 August 1562 between Margaret Keyle and Thomas Kyd. This couple baptized a son, William, on 10 September 1564, and a daughter, Margaret, on 12 October 1567 in the same parish. The Kyds and the Keyles (or Keales) were close neighbours. Lombard Street, where the dramatist grew up, was home to several goldsmiths' shops, one of which was owned by Hugh Keale, who served alongside Francis Kyd in 1575 as churchwarden in the parish of St. Mary Woolnoth. Living in a well-to-do area, the Kyds and Keales shared the same street and worshipped at the same church. In 1578, the estate of another goldsmith, Henry Gainsford, deceased, was disputed by a group of tenants including Francis Kyd and Hugh Keale. The St. Mary Woolnoth registers show the baptism of a Margaret Kele, daughter of John Keale, on 28 January 1553, making her too young to be the woman who married only nine years later but indicating the family name. The same registers show that John Keale died on 1 November 1574, 'out of Hugh Keyle his house'.[31] There seems sufficient evidence to render plausible a marriage between the Kyd and Keale families, and therefore to assume that the two Thomas Kyds were probably related and knew each other: they were perhaps uncle and nephew. At the impressionable age of 18, the dramatist is likely to have been aware of a family scandal. When, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, the dramatist refers to Horatio's father as 'old Hieronimo (1.4.135; 3.4.12) and the 'hard hap

[31] LMA, Ms. 9264 (microfilm).

of old Hieronimo' (4.1.198), perhaps somewhere in the background, he may well have recalled the hard hap of 'olde kidde'.[32]

If Kyd's was the first English play to represent a real prostitute on the English stage (and do so in a radically new way), Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* furnished the earliest dramatic representation of the venal continental courtesan. While Kyd seems by and large to have filtered scandalous history out of his play, Marlowe subtly writes it back in. Half-way through the play, Bellamira and her cut-purse pimp Pilia-Borza set about manipulating Ithamore, Barabas's Thracian manservant, into fleecing his master. Sold at a slave auction of Turks and Arabs, Ithamore is unmistakably coded as a black man, signalled in the latter half of his name. Bellamira and her bully first enter at the start of Act Three,[33] directly after Abigail, Barabas's Christian daughter, has left the stage, and just before Mathias's mother, Katherine, appears onstage. Evidently, Bellamira's part cannot have been doubled with these roles and so, with a neat Marlovian irony, the actor playing Bellamira had in all likelihood been onstage earlier as the Abbess or as the nun in the play's second scene. Casting would usually be a matter for the company (in this case the Lord Admiral's Men at the Rose) rather than the writer, but Marlowe may well have planned for this possibility. If he did, Friar Jacomo's words in Scene 2 to Abigail, and her address to the Abbess and nun, all apparently innocent, become charged with sexual irony: 'madam, this house / and waters of this new made nunnery / will much delight you' … 'Grave madam, and you, happy virgin's guide' (2.309–13). Bellamira explains that before these leaner days she could charge 'a hundred ducats' for 'one bare night'. The Turkish siege has made custom scarce and, she declares, 'against my will I must be chaste' (3.1.1–4). Pilia-Borza (the name effectively means 'cut-purse') supplies her with money he has stolen by climbing the Jew's counting-house walls and using hooks through the open windows. This technique, of using an 'yron hook' to lift items from windows is described by Thomas Harman in *A Caveat for Common Cursetors* (1567), and again in *The groundworke of conny-catching* (published in 1592). The technique was not just imagined. In the spring of 1603, a boy named Thomas Haskins, also known as 'little Tom', was arrested 'for a cut purse and a pick pocket a hooker a creeper in at windowes'.[34] In other cases, children served instead of hooks. Sixteen-year-old William Hobbs was prosecuted in 1605 for using six-year-old Phillipp Mittern to steal from houses, 'for that the said Hobbs did putt the child in at a wyndoe in to a gent*leman*s chamber in the Temple where they pilfered divers things'.[35] Shakespeare seems to have had such stories in mind when he wrote of Cesario's 'perfections' creeping in at Olivia's eyes (*Twelfth Night*, 1.5.286–8), as though Cupid were another 'little Tom' or Phillipp Mittern stealing under eyelids and filching ladies' hearts. In any event, courtesans and cut-purses were likely to

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32 'Hard is the hap of old Hieronimo', *The Spanish Tragedy* (4.1.198).

33 See T. W. Craik (ed.) *The Jew of Malta* (London: Ernest Benn, 1966), 54, n.1.

34 BCB. 4.369^{v} (18 April 1603).

35 BCB 4.32^{v} (29 May 1605).

keep company: 'Richard burrows a boye is a cutt purse and he robbed a cobblers shoppe at Temple barre & is sometymes in the fields and sometymes in the gardens with whores'.[36]

Bellamira's first words draw attention to a vogue for associating sex, learning, money and travel. With boasts that she could bring in 'a hundred ducats' a night, and that her boy-actor's 'beauty doth not fail', Marlowe constructs her as a figure of satire: 'From Venice merchants, and from Padua / Were wont to come rare-witted gentlemen, / Scholars, I mean, learned and liberal' (3.1.2–8). Ithamore has only to see her to confide in the audience, 'I know she is a courtesan by her attire' and fall immediately and stupidly in love with her (3.1.26–7). In an essay on her costume, Randall Nakayama has pointedly asked, 'What was she wearing?'[37] The playing company is likely to have signalled her wealth or elevated social status by sartorial display that contravened sumptuary laws against excessive expenditure, regulations partly designed to prevent prostitutes from attiring themselves as women of 'quality'. Georgina Masson cites a prose dialogue that testifies to the self-assertiveness of power-dressed courtesans. In *La Puttana Errante* (date unknown) probably written by Lorenzo Venier but collected among Aretino's dialogues in its 1660 imprint, Madalena and Giulia enviously discuss the rich attire of the courtesan 'La Tortora' (the Turtledove):

> Did you see La Tortora's wonderful clothes when she went to S. Agostino? I didn't know her, I thought she was a baroness. She had two manservants and a page walking in front of her, and a young man beside her, talking to her, who was dressed in velvet. And did you see the way her hair was done? It looked like one mass of curled gold on top of another. And that black velvet and gold robe, with gold cords interlaced over the velvet, and velvet ones over the gold. The work alone must have cost the world. And her rings and pearls and the necklaces, and all the other beautiful things she had?

Guilia replies that she had indeed noted this spectacle, which was all the more extraordinary because she recalled having seen La Tortora previously 'in an old sack of a dress, with her hands and ankles dirty, wearing old house slippers without heels'.[38]

A stage courtesan would require dress appropriate to her character. Henslowe's *Diary* shows that costumes for women's parts could be lavish, and eye-catching: 'j lane [lawn] robe with spangells' and 'j womenes gown of cloth of gowld'. Henslowe records no specific dress for *The Jew of Malta*, noting only payments of five pounds to Robert Shawe and 'Mr Jube' [Edward Juby?] to 'bye divers

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[36] BCB 2.295^{v} (27 April 1575).

[37] Randall Nakayama, '"I know she is a courtesan by her attire": Clothing and Identity in *The Jew of Malta*' in Sarah Munson Deats and Robert A. Logan (eds.) *Marlowe's Empery, Expanding His Critical Contexts* (London and Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2002), 150–63, 150.

[38] Georgina Masson, op. cit., 29.

things for the Jewe of malta' (19 May 1601) and ten shillings to 'the little taylle r for more things for the Jewe of malta'.[39] The 'little taylor' had undertaken work for Henslowe since at least 1597 when he worked on costumes for the now lost play *Alice Pierce.* Alice Pierce was a historical figure, the mistress ('concubine' or strumpet, according to different sixteenth century commentators) to Edward III in his declining years. John Stow describes her as having sat in the King's Bench Consistory courts 'perswading and disswading in defence of matters'.[40] She procured the banishment or imprisonment of knights and counsellors she detested and, according to one possibly embellished account, stole rings from the fingers of the dying monarch.[41] On 8 December 1597, Henslowe had paid the Admiral's men twenty shillings to buy from the 'little tayller (also known as 'Radford') 'tafetie & tynsell' to make two bodices for 'a womones gowne to play allece perce'.[42] Hal, in *1 Henry IV*, taunts Falstaff for his associations with 'leaping-houses', 'bawds' and 'a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta' (1.2.9–10), and Lavatch, the Clown, in *All's Well That Ends Well* (2.2.21), reels off a quip about the price of venereal disease ('your French crown') caught from women of the street ('your taffeta punk'). So it seems likely that Bellamira's costume, perhaps supplied over the years by the little tailor, would have been made from 'tufed tafitie',[43] the same material used for the part of Alice Pierce. It was a desirable fabric, and occasionally used in payment for sex. Robert Bradley, serving-man, confessed that he had enjoyed the body of Anne Turte at Worcester House, and given her 'a yarde of fine taffeta, and to the housekeeper, Mistress Higgens, 'iii yards of black doble mockadoe'. He also paid off one Mistress Lee with a quarter of a yard of 'wrought vell*v*et.'[44] Three days later, William Mekyns testified that a merchant from Bath kept a woman at the Bell inn St. John's Street who, 'with noe lande or lyving', recently bought herself two 'sewtes of apparel of silke'. The same day, Bradley explained that he gave a woman an 'ell of taffeta' to make a hat, and another for sleeves, in payment for her services.[45] Caught up in an evening's merriment at an inn, Margaret Forster was prosecuted in 1601 with two other women for 'dawnceing at the main taverne by

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[39] R.A. Foakes (ed.) *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 2nd edition), 170.

[40] John Stow, *The chronicles of England from Brute vnto this present yeare of Christ. 1580. Collected by Iohn Stow citizen of London* (London: 1580), 467.

[41] Sir Richard Baker, *A chronicle of the Kings of England, from the time of the Romans goverment [sic] unto the raigne of our soveraigne lord, King Charles containing all passages of state or church, with all other observations proper for a chronicle / faithfully collected out of authours ancient and moderne, & digested into a new method* (London: 1643), 180.

[42] Foakes, *Henslowe's Diary,* 73.

[43] Ibid., 107.

[44] BCB 3.31v (30 June 1576).

[45] BCB 3.34r (3 July 1576).

the Spittle together with caveleers being all of them druncke'. She was familiarly known as 'Taffety Meg'.[46]

Bellamira's finery bedazzles Ithamore, but her sweet, flirtatious words win him entirely. She pretends she can contain herself no longer, as though she has all this while been keeping her appetites barely under control: 'Though woman's modesty should hale me back, / I can withhold no longer; welcome, sweet love' (4.2.50–2). Editions that print Ithamore's response as an aside ('Now am I clean, or rather foully, out of the way') invite, or perhaps worse, induce laughter at his blackness, a laughter Marlowe perhaps intended.[47] White Bellamira dallies with her black lover in a scene designed to shock, a scene Shakespeare will echo with Tamora and Aaron in the second act of *Titus Andronicus*: 'Now, gentle Ithamore, lie in my lap. / Where are my maids? Provide a running banquet; / Send to the merchant, bid him bring me silks; / Shall Ithamore, my love, go in such rags? (4.2.88–91). Bellamira's teasing, insouciant charm, raising him to the status of a *generosus* or gentleman, has Ithamore spellbound, and Marlowe pushes the joke, with all its racist undertones, as far as it may go: 'I have no husband, sweet, I'll marry thee' (4.2.85). The offer transforms Ithamore from dullard to classically-trained scholar: 'I'll be thy Jason, thou my golden fleece … I'll be Adonis, thou shalt be Love's Queen' (4.2.96, 100).[48] They feast and have sex (presumably): 'Come amorous wag, first banquet and then sleep' (4.2.131). The scandal of the scene is multiplied: a single white woman taking an unmarried dark man, a whore taking a Turk, and a mistress taking a servant and making him 'gentle'. Marlowe, it seems, was no friend of aliens, if the joke about 'Lopus' being no doctor in *Dr. Faustus* and the Dutch Church libel of May 1593 signed 'Tamberlane' are anything to go by.[49] This mockery of an ignorant black serving-man was very likely to have been topical, for Ithamore was not the only black servant adrift in a strange new, predominantly white and bewildering world. The infamous Jane Trosse kept company with 'a felowe in a lyon tawnye cote', one Master Kimpton's man who gave her an eel pie, and Myles 'a little blacke felowe' who was 'Master Osbornes man'. Bawdy house owner Rose Brown was reported to have 'had dyvers s*er*vinge men blackamores and other p*er*sons resort to her house while this Elizabeth dwelt ther'.[50] Black servants were probably regarded as exotic, especially in wealthy households. The wedding of Lord Hunsdon's daughter

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[46] BCB 4.229[r] (7 April 1601).

[47] There is no 'aside' stage direction in the 1633 Quarto at this point. Both N.W. Bawcutt and T.W. Craik give the line as an aside in their respective Revels and New Mermaid editions of the play.

[48] For the black-face tradition in early comedy see Robert Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 24–62.

[49] The libel is transcribed and discussed in Arthur Freeman, 'Marlowe, Kyd and the Dutch Church Libel', *English Literary Renaissance* , 3 (1973), 44–51.

[50] For Myles the 'litle blacke felowe' see BCB 3.184[v] (13 March 1576/7). For Rose Browne, see BCB 3.277[r] (15 January 1577).

Elizabeth Carey to Thomas Berkeley in 1596 has been suggested as a possible occasion for the earliest performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1600, Berkeley set off on a grand tour through France to 'Rome, Naples, Venice, and many other the cheifest cities of those States and Kingdomes', and left his wife to run the household affairs.[51] In January 1600/1, she ordered a black serving-maid to be whipped at Bridewell for truancy: 'Augustina Patra A blackamore s*er*vant to the Lady Berkeley sent in by her warrant was ponished for running away d*i*verse tymes'.[52] Two years later, Roger Holgate, servant to Thomas Browne, a hatmaker, confessed to having 'committed with his fellowe a blackamoor in the house the abominable synne of whoredome'. Having made her pregnant, he was punished and required to put in sureties to 'discharge the Cittie and p*ar*ishe of the childe and children'.[53] On 19 March 1605/6, another young black woman, probably a merchant's servant, testified that 'one John Edwards' who boarded at her master's house had sex with her twice and that she now carried his child.[54] Young black men and women arrived in London from trading ships docked in ports around the country. Paul Bayning was one of London's leading merchants and, but for his wife's affair with one of Drake's captains (for which Bayning pursued her relentlessly through the courts), might have been elected lord mayor. In his will, he left £5 'instructing Anthony my Negro in the principles of the Christian faith and religion when he shalbe fitt to be baptised'. It seems that Anthony was not his only black retainer. In 1608, 'Abell a Blackamore', described as 's*er*vant to Master Paule Bannying', was kept at work at Bridewell until a further hearing. Ten days later, he was whipped and detained 'for stubbornnes beinge incorrigable'.[55] Other black people appearing in court included 'Phillip Moore a Neigro' who 'useth to sell brooms' in Southwark but was now caught begging, and Mary Dane or Darne 'a Negro', 'Rachell Moore a Blackamore' and 'John a Blackamore', whose occupations are not recorded. The sardonic humour of Marlowe's set-piece scene depends not so much upon miscegenation, itself a not unknown aspect of London life, as upon the dark servant's infatuation with his fair mistress, a courtesan. In a subsequent scene, Marlowe highlights their erotic, transgressive and satirical potential as they play with coins they have extracted from Barabas, carelessly spilling them like Jove over Danae in a shower of gold. When Ithamore closes the scene with a wish to 'tumble' in Bellamira's 'incony lap', Marlowe creates a

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[51] See J. Maclean (ed.) *The Berkeley Manuscripts: The Lives of the Berkeleys, by John Smyth* (Gloucester: Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society, 1883), 399.

[52] BCB 4.209^{v} (21 January 1600/1). The name 'Patra' is intriguing, an abbreviation perhaps of an English moniker – Cleopatra. Might a black child at Berkeley House in Clerkenwell, a place Shakespeare is likely to have known well, have generated the idea of the Indian changeling boy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

[53] BCB 4.344^{r}, (5 January 1602/3).

[54] BCB 5.94^{v}.

[55] For Paul Bayning, see Ian Archer's entry in *ODNB*. The case of 'Abell a Blackamore' is given in BCB 5.334^{r} (22 March 1608/9) and BCB 5.337^{r} (1 April 1609).

neologism. Shakespeare noted it, and liked it enough to put it twice into the mouth of Costard in *Love's Labour's Lost* (3.1.132 and 4.1.141). No previous writer is known to have used the word 'incony', which means, in Marlowe's context, fine, delicate or attractive. And yet, true to the scene's satire, it was an adjective that positively invited mispronunciation.

Any single, principal source for *The Jew of Malta*, if there ever was one, remains unknown. Bellamira – her name perhaps taken from Spenser's proud and disdainful Mirabella in Book VI of *The Fairie Queene*, or an Italian-English rendering of Villon's 'La Bel Heaulmiere' – was Marlowe's version of Nashe's cunning continental courtesan, and evidently designed to cause a sensation. It is likely that her assertiveness would have scandalized. For a character who speaks relatively few lines, Bellamira wields a notably disproportionate power in the last three acts of the play. Spicing up an already sharp confection of mercenary attitudes, Bellamira extorts money from a usurer (and Jew) and so to that extent plays the audience to her side of villainy. She has the skills of a hustler and the knowing sophistication of a *sensualist*, a versatility her antecedents lacked. The rumbustious Meretrix in Thomas Preston's *Cambyses, King of Persia* (Greg's date, 1569) is a home-grown knockabout figure, a woman not averse to boxing men's ears or beating them in the street. But unlike that play's Vice, Ambidexter, and unlike Marlowe's Bellamira, Preston's Meretrix is no cheat or extortionist. George Whetstone had similarly portrayed an English rustic in his courtesan 'Lamia' for a two-part tragic-comedy *Promos and Cassandra* (1578), although the play probably never reached the stage. John Lyly, as we have noted, gave a brief penultimate scene to the classical courtesan Lais in the penultimate scene of his *moste excellent comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes* (1584) but his Lais lacks those arts of dissimulation and entrapment that belong to the acquisitive Italianate courtesan. It was Marlowe's Bellamira who defined the role, outrageously dressed in taffeta, velvet and brocade, dandling a moorish buffoon in her silken lap and discomfiting the audience by giving him status and offering him marriage.

Heywood's two-part *King Edward IV* reminded that scandalous women belonged to English cultural history too. At the centre of this two-part work is Jane Shore, the king's long-suffering concubine. The story of Jane Shore had circulated in a number of versions since Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard III*, written around 1513–18.[56] The prodigious writer Thomas Churchyard penned a broadly sympathetic verse account of 'Howe Shores wife, Edwarde the fowerths concubine, was by king Richarde despoyled of all her goodes, and forced to do open penance', set in her own voice, a work that was included in the second part of *The Mirror For Magistrates* in 1563. Thomas Deloney wrote a ballad-sketch

[56] More's account was first printed by Thomas Payne for William Sheares in 1641 as part of *The historie of the pitifull life,* and unfortunate death of Edward the fifth, and the then Duke of Yorke, his brother: with the troublesome and tyrannical government of usurping Richard the third, and his miserable end.

of her in *The Garland of Good Will*, published eventually in 1628. Anthony Chute penned a lengthy confessional verse in Shore's voice, printed in 1593, and Michael Drayton contributed his own exchange of verse epistles between Jane Shore and Edward IV in 1597.[57] Drayton's Jane disavows comparison with the elite women of the continent: she cannot 'In fashion follow the Venetian Dame, / Nor the fantastick French to imitate,/ Attir'd halfe Spanish, halfe Italionate; / Nor wast, nor curle, body nor brow adorne,/ That is in Florence, or in Genoa borne' (L2^{v}). Jane Shore, it seems, was England's own. An anonymous play printed in 1594 by Thomas Creede entitled *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* announced on its title page that the play also contained the 'lamentable ende of Shores wife, an example for all wicked women'. This was a work from the Queen's Men's repertoire and it depicted 'Mistress Shore' in the period of her demise after Edward's death. Perhaps recalling Churchyard or Chute, a friend named Lodowick deserts her (even though she has secured him land), saying: 'I will shun her company and get me to my chamber and there set down in heroicall verse, the shameful end of a Kings Concubin' (E2^{r}). Abandoned and spurned, she is told, 'thy wicked and naughtie life hath undone thee' (E3^{v}). Her final speech is a brief soliloquy denouncing Richard of Gloucester and pleading, 'Therefore sweet God forgiue all my foule offence: / And though I have done wickedly in this world, / Into hell fire, let not my soule be hurld' (E3^{v}).

Anxieties concerning English women who sought to emulate the fashions and inclinations of their Italian counterparts surfaced once more a year after Heywood's play was printed, in Andrew Willet's *An antilogie or counterplea …* (1603) which petitioned the new king to remove minor church ceremonies causing offence to puritan factions within the Church of England. Willet, a Cambridge-educated defender of the Elizabethan settlement, set out to answer point by point a Roman antagonist. What starts ostensibly as a religious disagreement quickly becomes tangled up with English nationalism. Willet posits the straw argument that since English women aspire to dress like Italians, so they should worship like them too, in order to demolish it: '… because the Ladyes of England in their daylie and new deuices, esteeme it not dishonorable to learne of the Ladyes of Italy, France, Spaine, and Rome: … therefore they should imitate them in their religion'. His answer is, fairly predictably, that the getting of bastards and courtesans 'were both more vsuall in the popish Church'. It is true, he concedes, that many English kings 'had their concubines, Ethelbald his Iudith: Edgar had his Elfleda: Henry the 2. his Rosamund: Edward the 3. his Alicia: Edward the 4. Iane Shore', but the example set by the papacy is so much the worse:

> How many of their vnholie fathers the Popes haue been infamous for their concubines and bastards? Sergius the 3. had a concubine called Marozia: Iohn the 10. Theodora: Gregor. 7. Matilda: Alexander the 6. had Iulia Farnesia: Leo 10. Magdalena: Paulus 3. Laura: Sixtus the 4. did erect stewes for both sexes:

[57] For these versions of the 'Jane' Shore story, see Maria M. Scott, Re-presenting "Jane" Shore: Harlot and Heroine (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 12–47.

> Paulus the third had 30. thousand harlots in Rome in a catalogue, of whome was gathered to their ghostlie fathers vse a monthlie rent. And as for bastards, they abounded in that holie See: Iohn the 10. was bastard sonne to Pope Landus. Iohn the 11. the son of Sergius the 3. by the famous strumpet Marozia: Innocentius the 8. had 16. bastards, whom he openly acknowledged for his children, whereas before they vsed to call the their nephews: Alexander the 6. had also diuers basely begotte, as Caesar Borgia, another Duke of Candie, and Iuffredus: Paulus the 3. had a wicked sonne like the father, Petrus Aloisius: Bloudie Bonner here in England had diuers base children, to whom he gaue in farme diuers of the lands belonging to his See. An hundred such examples might be shewed of popish Prelates, that kept their concubines, and filled the Church with bastardie.[58]

Bloody [Edmund] Bonner' had been Mary Tudor's bishop of London, and a zealous opponent of protestant heresy in the mid-1550s. Alert to the ever-dangerous enemy within, Willet even suggests that a Jesuit-sponsored 'familie of loue' is continuing the wickedness.

Willet's text follows the name for Shore popularised in Heywood's two plays. Historically, her first name was Elizabeth, and she was born a Londoner and married to William Shore, a mercer, from whom she separated on grounds of his impotence in 1476. Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard the Thirde* provides a detailed description of her. She was the 'meriest' of Edward's concubines, but he declines to name the other two. In More's account, her marriage had broken down when Edward first 'required her'.[59] She was, More suggests, short but 'proper' and 'fair', a woman of comely appearance, yet he also unflatteringly adds, 'some that now se her (for yet she liueth) deme her neuer to haue ben wel visaged. Whose iugement semeth me somwhat like, as though men should gesse the bewty of one longe before departed, by her scalpe taken out of the charnel house: for now is she old lene, withered & dried vp, nothing left but ryuilde skin & hard bone'.[60] She could read and write well, she was merry in company, quick-witted and 'sometime taunting without displeasure not without disport'. Of the many women he enjoyed, Edward loved her, More writes, but so too did the people. More explains that, 'she delited not men so much in her bewty, as in her plesant behauiour' and goes on to add that she acted generously on behalf of those who petitioned the king: 'she stode many men in gret stede, either for none, or very smal rewardes, & those rather gay then rich: either for that she was content with the dede selfe well done,

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[58] Andrew Willet, *An antilogie or counterplea to An apologicall (he should haue said) apologeticall epistle published by a fauorite of the Romane separation* (London: 1603), 242–3.

[59] *The workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellour of England, wrytten by him in the Englysh tonge,* (London: 1557), 56. Citations are from William Rastell's 1557 English translation. Rastell was More's nephew and published several of More's works.

[60] John Speed repeats this description in *The history of Great Britaine under the conquests of ye Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans …* (London: 1611), 704.

or for that she delited to be suid vnto, & to show what she was able to do wyth the king, or for that wanton women and welthy be not alway couetouse'. More argues that although some will think his digression on Shore's wife 'to sleight a thing, to be written of & set amonge the remembraunces of great matters', the greatness of her fall is worth remembering. With some charitable feeling, he concludes: 'shee beggeth of many at this daye liuing, that at this day had begged if she had not bene'.[61]

Heywood largely recreates More's sympathetic picture of Mistress Shore, adding to its pathos by giving her husband a substantial role and making him an attentive and caring outsider, forced to look on from a distance at her infidelity. Later, in *Part Two*, when he is on the point of death at the gallows, Jane rides valiantly to his rescue and the couple are at last reunited. From the first, we see the Shores as a close couple together at a banquet with the mayor of London. They are joined by Edward and his lords where the king is struck by her beauty. Edward later disguises himself and visits her in her goldsmith's shop. After a series of pleasantly leading exchanges, Edward reveals himself and the couple realise they must be forced apart by the king's apparent demand. Heywood invents a companion for Jane, a Mistress Blage, who counsels her and gains by her, but who will, in the second part, cruelly forsake her. As the king's mistress, Jane enters 'ladylike attired, with diverse supplications in her hand'. Heywood makes Jane's benevolent interventions and her determination to prevent corruption central to her role. She refuses Rufford's suit to export grain instead of feeding the hungry poor at home (*Part One*, Sc. 23, 62–9). The sequel depicts Edward's military adventures in France, Jane's reconciliation with the Queen, Edward's death and Jane's pathetic demise under threats from Richard of Gloucester. The play's later scenes recall Shakespeare's *Richard III*, especially in its treatment of the two young princes in the Tower. Towards the end, Jane's exchanges with her husband Matthew approach melodrama. Rejected and destitute (Mistress Blage denounces her as a 'strumpet quean', *Part Two*, Sc. 18, 205), she is forced to walk the streets in a white sheet 'with her hair about her ears and in her hand a wax taper'. Heywood restores some justice by reducing Mistress Blage in subsequent scenes to a common beggar, and generates sympathy through Master Shore's 'relief' for his starving wife. The couple reunite in their final scene with a 'sweet married death', Shore kissing her as she expires (*Part Two*, Sc. 22, 102). By the end of the play, Heywood, perhaps in collaboration with others, has made Jane Shore a character about whom the audience will care. The play carries no hint of conventional disapproval for her conduct; indeed it goes a good way towards exculpating her and restoring her reputation in the manner of Shakespeare's *Lucrece*.[62] Heywood,

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[61] Ibid., 57.

[62] Scott writes, 'Heywood never lets us, or Shore herself, forget that she is a [*sic*] adultress. If that aspect of her is enhanced, however, so is her charity. Heywood actually shows us examples of Shore's benevolence, some of which have clearly political implications', op. cit., 65.

like Drayton, shows the English rather attached to, indeed proud of, their own courtesans, far preferring them to those shameful, irreligious hussies across the seas. But it was not a view that everyone shared. A 1620 broadsheet, now held in the British Library, composed in couplets and adorned with a woodcut engraving of Shore finely attired and carrying 'plumes as wantons doe', announced itself as having been 'set forth for an example to all lewd women'.[63] The English courtesan would continue to have a contested history.

[63] *The wofull lamentation of Mistris Iane Shore a goldsmiths wife of London, sometimes K. Edwards concubine, who for her wanton life came to a most miserable end. Set forth for an example to all lewd women. To the tune of Liue with me* (London, 1620).

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Chapter 6
Shakespeares, the Clerkenwell Madam and Rose Flower

Sixteenth century Italian courtesan culture made the cities of Rome and Venice renowned for the delights they might afford male travellers, and turned a small number of women – among them Imperia, Tullia d'Aragona and Veronica Franco – into international celebrities. But the legendary status of a handful of personalities should not eclipse the fact that the lives of most courtesans were marked by abandonment, rape, poverty, disease and prosecution. Tessa Storey's observation that, '[d]espite the hubbub of activity, the majority of people in Rome lived in poverty and were always vulnerable to the next famine or wave of infectious disease', would probably apply to most of Europe's major cities, including Venice and London.[1] The 1570s saw 'savage epidemics of bubonic plague and typhus' that drastically reduced the population in Venice.[2] According to Monica Chojnacka, many Venetian women may have owned property, generated income, or made successful requests and petitions, yet 'the lives of working women were difficult, plagued by poverty, disease, over-crowding, and crime'.[3] City authorities in London, Rome and Venice did their best to control and suppress illicit sexual activity, but it was a task undertaken with varying degrees of failure. There was much to regulate. As Storey explains, because prostitutes paid taxes and other duties, their income generated municipal revenues. In vain, the papacy attempted in the summer of 1566 to remove prostitutes from the centre of Rome, meeting sustained opposition from the '*Popolo Romano*', a lay civic body that oversaw Rome's routine administration. Opposition to Pius V's project to relocate Rome's prostitutes to a less desirable district and compel them to wear signs of their 'profession' resulted in deadlock. In the end, an uneasy compromise was reached, with a number prostitutes relocated to designated *luoghi* or 'spaces', especially the Campo Marzio district. Storey's analysis of the prostitute demographic of Rome towards the end of the sixteenth century shows that while many were crammed into these allocated streets, the wealthiest continued to live in the more elegant areas from which they had been officially prohibited.[4]

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[1] Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce*, 59. For civic orders regulating brothels and prostitutes in Venice, see David Chambers and Brian Pullan (eds.) *Venice, A Documentary History, 1450–1630* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 120–123, 126–7, 189, 213, 237.

[2] Brian Pullan, 'Occupations and Investments of the Venetian Nobility in the Middle and Late Sixteenth Century' in J.R. Hale (ed.) *Renaissance Venice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 381.

[3] Monica Chojnacka, *Working Women in Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 139.

[4] Storey, op. cit., 67–94.

London's civic apparatus similarly struggled with a constant problem of rounding up and punishing prostitutes, largely because as soon as one group or bawdy house was closed down, another would unsurprisingly take its place. England had a history of renowned court mistresses – Jane (Elizabeth) Shore, Alice Pierce and Anne Boleyn – all of whom featured in plays written and performed in Shakespeare's lifetime, but it was only Aemilia Lanyer (née Bassano) who left behind imaginative writing that would secure her fame. She has been famously linked with Shakespeare, notably by A.L. Rowse who proclaimed her as the long-mysterious 'Dark Lady' of the Sonnets.[5] Recently, René Weis has revisited and endorsed Rowse's arguments, urging that, if we must seek an historical identity for this persona, Lanyer seems the strongest candidate. Whatever her particular merits, there are other candidates and the evidence for one of them, Lucy Negro, otherwise known as Black Luce, has yet to be fully weighed. The purpose of this chapter is to consider that evidence more fully, yet it ought perhaps to be pointed out from the start that none of the details here set forth establish Lucy Negro as the 'dark lady' of the sonnets, though she was certainly a woman of nefarious deeds. The evidence does, however, have implications worth considering: it seems certain that she and Shakespeare knew of each other, either directly or indirectly; it is highly likely that they were in the same hall at Gray's Inn on the night of 28 December 1594; and it seems, furthermore, that Shakespeare tailored his writing to acknowledge her presence on that occasion. There is of course an element of doubt in these last two surmises, but what we can conclude with some confidence is that Shakespeare's sonnets speak of a woman with exactly her blend of notoriety.

Shakespeare staged courtesans and prostitutes with a good deal of human sympathy.[6] The parts of Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet in *2 Henry IV* may be laughable but they are also poignant. Mistress Quickly insists umpteen times that she will have no swaggerers in her house ('I cannot abide swaggerers', 2.4.93), but she reminds Falstaff that he once promised to marry her ('I put thee to thy oath; deny it if thou canst' 2.1.93–4), a moment that the Oxford editors mark with a supplied stage direction, 'She weeps'.[7] Less given to sentiment,

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[5] A.L. Rowse, *Shakespeare the Man* (London: Macmillan, 1973); see also S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 559.

[6] E. I. Fripp preferred to believe that Shakespeare delighted in 'happy young wives and husbands', detesting 'the false', among whom he included Venus, Tarquin, Jane Nightwork, Doll Tearsheet Gertrude, Cressida, Angelo and 'the Black 'Bitch' of the Sonnets', *Shakespeare, Man and Artist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938) I, 189.

[7] We can sometimes trust what Mistress Quickly says. When she tells Pistol, Bardolph, Nim and the Boy that Falstaff's nose was 'as sharp as a pen, and a table of green fields' (*Henry V*, 2.3.16–17), she refers, I suggest, to both a quill's tip, and a point on a green-stained, wooden gaming board. Backgammon, a tavern game, was known as 'tables' and its playing quadrants are still today termed 'fields'. The Folio line thus makes coherent, if clumsy, sense, and there is no need for emendation. Shakespeare refers elsewhere to backgammon, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, where Biron describes Boyet as 'Monsieur the Nice, / That when he plays at tables chides the dice / In honourable terms' (5.2.325–27), and in

Doll Tearsheet scorns Falstaff as a 'muddy rascal', quipping that he catches not diseases but 'our chains and our jewels' (2.4.34, 42), but once he has thrust Pistol downstairs, perhaps through the stage trap-door as if back into hell, she sits on his knee and learnedly admires his gallantry: 'Ah rogue, i'faith, I love thee. Thou art as valorous as Hector of Troy, worth five of Agamemnon' (2.4.195–6). It is in *2 Henry IV* that Shakespeare comes closest to depicting Londoners of his day. He makes very specific reference to a variety of city locations, and also veiled allusion to particular (but no doubt imagined) individuals. The brilliantly tender reminiscences between Shallow and Silence in the third act, for example, recall their escapades as young members of the inns of chancery and court, especially at Clement's and Gray's inns. Silence's daughter, Ellen, has unfortunately not turned out well. She is, her father reports, 'a black ouzel' (3.2.7), a blackbird, and so by implication a woman of dark deeds. Shallow recalls younger days when he was nicknamed 'lusty' by his mates, John Doit (probably pronounced 'Do-it'), 'black George Barnes', Francis Pickbone and the wonderfully named Will Squeal, names that would carry for a contemporary audience hazy intimations of remembered, possibly even guessable characters. Shallow jokes that 'we knew where the bona robas [i.e. courtesans] were, and had the best of them all at commandment', a bold public confession. He brings to mind a younger Falstaff beating one 'Scoggins' on the same day that he fought with 'Samson Stockfish, a fruiterer, behind Gray's Inn' (3.2.20–1, 29–32).[8] We do not have to speculate about historical figures that

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Measure For Measure, where Lucio speaks of carnal embrace as a game of 'tick-tack' (1.2.167). See 'Falstaff's Nose', *Notes and Queries*, 51, 3 (2004), 284–285 for an initial outline of the case.

[8] See further note 38 below. The Middlesex County Records preserve two vivid incidents of violence occurring in or around Gray's Inn Fields. The first is a post-mortem inquisition for 26 February 1588/9, 'taken at Maribone on view of the body of Robert Radclyff gentleman, there lying dead: With Verdict that, on 21 January 31 Elizabeth between the hours eleven and twelve a.m., Charles Wrenne late of Grayes Inn co. Midd. gentleman walked in the fields from Grayes Inne towards Maribone Parke; that, on seeing this, the aforesaid Robert Radclyffe followed the said Charles Wrenne, and on the said Charles's return met him in a certain lane called "Lustie Lane *alias* Longe Lane" at Maribone, and there demanded of him a certain sum of ten pounds which he (the said Robert) pretended was owed to him by the same Charles; that by reason of the controversy arising between them on this matter, Robert Radclyffe drew forth his sword and dagger and made an assault on Charles Wrenne, who for the preservation of his life drew forth his sword and dagger, as he endeavoured to withdraw from the same Robert; and that in the ensuing affray, resolutely and violently forced upon him by his assailant, the said Charles Wrenne in self-defence with his sword gave Robert Radclyffe a mortal blow on the right breast, of which blow he then and there died instantly at Maribone Park'. The second, better known incident is more contemporaneous with *2 Henry IV*. A 'true bill' of 12 November 1597 states that 'at Grayes Inne of St. Andrew's in Holborn co. Midd. on the night of the said day between nine and ten p.m., Richard Aunger jun^{r}. of the said parish gentleman and his wife Agnes Aunger, and Edward Ingram of the same parish laborer, made an assault on Richard Aunger sen^{r}. esq. of Grayes Inne father of the said Richard Aunger jun^{r}. aforesaid, and, with the intention of

might lie obscurely behind the remark to sense that the impression of localism is deliberate. The play mentions numerous London sites – Smithfield, St. Paul's, Pie Corner, Lombard Street, Eastcheap, Westminster, St. George's Field, Mile-End Green, Turnbull Street – but, in this scene, repeated allusion is made to the inns of court and chancery, especially Gray's and Clement's inns. Clement's occurs four times, and Gray's Inn once but they are enough to intimate that Shakespeare has some inside knowledge of the members there and is, in this scene, inviting his audience to put their recollections together in an effort to guess at the real-life characters suggested. At the start of the final act, Davy refers to 'William Visor of Woncot' whom he calls 'an arrant knave': a family named Visor or Vizard is known to have lived in Gloucestershire, the locale in which these scenes are set. In such moments, Shakespeare alludes, if not obliquely to real persons, then to kinds of person with whom members of his audience were likely to feel familiar. He also had his own connections with these institutions. The lawyer John Greene, who acted for Shakespeare's daughter Susanna over the Blackfriars gatehouse, was a member of Clement's Inn. His brother, Thomas Greene, had trained at both Staple Inn (a chancery inn which fed students to Gray's) and the Middle Temple, before settling in Bristol, and he styled himself Shakespeare's 'cousin'.[9]

What might have been Shakespeare's own personal acquaintance with the 'bona robas' of his day? It was a young inns of court barrister, John Manningham, who recorded the famous anecdote regarding Shakespeare's sexual competitiveness with Richard Burbage, a story he seems to have heard from a fellow lawyer named Master Touse. The episode has been retold in several recent biographies but it never loses its sense of exuberant fun. Manningham wrote in 1601:

> Vpon a tyme when Burbidge played Rich. 3. there was a citizen greue so farr in liking wth him, that before shee went from the play shee appointed him to come that night vnto hir by the name of Ri: the 3. Shakespeare ouerhearing their conclusion, went before, was intertained, and at his game ere Burbidge came.

killing him by strangulation, with their hands violently broke, twisted and strangled the neck of the same Richard Aunger sen[r]. esq., so that he then and there died. Putting themselves 'Guilty,' Richard Aunger gentleman and his wife Agnes were sentenced to be hung', see John Cordy Jeaffreson (ed.) *Middlesex County Records (Old Series): Volume 1: 1550–1603* (London: Greater London Council, 1972 repr., originally Middlesex County Records Society, 1886), 183–4 and 241. For two recent publications on the inns of court, see Alan H. Nelson, and John R. Elliott, Jr (eds) *Records of Early English Drama: Inns of Court*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010) and Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah Knight (eds.) *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011).

[9] See Chambers ii. 4, 17, 149; for Greene's year-long stay at New Place, see Honan 384; see also Weis, op. cit. 87–8. Greene's father also called himself 'Shakespeare'. The *Calender of State Papers* (Everett Green, 157) lists on 12 October 1604, a 'Thomas Shakespeare, of Staple Inn, Middlesex' who complained that he had been maliciously prevented from attending a summons, and should not be sued for non-appearance. Although Thomas Greene cannot safely be identified with Thomas Shakespeare, William Shakespeare's connections with Inn members were several.

> Then message being brought that Rich, the 3d. was at the dore, Shakespeare caused returne to be made that William the Conquerour was before Rich, the 3. Shakespeares name willm.[10]

The 1597 quarto title page of *Richard III* claims that it had been 'lately acted' by 'the Lord Chamber-laine his seruants' but we have no record of exactly 'when Burbidge played Rich. 3'. The play is usually thought to have been written by 1594. For James R. Siemon, the anecdote suggests a degree of public accessibility to actors, the author's presence off-stage, merry male rivalry for a female 'citizen' and a real-life bed-trick. But there is also a sense of farce in message being brought, and return being made, perhaps inconveniently even while Shakespeare was still 'at his game'. Manningham's report is all the more credible because it comes from a lawyer of the Middle Temple whose associates at the inns of court were, by all accounts, much entertained by such assignations.[11] Burbage and Shakespeare, like Shallow and Silence, very probably 'heard the chimes at midnight' (3.2.197). Among former friends the elderly justices recall is 'Jane Nightwork', an old flame who, Falstaff reports, still lives. The name is obviously suggestive, a pun on the term 'nightwalker', frequently used for prostitutes. The most infamous London Jane, a night-worker and nightwalker, now well past her youth, was Jane Trosse, a prostitute who also knew the inns of court well enough. On 26 February 1576/7, George Craven (alias Smerken), servant with Master Richard Lane of Lincoln's Inn, stated that, 'John Browne of Greys Inne kepte Jane Trosse aboute ii yeres sythens she was in his chamber aboute vii daies'.[12] Several in the playhouse audience would have known this of Jane, if only by reputation.

It is unlikely that anyone today would have known of Margaret White, widow of the deceased Henry White 'clothmaker', had not Christopher Beeston raped her on midsummer's night 1602 (allegedly). We can be sure that Shakespeare knew of her. Beeston had been a long-standing colleague of Shakespeare's in the Lord Chamberlain's players. He was probably the 'Kit' listed in the extant 'platt' of the anonymous *Seconde Parte of the Seuen Deadlie Sinns* (c. 1592), performed by the Earl of Derby's men, and may well have played in *Titus Andronicus* (perhaps as one of the rapists, Chiron or Demetrius), a joint production from Derby's, Pembroke's and Sussex's men in 1594.[13] The 1616 Jonson Folio indicates that he acted in *Every Man in his Humour* in 1598, and the will of Augustine Phillips in 1605 shows that he maintained links with the Chamberlain's men, despite having left

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[10] Cited in James R. Siemon (ed.) *King Richard III* (London: Methuen/A & C Black, 2009), 83.

[11] Elizabeth Evans was visited in Abchurch Lane by one 'Jones', a gentleman of Gray's Inn.

[12] BCB 4.179^{v}.

[13] For a useful reproduction and discussion of the 'platt' of the *Seuen Deadlie Sinns*, see Tarnya Cooper et al, *Searching For Shakespeare* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2006), 102–103.

the company in the summer of that year.[14] He would later enjoy a successful career as financial director of Queen Anne's company, leader of the Red Bull playhouse in Clerkenwell, and, from 1617, as director of the Cockpit/Phoenix theatres.[15] The year 1602 had seen a near-revolution at Bridewell. A group of contractors, known as 'the undertakers', led by Thomas Stanley, William Brownlow and Nicholas Bywater, had taken over its administration and allowed detainees virtually free rein over the building.[16] The governors recorded in the Minute Books a catalogue of 'imparements', complaining that the number of prisoners had been reduced from 200 to 60; that the undertakers ruled in absolute fashion; that diet was reduced, supervision neglected, and the best rooms in the palace emptied out and given over to near family members. The undertakers, they wrote, 'suffer those women prisoners beinge of lighte and lewde behaviour to were their gorgeous apparrell to enterteyne all men of their Aquayntance to come unto them liberallie to walk and talk in the fairest Roomes in the house and sometymes to shutt their feloes upp togither privately in chambers …'. Remarkably, the most feared of London's prisons had become the grandest brothel in the city. The minute continues, '[T]he said women prisoners are growne so peremptory and short that they have refused to come upp into the Courte when they have ben sent for before the Lo*rd* maior and Aldermen beinge ther present, but have taken the try*a*l into their owne custodie and have locked themselves upp until the sh*er*reifs offices have ben reddie to braeke [*sic*] open their chambers and are so their owne keepers & that 2 of them one Katherin Arden and m*ist*ris miles al*ia*s Godfrey have latelie thorogh their default escaped awaie'.[17] Bywater was especially hated. Several prisoners

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[14] Phillips left Beeston thirty shillings. See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), ii. 73.

[15] Despite several brushes with the law, Beeston continued to be designated a yeoman or gentleman in the Middlesex County Sessions records; see William Le Hardy (ed.) *County of Middlesex, Calendar to the Sessions Records II, 1614–1615 and IV*, *1616–1618* (London: Guildhall, 1941), ii. 26, iv. 91.

[16] Tenders from Stanley and his associates were submitted to the Lord Chief Justice, lord mayor and Court of Aldermen on 16 January 1601/2, and agreed at a meeting at the Guildhall (BCB 4.284^{r}).

[17] See Thomas Bowen, *Extracts from the records and court books of Bridewell Hospital* ... (London: 1798), 26. For 'A Note on the Impayrements that have growne to the house of Bridewell by the disorders of the undertakers since they were there' see BCB 4.313^{v}-314^{v} (4 October 1602). For Stanley's forced resignation, see BCB 4.325^{r} (10 October 1602). Stanley convinced others that he held a genuine concern for the indigent. Supporters published an abstract of his ideas under the title *Stanleyes Remedy, or The Way how to reform wandring Beggers, Theeves, high-way Robbers and Pick-pockets. Or an Abstract of his Discoverie, wherein is shewed That Sodomes Sin of Idlenesse is the Poverty and Misery of this Kingdome* (London: 1646), in which he argued, 'I have heard the Rogues and Beggars curse the Magistrates unto their faces, for providing such a Law to whip and brand them, and not provide houses of labour for them … for tell the begging Souldier, and the wandring and sturdy Beggar, that they are able to worke for their living, and bid them

later explained how he had colluded in the women's escape. Elizabeth Fox told the court that 'diverse tymes sundrie gentlemen have resorted to M*aste*r Bywaters house and have had the company of the wemen prisoners of the house'. There they would sup and stay late into the night, enjoying 'crabbs, lobsters, Artichoque pyes and gallons of wyne at a tyme'. Mistress Miles had ingratiated herself with Bywater and his wife, promising a 'packe' [of prostitutes] 'better worthe unto him than his beinge at Bridewell' if he could secure her freedom. Isabel Bradley confirmed the story, adding that Miles would 'practise charmes' to try to open the prison doors but eventually escaped 'oute of the strawhouse windowe next the Lo*rd* Tre*asure*rs garden' with the help of 'Bywater's man'. Bridget Winnicombe reported that she had seen Bywater 'upon the said m*ist*ris Arden' and that he beat her when she challenged him about it. She heard him tell Arden that he would leave a door unlocked when he left town, and 'then doo what ye will'. Elizabeth Cam testified that Bywater had struck her three or four times 'w*i*th his fist that hee felled her' and beat her 'with a bedstaffe' until she was 'black and blewe'. She showed the court her injuries. Finally, Wilgiver Gravenor deposed that she had been beaten by the matron, Bywater and by his man, the latter breaking her hand.[18] Bywater inspired such loathing that the infamous Mary Newborough ran at him with a pair of shears for beating her and the other women inmates.[19] On 10 October, Stanley, Brownlow and Bywater were forced to relinquish all their Bridewell offices, entitlements, charges and leases, settle their various debts, and leave. The experiment to contract out prison supervision to private 'undertakers' was at an end. It was, then, just as the governors were trying to restore control, that Margery or Margaret White was brought into Bridewell for having 'a childe begotten in whoredome and otherwise livinge in incontinency' (see Figure 6.1). She named one Henry Noone as the father, but also complained that,

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go to worke, they will presently answer you, they would work if they could get it.' (3–4). See also William C. Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 57.

[18] BCB 4.316r-v (11 August 1602). 'Woolgever Gravener' was returned to Bridewell on 19 February 1602/3 as 'a common vagrant often in this house'. A week later she was given a pair of shoes and sent to St. Thomas's Hospital (BCB 4.348v and 350r). A 'Willgefer Cravens' was prosecuted later in 1613 for stealing from 'a poore cunterye Man' but escaped imprisonment, see Le Hardy, op. cit., i. 87.

[19] BCB 4.317v (23 August 1602): 'M*ist*es Marye Newberry prisoner in this house exa*min*ed saith that because this examinat did mislike because a maid prisoner here was verie cruellie beaten by m*aste*r Bywater and others m*aste*r Bywater came unto her and called her whore whereuppon she called him cuckoldlie knave and his wife whore and then the said Bywater beate her with a cudgell. And so saith that when she came first into this house she was committed close prisoner but that afterward m*aste*r Bywater gave her maid leave to come unto her but since will not suffer her maid to come at her. Elinor Bewes and Eleanor Bedford prisoners and chamber fellowes with the said m*ist*ris Newberrye said and affirmed that m*aste*r bywater gave the said m*ist*ris Newberrye three or fourse blowes and that he gave her the first before she rann at him with the sheers'.

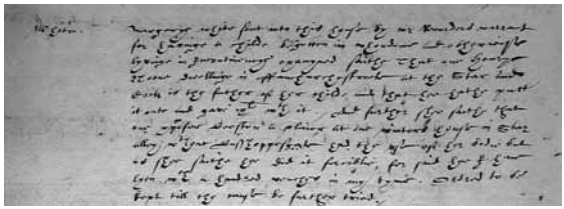

Fig. 6.1 The allegation made by Margaret White against Christopher Beeston, 27 October 1602, BCB 4.327[v] (by kind permission of the Bethlem Art and History Collections Trust).

> one xpofer Beeston a plaier at one winters house in Star alley w*i*th out Bushoppesgate had the use of her bodie but as she saithe hee did it forciblie, for said hee I have lyen w*i*th a hundred wenches in my tyme.[20]

Beeston's boast could have come from any swaggering Pistol. It reflects the attitude of one who believes himself beyond the law. Quietly over the summer, by August 1602, Beeston transferred, perhaps under pressure, to the Earl of Worcester's company of actors, joining Will Kemp. At the time of White's allegation, he had been married for just over a month.[21]

Beeston 'a plaier' appeared in court on Friday 5 November 1602 to answer White's accusation that he had 'had thuse of her bodie at one Goodwife winters house w*i*thout Bushoppesgate on midsomer even last'. Examined, he protested that he 'utterlie denieth it and saieth it is done of mallice.' He was ordered to put in sureties and to return 'w*i*th*i*n 4 daies after warninge w*hi*ch was done'.[22] Eight days later, he faced White in court, but this time he brought friends:

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[20] BCB 4.327[v] (27 October 1602). Star Alley, near Shoreditch, is shown as location 'a53' on the 1676 London map by John Ogilby (and later William Morgan). See *The A to Z of Restoration London*, int. Ralph Hyde (London: London Topographical Society, 1992), 9.

[21] For Christopher Beeston, see A. Gurr, 'Beeston [Hutchinson], Christopher' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) at <www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/66593>; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923; repr. 1974), ii. 302; Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors and of Other Persons Associated with the Public Representation of Plays in England before 1642* (1929; repr. New York, 1968); M. Eccles, 'Elizabethan Actors I: A-D', *Notes and Queries*, NS 38 (236) 1 (March 1991), 39–40. G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 1 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941–68), vol. II, 363–70, and *The Profession of Player in the Time of Shakespeare* (Princeton, NJ: Yale, 1984), 64, 73, 84, 115, 149, 162, 190, 253. Beeston's will is given in E.A.J. Honigmann and S. Brock (eds.) *Playhouse Wills 1558–1642: An Edition of Wills by Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in the London Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 191–4.

[22] BCB 4.330[r].

> And forasmuch as the said xpofer Beeston is by one margarett white a prisoner of this house accused to have committed w*i*th her the abhominable synne of Addultarye in most filthie and brutishe manner in one Winters house in an alley w*i*thout Bushoppes gate on midsomer eue last. For w*hi*ch hee was convented before certen of the gouerno*r*s of this house, and hee beinge exa*min*ed utterlie denieth the facte (notw*i*thstandinge shee Justifieth it to his face. / At w*hi*ch tyme also the said Beeston and others his // confederate*s* plaiers did verie unreuerentlie demeane themselues to certen gouerno*r*s and muche abused the place, and yett upon some reporte*s* made knowen to this courte greatelie suspected to have committed the facte. / And because at this courte also some in the said Beestons behalf hathe contrarie to all good order taken excepcy*o*ns against some of the gouerno*r*s of this house. It is ordered by a generall consent that suche a course shalbe in lawe proceeded against him as is and shalbe thought fitt for so greate a cryme.[23]

In fact, the Governors seem to have thought fit to have nothing done, for though Beeston was 'greatelie suspected', no further proceeding against him was recorded. Who were those 'others his confederates plaiers' who behaved so 'unreuerentlie', and might Shakespeare have been among them? Perhaps Beeston lost favour with Chamberlain's and brought in new associates from Worcester's company, which included two former Chamberlain's men John Duke and William Kemp, and Thomas Blackwood, Thomas Heywood, John Lowin, Robert Pallant, John Thare and one Cattanes whose first name is unknown. He remained on very good terms with Augustine Phillips, however. At the time of the alleged incident, Beeston was still a Chamberlain's player and Shakespeare would certainly have known of the allegation and the Bridewell hearing. Other aspects of this case are mysterious. Master Knevett, clerk to leading alderman and former lord mayor Sir Henry Billingsley, came into court to make a curious denial:

> m*aste*r Knevett sir henry Billingesleys clark presented himselfe in courte and beinge by m*aste*r Thre*asore*r examined, utterlie denieth that ever hee used anye suche speaches that one Shepperde charged him to speake as concerninge one Beeston a plaier w*hi*ch was to this effecte. That Beeston himself saide *tha*t hee had lyen w*i*th an hundred wemen in his tyme.

Who was this mysterious Shepperde? What was his motive in charging Knevett to 'speak the speech' (as Hamlet puts it to the players), concerning Beeston's brag? It seems odd that a lord mayor's clerk should attend court to deny slandering an actor. Was it Billingsley's interests that were at stake, or those of his son, Henry, a member of Gray's Inn since February 1591?[24] The facts remain cloudy and

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[23] Ibid., 332r.

[24] For 'Thomas Sheppard', brother to Oxford vintner John Davenant's wife, Jane, see Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2008), 243. A 'Zachary Sheparde' entered Gray's Inn on 31 January 1583/4; see Joseph Foster, *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521–1889, Together with the Register of Marriages in Gray's Inn Chapel, 1695–1754* (London: Hansard, 1889) 64.

although Margaret White had initiated the investigation with a petition to the Court of Aldermen, neither they nor the Bridewell bench apparently did anything more about it. Perhaps jettisoning Beeston helped to cover the company's professional embarrassment. A certain distance is suggested by the fact that Beeston was omitted from the list of 'principall Actors' in the 1623 Folio. Not long after 1602, Shakespeare wrote *Measure For Measure,* performed on Boxing Day 1604, a play in which a man tries to conceal his attempts at rape, a 'fantastique' unreverently demeans himself to an authority figure, and a prisoner is 'peremptory and short', and refuses to leave his cell. Scathing of political hypocrisy and powerfully ambiguous, *Measure For Measure* seems to have enabled the company (now the King's Men) to acknowledge the controversy and parody the Bridewell court at the same time, resolving the risks of legal procedure into an uneasy fiction. Shakespeare used a variety of literary sources to compose that play, but it is difficult to imagine that he did not have in mind Beeston's experience too.[25]

Shakespeare probably knew of Jane Trosse and Elizabeth Evans, and he certainly knew of Margaret White. There is good reason to believe also that he at least knew of, and perhaps knew personally, one of London's most infamous characters – Lucy Negro of Clerkenwell, a brothel madam who seems, so far as we know, somehow to have avoided prosecution while operating, with an associate named Gilbert East in Turnmill Street, at the centre of a shifting network of itinerant prostitutes. Together, these two individuals made Clerkenwell foremost among disreputable areas in London, lending it a notoriety that easily rivalled the Bankside stews. Charles Nicholl rightly reminds that Clerkenwell was an infamous red-light district but gives little detail about what, or who, made it so.[26] The answer is East and Lucy Negro, the latter known in the records as Black Luce. It may be helpful to have some idea of the locale in which these characters lived. Clerkenwell, and its surrounding lanes and fields, was a north-western London suburb. Turnmill (sometimes 'Turnbull', 'Turnball' or 'Turnbole') street turned briefly westwards and then north from the foot of Cow Cross Lane to a crossroads on the western corner of Clerkenwell Green. To the right (eastwards) on Clerkenwell Lane stood the old, dissolved nunnery of St. Mary's, on the northern side of the lane, adjoining the old Church of St. James. Further ahead, Clerkenwell Lane joined St. John's Street, which ran from north to south, down to the 'late

[25] For Sir Henry Billingsley, see A. McConnell, 'Billingsley, Sir Henry' *Dictionary of National Biography* at <www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/2392>; F. Freeman Foster, *The Politics of Stability: A Portrait of the Rulers in Elizabeth London* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 5, 93, 95, 129–30, 142–3; and A. B. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London*, 2 vols. (London: 1908–13), i. 48, 83, 176, 201, 276. A possible connection with Barnardine occurs in the Bridewell Court Minute Books: 'Baradine his bonde was delivered to him by consent of the court' (BCB 4 262^{r}, 7 Sept. 1601); and 'Lewin Bowder alias Baradine presente in Courte gave of his voluntary benevolence towards the releefe of the poore of this hospitall the some tenne shillinges' (Ibid., 265^{r}, 3 October 1601).

[26] Charles Nicholl, op. cit., 68, 198, 212. Today, Turnmill Street is quite a chic little street, surrounded by building works near Farringdon Station.

dissolved' St. John's Priory, and linked back up again with Cow Cross Lane.[27] The route westwards at the Turnmill/Clerkenwell crossroads led in the direction of Gray's Inn Lane, Southampton House and various inns of chancery, including Lincoln's and Clement's (see Figure 6.2). Through the streets, lanes and pathways of this small area, between Gray's Inn, Clerkenwell, Turnmill Street, St. John's and Cow Cross, circulated the restive energies that sustained demand and supply in London's sexual economy.

But East and Lucy Negro had more than roads and lanes to connect them to the world of the theatres. Lucy Negro has been of particular interest as a possible candidate for the dubious role of Shakespeare's 'dark lady' of the *Sonnets*. These perpetually intriguing poems speak of a woman distinguished by whorish appetite and dark physicality. The poems addressed to this figure are found among the group 127–54, a sequence probably written earlier than sonnets 1–126.[28] The picture of Shakespeare's 'mistress' cumulatively built up in these sonnets is of a woman with 'raven black' eyes (127.9), and hair like 'black wires' (130.4); a woman who is musical (128.1–14), guilty of 'black deeds' that include promiscuity (131.13, 137.6, 10), who believes him to be younger than her (138.5); a mistress who is 'black as hell, as dark as night' (147.14) and has committed 'foul faults' (148.14).[29] For René Weis, as for Rowse, these details fit best with all that is known of the serial mistress Aemilia Lanyer. But there is no escaping the fact that Shakespeare describes this woman as a prostitute. Katherine Duncan-Jones notes that the impression given in Sonnet 131 by the words 'neck', 'witness', 'black' and 'judgement's place' is that of 'a condemned person being hanged'.[30] Both she and Colin Burrow independently note in 137 allusions to sexual release, prostitution and infection.[31] Burrow suggests that Shakespeare hints at this woman's 'cunning deceptions' in Sonnet 138, and her 'disgusting vices' in 148.[32] Burrow observes 'a bitterly sexual twist' in Shakespeare's reference to her lap as 'the bay where all

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[27] Valerie Pearl (ed.) *John Stow, Survey of London* (London and Melbourne: Dent, 1987), 181. For further historical details of St. James's and St. John's, see Philip Temple (ed.) *South and East Clerkenwell, Survey of London, Volume XLVI* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 5–6; for details of St. Mary's nunnery, see ibid., 29–32; for St. John's, see ibid., 115–18; for Cow Cross and Turnmill Lane, see ibid., 183–6.

[28] On the date and sequence of the Sonnets, see Burrow, 103–111, esp. 105. As Burrow notes (670) many regard Sonnet 145 as addressed to Anne Hathaway.

[29] For a witty and shrewd account of proposed 'dark lady' solutions, see S. Schoenbaum, 'Shakespeare's Dark Lady: a question of identity' in Philip Edwards, Inga-Stina Ewbank and G.K. Hunter (eds.) *Shakespeare's Styles: Essays in Honour of Kennth Muir* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 221–39.

[30] See René Weis, *Shakespeare Revealed, A Biography* (London: John Murray, 2008), 148–9. Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.) *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Thomson, 1997) 376.

[31] Duncan-Jones, 388; Burrow, 654.

[32] Burrow, 656, 676.

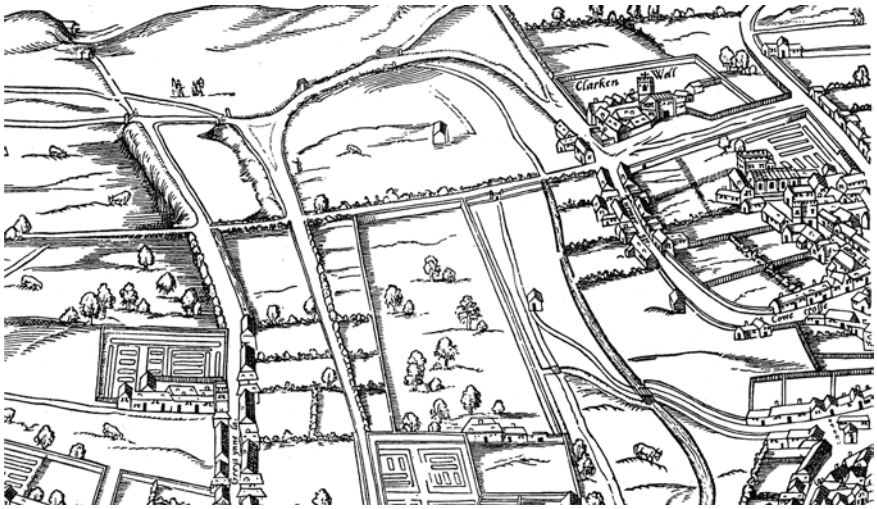

Fig. 6.2 Detail from the 'Agas' map showing Gray's Inn to the left on Gray's Inn Road and Clerkenwell. The water-spout of the well is just visible. The road south of the cross-roads is 'Turnbull' or Turnmill Lane, where Gilbert East lived. The road leading south on the far right is St. John's Street, showing houses where Matthew Shakespeare may have lived. 'Wood's Copse' or 'Close' lay just east of the T-junction (see Fig. 6.3). To the south is Cowe Cross where Henry Boyer and George Wilkins resided (with kind permission from London Metropolitan Archives).

men ride' (137.6).[33] Altogether, these poems give an impression of a woman of striking appearance who behaves like a whore. In 1933, G.B. Harrison tentatively proposed that the so-called 'Dark Lady' of Shakespeare's sequence might have been a black-skinned London prostitute, Lucy Negro, a woman mentioned in a Gray's Inn entertainment of 1594. It was a bold and radical suggestion in the year Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, and so it remains today.[34]

The 1594 Gray's Inn Christmas jests were eventually printed in 1688 as the *Gesta Grayorum*, a collection of mock announcements and speeches that, from today's perspective, puts the all-male inns of court in a rather unflattering light. Mixing schoolboy innuendo with wearying legal nonsense and a series of in-jokes, it constitutes a remarkably bawdy series of entertainments designed to

[33] Ibid., 654.

[34] See Margareta de Grazia, 'The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets', *Shakespeare Survey* 46 (1994), 35–49: 'It is Shakespeare's gynerastic longings for a black mistress that are perverse and menacing, precisely because they threaten to raze the very distinctions his poems to the fair boy strain to preserve' (47).

honour the puppet festive monarch of Gray's, the 'Prince of Purpoole'.[35] These entertainments were held on specific days or evenings over the Christmas period of 1594, and extended even to Ash Wednesday in the following March. The first night of revels took place in the great hall on St. Thomas's Eve, 20 December, with Henry Helmes, the member chosen as 'the High and mighty Prince of Purpoole … Knight of the most Heroical Order of the Helmet, and Sovereign of the Same', seated in state with his counsellors (other Gray's members) about him. After a brief proclamation and challenge, the court 'Sollicitor' rose to announce a series of 'special Persons' who had been 'charged by their Tenures, *to do Special Service at this your glorious Inthronization*' (my emphasis). These 'special Persons' were, it appears, present as guests invited for the occasion. There follows a list of these 'Homagers and Tributaries' accorded particularly high status in this Cockayne land of Purpoole, persons esteemed for their tenures 'admirable', their value 'inestimable' and their worthinesss 'incomparable'. The first two appear to be leading members of Gray's 'feeder' institutions Barnard's and Staple inns, but the rest seem to be outsiders, all of them either brothel owners or providers of sexual services.[36] Third on this list is '*Lucy Negro*, Abbess *de Clerkenwell*, holdeth the Nunnery of *Clerkenwell*, with the Lands and Privileges thereunto belonging, of the Prince of Purpoole by Night-Service *in Cauda*, and to find a Choir of Nuns, with burning Lamps, to chaunt *Placebo* to the gentlemen of the Prince's Privy-Chamber, on the Day of his Excellency's Coronation'.[37] A priory of black nuns had existed at Clerkenwell since the beginning of the twelfth century, as Stow's *Survey of London* (1598) confirms, but like St. John's nearby, it suffered after 1534, and was dissolved, Stow reports, in 'the 31st of Henry VIII', that is, in 1539–40. The registers for St. James's, the parish church in Clerkenwell, record the interment of its prioress: 'Dame Isabell Sackefeild sometime Pryoresse of Clerkenwell was buried the fowre and twentieth of October 1570'.[38] She had evidently stayed within the parish, but by 1594, a very different kind of 'Abbess' with an altogether new sisterhood had replaced her. Lucy Negro kept a bawdy house of notable repute,

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[35] In 1314, John de Gray had granted land to St. Bartholomew's Priory in an area of Holborn known as 'Portpool', now Gray's Inn Lane. See V. Pearl, *Stow*, 389; G. B. Rawlings, *The Streets of London, Their History and Associations* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1926), 51–2.

[36] The last of these persons listed has bawdy responsibility for 'Water-gates, Sluces, Passages, strait Entrances, and dangerous Quagmires ; and also shall repair and mend all common High and Low-Ways, by laying Stones in the Pits and naughty places thereof', see W. W. Greg (ed.) *Gesta Grayorum, or, The history of the high and mighty Prince Henry... together with, A masque, as it were presented ... for the entertainment of Q. Elizabeth ...* (Malone Society Reprints, 1914), vol. 38, 13.

[37] Ibid., 12.

[38] Valerie Pearl (ed.) *John Stow, Survey of London* [1598], (London: Dent, 1984), 388, burial register of St. James, Clerkenwell, consulted on microfilm, LMA, X097/354. Isabella Sackville, the nunnery's last prioress, was buried near the high altar of the old church; see Philip Temple, op. cit., 42.

and her 'Choir of Nuns with burning lamps' – that is, a group of prostitutes with the French pox – offered irreligious 'Night-service'.[39] Lucy Negro was far from the only provider of such services to young men of the inns. Others are praised for having supplied a 'Milk-white Doe', two 'ambling, easie paced Gennets', 'so much cunny-Fur', some rousing '*Amazons*' or young virgins – and one is credited with responsibility for all matters of 'Tail-general', operating from his 'mannor of *Deep-Inn*'.[40] The representatives of Barnard's and Staple's 'did Homage to his Highness' by kneeling, but it seems that Lucy Negro and the 'choir' she assembled were retained for other pleasures: 'The rest that appeared were deferred to better leisure'.[41] The Gray's members who led this entertainment were mostly recent appointees and its boisterous sexual innuendo with foreign pseudonyms suggests a group of energetic young wits who saw themselves as blades or gallants.

Shakespeare was well connected with Gray's Inn. His patrons, Southampton and Hunsdon, were members, and so too was the Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney. Probably under commission, Shakespeare drafted an after-piece to follow a night of Christmas merriment as part of these events. On Innocent's Day 1594 (28 December), a group of players, in all likelihood the newly-formed Chamberlain's Men, performed *The Comedy of Errors* at Gray's Inn before what by all accounts was a rowdy audience. The entertainments that evening had fallen into disarray. The occasion had begun rather badly with such a 'Presence of Lords, Ladies and Worshipful Personages that did expect some notable Performance at the time … that thereby there was no convenient room for those that were Actors'. Even worse, 'there arose such a disordered Tumult and Crowd upon the Stage that there was no Opportunity to effect what was intended', and guests invited from the Inner and Middle Temples left 'discontented and displeased'. The press of 'worshipful personages' and 'Gentlewomen' on the stage was so great that little could be managed other than 'Dancing and Revelling with Gentlewomen', after which was presented 'a Comedy of Errors (like to Plautus his *Menaechmus*)', a performance that was, 'played by the Players. So that night was begun, and continued to the end, in nothing but Confusion and Errors: whereupon, it was ever afterwards called, *The Night of Errors*'.[42] Shakespeare's play in the end proved a successful finale to a shambolic night. In his Oxford edition of the play, Charles Whitworth has argued that Shakespeare wrote *The Comedy of Errors* specifically for these Christmas revels of 1594: the play's stylistic features fit a composition date of that

[39] A pun on feudal 'Knight-service' whereby lands are held or bestowed on condition of fealty.

[40] These are the kind of puns Shakespeare uses in *2 Henry IV* ('little John Doit', 3.2.18) and it may be that Shakespeare had in mind, when writing that play, a likely inns of court performance. If so, the Epilogue's line, 'All the gentlewomen here have forgiven me: if the gentlemen will not, then the gentlemen do not agree with the gentlewomen, which was never seen before in such an assembly' (Epilogue, 20–23) has particular edge.

[41] Greg, *Gesta Grayorum*, 14.

[42] Ibid., 20, 22.

year; it is short and precisely plotted, befitting an after-piece; and its Plautine substructure would please an educated or academic audience.[43] Whitworth considers the possibility that Shakespeare's young patron, Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton, may have 'had a say in the invitation from the Inn', but, though Southampton House stood just across the road, either Henry Carey or Edmund Tilney could have initiated the opportunity for this performance.[44] Desmond Bland, in his edition of the *Gesta Grayorum*, suggests that Shakespeare revised his play for performance at Gray's Inn, and – significantly – adapted the name of the kitchen-maid in the third act from Nell to Luce, to fit the occasion.[45] Either way, the likelihood is that Shakespeare knew the kind of audience this production would play to, and there can be little doubt that the inclusion of an unspecified priory and unnamed abbess in the fifth act would evoke, for a Gray's Inn audience, not only the topography of Clerkenwell with its historic nunnery of St. Mary and priory of St. John of Jerusalem but also its now more infamous residents.[46] Shakespeare does not (as he easily might have done) double the courtesan with the Abbess and so make the connection obvious. Instead, he writes the name Lucy into the play via two of its characters, Luciana, sister to the long-suffering Adriana, and Luce, the 'swart' or dark-skinned kitchen wench (3.2.100). When the courtesan

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[43] The play is also unusual among Shakespeare's plays in lacking any musical cues. I am indebted for this observation to Stanley Wells, in conversation. There was (and still is) a musicians' gallery in the great hall at Gray's Inn and trumpets were sounded on the '*Night of Errors*' (*Gesta Grayorum*, 21).

[44] Charles Whitworth (ed.) *The Comedy of Errors* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3–10. *ODNB* erroneously gives the year of Southampton's admission to Gray's Inn as 1589. The date was, in fact, 29 February 1587/8, on recommendation of William Cecil. Southampton's grandfather, Thomas Wriothesley, had been admitted to Gray's Inn in 1534. See Joseph Foster, *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521–1889*, 65. Henry Carey had been admitted in 1580, Tilney in 1584.

[45] Desmond Bland (ed.) *Gesta Grayorum* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1968). Bland follows Hotson (see below) in identifying Lucy Negro as Lucy Morgan: 'It is just possible that she has left her mark on *The Comedy of Errors*, where one of the minor puzzles is whether Luce, maid to Luciana, is the same as Nell the kitchen-maid. Luce enters (or apparently does so) at III, i, 48 to deny Antipholus of Ephesus entrance to his own house. She does not appear again, but later (IV, iv, 72) we are told that is [*sic*] was Nell who railed at Antipholus and would not let him in.' He notes that Luce is described as 'swart' and conjectures that Nell's name was altered to Luce for the Gray's Inn performance, adding that 'the exchange between Luce and the party at the door is bawdy enough to warrant the change of name at this point' (94–5, n. 21). The Folio text of *The Comedy of Errors* shows signs of authorial drafting or revision: Shakespeare brings on 'Antipholus Erotes' after the Duke and his party 'exeunt' in the first act and later in act two, and has Adriana as 'wife to Antipholus Sereptus' at the start of the second act. He confuses Luciana with the name Juliena or Juliana, and alters the kitchen-wench's name from Nell to Luce, in the third act, (see Whitworth, 97, 103, 109, 128 and 123).

[46] Clerkenwell 'nunnery', like the Danish one Hamlet imagines (*Hamlet*, 3.1.120), was a place for women of questionable honesty.

enters later in the play, Dromio of Syracuse describes her as wearing 'the habit of a light wench': 'It is written, they appear to men like angels of light; light is an effect of fire, and fire will burn; ergo, light wenches will burn; come not near her' (4.2.50–4). Shakespeare could rely on his audience knowing how the Italian word *luce* translated, and sounded, in English. This pun on a light/loose wench who will 'burn' strikingly echoes the mention of Lucy Negro's choir with burning lamps, which his audience had previously heard. Shut out of the house, Dromio of Syracuse quips, 'If thy name be called Luce [i.e. 'loose'], Luce thou hast answered him well' (3.1.53–4). It is worth recalling that the *Gesta Grayorum* mention of Lucy Negro charges her to procure women 'to chaunt *Placebo* to the gentlemen of the Prince's Privy-Chamber, *on the Day of his Excellency's Coronation*'.[47] As the entertainment had already made clear, the Prince of Purpoole took to his throne in the 'great Hall' that very evening.[48] Lucy Negro and her 'Choir of Nuns', certainly present in the audience on the night of 20 December 1594, are likely to have been among the many 'Gentlewomen' who danced before the performance on the evening of 28 December when Shakespeare's play was presented. Shakespeare, it seems, knew what everyone else in the room knew: who and what she was, and exactly where she could be found.

Harrison presented his hunch that the possibly dark-skinned Lucy Negro may have been the mysterious mistress of the sonnets in a book splendidly entitled *Shakespeare Under Elizabeth* (1933), altered later that year to *Shakespeare At Work 1592–1603*.[49] His hypothesis was taken up in 1964 when Leslie Hotson published *Mr W. H*. and made the ingenious claim that the Fair Youth of the poems was one William Hatcliffe, and that the 'dark lady' was Lucy Negro, whom he preferred to believe was a white-skinned woman masquerading under that alias but really named Lucy Morgan, a waiting-lady in Elizabeth's court. Hotson cited as evidence for this view a series of onomastic puns he was convinced Shakespeare had scattered at will (so to speak) throughout his sonnet-cycle. So, for Hotson, when Shakespeare wrote the words 'hath left' and 'more than' in the poems, he did so quite intentionally to encrypt the names of his two loves, Hatcliffe and Morgan.[50] What persuaded Hotson that Negro and Morgan were identical was a short satirical poem, a 'drollery', first published in 1656 entitled 'On Luce Morgan, a Common-Whore', that seemed to explain all. The poem begins, 'Here lies black luce that pick-hatch drab/ Who had a word for every stab/ Was lecherous as any sparrow/ Her quiver ope to any arrow'. The poem continues in biographical vein, adding that she caught the pox, and concluding, 'Unto the Romish faith she turn'd;/ And therein dy'd and was't not fit/ For a poor whore to dye in it'.[51] The

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47 Greg (ed.), *Gesta Grayorum,* 12 (my emphasis).

48 Ibid., 9.

49 G. B. Harrison, *Shakespeare at Work* (London: Routledge, 1933), 310.

50 Leslie Hotson, *Mr W. H*. (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964), 238–55.

51 'On Luce Morgan – a Common Whore' cited from John Philips, *Wit and Drollery Joviall Poems Corrected & much amended with additions by Sir J. M, … Sir W. D. and the most refined Wits of the Age* (London: Nathaniel Brook, 1661), 30.

evidence appeared conclusive and seemed to warrant Hotson's claim that Lucy's surname was Morgan, and that she was identical with a Luce Morgan he found listed in the Queen's accounts as one of the Court ladies in waiting. This Luce Morgan, Hotson reasoned, must somehow have fallen from courtly favour in the 1580s and thereafter become the woman over whom Shakespeare anguished in or around 1594 when his 'dark lady' sonnets were underway.[52]

In the winter of 1576, the Court of Governors of the London Bridewell prison set about breaking up a loose and shifting circle of pimps, escorts and prostitutes, operating in the northern reaches of London's hinterland. Bridewell itself stood on the Thames just outside the city wall, separated from the liberty of Blackfriars by the stinking stream that was the river Fleet, and yet its judicial reach extended to any and all of London's suburbs. The group broken up by the Bridewell authorities had at its core a few unsavoury individuals. These included Gilbert and Margaret East who ran a brothel in Turnmill Street, Mary Dornelly their most select prostitute (the spelling may reflect her Irish accent), Anthony Bate a goldsmith and notorious pimp, and Henry Boyer and William Mekyns, their 'carriers' or panders. They had two principal associates: Thomas Wise a surgeon, who with his wife Dorothy kept a brothel in Whitefriars, and Black Luce who ran her own neighbouring bawdy house in Clerkenwell.[53] East, Bate, Mekyns, Boyer and Black Luce first came to Bridewell's attention on 26 June 1576, in witness statements made by one Thomasine Breame who operated as a brothel madam from the Earl of Worcester's London residence. A former serving-man of hers, Richard Rolles or Rowles, gave incriminating testimony: 'wise fetched one megge Goldsmyth from Black Luces at Clerkenwell wher she laye and she saieth that the said Luce is an arrant whore and a bawde'.[54] East and Black Luce frequently provided sexual services to foreigners or visitors to London. East and Mekyns deposed on 17 December against 'Litle Kathryn' [Jones] and Alice Furres, two prostitutes who served 'ingraunt' [immigrant] strangers, including Captain Augustyne, the French Ambassador's steward, and a Seigneur called Prospero. East testified that one Mandrell lay with Alice Furres at Black Luce's 'this last summer and gave her a dogge with silver bells and gave her xx^{s} … and he had thuse of her body'. Mekyns stated that 'Margarett Goldsmyth laye at Black Luces a great while and greate companye resorted to her and black luce has much gayne by kepying of her and was lewde to her and knewe yt well that she was noughte Gilbert East brought her to Seign*eu*r Prosper from black luces and black luce sent her her apron and other thinges to be noughte with Prospe*ro*'.[55]

John Shaw, another prominent north London pimp, testified on 2 January 1576/7 that Sir Owen Hopton's second son 'resorteth much to his house this quarter

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[52] Hotson, op. cit., 249–52.

[53] Ian Archer first made brief allusion to these prosecutions in his book *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London,* and their details are recorded in the Bridewell Court Governors' Minute Books (BCB 3.20^{r}–24^{r}, 27^{r}–33^{v}, 279^{r}–281^{r}.

[54] BCB 3.22^{r}. Rolles was also at one time servant to Jane Trosse.

[55] Ibid., 104^{r}.

of a yeare and he hath had thuse of the body of little margaret [Goldsmith] and Elizabeth Jane Fullers mayde'. Margaret now resided, he said, at the Bell beyond Shoreditch and was there kept by one Lawrence Dutton, a player. According to Shaw, Black Luce's house had recently been raided at midnight, and its occupants forced to flee to one Stalles at Westminster where Stalle's wife (said to be 'full of the pox') operated as 'a whore and a bawd'.[56] Hopton was one of London's most senior administrators, and apparently made an honorary member of Gray's Inn three years after Shaw's testimony. In 1579, he sent a cobbler, John Gosse, into Bridewell for taking sexual 'delighte' in whipping two boys in the fields 'by the theator' in Shoreditch.[57]

The clearest information regarding East and Black Luce's partnership emerges in the testimony of Elizabeth Kirkman, another of East's prostitutes, approximately a year later. On 15 January 1577/8, Elizabeth appeared before the court charged alongside Rose Brown 'for that Rose Browne is a bawde and a whore to the said Elizabeth Kirkeman and others Elizabeth sayeth that the same Rose had dyvers s*er*vinge men blackamores and other p*er*sons resort to her house while this Elizabeth dwelt ther'.[58] Six days later, she testified against Gilbert East and Mary Dornelly, saying that she had lived at East's for three months of the previous year, and there met Mary and other prostitutes, including one Bess Cowper. East, she stated, would force his wife to 'play the harlot' and 'gett money'. Mary had a silk gown, and was kept 'especially by gentlemen and welthyemen with velvett gaskens and rich apparel and not for the common sorte'. She further testified that, 'Black Luce of Clerkenwell did agree with East and his wyfe that when Blacke Luce had any gre*a*t geste that this exa*min*at or such other women as East had should get them to Luces house and were Mary Dornellys gowne and Luce Bayntham should have thone halfe of the money and East thother halfe of the reste this exa*min*at went to Black Luces and ther at other tyme a gent*leman* a straung*er* of the imbassators house in fflete strete had thuse of her bodye Luce had then halfe and Easts wiffe had then halfe of the rest she were then Mary Dornellys gowne and attire'. Something of East's violent temper and his wife Margaret's distress emerges in the depositions. Elizabeth told how 'East would be very angrye with his wiffe when she did wepe and was lothe to play the harlott and bid her goe and earne monye with commyttinge whoredome and thrust her upstaires comenly everydaye when ther was not other to serve, many prentises came thether some brought halfe a finger lo*a*ffe and the gests sent for so much wyne and good chese they had rather drink bere than wyne'.[59]

East and Black Luce shared their profits equally, exchanged and circulated prostitutes, found custom for them in houses elsewhere as circumstances allowed, and even dressed them to suit the better sort of clientele. Elizabeth Kirkeman's

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[56] Ibid., 120$^{r\text{-}v}$.

[57] Ibid., 413^{r}, 15 August 1579. See 'New Allusions to London 'Shewes' and Playhouses, 1575–1604', *Early Theatre* 8.2 (2005), 105–106.

[58] Ibid, 277$^{r\text{-}v}$.

[59] Ibid., 279^{v}–280^{r}.

statement continues: 'And this exa*min*at sayeth that Black Luce is a vilde bawde and lyveth by it and East and his wiffe and she agree together and devide the monye that is geven to the harlots and helpe to tryme them up with swete water and calles and cotes and thinges for the purpose fitt for the degree of them that use them'.[60] East and Black Luce catered for any who could afford their services, from 'prentises' and 'ingraunts', to 'gentlemen', 'welthyemen' and members of the aristocracy. Even Master Breche, the 'hy constable of Clerkenwell' spent a night with Mary Dornelly (he happened to be East's landlord).[61] As for Mary, she made a full confession, stating that 'East and his wiffe are to abhominable and lewd p*er*sons, none worse in the world'.[62] She was imprisoned for six months and set free on 24 July 1578. Despite the raid on her house at midnight, there seems no record of Luce ever being arrested or examined before the court of Governors. Her premises were perhaps partly protected by the 'greate company' that frequented them. The last references to her in the third Bridewell minute book occur on 1 and 5 August 1579 in statements referring to 'Baynam Luces husband' and 'one Baynam of Clerkenwell'.[63] The Bridewell archives are missing for the period 1579 to 1597, and there seems to be no trace of Lucy or Luce Baynham/Negro in the Clerkenwell parish records. Only two 'Luces' appear in those records for this period: a 'Luce, wife of George Pecke', buried in the terrible plague month of August 1603, and 'Luce Baynard widdowe' buried 'in the south ile' on 1 September 1604. Had Baynard been Baynam, she would have died a respectable churchgoer, a rather unlikely outcome. There are at least enough details in the Court Minute Books to establish her identity. In many of the Bridewell references to her, she is named in the margin as 'Luce Baynham' or sometimes 'Bayntham'. In an entry recorded for 7 June 1578, she is referred to as 'Baynam's wife' and the brothel she ran as 'Baynams'.[64] In 1575, a Henrie Baynam had come before the court for fornication with one Mawdlin Johnson, though he seems to have been discharged without punishment, and does not thereafter appear in the Bridewell minutes. By 1576, Luce Baynam was married, possibly to a Henry Baynam, and running a successful brothel on the outskirts of the city in Clerkenwell in partnership with Gilbert East. She may have been a black woman, since there were several 'blackamores' dwelling around Aldgate at this time, and some, as we have seen, are noted among the prostitutes' clientele.[65] But she was not the Gentlewoman of the Queen's Wardrobe, Luce Morgan, listed in the Queen's accounts between 1579 and 1581.

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60 Ibid., 280^{r}.

61 Ibid., 280^{r}.

62 Ibid, 281^{r}.

63 Ibid. 409^{r}.

64 Ibid., 318^{v}.

65 See Thomas Rogers Forbes, *Chronicle of Aldgate: Life and Death in Shakespeare's London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), 3–4. The *Gesta Grayorum* refers to Lucy Negro and her associates as 'Negarian Tartares' but this may not refer to skin colour.

Hotson may, however, have been partly right about a Luce Morgan who fell from courtly grace to the squalid back-streets of London, and thereafter to the grim conditions of prison. The Bridewell records for 3 May 1598 have the following entry:

> Luce Morgaine sent into this house by vertue aforesaid saieth that she lyeth at the house of Edward Tilsley and keeped the saime at Picket hatch Att the upper end of Aldersgate London by the space of one yeare and more nowe past and that the said Tilsley cometh thither to his house Att Picket hatch once a Fortnight and sayeth that thay are assured Together as man and wyfe before witnesses and that the said Tilsley doth maintaine her and further saieth that there cometh no resort unto her neither men nor women but such as be the friends of the said Tilsley and saieth that he alloweth her three shillings a weeke for her maintenance and that the said Tilsley doth paye the rent of her house and further sayeth that S*i*r Mathew Morgaine doth allowe her x^{li} a yeere when he is in England and that he sent her v^{li} by his boye at Xmas last whose name was Goffe.[66]

An allowance of three shillings a week was rather less than the four or five shillings that women could routinely make for sex, but payment of her rent and a generous annual allowance clearly marked Luce Morgan out as a woman of means. There is no record that she was detained at this interrogatory, and it is quite possible, given her family and in the absence of witnesses or a confession, that she would have been discharged, perhaps upon sureties for her good behaviour. Luce Morgan was, however, by no means London's highest earning prostitute. For those who could avoid arrest, the rewards of night-walking could be considerable. Ann Levens seems to have established herself over a three-year period ending in December 1576 as one of London's most active and successful prostitutes. She offered her services especially to 'strangers' and 'cortyers', and testified at her summons that a French gentleman named Mandreant frequented her at a widow's house in Grub Street, and elsewhere, and 'he gave her large monye about xxx or xl^{lis}'.[67] Levens earned enough to be liberal with her money, and once lent Mathias Vanbargen of the Steelyard the sum of ten pounds. Another of her earlier customers, Henry Cortsell gave her a gold chain and twenty nobles, and a stranger named Adams paid her 'xx^{s} at a tyme'. Clerked and formulaic as many of these depositions were, occasional hints of the *ipsissima vox* of the defendant seem to emerge. In her study of women's depositions in court, Laura Gowing has reminded that the narratives presented 'were shaped not just by clerks and proctors but by their narrator's own strategic and unconscious reshapings'.[68] In recalling her clients and lovers, Levens remembers that 'he that had the first use of her bodye was a gent*leman* named Syprian velotell and it was in a garden about Simon and Jules dayes'. She further

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[66] BCB 4.18^{v}.

[67] BCB 3.96^{v}.

[68] Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 54–5.

recalls, 'a verie fayre youthe with a p*er*fect yellowe bearde' who gave her twenty shillings. Levens was, like many such women, an itinerant worker. In pursuit of trade, she moved between a total of seventeen bawdy houses, the last of which was Black Luce's. Even with the share she had to pay to brothel owners, Levens made a lucrative business from selling sex, until she was arrested. Two years later, on 10 December 1578, she was released upon sureties and on condition that she depart the city within three days.[69]

By 1576, Black Luce would probably have been in her twenties at least, around a decade older than Shakespeare. The records do not link her directly with Shakespeare but she might even in those early days have had literary connections. In February 1577/8, Mary Dornelly testified that she and a friend were frequented by one 'Edward Dier' and a 'm*aste*^{r} beeston' at Black Luce's, and that this Beeston promised to marry her and paid ten shillings a week for her board at a house in Westminster, despite having a wife 'in the northe'.[70] This is unlikely to have been the actor but we may recall that the Beeston family held property at Clerkenwell, and Christopher Beeston would later run the Red Bull theatre nearby at 'the upper end of St. Johnstreet'.[71] On at least one occasion, he gave his address as Turnmill Street, the lane where East had kept his brothel.[72] A further theatrical connection with Clerkenwell occurs elsewhere in the Bridewell minutes. Judith Hill, a widow notorious for pimping out her own daughter, confessed in court that 'm*aste*^{r} Tilney a gent*leman* of Grayes Inne had thuse of her body at Clarkenwell and he gave her v^{s} At an alehouse called the signe of the Pye a quarter of a yeere since he is an olde bachelor brother to m*aste*^{r} Tilney a councillor of Grayes Inne.'[73] Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels, had been admitted to Gray's on 2 February 1583/4, and he lived at Clerkenwell (as would, after 1608, the actor Thomas Greene,

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[69] BCB 3.345^{r}; see further 352^{r}.

[70] Ibid., 3.285^{v}.

[71] Le Hardy (ed.) op. cit., 285. See also Eva Griffiths, 'New Material for a Jacobean Playhouse: The Red Bull Theatre on the Seckford Estate', *Theatre Notebook,* 55 (2001), 5–23.

[72] See Nungezer, 38.

[73] BCB 4.373^{r} (30 April 1603). An arrest warrant had been issued for Hill on 21 January 1602/3 (BCB 4.348^{v}). Six days later, a special court was convened by the lord mayor solely to begin an investigation into her activities: 'Whereas suspicious matters of some ymportaunce are nowe made knowen to the Governors here present as touchinge the filthie misdemeanors of a notorious Bawde one Judith Hill to whome resorted diverse and sundrie p*er*sons thought to be of good creditt and honest behavio*ur*^{r}' (27 January 1602/3, 4.350^{r}). She was detained but, by 7 February, suit had been made for her release (by whom is not recorded, but perhaps Robert Tilney). The governors relented on condition that she and her daughter make an affidavit and agree to sureties binding them for their good behaviour (4.352^{v}). They were released on 16 February 1602/3 (4.356^{r}). Ironically, one of the governors who presided at these hearings was Peter Street, the Bridewell carpenter and constructor of the Globe theatre. He had a petition for land at Bridewell which he wished to pursue.

Thomas Heywood, and, later, John Weever, author of the sonnet 'Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare').[74] *The Pension Book of Gray's Inn* notes for 29 April 1600, 'Mr. Robert Tilney, the elder, having paid all his vacations and commons due by him to the Society, is restored to his former degree of ancienty'.[75] Robert Tilney had influence and means and seems to have avoided making any appearance at Bridewell. Gilbert East apparently later found employment in the world of the playhouses. Henslowe records having dinner on no less than thirty occasions with a Gilbert East in 1600. On 26 November 1603, he notes 'gilbart easte my / bayllefe' as witness to a (presumably disputed) non-payment of rent.[76] The name 'Gilbert East' is rare in London parish records and we are on relatively safe ground in taking the Clerkenwell brothel-owner to be the bailiff on whom Henslowe relied.[77] There is another striking link between this group and the literary world of the 1590s. A wryly knowing section of the Gray's Inn revels, a letter signed by 'John Puttanemico' from 'the Harbour of Bridewell', refers to a 'hot skirmish' on 9 January 1594/5 in the 'Straits of the Gulf of *Clerkenwell*' between a 'merchant of St. Giles's, called *Amarpso* and the Admiral of the Amazons called the *Rowse-flower*; wherein the Merchant having gained the Wind, came up with her in such close manner, that he brake his Bolt-sprite in her hinder Quarter'.[78] Rose Flower had worked as a prostitute since at least 1574, when Elizabeth Barnewell served as her bawd. She was later married to one 'Prise' and lived in Shoreditch where she ran a bawdy house for 'euery foke 1 or 2 hores in her house for all that come'. She used her home but also worked in brothels throughout London.[79] Henry Boyer, a

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[74] It seems, too, that Thomas Dekker and his wife were buried at St. James's, Clerkenwell, in 1632 and 1616 respectively, if the 'Thomas Decker, householder', buried there on 25 August 1632, was the author.

[75] For Edmund Tilney, see Joseph Foster, *The Register of Admissions* (London: Hansard, 1889), fo. 45 (admitted 2 February 1583/4). For Robert Tilney, see Reginald J. Fletcher (ed.) *The Pension Book of Gray's Inn* (London: Chiswick Press, 1901), 149.

[76] R.A. Foakes (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed, 2002), 192–3, 245.

[77] Henslowe's association with East should not be taken to support the notion that he was a brothel-owner. The Bridewell court books make no reference either to him or to properties he owned, a silence that weakens that supposition. See S.P. Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn: His Brothel's Keeper?' *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 13 (2001) 93–100.

[78] W.W. Greg (ed.) *Gesta Grayorum*, 49–50. The letter echoes Shakespeare's lines on Dromio's 'spherical' admirer (*Errors*, 3.2.95–142).The conceit may derive from a known ship name. The Chamberlain's accounts for 1584–85 cite the transportation of 150 men in 'the ship called the "Mary Flower" of London'; see Betty R. Masters (ed.) 'The Chamberlain's Account 1584–5: Nos. 68–146', *Chamber Accounts of the Sixteenth Century: London Record Society,* 20 (1984), 30–62, fo. 84 (16 August 1584).

[79] For Flower's early life and association with Barnewell, see BCB 2.28^{r}–30^{v} (31 July 1574). For Flower's marriage, see BCB 3.317^{v} (7 June 1578 'in thafternone'). She may have re-married later. The parish clerk of St. Botolph, without Aldgate, took the following

pimp living in Cowe Lane, just outside Clerkenwell, was said (on 2 July 1576) to have taken 'Rose Flower' to bawdy houses in Whitefriars and the Strand.[80] Two years later, John Lee, who 'also laye w*i*th Marg*ar*ett Goldesmythe at Baynehams at Clerkenwell' was recorded as having used Rose Flower: 'John Lee in Lyme Strete did abuse Rose Flower at Shoreditch in her howse'.[81] This John Lee claimed that 'he went to Sir Henry Lees and there he could have a ȸ Lady [*sic*] when he lysted to be noughte'.[82] Few aristocrats were better connected to Elizabeth's court than Sir Henry. Rose Flower was even tipped by Nashe, in a hitherto unexplained allusion, as one of the finest women in London for experimentation.[83] If Rose Flower was well-known, Black Luce had created a myth. She was sufficiently celebrated, or notorious, to be named in the *Gesta Grayorum* for the Christmas amusement of the young gentlemen and lawyers at the inns of court. She was on intimate terms with members of an audience that probably included Shakespeare's patrons, the Master of the Revels and his brother, and may well have been present that night. Her 'choir of nuns' was drawn from a network that included (in the 1570s) Margaret Goldsmith (also known as 'M*ist*ris Tarleton'[84]), Ann Levens and Mary Dornelly. She would later be the subject of a quip in Heywood's *Edward IV, Part One* (1600) where the captured renegade Captain Spicing bids farewell before he goes to the gallows: 'Commend me to black Luce, bouncing Bess, and lusty Kate, and the other pretty morsels of man's flesh. Farewell pink and pinnace, flyboat and carvel, Turnbull and Spittle; I die like a man' (Scene 10, 162–5).[85] Like the first names Anne, Margaret or Margery, the name Elizabeth was very common at the time and so the nickname 'bouncing Bess' was not likely to have been unusual: unsurprisingly, we find it in an entry for 10 June 1560, when Elizabeth Vaughan 'otherwise called Bowncyng Besse' was detained for twelve days at Bridewell as a suspected 'common harlot'.[86]

Difficult as it is to make secure historical identifications, these allusions to Lucy Negro appear not to have been simply memories of a woman who had long ago slipped into local lore. Black Luce was still in business in 1601. On 23 September that year, Helen Balson, alias Hudson, a woman already known to the

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record: 'Marke Mulbourne of S*ain*t Pulkers p*ar*ishe glover and Rose Flower a widow being of the said p*ar*ishe weare wedid the xviith Day of November *ann*o 1593 by me M*r* Threlkeld our preacher but I knowe of no licence' (LMA, St Botolph Aldgate, Composite register, 1593–94, P69/BOT2/A/01/Ms 9234/4).

[80] BCB 33[r].

[81] BCB 3.317[v] and 318[v].

[82] BCB 3.160[r].

[83] See Nashe's *Have With You to Saffron-Walden* in McKerrow, iii, 54.

[84] Morrice Williams deposed on 1 August 1579 that 'she is a harlott and hath 4 names her trewe name is Megge Goldsmyth she is also called M[ris] Tarleton' (BCB 3.409[r]).

[85] See Richard Rowland (ed.) *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV, Thomas Heywood* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005) 132.

[86] BCB 1.85[r].

Bridewell bench, was 'apprehended in mans apparrell'. Told to explain herself, she replied that a certain 'm*aste*r Taylors sonne lyeing at Black Lewces' had urged her to cross-dress.[87] When and how she died, we do not know, but it was unlikely to have been in Clerkenwell for we can locate her quite precisely in the first year of the new reign. Just after Christmas 1604, Henslowe made a record of his tenants living in the Boar's Head tenements he owned on Bankside. In an entry marked 'The Bores Heade tenantes as foloweth be genyng at crystmase Laste 1604', he notes fifteen residents, including John Street, son of the Globe carpenter Peter Street. Third in this list are 'Lewce easste', who pay an annual rent of twenty shillings for their rooms and seem to be living together.[88] The brevity of the names implies Henslowe's familiarity with them. Black Luce had moved south of the river, perhaps as a result of recent orders against houses in the suburbs susceptible to plague, and her myth went with her. Stow indicates the location of the Boar's Head rooms on Bankside facing the river. It is perhaps a fitting irony that Luce and East ended up in one of the former stews, looking across the river, with Bridewell Hospital, a place they had so long struggled to avoid, just to their left.[89] Even in 1606, the year that Barnabe Barnes's *The Devil's Charter* was published, her name resonated sufficiently for a topical quip: 'I coniure thee by *Negra Luciaes* name'.[90] By this time, Luce was a woman of considerable renown with a long and successfully disreputable career behind her as a brothel madam, and she was still very much a part of the world of the theatres. According to John Aubrey, Shakespeare first lodged in north London at Shoreditch, a report both Charles Nicholl and René Weis accept as probable.[91] He may well have heard of the reputation of Rose Flower, especially since his *Comedy of Errors* seems to have informed the account in which she is mentioned as being penetrated sexually from behind. He is more likely to have known of Black Luce and not just through his connections with Gray's Inn or Henslowe. He had reason to take particular note of Clerkenwell, for among its residents – besides Beeston, Boyer, East, the Tilneys, Black Luce, John Weever, and his collaborator on *Pericles*, George Wilkins – were Shakespeares.

The parish registers of St. James, Clerkenwell, record a Matthew Shakespeare, the surname perfectly spelt, trying to establish a family in London in the years before William's arrival. His first child, Joane, was baptised on 18 January

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87 BCB 4.263r.

88 See Foakes 249 (177v). Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage* ii, notes, 'A Boar's Head on the Bankside, which belonged to Henslowe in 1604 and previously to Alleyn … was apparently not an inn' (443). See also Henry Ansgar Kelly's article which dispels many myths about the medieval stews, 'Bishop, Prioress and Bawd in the Stews of Southwark', *Speculum* (2000) 75, 2, 342–88, esp. 354–60.

89 Stow, ed. Pearl, 361.

90 I am grateful to Nick de Somogyi, editor of *The Devil's Charter*, for this reference. See his *Barnabe Barnes, The Devil's Charter* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1999), 55.

91 Nicholl, op. cit., 39; Weis, op. cit., 94.

1569/70, and he saw her buried just over three weeks later on 11 February 1569. A son Humfrey was christened on 5 August 1571 but interred not long afterwards on 30 August 1571. He buried a second Joane on 26 December 1572. His son Francis, baptised on 18 April 1574, lived to the age of three and was buried on 7 October 1577. His daughter Jane, baptised on 27 August 1578, died just nine days later on 5 September 1578. A son Robert was buried on 5 May 1581. Another son Thomas, christened 7 April 1583, seems to have survived. These seven children came by his marriage to Isabel Peelle on 5 February 1569 at Christ Church, Greyfriars, Newgate. Trouble seems to have followed Matthew Shakespeare around, although nothing in the records indicates why this might have been so. In a recognizance of 16 October 1581, Matthew Shakespeare is cited as a 'vitler' [victualler] who lived on St. John's Street. He put in five pounds sureties binding a neighbour, Hugh Vomer, a smith, to keep the peace.[92] The following year, on 30 April, three servants of Sir John Parret, knight, and his son James, were bound over to keep the peace, 'especially towards Mathew Shakespere'.[93] Trouble came his way more seriously in 1585 when John Craggen, a neighbour, was found dead 'near the dwelling-house of a certain Mathew Shaxper of the said street'. Craggen and one Robert Marshe of St. Clement Danes had quarrelled between one and two o'clock on the afternoon of 17 February and the same day duelled with swords and daggers in a copse called 'Woodes Close' in nearby fields (see Figure 6.3). Marshe felled Craggen with his sword, giving 'the said John Craggen on the fore part of his head a mortal wound, of which he languished from the same 17th of February to the 17th of March, when he died thereof'. Marshe claimed he was innocent of murder but admitted 'killing the said John in Chaunce-Medley', that is, in manslaughter, or homicide by misadventure. His plea failed and 'he was sentenced to be hung'. Quite why Matthew Shakespeare came to find a dead body outside his house is unclear, but the post-mortem inquiry cites him as a 'yoman', a man of good community standing, if not of rank.[94] Although we do not have anything like as colourful a record of his kindred, it appears that he may have lived in Clerkenwell alongside relatives, perhaps brothers. On 5 August 1571, Henry Shakespeare's son Humfrey was christened at St. James's, Clerkenwell, and on 24 May 1577, Robert Shakespeare – an adult – was interred. A 'Francis Shackespere', not listed as an infant, was buried on 7 October 1577.[95] The name 'Shakespeare' was not particularly uncommon and these families may have been quite unrelated to the author: after all, an apparently unconnected John Shakespeare, a cordwainer

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[92] Jeaffreson, op. cit., 134.

[93] Ibid., 141. Sir John Perrot was knighted by Edward VI and served between 1584 and 1588 as Lord Deputy in Ireland. His demise was a major political event in the early 1590s. I have not been able to link him with the Perrots of Stratford with whom John Shakespeare quarrelled.

[94] Ibid., 159.

[95] These details are taken from the composite parish registers of St. James, Clerkenwell, 1561–1670, LMA, P76/JS1/003, microfilm X097/354 and X097/355.

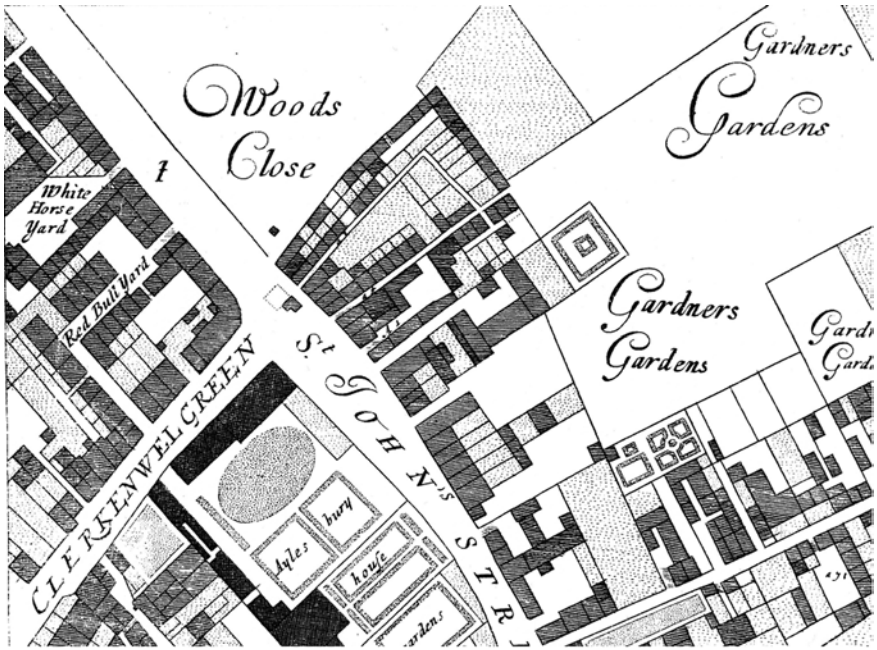

Fig. 6.3 Detail from the map of London by John Ogilby and William Morgan (1676) showing 'Wood's Cope' or 'Close' (with kind permission from London Metropolitan Archives).

or 'corvizer' was recorded as having married at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, on 25 November 1584 and seems to have fathered children in the locality.[96] But there is one crucial aspect of Matthew Shakespeare's story that lends it a particularly interesting light – which is, quite simply, his marriage to Isabel Peele at Christ Church, Greyfriars in Newgate. In 1901, Charlotte Carmichael Stopes noted Matthew Shakespeare and suggested that his bride might be the sister of the dramatist George Peele.[97] Stopes offered not a shred of evidence to support this claim, but in fact she did not have to. Peele's father, James, was clerk and book-keeper at Christ's Hospital from 1562 until his death in 1585. Christ's Hospital was the school at which George Peele was educated before going on to Oxford.

[96] See E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) 2 vols, ii. 3. See also S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 7, 87, 94 and 174 on Rowe's confusion of the shoemaker with Shakespeare's father, and Malone's deduction of the solution. Chambers (op. cit., ii. 370) notes Matthew Shakespeare but makes no connection with the playwright.

[97] C.C. Stopes, *Shakespeare's Family: Being a Record of the Ancestors and Descendants of William Shakespeare, with Some Account of the Ardens* (London: Elliot Stock, 1901), 144. Stopes gives an incorrect year for the marriage.

Christ Church, Greyfriars, in Newgate stood directly against Christ's Hospital, and it was the church routinely used by masters and pupils (see Figure 6.4). Marriage to a Peele in that place points to a virtually certain connection with the family of the dramatist. When Shakespeare collaborated with Peele on *Titus Andronicus,* as Brian Vickers has painstakingly and persuasively argued he did, Peele's sister was, or had lately been, one Mistress Isabel Shakespeare, and his brother-in-law, a Master Matthew Shakespeare.[98]

There are further hints that Shakespeare might have had other cousins in London besides Thomas Greene, and possibly Matthew Shakespeare.[99] A John Shakespeare of Shadwell, London, began a line of rope-makers who seem to have claimed their ancestry from Shakespeare's grandfather, Richard of Snitterfield. We could dismiss this claim as forgivable self-advancement but for the fact that John's descendants adopted and proudly displayed Shakespeare's coat of arms as their own. The most prominent of these, John Shakespeare, an alderman elected Master of the Ironmonger's Company in 1769, repeatedly presented Shakespeare's coat of arms (without the falcon crest) next to his name. His shield can be seen in John Noorthouck, *A New History of London* (1773), on the rear wall of the present Ironmonger's Hall in Shaftesbury Place, London (see Figure 6.5), and also apparently on his tomb at St. Paul's, Shadwell (which I have not seen).[100] Although the College of Arms apparently holds no record of this John Shakespeare's application for arms, George Russell French stated in 1869 that his descendents held in their possession 'the drawing on parchment of a coat of arms pronounced by an eminent herald "to be more than 200 years old"'. This design,

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[98] On Shakespeare's collaboration with Peele, see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 148–243. Katherine Duncan-Jones notes Peele's pun on the name 'Shakespeare' in his *Edward I* and observes, 'all apparent links between Shakespeare and Peele should now be pondered with some thought', see her *Shakespeare, Upstart Crow to Sweet Swan, 1592–1623* (London: A & C Black, 2011), 107–108. The marriage establishes a kindred link between Peele and the Shakespeares of Clerkenwell, not between William and Matthew Shakespeare.

[99] Charlton Hinman notes a 'John Shakespeare', son of a Warwickshire butcher, apprenticed to William Jaggard in 1610, who may have been Compositor 'B' for the First Folio, see Charlton Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the Fisrt Folio of Shakespeare*, 2 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), ii.513. It ought to be emphasised that while these London Shakespeares are naturally of interest, we cannot link them definitively with the dramatist, even though we know more about them than we do his own brothers, Gilbert, Richard and Edmund.

[100] John Noorthouck, *A New History of London, including Westminster and Southwark to which is added a General Survey of the Whole, describing The Public Buildings, Late Improvements Etc, illustrated with Copper-Plates* (London: R. Baldwin, 1773), illustration interleaved between pp. 544 and 545. I am exceedingly grateful to Teresa Waller-Bridge, Clerk's Secretary at the Ironmonger's Hall, Shaftesbury Place, London, for kindly showing me round the Hall. See also George Russell French, *Shakespeareana Genealogica: In Two Parts* (London and Cambridge: Macmillan, 1869), 546ff.

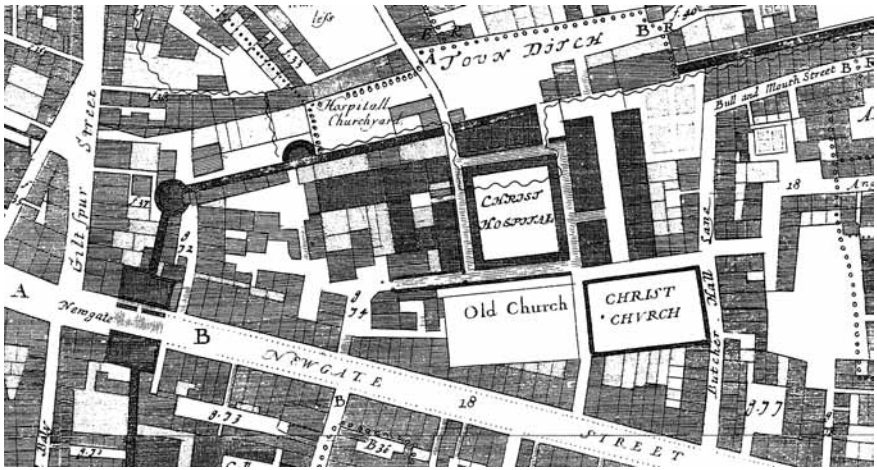

Fig. 6.4 Detail from the map of London by John Ogilby and William Morgan (1676) showing the line of the city wall and the proximity of Christchurch, Greyfriars, Newgate to Christ's Hospital (with kind permission from London Metropolitan Archives).

French records is 'precisely the same' as Shakespeare's.[101] A nearby family of another John Shakespeare, a wealthy 'bitmaker to the king' flourished in the parish of St. Clement Danes, near Clement's Inn. An intriguing feature in this line of the family emerges in the will left by his 'relict' or widow, Mary (neé 'Godtheridg'), which shows not only that she was extraordinarily wealthy, her estate amounting to over one thousand pounds, but that she bequeathed her 'second best feather bedd' to a grandchild, leaving her 'best childbed linen and woollen' and 'best feather bedd' to her daughter Ellen:

> I give unto my said daughter Ellen the Wife of John Milburne before named all my best childbed linnen and woollen to furnish her Chamber with as Carpetts Curtaines and Cushions and my best Feather bedd two downe pillows one payre of the best blancketts and my tapestrie Coverlett and also I give unto hir my diamond Ring. Item I give unto my said Grandchild Mary Milburne my second best Feather bedd. bolster [*sic*] and one downe Pillowe my laced Curtaines and vallence to them.[102]

[101] Private communication from Mr. Robert Noel, College of Arms. French, op. cit., 546.

[102] NA, Kew (Prob/11/247). A few details of this will are given by Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, op. cit., 149–50. For a transcript and discussion of the will, see my 'Mary Shakespeare of St. Clement Danes' (forthcoming).

Fig. 6.5 The arms of John Shakespeare, alderman, reproduced from an original in the Ironmonger's Hall, Shaftesbury Place, London EC2 (with kind permission).

The will gives a touching inventory of personal items, but the bed references are of especial interest. The association of 'childbed linen and woollen' with a 'best Feather bed' might seem to suggest a convention among certain households that such items should be kept for 'lying in' in the weeks leading up to, and including, child-birth. In 1616, when Shakespeare made his will, both Susanna and Judith were of child-bearing age (33 and 31 years respectively). Either of them could have been left the 'best' bed: Judith had only just married (10 February 1616), but Susanna was bequeathed 'thappurtenances' and other 'household stuffe whatsoever' of New Place, in which it might have been included. Either way, on this line of inference, Anne Shakespeare is unlikely to have expected, or indeed wanted, her husband's best bed. Yet at the time that Mary Shakespeare's will was made (24 December 1653), Ellen Milburne was 39 years of age, by no means past child-bearing but also not about to start a family.[103] Mary who received the 'second best Feather bedd' was 17 and would marry the following year. Another grand-daughter, Martha, to whom was left 'the best Feather bedd in the Upper chamber', was 12 and married four years later. Best and second-best beds were, it seems, distributed according to personal wish or convenient circumstance, and Shakespeare's finest bed may, of course, have lain in London. But it should be

[103] An Ellyn Shakspeer, daughter of John Shakespeer, was christened at St. Clement Danes on 5 May 1614. Her daughters were Mary, baptized in the same parish on 27 September 1636, and Martha on 13 August 1641. E.I. Fripp, *Shakespeare, Man and Artist*, ii.827 mentions two wills that leave a second-best bed and furniture to a daughter, and to a son, respectively.

apparent that there is no intended slight in Mary's bequest of her second best bed to Mary Milburne. No kindred link between William Shakespeare and these others who shared his name has yet been established, but they were in his locale.[104] More important than simple blood-relation, perhaps, is whether they formed a part of his personal milieu, whether he was likely to have had social, literary, legal or business connections with them. London was a small place, and as with Thomas Greene or Richard Quiney journeying between London and Stratford, at least some of these Shakespeares, along with his brothers Gilbert, Richard and Edmund, must also have made that journey. Circumstantially, they form part of Shakespeare's London world, for which Clerkenwell would have been a major point of arrival and departure.

The northern London suburbs were a natural gateway to Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, and taverns would provide a hub for visitors, merchants, travellers and troupes of various sorts. An inn named the Bell lay just north of St. Leonard's church, Shoreditch, on the main route north out of London. Notorious brothel-keeper John Shaw told the court that the player Lawrence Dutton had once kept Black Luce's prostitute 'litle megg' (Margaret Goldsmith) there, and Melcher Pelse confessed that 'there dwelleth a bawde at the farther end of Shorditche beyonde the churche at the signe of the Bell there goeth very many oute of London thither'.[105] Shakespeare is likely to have known this hostelry well. Stow tells us that Gracious (Gracechurch or Grasse church) Street held 'many fair houses for merchants and artificers, and many fair inns for travellers'.[106] One of these was the Cross Keys where 'one Browne the Carrier of Coxall' lodged.[107] Shakespeare is likely to have taken either of two routes between Stratford and London, one via Banbury and Aylesbury, and the other via Oxford, Watlington and (probably) Henley-on-Thames. He was said by William Beeston (via Aubrey – a merry though not always reliable source) to have conceived Sir William Davenant, probably at the Crown Inn (just off Cornmarket Street) Oxford, with Davenant's mother Jane.[108] William Bennet, born in Oxfordshire, made the journey to London to find service with 'the Carrier of Watlington', presently lodging at the Bell in Broken Wharf just by the Thames, but ended up detained in Bridewell for suspicious

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[104] Stopes, op. cit. writes, perhaps hopefully, 'I find that "Gutheridge" was a Stratford-on-Avon name. A Mr. Gutheridge was a dealer in leather there … and John Milburne was a Rowington man … – two facts which much increase the likelihood of John, of St. Clement Danes, being at least a Warwickshire man, if not the Snitterfield one', 230.

[105] BCB 3.120^{r} (2 January 1576/7) and 124^{v} (28 December 1576).

[106] Stow (Pearl, ed.) 157.

[107] Marie Sweetinge had been brought to London by Browne who, she said, 'lieth att the Crosse Keyes in Gracious streat' (BCB 5.436^{v}, 13 June 1610). Coxall is a hamlet in Herefordshire. It appears that the Bel Savage, just north of Ludgate Hill, was still functioning at this time, though not perhaps as a playing space: Abraham Barber was brought in as 'a notable filcher who filched five pullets for the Bell savage and had two founde about him here' (BCB 5.437^{r}, 26 June 1610).

[108] Nicholl, op. cit., 242–3; Weis, op. cit., 281–3.

behaviour near the White Horse in Fleet Street.[109] Until 1601, the carrier from Stratford was William Greenaway, a neighbour of John Shakespeare's, who once brought a letter to London from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney 'at the Bell in Carter Lane' which mentions Shakespeare.[110] From those places north of the river in which Shakespeare resided, either Shoreditch, or further south at St. Helen's Bishopsgate, or again south-east at Silver Street in Cripplegate, the route to Stratford lay either through or past Clerkenwell, home of Shakespeares.

As the Gray's Inn revels indicate, the nexus of north London route-ways stretching from Shoreditch to Clerkenwell, Turnmill Street and St. John's Street, and south-west to Gray's and Clement's Inn sustained a market in human pleasures – theatrical and sexual. Shakespeare must have travelled this circuit, for in order to get to Southampton House from Shoreditch, he had to walk through Clerkenwell and pass Gray's Inn.[111] Tempting though the opportunity may seem, I have not argued that Black Luce was Shakespeare's 'mistress' of the Sonnets. The evidence adduced so far cannot be regarded as having substantiated that claim, although cumulatively, it makes her connections with the theatrical world of interest. Some years ago, I suggested that we could rule her out as a candidate for the 'dark lady' altogether, a view I now consider insecure in light of further evidence.[112] Yet if we set aside the question of this persona's precise historical identity, two points remain: first, Black Luce's bad name was so well-known that anyone reading Shakespeare's 'sugar'd sonnets' circulated among his 'private friends' in the 1590s and early 1600s may perfectly reasonably have brought her to mind, something the

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[109] BCB 5.441^{v} (14 July 1610). Humfrey Harington, a boy, was charged with vagrancy, having been brought by 'Guy the Carier of Oxford' who resided at the Saracen's Head, Newgate (BCB 5.256^{r}, 19 March 1607); in a similar case, James Hopton, 'vag*rant*', was brought to London by 'one of Oxford carriers' and 'lefte att Sainte Gyles' (see BCB 5.324^{r}, 18 February 1608). The phrasing in the latter case is rather unclear but seems to imply departure from St. Giles in Oxford since the London location would usually have been designated as 'without Cripplegate'.

[110] For Greenaway (or Greenway), see Nicholl, op. cit., 67–8; Weis, op. cit., 38–9, 47–9, 242–3. Weis cites Daniel Baker's letter from Stratford to Leonard Bennet residing at 'the Bell in Friday-street' (241). On 24 January 1609/10, the Lancashire carrier was staying at this inn. The 'tapster and hosteler' at the inn was 'one Bowen' who had 'a crooked backe'. George Walmsley offered the carrier twenty-two shillings for taking Anne Murrey who bore his bastard child from London into Lancashire (BCB 5.409^{r}). Quiney was staying at the Bell in Carter Lane, just south of St. Paul's, a location conveniently accessed either from the west through Holborn, past the Lincoln's, Staple's and Barnard's inns of court, or from the north-west, via Clerkenwell. There were several Bell inns, at Holborn, Carter Lane, St. John's Street, Friday Street, Gracious Street, Bishopsgate, Shoreditch, Distaff Lane, and Tower Hill.

[111] Southampton House, situated near the junction of Chancery Lane and Holborn, lay at the centre of a circuit that included Gray's, Barnard's, Staple, Clement's and Lincoln's Inns.

[112] See 'Black Luce and the 'curtizans' of Shakespeare's London', *Signatures 2* (2000), 1–10.

poet is unlikely not to have anticipated; and second, if such a notorious reputation could be appropriated to characterise Lucy Morgan, it could just as readily have been used by Shakespeare to lend myth of a certain colour to another woman altogether. On balance, I think it likely that she was present among the Christmas audience at Gray's Inn and that we find her comically acknowledged in the kitchen-maid of *The Comedy of Errors*. That one of her coterie was also known as Mistress Tarleton adds to the intrigue. We almost certainly find her residing, with Gilbert East, in Henslowe's Boar's Head tenements on Bankside in 1604–1605, but thereafter, she disappears. There is still no 'revealed at last' story to tell, in the manner of A. L. Rowse.[113] The mystery of the 'dark lady' (a term not used in the *Sonnets*) continues to remain dark, though the question of her historical identity is unlikely to go away. We cannot conclude that Shakespeare and Black Luce were lovers, but they certainly shared acquaintances, and though it may seem fanciful to imagine her laughing in the candle-light at Dromio's argument with a swart, loose wench through a keyhole,[114] or at the entrance of a pious abbess, it remains the case that Harrison's tentative but bold conjecture carried more historical intrigue, and weight, than perhaps he imagined.

[113] See S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 559.

[114] The fine Elizabethan screen in Gray's Inn Hall has two doors with keyholes. The *Gesta Grayorum* speaks of a tumult of people 'upon the stage' and of a stage having been 'built' (22–23) so this screen is unlikely to have been used as a back-drop for the performance. I am grateful to Andrew Mussell, archivist, for showing me around Gray's Inn and the Great Hall.

Chapter 7
Vanishing Tricks: Dekker, Marston, Shakespeare and Middleton

When Thomas Hobbes wrote in 1651 that in a time of war the life of man could be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short',[1] he might have added that the lives of women in peace time were often no different. Plague, infection, sickness, hunger, and the risks of childbirth and venereal infection were all serious dangers women faced. Those of the 'better' or 'middling' sort might be insulated against some of these hazards but despite a constant flow of theological, astrological, medical, legal, and social publications urging all the qualities that made for a good wife, virgin, maid, or daughter, dearth ensured that prostitution still flourished. Hunger, ignorance of biology and threadbare education made out-of-wedlock pregnancies a daily fact of early modern life. But prostitution was a problem far easier to denounce than to solve, a reality that begins to register in the literature. Writers continued to warn against the arts, glances, deceits and ruses of courtesans but, by the early seventeenth century, they were also concerned with wider anxieties that illicit sex inevitably raised. In particular, dramatists such as Thomas Dekker, John Marston and Thomas Middleton began to depict prostitution as a social problem in need of a social solution.[2] In the emerging genre of civic comedy, place would need to be found for the courtesan, to accommodate, recuperate, or absorb her into the social fabric, or otherwise make her disappear. A sub-genre of what might be termed 'marry-a-punk' plays emerged in which rakes were wedded to whores, but, as the ending of *Measure for Measure* indicates, this move could have uneasy effects. Marriage to a prostitute left narrative complications unresolved, and implied that just as whores could become wives, so also wives might prove wicked. Dramatists could achieve what the authorities could not by converting the courtesan into a wife, or revealing her as truly innocent, but doing so allowed these equivocations to persist. Furthermore, it ignored the fact that even as playwrights transformed their prostitutes into citizens, hardship and poverty would continue to turn citizens into prostitutes in the alleyways, gardens, messuages, tenements and chambers of the city.

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[1] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or, The matter, forme, and power of a common wealth, ecclesiasticall and civil* (London: 1651), Part One, xiii, 62

[2] Ann Rosalind Jones has argued that the Venetian authorities were beginning to adopt a similar change of attitude, see her 'Prostitution in Cinquecento Venice: Prevention and Protest', in Levy, op. cit., 43–56.

Tales of the rise and fall of prostitutes, or the conversion of courtesans, filled Renaissance broadsheets and pamphlets. Erasmus had provided a model of the genre (itself based on earlier examples) in a brief dialogue he composed for his *Colloquies* (first printed in August 1523), where a prostitute, Lucretia, is persuaded by one of her most frequent former clients, Sophronius, to abandon her loose ways and pursue holiness. The dialogue was translated and published in English by Nicholas Leigh in 1568 as an addendum to an Erasmian treatise on marriage.[3] Sophronius himself has previously been turned away from licentiousness by a confessor at Rome who, incidentally, recommends that he reads Erasmus for excellent moral instruction. Re-working the genre for a London readership intrigued by tales of trickery or 'coney-catching', Robert Greene's pseudo-autobiographical *Disputation Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher, and a Shee Conny-catcher* (1592) sets forth Laurence's dialogue with 'Nan, a Traffique', a prostitute whom he turns to repentance, together with examples of 'wanton' women turned to fidelity through marriage.[4] Conversion was a powerful theme in Italian pamphlets, songs and broadsheets, some of them strikingly illustrated. These would lament the squalor and pain in which prostitution would often end. Tessa Storey describes a number of these texts, including 'The Boast and Lament of the Ferrarese Courtesan', which ran to several editions in the 1540s, and depicted first the wealth and then the diseases a courtesan could accumulate through sex. Other similar texts included an illustrated broadsheet entitled 'Questo si e il manco mal di n'altre meretrize morir in l'ospeal', and, perhaps most vividly of all, 'La vita et miseranda fine della puttana'. This last work, printed in Venice in 1650, reads as a storyboard of fine engravings complete with an accompanying sub-script text. It offers a more complex narrative than the 'simple bi-partite scheme' of earlier moralizing works and follows the life of a prostitute in episodes from her beginning as a novice to her pitiful demise. The unnamed girl begins by attending parties, meets with a procuress, runs away with a lover, lives as a duchess, encounters lovers on the Piazza San Marco, has her portrait painted as

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[3] Nicholas Leigh, *A modest meane to Mariage, pleasauntly set foorth by that famous Clerke Erasmus Roterdamus and translated into Englishe by N.L.* (London: Henry Denham, 1568), Ciiii-Dii[v]. See also C.R. Thompson, *Collected Works of Erasmus, Colloquies* (Toronto and London: Toronto University Press, 1997) 381–9. Some of the playfulness and freshness of Erasmus's dialogue emerges in the rather free translation by Nathan Bailey (1725): 'And do but seriously consider, this Flower of thy Beauty that now brings thee so many Gallants, will soon fade: And then, poor Creature, what wilt thou do? Thou wilt be piss'd upon by every Body', *All the Familiar Colloquies of Desiderius Erasmus, of Rotterdam Concerning Men, Manners, and Things, translated into English*, 198.

[4] *A disputation, betweene a hee conny-catcher, and a shee conny-catcher whether a theefe or a whoore, is most hurtfull in cousonage, to the common-wealth. Discouering the secret villanies of alluring strumpets. With the conuersion of an English courtizen, reformed this present yeare, 1592. R.G.* (London: 1592). For a thoughtful discussion of Greene's depictions of prostitutes, see Paula M. Woods, 'Greene's Conny-Catching Courtesans: The Moral Ambiguity of Prostitution' in *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 18 (1992) 111–24.

an Amazonian queen, cheats on her lover, loses his financial support, ends up in a tavern with English sailors, associates with ruffians, becomes a syphilitic beggar and finally dies a horrible death in hospital.[5] As Storey remarks, 'What all these texts have in common is their attack on the ambition of the courtesan, who uses her 'power' and position to pick and choose her clientele so as to advance her social position'.[6] Other broadsheets, such as the 'Miserable End of Those who Follow Prostitutes' (Rome, 1611) and 'Vita del lascivo' (Venice, c.1660s), depicted parallel tales directed at young men. Storey suggests that the male's counter to a courtesan's 'power' (or '*superbia*') lay in expressions of disdain and contempt towards her.[7] These pamphlets served up vivid warnings to young women and men and stressed the importance of individual, moral self-salvation. But beyond one's own moral determination, fortified by the terrors of the hospital or prison, they seemed to acknowledge that there was little that social regulation could achieve. Erasmus had urged that women should either get themselves a husband, or remove themselves to 'some godly colledge' for fallen women, but all this really did was to displace the errancies of human desire elsewhere.

The figure of the seventeenth century stage courtesan has recently been the focus of renewed critical attention.[8] One of the most sophisticated and committedly feminist-historicist discussions of early seventeenth-century prostitution plays is provided by Jean Howard in her book *Theatre of a City* (2007). Howard sets out to show that the 'high-spirited' plots of many of these plays enabled dramatists to present 'powerful and socially significant alternatives to normative prescriptions not only about prostitutes, but also about women in general'.[9] In particular, Howard responds to ways in which brothel-plays of the period engage with 'the quickening and expansion of the market economy, the feminization of those who became garden variety hucksters in this new market' and the 'novel positions in which the city places women, complicating their social status'. Such plays, she argues, 'refuse to assign prostitution its own singular, clearly legible place'.[10] In her view, the terrain of Jacobean prostitute drama is complex, shifting and resistant to unifying readings. Howard discusses a number of plays in which 'men marry whores and live to praise the fact', and women decide 'the value of turning tricks' and yet 'still get a husband in the end'.[11] Only one of these plays, Marmion's

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5 Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce*, 27–45.

6 Ibid., 46.

7 Ibid., 53.

8 See, for example, Keir Elam, ''Tis Pity She's Italian: Performing the Courtesan on the Early Seventeenth Century Stage' in Michele Marrapodi (ed.) *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theories: Anglo-Italian Transactions* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2011), 235–46.

9 Jean E. Howard, *Theatre of a City, The Places of London Comedy, 1598–1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Pres, 2007), 115.

10 Ibid., 120–121.

11 Ibid., 140.

Holland's Leaguer, depicts scenes from a brothel but, as Howard points out, 'The place of prostitution is sometimes home … [i]llicit sexuality needs no designated brothel'.[12] London, as we have seen, played host to all kinds of places of 'ill rule', 'ill resort', 'ill houses', 'alehouses' and 'bawdy houses'. Prostitutes could operate from rented accommodation or their own homes and might be arrested on various kinds of suspicion, being 'common', 'lewde', 'light', 'loose', 'naught', 'of ill report', 'incontinent', 'unruly', being 'naughty packs', 'idle wenches', 'night-walkers', 'strumpets', 'harlots', 'whores' or 'bawds' (though never 'punks' or 'courtesans', which seem to have been solely literary terms) or indeed none of these. Such terms were themselves vagrant – as yet unallocated to precise legal distinctions – and often qualified by adjectives such as 'horrible', 'notable', 'arrant' or 'vile'. Howard is alert to this instability and suggests that, 'the malleability of women's identities' disturbs 'the comfortingly stable and discrete categories of maid, wife, widow and whore'. For her, these last categories were simply 'prescriptive injunctions that did not necessarily fully describe women's social experience'.[13] This latter point is rather weakened by Howard's post-structuralist but needless disavowal of hoping to recover 'what really happened', or 'what London was really like for women', in favour of studying ways in which the drama negotiated or imagined roles for women.[14] Any claim that the words 'wife' or 'whore' did not 'fully describe women's social experience' requires at least a going idea of the social reality. Howard argues that brothel-dramas re-imagined possibilities for women that constituted 'a delicious riposte to outmoded pieties'.[15] I would like to be able to share this view, but doubt that, historically, many women were able to take any advantage of such possibilities, even if they were indeed so imagined or available. Stage courtesans could be feisty, eye-catching and even sometimes powerful, but we should be cautious about inferring from this that they pointed towards, or opened up, feasible social advantages for women. There are few grounds for optimism in reading the early modern whore. City comedy tells us one kind of story, and seeks a new social place for the prostitute, but history tells us quite another.

A further powerfully stated, feminist account of the Renaissance literary courtesan is given by Karen Newman in her chapter 'Sex in the City' published in a comparison study of early modern London and Paris.[16] Part of the thrust of Newman's chapter is to throw doubt over the entire enterprise of reading archival materials as a means of illuminating literary representations of city women. Newman draws on historical work by Ian Archer and Paul Griffiths, but argues that records such as the Bridewell books should only be approached '*rhetorically*

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[12] Ibid, 128, 134.

[13] Ibid., 25, 135.

[14] Ibid., 3, 114.

[15] Ibid., 161.

[16] Karen Newman, *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), ch. 8, 134–47.

or literarily' [her emphasis], and so not as a resource of indubitable facts. Newman stresses the formulaic nature of legal records and the filtered, mediated and reported processes by which they were produced: 'one is hard put,' she writes, 'to imagine the voice of any of the deponents'. For Newman, 'the temptation to seek the marginal voice, or lost women's speech, to read records as conveying the real the literary cannot, frequently overcomes better judgement.'[17] To imagine that prosecutions might give any guide to the real historical circumstances is, she suggests, troublingly misguided. And yet, she then goes on to cite testimonies from the Bridewell courtbooks regarding women's attire without any reservation at all as to their facticity. But Newman is intent on sounding a warning, seeing danger in ascribing weight to facts: 'The archive fever that has taken hold in literary studies threatens the study of literature with a renewed historicism of a distinctly old rather than new type.'[18] She concludes with an epilogue that aims to tackle head-on the feverish scouring of old records and 'scienticity' that characterizes, as she thinks, 'too much recent work in literary studies'. To indulge in 'fantasies of fact', she writes, is to miss the interpretative nature of writing and the 'impossibility of ever providing "just the facts".'[19]

Newman relies upon archival sources, and often trusts 'facts', yet she remains suspicious of work that seems to her worryingly 'old historicist'. The label is intended to be a put-down but her concern is needless. Any hope of presenting 'just the facts' would, of course, be misplaced. But that facts should pose any kind of a 'threat' to literary study is itself a fantasy since the so-called facts of the matter are crucial to the material meaning of texts that have come down to us. What often makes 'the facts' so intriguing is precisely their contingent and disputed status. Because they are so often incomplete, there are always different gradations of possibility, and ways we might read them. Moreover, it is not quite the case that women's voices are drowned out altogether in the Bridewell courtbooks, and nothing is gained by arguing for their silence. Instances where signs of orality in the records are particularly strong may be infrequent but they do survive. I quote just two examples, although there are others. The first is the interrogation by the magistrates' bench of a young woman, probably of Welsh parentage (see Figure 7.1):

> The Examinacon of Margaret Aprice before M*aste*r Anthonie cage, M*aste*r Thomas Medcalf & M*aste*r Will*ia*m Elkine the xxvi daye of Marche 1575 about the age of 25 yeres.
>
> Margaret Aprice whether you ev*e*r had any childe or not she answered no
>
> Whether you were w*it*h one hawkes at Leaden hall in som*me*r last in a howse or noe & at what tyme she answered she was ther but not dishonestie committed

[17] Ibid., 138–9.

[18] Ibid., 147.

[19] Ibid., 150–151.

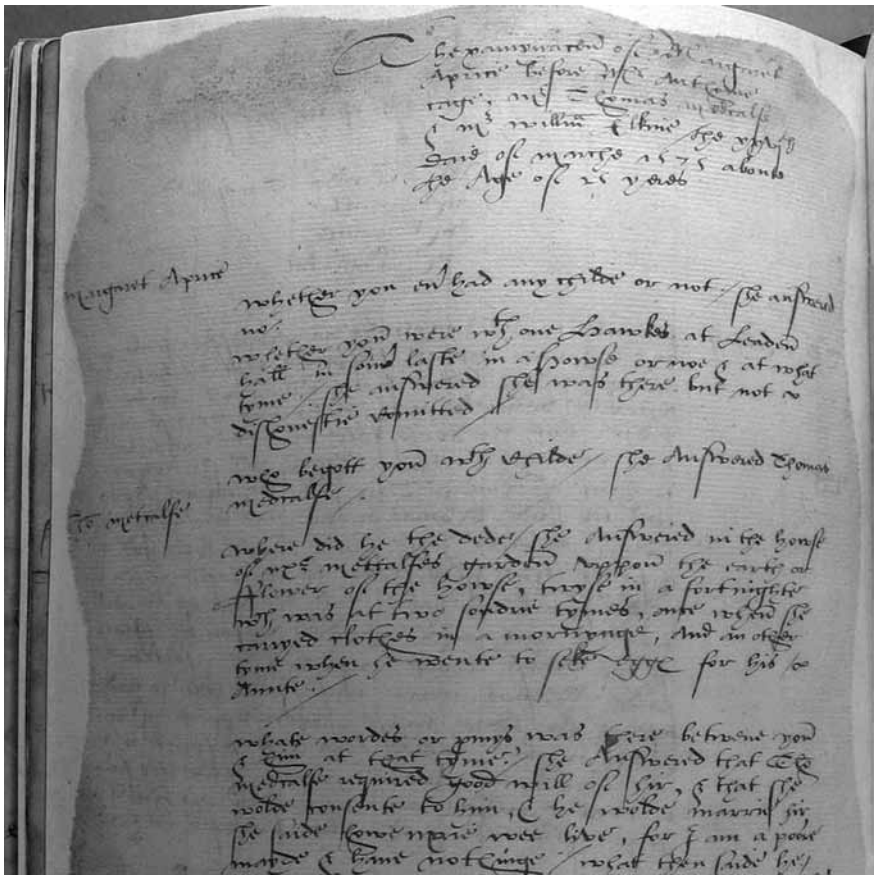

Fig. 7.1 The interrogatory of Margaret Aprice [Ap-Rhees?] 'aboute the Age of 25 yeres' 26 March 1575, BCB 2.79[v] (by kind permission of the Bethlem Art and History Collections Trust).

Who begott you wi*t*[h] childe she answered Thomas Medcalf

Where did he the dede she answered in the house of M*istri*s medcalfs garden upon the cart or flower of the howse twyse in a fort nighte w*hic*[h] was at two sundrie tymes once when she carried clothes in a morning And another tyme when he went to seke eggs for his Aunte.

What wordes or pr*o*mys was ther betweene you & hym at that tyme she answered that Tho*mas* Medcalf required good will of her & that she wolde consent to him & he wolde marrie her she saide howe maie wee live for I am a poor mayde & have nothinge what then said he my unckle will geve me twoe or three howses & some substance besides & I shall have to live well on them said she then you will

> litelie regard me I will nev*er* breake promise but will marrie you well then said she I will p*ro*myse to marrie you or marrye w*i*th you & theruppon delte together those two tymes & no oftner but yet she willing upon his p*ro*mys to do it.
>
> What gifts have you receved she answerd a girdle, a pin pillow, a thimble halfe a crowne in golde & iiii^{s} in monye.[20]

The second case was taken on 27 May 1609, and concerns a woman frequently brought before the Bridewell governors:

> Katherine Ratcliffe taken in the watch and brought in by the same constable [Constable Banes] she is an olde guest a lewd p*er*son & a common night walker: she was lately in Newgate about a man of my Lord Riches that was hurte in Feilde lane and was in greate daunger of being murthered she cried out to him that hurt him kyll him my love kyll hym my love stabbe him. She is by order of court po*nished*: and kepte until she finde good sureties for her good behaviour.[21]

Reading the ink-black, neat cursive hand of the clerks' notes on these folio pages, it is hard not to imagine Aprice's voice as cautious or uncertain, or Ratcliffe's as loud or shrill. But we can assume too much. Time, language-change, conventions of grammar, the genres of legal process and a pattern of textual filtration all intervene between then and now. Aprice's words were recalled, re-spoken, and re-shaped according to questions from the court, recorded by the clerk, and briefly repeated in a short reported confession. Neither case provides unmediated access to the past: both survive through varieties of reportage. We are not proximate to the events described but we can be to the marks that disclose them, and from them gain some understanding of those who were. In the end, I think Newman was partly right: literary studies *are* currently under a serious threat, but not from a forensic historicist approach that values public resources such as archives.

It is unfortunate that historical facts elicit such disdain from those who see them as naive, reactionary and – perhaps worst of all – 'old-historicist'. They have for some time been out of fashion, as though the question of what constitutes a fact has long been settled and remains self-evident. Historical knowledge, some claim, is ineluctably produced in the present: facts are subject to interpretation, and so refracted through a variety of political, semantic, and rhetorical (literary or poetic) conditions. Subtle, shifting ambiguities of metaphor have, it is alleged, permanently undermined trust in the supposed singularity of the fact. The past, on this view, lies under erasure, inaccessible unless through the stories we contrive. But the most substantial current threat faced by literary studies is more practical, political and urgent, currently directed against the funding of museums, libraries, archives and universities, and hence too, at our material relationship with the

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[20] BCB 2.79^{v}–80^{r}.

[21] BCB 5.350^{v}. Robert Rich, first Earl of Warwick, was married until 1605 to Penelope Rich, the Stella of Sidney's sonnet sequence. He had a reputation for occasional violence.

past. That relationship is already undermined if we promulgate the mistaken assumption that historical evidence is no longer needed, or cannot be trusted. At risk is not only the educative motive for study but even the very survival of such resources. An 'archival turn' in early modern studies, currently underway, is thus particularly worthwhile. One of the most rewarding aspects of this kind of research is its unpredictability. Occasionally, a past inscription will disclose something we did not expect, or refuse to tell us something we really would like to know. In such cases, we are constrained. We may fail to comprehend, translate or transcribe aright, or we may seem to hear only our own voices. A text or document may prove obdurately puzzling. When Shakespeare used the word 'scamels', or sent a gravedigger to 'Yaughan', he probably knew what he meant, but we do not. In these instances, the texts have a certain obstinacy or priority: they are uninterpretable and we are stopped in our tracks. It is plainly the case that historical documents should not always be trusted: speakers embellish and writers encode according to their own lights, but from this we cannot assume a general unreliability. In weighing evidential sources up, we have to be aware that they may sort very unevenly, that historical and literary genres can serve divergent social purposes and differ substantially in the circumstances of their earliest inscriptions. The historical and literary will not always align. While historicist critics have lately sought to identify shared codes or vocabularies across unusual conjunctions of literary and non-literary texts, it is also evident that dissimilarities will sometimes impose themselves more forcibly. There is, in all likelihood, no single model for the relationship between historical and literary texts, and this book does not advocate one. But it does urge that we jettison lately modish 'positions' regarding that relationship, and end the needless denigration of documentary research as some kind of malady, an 'archive fever'.[22] The remainder of this chapter recognises that literary and historical texts can pull centrifugally away from one another, and argues that, as it developed after the turn of the seventeenth century, the prevailing literary myth of the dramatic courtesan by and large departed from the historical reality of women's lives at the time.

The Italian term 'onesta' or 'honest' had long signalled an ambivalence in attitudes towards the idea of the courtesan. It seemed to add dignity to a career-choice that many held in contempt. Hamlet's demands of Ophelia, 'Ha, are you honest?' and Othello's insistence that Iago is an 'honest' man are two familiar English inflections on the social ambiguity of this word.[23] Thomas Twyne used the term in his explication of 'merie iestes of maydens and young women' in a book of quips called *The schoolemaster, or teacher of table philosophie* (1576). Presenting his readers with 'honest mirth and delectable deuises', Twyne compiled a series

[22] The phrase derives, of course, from Jacques Derrida (trans. Eric Prenowitz), *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[23] See William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words* (London; Chatto and Windus, 1951).

of weakly comic anecdotes, including one about a 'good honest whore woman' who told her husband that the herb chervil made one double-sighted and that is why he did not really see a lover in bed with her.[24] But the phrase 'honest whore' is most readily known from the title of a two-part dramatic production by Thomas Dekker (with Thomas Middleton as collaborator for the first part). In the weeks before 14 March 1604, Philip Henslowe recorded a loan to 'the company' of his step-son-by-marriage Edward Alleyn of five pounds' to 'geue vnto Thomas Deckers and midleton in earnest of ther playe Called the pasyent man & the onest hore'.[25] Importantly, this entry identifies *Honest Whore* as belonging to Alleyn's company (now the servants of Prince Henry), and as probably performed at the Fortune Theatre in Whitecross Street, which he shared after 1601 with his father-in-law, Henslowe. The play was entered in the Stationers' Register on 9 November 1604 and proved successful, running to several editions over the next thirty or so years, spawning a sequel by Dekker shortly after initial publication of the first part (registered on 29 April 1608).[26] Phrases from the first part, attesting to performance by 'the company' (as Henslowe put it), survive in a commonplace book by Edward Pudsey, along with lines from Shakespeare's plays.[27] The works we now call *The Honest Whore I & II* publicly staged the most sustained consideration of prostitution's social effects of the era. Interwoven between the narrative of patient linen-draper Candido whose wife does her best to vex him just once, even to the point of having him certified insane, is the story of Bellafront, a high-class prostitute, persuaded by the courtier Hippolito to leave her career of courtesan and turn 'honest'. Bellafront initially cuts an assertive figure. She is fond of her looking-glass, cosmetics, baubles and ditties, and speaks of hooking men like fish, or loathing men who 'go against my stomach' (5.65–7). The key attraction of this life, she tells Hippolito, is its freedom: 'I am in bonds to no man, sir' (5.309). An illicit outsider, the 'honest whore' is perfectly set up for conversion: her liberty is a provocation and she must be reined in. Dekker set the play in Milan, but its social world, populated by servant-panders like Roger and bawds like Mistress Fingerlock, is London, circa 1600, as the plays' concluding scenes make clear.

Hippolito turns Bellafront around in three set-piece speeches, deploying a battery of similes associating prostitution with filth, sin, disease, corruption, poison, damnation, and if all that were not bad enough, foreignness (Scene 6).

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[24] Thomas Twyne, *The schoolemaster, or teacher of table philosophie A most pleasant and merie companion* ... (London: 1576), chap 19, sig. Kii^{v}.

[25] R.A. Foakes (ed.) *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2002), 209.

[26] See Paul Mulholland's edition in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (eds.) *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 280; and *Thomas Middleton And Early Modern Textual Culture, A Companion to the Collected Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 507ff. All quotations from Dekker's *The Honest Whore Part One* are from Mulholland's edition.

[27] Ibid., 280.

But Dekker also makes Hippolito a man of experience: 'A harlot is like Dunkirk, true to none, / Swallows both English, Spanish, fulsome Dutch, / Back-doored Italian, last of all the French' (6.405–7).[28] The explicitness of the lines is unusual but reminds the audience that this is, after all, a comedy. As in the pattern of Italian broadsheets, he invokes an exemplar:

> The fairest and most famous courtesan,
> Whose flesh was dear'st, that raised the price of sin
> And held it up, to whose intemperate bosom
> Princes, earls, lords – the worst has been a knight,
> The mean'st a gentleman – have offered up
> Whole hecatombs of sighs, and rained in showers
> Handfuls of gold; yet for all this, at last
> Diseases sucked her marrow' (6.427, 433–4).

Saturated with evangelical zeal, this is rhetoric designed to shock, like a *memento mori* or a looking-glass that reflects back an image of death sucking at female flesh. Hippolito seeks to horrify Bellafront into believing that she feeds and sustains her spiritual contamination like a foul progeny: 'The sin of many men is within you … You eat but to supply your blood with sin' (6.378–9, 418). There is, it seems, only one social level below prostitution: 'You are the miserablest creatures breathing. / The very slaves of nature' … Are you now not slaves?' (6.415–16, 470). Every Londoner was bound by indenture or kinship to a trade, guild, livery company, or a form of work, each week sermons reminded them of bondage to sin, and hence Hippolito urges confession as the only way Bellafront can imagine herself free. Bellafront accedes to the self-image of a spotted woman: 'I am foul. 'Harlot'! Ay that's the spot that taints my soul' (6.494–5), and consequently her pimps bemoan the fact that they have lost 'twenty pounds a night' (8.21). Dekker's Milan has its own 'Bethlem Monastery' where the play concludes, a location matched by an equivalent scene in the sequel set in 'an Italian Bridewell'. This Bethlem bears little relation to the dilapidated hospital that stood just outside Bishopsgate on the western side of the road leading north to Shoreditch. In a state of appalling decay by 1598, it housed twenty patients whose care (or neglect) was sponsored mainly by wealthy or well-placed benefactors. Dekker was not depicting Bethlem to an audience who might have visited or passed it on their way to plays at Shoreditch, as has been suggested. By 1604, the Theatre and Curtain playhouses were long out of action: the Theatre's timbers now supported the new Globe Theatre on Bankside, and the Curtain seems to have been practically decommissioned.[29] Dekker probably set scenes in Bethlem and Bridewell not to satisfy the tastes of those who might have frequented those institutions but to present a theatrical

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[28] See note 46 below.

[29] Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker, Keir Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (London: Routledge, 1997) 132. For the demise of the Theatre and Curtain playhouses, see E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), ii, 397-403.

'discovery' of what they might conceal. Discoveries, where a curtain was drawn back to reveal a character or scene, such as Marlowe's Faustus in his study, or Peele's Bathsheba and her maid bathing, were a familiar convention in Elizabethan drama. In similar manner, Dekker adopted the device in his Bethlem scene when Friar Anselmo 'Discouers an old man, wrapt in a Net'.[30] An onstage parade of lunatics or prostitutes, led from the darkness of their cells, added to the series of revelations with which both parts of *The Honest Whore* end.

In writing the first part, Dekker seems to have has kept in mind possibilities for a follow-up where Hippolito's reformed rhetoric will be almost entirely undone. Hippolito ended his conversion speech to Bellafront with images of arrest and imprisonment: 'I know you dream / Of warrants, whips, and beadles, and then start / At a door' windy creak, think every weasel / To be a constable, and every rat / A long-tailed officer' (6.466–79). Appropriately, the final scene of Part Two takes place in the infamous judicial space to which these lines refer – Bridewell. The work's title page of 1630 draws particular attention to 'Comicall Passages of an Italian Bridewell, where the Scaene ends'.[31] The imperturbable Candido closes the fourth act cheerfully facing time in yet another of London's major institutions: 'They had mee once to Bedlam, now I'm drawne / To Bridewell, louing no whores' (4.3.180–181). As with Part One, the final scene of the sequel draws all the major characters together – Bellafront remaining virtuous despite her husband Matteo's dissipation and Hippolito's attempts to win her as his whore. Those attempts feature most strongly early in the fourth act when Hippolito and Bellafront debate the virtues and vices of prostitution (4.1.260–401). Again, Hippolito seems to have studied the subject, pointing out that 'Harlot' was the name of a royal mistress, something Dekker may have learned from a 1570 work by William Lambarde.[32] But the key point he makes is that, 'the cheife blisse / This world below can yield, is liberty: / And who (than whores) with looser wings dare flie? (4.1.273–5). Reversing his persuasions of the earlier part, Hippolito now insists that the prostitute is 'no mans slaue; (men are her slaues)' (l. 278). The reformed Bellafront is unimpressed, arguing that Eve was made for one man, that men hunt women only to discard them, and that at the end of lust's path lies the hospital. She asks, 'Who then would be a mans slaue?' (ll. 300–29). The greatest threat to liberty for any aspiring prostitute in Dekker's London was the network of constables, beadles and officers who trooped the lanes from Bridewell into the city's heartland and beyond. Arriving there in the final scene, the Duke accurately recognizes the place as a former palace: 'Your Bridewell? That the name? for beauty, strength, / Capacity and forme of ancient building, / (Besides the Riuers neighbourhood) few houses / Wherein we keepe our Court can better it' (5.2.1–4). A 'Master of Bridewell' fills in the institution's history with notable fidelity to the

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[30] Fredson Bowers (ed.) *Thomas Dekker, Dramatic Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), II, 98.

[31] Ibid., 133.

[32] William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent conteining the Description, Hystorie and Customes of that Shire* (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1826), 200.

facts, from its building by Wolsey and role in Henry's divorce, to its endowment and function as a prison. The master correctly explains that inmates are sent as soldiers to the wars, and those who remain are set to work: 'The House is like a very Schoole of Arts' (l. 29).

The most striking aspect of this scene is its show of extravagantly-dressed prostitutes, none of whom seems the least bit cowed by the fact they are in Bridewell. The first is 'Dorathea Target', designated as 'braue' in her stage direction, a term that signals her finely-dressed, grand, showy or splendid appearance: the master later refers to her 'wanton loose attire' (l. 302). She draws abuse, cracks the head of Friscobaldo (Bellafront's father) and fancies herself a gentlewoman. A regulation 'blew gown' is carried by a beadle to 'cloath her in humility' but the point of her appearance is evidently conspicuous display (l. 304). The next to enter is 'Penelope Whore-hound', dressed 'like a Citizen's Wife', who proves equally assertive, priding herself as a 'Citty-dame' (l. 351). The Master explains that she used to alter her habit and guise to suit her clientele. The last of the prostitutes is pre-announced as 'A Monster both in shape / And nature' and, if that were not enough, 'a swaggering whore' (l. 360–1, 365). This is Catyryna Bountinall, ushered in with her aged bawd, Mistress Horseleach, in a parodically regal fashion, accompanied by two masters, a constable and a beadle beating 'a bason' by way of announcement. Horseleach protests she is a 'motherly honest woman, and no bawd', a story Catyryna soon puts straight with an account of her history: 'burnt at fourteen, seuen times whipt, sixe times carted, nine times duck'd, searched by some hundred and fifty Constables, and yet you are honest?' (5.2.373–6). The scene continues in satirical vein. Lieutenant Bots (the name signifies a parasitical worm in the digestive organs of a horse) seeks to avoid being implicated and so tries unsuccessfully to deflect the women's sardonic comments in his direction. Discovered, he is condemned to suffer 'double' punishment, to be whipped and then banished. In the First Part, Bots's equivalent, the rake Matteo, was forced to marry the prostitute Bellafront, much to his disgust and humiliation: 'How, marry with a punk, a cockatrice, a harlot? / Marry faugh, I'll be burnt thorough the nose first' (9. 119–20). Marrying a punk was, as Marlowe had already intimated in *The Jew of Malta*, a pointed theatrical joke. Getting laughter out of the grave masters of Bridewell and their sinful charges, Dekker presents his audience with a scene that mocks authority, and makes the Duke, a thinly-veiled type of James I, the butt of contemptuous jokes. Ken Jackson has argued that the Bethlem and Bridewell scenes in the two parts of *The Honest Whore* function to resolve the two plays' anxieties in locations of charitable care that will enlist an audience's sense of pity.[33] But this is to pass over entirely the satire and social humiliation of the scenes. In the first part, prostitution was first and foremost a moral problem,

[33] Ken Jackson, 'Bethlem and Bridewell in The Honest Whore Plays', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 43, 2 (2003), 395–413. This view is expanded in his *Separate Theatres: Bethlem ("Bedlam") Hospital and the Shakespearean Stage* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).

addressed theologically with a tale of conversion: in the second part, it has become very much a social problem that raises evident scepticism about the city's practical capabilities for regulation. Bellafront remains a 'converted curtizan' and Matteo's loyal wife in the sequel, but the parade of whores who exit cursing only intensifies anxieties about what could or ought to be done with such women.

For all his attempt to depict the inner spaces of the Bridewell Hospital, there is nothing in Dekker's handling of the scene that suggests he knew the institution first-hand. Shakespeare, on the other hand, may have done, as the Beeston case indicates. Shakespeare first introduces what might be called 'local' prostitution in the two parts of *Henry IV*, at the end of which Doll Tear-sheet and Mistress Quickly are carried off to 'whipping cheer' in 'base durance and contagious prison' (5.4.5, 5.5.34). He returns to the theme in *Much Ado About Nothing* where the bastard Don John slanders Hero as the kind of woman his mother is alleged to have been (an implication of his illegitimacy). Bandello's *novella*, the main 'source' for Shakespeare's narrative, makes its heroine Fenicia appear merely an adulterer, unfaithful to Sir Timbreo (Shakespeare's Claudio) and 'light' with Sir Girondo (Shakespeare's Don John). Shakespeare broadens the accusation to fashion Hero, like Bellafront, as a common property, a 'contaminated stale (2.2.25): 'Leonato's Hero, your Hero, everyman's Hero (3.2.95–6). Attitudes to prostitution appear in sharper relief in *Measure For Measure*, a play that derived its main narrative from George Whetstone's prose and dramatic versions, where, like Dekker's Milan, Vienna is the setting for what are identifiably London-based scenes. Shakespeare's diseased Mistress Overdone, who probably provided the model for 'Mistris Horsleach' hobbling in at Dekker's finale, is introduced as 'Madam Mitigation' (1.2.43), a tag explained by the second Arden editor as originating from the fact that she 'mitigates desire'. More plausibly, Mistress Overdone is practised at pleading mitigating circumstances before tribunals, something she duly attempts when arraigned in the third act. In a reading highly alert to the social implications of the play, Jonathan Dollimore has argued that *Measure for Measure* depends upon those it silences – the prostitutes. He writes of 'the literal silence of the prostitutes: not one of them actually speaks'.[34] For Dollimore, this silence illustrates their powerlessness even when the play 'obsessively invokes them'. For the critic, the need to remember them remains: 'to recall that their miserable fate has been that of many sexual minorities; to indicate how even the fact of historical effacement can be the point of entry into history'.[35] Powerfully stated as this argument is, the prostitute voice does get heard in *Measure for Measure*, albeit through the broadly ridiculous Mistress Overdone. In the long single scene that comprises Act Three, Mistress Overdone, once a 'fresh whore' and now a 'powdered bawd', first pleads mitigation before the prison authorities ('Good my lord, be good to me. Your /

[34] See 'Shakespeare Understudies: The Sodomite, the Prostitute, the Transvestite and Their Critics', in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (eds.), *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Manchester and New York, 2nd ed. 1994) 129–52, 136.

[35] Ibid., 137.

honour is accounted a merciful man, good my lord') and then poignantly explains the kind of self-help strategies that women had to improvise for themselves in cases of pregnancy outside marriage:

> *Prov.* A bawd of eleven years' continuance, may it please your honour.
> *Mis. O.* My lord, this is one Lucio's information against me, Mistress Kate Keep-down was with child by him in the Duke's time, he promised her marriage. His child is a year and a quarter old come Philip and Jacob. I have kept it myself; and see how he goes about to abuse me. (3.1.450–62).

Far from silent, Mistress Overdone's words tell the tale of countless real human stories. Her plea against defamation, neglect and abuse shows a certain familiarity on Shakespeare's part with the phrasing of court records. Mariana, Julietta and Kate Keep-down were all promised marriage but abandoned. So, too, innumerable women claimed in Bridewell that the father of their child had promised them marriage. Mawdlin Johnson stated that she let Henry Baynam have 'thuse of her bodie' because 'he p*ro*mised her marriage'; Elizabeth Standishe pleaded that the 'great resort' to her house was due to one Mr. Anglesey 'that p*ro*mised her marriage'; Elizabeth Morgan confessed to having sex several times with Reignold Harrison and 'saieth that the said Harrison p*ro*mised her marriage she now being great w*i*th child'; Mawdlyne Hawkins deposed that Robert Welles had 'promised to marye with her' before he had sex with her; serving-girl Isabel Mosse, now with child, confessed that its father was one Matthew Gwyn, also a servant, and that 'he promised her marriage'; and Amey Bennett, serving-maid, allowed French merchant John de Lane to enjoy her because he gave her diamonds and rings and 'promised her marriage'. Afterwards, he promptly took the rings and jewels back and 'would not restore them againe'.[36] Overdone's plea for mitigation shows Shakespeare finding his most social, historical voice. *Measure for Measure* was Shakespeare's Bridewell play and he took note of its repressive processes in this especially resonant line. Overdone is quickly silenced, dragged off one might imagine for the mill or the hemp-house, but in the memorable little phrase 'he promised her marriage', she speaks any number of female histories.

Dekker's play is likely to have post-dated and drawn upon Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (perhaps for Hippolito's attempt on Bellafront or Mistress Horseleech's painful gait). While *1 Honest Whore* was registered in November 1604, Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 26 June 1605, and so seems be a later composition. Malheureux, the unhappy friend of the play's free-wheeling but soon-to-settle-down protagonist Freevill, expresses an attitude similar to Dekker's early Hippolito – that prostitutes beckon men to their eternal destruction (1.1.80–4). Freevill instead openly advocates the

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[36] Mawdlin Johnson, BCB 2.134^{r} (18 July 1575); Elizabeth Standishe, BCB 4.19^{v}-, (13 May 1598); Elizabeth Morgan, BCB 4.28^{v} (19 July 1598); Mawdlin Hawkins, BCB 4.33^{r} (16 August 1598); Isabel Mosse, BCB 4.322^{r} (2 October 1602); Amey Bennett, BCB 5.10^{r} (23 January 1604).

social benefits of brothels: 'Most necessary buildings, Malheureux. Ever since my intention of marriage, I do pray for their continuance' (1.1.59–60). For him, sexual desire will outbrave any beadle's staff: 'Youth and appetite are above the club of Hercules' (l. 67). In an echo of Falstaff's excuse for thieving ('Tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation', *1 Henry IV*, 1.2.102), Freevill urges that, 'every man must follow his trade, and every woman her occupation' (1.1.94–5). He argues with a certain logic: should a worker be laid up, might not his wife be laid down? If a captain lies in an open field abroad, may not his wife lie in civil arms at home? If a waiting-maid falls from court, may not city courtesy take her up? The puns work neatly to suggest a pervasive cuckoldry: 'Do you know no alderman would pity such a woman's case? Why is charity grown a sin? Or relieving the poor and impotent an offense?' (l. 103). Of course, no zealous alderman would have shown such women clemency, and Freevill's turning of his civic world upside down is meant to elicit laughter. But he is still willing to elaborate on the benefits of courtesans: 'They are no ingrateful persons; they will give *quid* for *quo*; do ye protest, they'll swear; do you rise, they'll fall; do you fall, they'll rise; do you give them the French crown, they'll give you the French – *O Justus justa justum*! They sell their bodies; do not better persons sell their souls?' (1.1.114–18). These mock-arguments are then buttressed by similar reasoning from the play's rogue and prankster, Cocledemoy, in the second scene. The bawd's profession is 'the most worshipful of the twelve companies'; she sells 'the best commodities', and sells them 'wholesale' – a pun that seems to even have made Marston laugh, since he has Cocledemoy guffaw directly after: 'Wa, ha, ho!'; her customers are, after all, 'most rare wealthy knights' and 'bountiful lords'. The jokes reach a neat summation in his conclusion that bawds live and die 'well', since they 'live in Clerkenwell and die in Bridewell' (1.2.29–54). Both characters, alike in many ways, acknowledge the ineradicable fact of prostitution and the local social conditions that sustain it. Within this context of sardonic realism, Marston re-writes Nicolas de Montreulx's story of friends in conflict with a vengeful courtesan, and reverses the traditional conversion narrative by transforming his eponymous courtesan from the Low Countries into a picture of 'comely damnation', a murderess.

Befitting the musical image of continental courtesans, Franchesina makes her first appearance with a lute and singing a bawdy ditty.[37] Malheureux quickly forgets his former aversions and is enchanted. Freevill reminds him of his earlier words, 'The sight of vice augments the hate of sin' (1.1.153–4, 1.2.149) but is glad to bestow this 'cast garment' on his friend. Franchesina complains bitterly to Mary Faugh, her bawd and Cocledemoy's confederate, at being thus jilted. Faugh's reply highlights a paradox. On the one hand, Franchesina is a valuable international

[37] It seems that lutes were a part of courtesan semiotics. Giacomo Franco's *Habiti delle Donne Venetiane* (Vatican Library) shows an exotically dressed lute-player. Carlo Saraceni's *The Lute Player* is another example. Q1 Hamlet has a stage direction that erotically encodes the mad Ophelia: 'Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, with her haire downe singing'.

commodity, suitable especially for 'wealthy flat-caps, that pay for their pleasure the best of any men in Europe, nay, which is more, in London!' (2.2.29). But on the other hand, England had fought off foreign invasion for years and an influx of Dutch courtesans would prove a deal more tricky and difficult to eradicate. From this point, Franchesina's alien status is marked as inimical. Vowing that she will have Freevill's throat cut, she curses him, wishing him all the diseases a whore might be capable of passing on: 'De gran' pest, St. Anthony's fire and de hot Neapolitan poc rot him!' (2.2.44–5). Directly afterwards, she and Freevill greet each other with feigned warmth and smiles. The moment is comic but underlines the courtesan's cosmetic heart. As Martin L. Wine says of her, 'Franchesina is, to be sure, vicious; but she is ridiculously vicious'.[38] In the play's source text, Montreulx's courtesan, Cinthye, he notes, is evil but 'sophisticated': Franchesina, by contrast, speaks with 'a ridiculous stage Dutch accent' (one that Cocledemoy mocks in the fourth act). Wine finds a more realistic picture of common sense and compromise in the genial characters Crispinella and Tysefew who 'make the rest of the play believable'.[39] In fact, Crispinella is a racier figure than Wine suggests. She expresses a healthy regard for and enjoyment of sex; she regards robbery, murder and treason as 'far more loathsome than an act which is so natural, just, and necessary as that of procreation'. She even makes a rare and graphic allusion to fellatio: 'You shall have an hypocritical vestal virgin speak that with close teeth publicly which she will receive with open mouth privately' (3.1.32–4).[40] Franchesina, having no such lines, is a caricature, Marston's stereotype of the cunning, scheming, venal and continental courtesan. She is the play's Machiavel, a destructive foreign agent who must be defeated by stronger powers of English civic amity. Giving her relatively few lines in the rest of the play, Marston has established her in the early scenes as utterly damnable, and so needs only to revive her briefly in the revelatory dénouement where Freevill thwarts her designs to have him killed, Malheureux hanged and Beatrice driven out of her wits. The play's closing tribunal scene has Franchesina under guard and committed 'to severest prison', a tidy ending perhaps. But in seeking to 'out-whore' any number of distinguished predecessors, Marston's socially abrasive jokes remind that beyond the playhouse lay an unsatieted and restless market for 'wholesale' services.

In the relatively early years of his career as a professional dramatist, Thomas Middleton penned a clutch of dramas that prominently featured parts for courtesans. These include *Michaelmas Term* (Stationers' Register [hereafter SR], 15 May 1607), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (SR, 7 October 1607), *Your Five Gallants* (SR, 22 March 1608) and *A Mad World My Masters* (SR, 4 October 1608). All of these plays, like Marston's *Dutch Courtesan,* were written for companies of boy players,

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[38] Martin Wine (ed.) *The Dutch Courtesan* (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), xix.

[39] Ibid., xx.

[40] A less likely allusion is made by Franchesina: 'dis ravenous wenches / Dat sallow all down whole, vill have all at one bit' (5.1.26–7). As Wine notes, 'wenches' probably means 'wenchers'.

and Middleton filled them with bawdy jokes and innuendo. In this closely written series of plays, Middleton sharpened his talent for sardonic humour, depicting a world of lechers, misers, cuckolds and wittols, credulous fathers or husbands and wayward wives whose devices for self-advancement repeatedly stretch the credulity of his audience. In this world, Middleton represents courtesans both as Plautine tricksters capable of tying up a plot, and as an inescapable feature of city life. Given the implausibility of most of his plots, critical debate has puzzled over where Middleton's sympathies may truly have lain. Surveying a range of conflicting critical responses to Middleton – from sincere moralist or realist, to provocateur or thoroughgoing ironist – Derek B. Alwes has sought the dramatist's 'final moral position'.[41] That Middleton had one Alwes does not doubt, but he finds only 'smaller details' from the plays on which to base his confidence, such as Audrey's consolation of Dampit in *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (4.5.174–5) which he regards as showing 'spiritual values' articulated with authentic human feeling.[42] If the question (and answer) sounds rather dated, Celia Daileader brings us right up to date by considering whether Middleton was essentially misogynistic. She argues that Middleton's 'sympathy' for his unchaste heroines in fact constitutes his feminism. For Daileader, a certain 'sex-phobia' has led critics to look askance at the sexual licence enjoyed by Middleton's courtesans, and to miss the implied stupidity of his male characters' expressions of misogyny.[43] In her view, critics' own assumptions about immorality have clouded their view of Middleton's 'happy whores'. Daileader finds in the courtesan of *A Mad World My Masters* an amusing, woman-friendly revision of Aretino's Nanna, and a model of Middleton's 'flawed' but 'brave, intelligent, vibrant, funny, resourceful' courtesans.[44] As if to undercut the whole culture of wily courtesans in Middleton's plays, Moll Cutpurse in *The Roaring Girl* powerfully repudiates male assumptions that women are inevitably whorish. She upbraids the rake Laxton for being 'one of those / That thinks each woman thy fond flexible whore' (Scene 5, 72–3).[45] Middleton never rehearses contemporary moralizing on the venalities of courtesans. They belong, for him, to a satirical world where wives, like husbands, sometimes play loose, and courtesans also play true. Although a lascivious succubus appears in *A Mad World*, no trap-door or curtain leads any of Middleton's characters off to hell, or even to prison. Everything in this world is a ruse, strategy, game or manoeuvre, and pragmatic solutions will rarely prove fully adequate. If Middleton assimilates his courtesans,

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[41] Derek B. Alwes, 'The Secular Morality of Middleton's City Comedies', *Comparative Drama*, 42, 2 (2008), 101–119, 103.

[42] Ibid., 110–111.

[43] Celia Daileader, 'The Courtesan Revisited: Thomas Middleton, Pietro Aretino, and Sex-phobic Criticism', in Michele Marrapodi (ed.) *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 223–38, 225.

[44] Ibid., 238.

[45] See Coppélia Kahn's edition in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, op. cit., 745.

usually by marriage, into the proper social arrangement, he recognises too that this move will produce its own unsettling consequences.

Middleton was much less concerned with prostitution's immorality than with the extraordinary human stupidity and vanity that surrounds it. The third scene of *Michaelmas Term* sees the vulgarly denoted 'Country Wench' all too easily persuaded to 'pass for a gentlewoman' in the city. Hellgill, a pander, cracks a suitably risqué joke: 'O, now, in these latter days, the devil reigning, 'tis an age for cloven creatures' (1.3.9–10). Since the 'Wench' rather likes the trappings and garments of 'gentility', she proves eager to be procured. Like Laxton in *The Roaring Girl,* Hellgill views all women as potential whores: 'I know you are all chaste enough, till one thing or other tempt you!' (ll. 35–6). The Wench acquiesces and settles in Holborn where she is set to work as a courtesan, an alteration marked not only by a change in her speech prefix, but also by the fact that her own father fails to recognize her. This lowly country girl from 'the bosom of a barn' and the 'loins of a hay-tosser' now looks, Hellgill remarks, like a 'fine sophisticated squall' (3.1.26–8), and he sets her up as mistress to the forgetful and uncaring rake Andrew Lethe. She quickly learns the sexual fashions and vogues of the day: ''tis such an Italian world, many men know not before from behind' (3.1.20–1).[46] While she seems very fine in her new silks and satins, Lethe regards her with contempt: 'when all comes to all, 'tis but a plain punk' (ll.83–5). Her own riposte is articulate and yet saturated with innuendo, including a pun remembered from Marston: 'Do not all trades live by their ware, and yet called honest livers? Do they not thrive best when they utter most, and make it away by the great? Is not wholesale the chiefest merchandise? Do you think some merchants could keep their wives so brave but for their wholesale' (4.2.15). Rarely has hole-selling been so openly defended. Lethe is a rival for the hand, and fortune, of Susan, daughter to the draper, Ephestian Quomodo, and learning of his intention to marry, the 'courtesan' decides to foil his plans. A parallel plot involves Quomodo's elaborate plan to fleece Squire Richard Easy of his lands, and Easy's seduction by Thomasine, Quomodo's wife (who has been led to believe herself a widow by Quomodo's feigned decease). Quomodo's naïve trust in Thomasine's loyalty, her rapid betrothal to Easy and the Country Wench's eagerness to turn courtesan are all equally risible, and the final scene brings about a suitable comeuppance for Lethe who is compelled to marry his 'quean', and so take his punishment. He protests, tries in vain to barter his way out of it, but relents, 'Marry a harlot, why not? 'Tis an honest man's fortune' (5.3.122). In her account of the play's conversions, from wench to prostitute to wife, and from wife to adulteress and back to wife again, Jean Howard treats these settlements as 'ironic outcomes' but also regards the Wench as having been 'recast as a smart entrepreneur', a woman who has been 'legally, if not morally, transported back across the bar into respectability', as one

[46] For a particularly lively and rewarding discussion of jokes of this kind, see Celia Daileader, 'Back-door Sex: Renaissance Gynosodomy, Aretino, and the Exotic,' *English Literary History* 69.2 (Summer 2002): 303–34.

who has made it 'across the line separating the chaste from the unchaste' (132–4). But Middleton's point seems to be that there really is no such 'bar' or 'line'. The ending brings about a salvation of sorts, a distribution of measure for measure, but the Wench's gaining of Lethe, Thomasine's reunion with Quomodo, and Lethe's marriage to a punk are all discomfiting solutions. The play finishes with a wry allocation of justice, the balance of sympathies lying just on the women's side, but with significant doubt as to the virtue of any of these relationships.

From a similarly feminist-historicist perspective, Valerie Wayne has argued that the speech prefix 'Courtesan' which designates the principal female part in Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, unhelpfully freezes her character from the perspective of the play's grasping elderly usurer, Walkadine Hoard. Wayne's contention is that this designation effaces the various parts she plays, from Witgood's 'kept' mistress at the start, to the disguised wealthy widow 'Jane Meddler' in Act Two and the wife 'Jane Hoard' in Act Three.[47] Accordingly, Wayne's edition gives the courtesan a name, Jane, enabling readers to consider her development through the play.[48] Witgood, a young man, needs money and wonders how he can wheedle it out of his rich uncle: 'Any trick, out of the compass of law now, would come happily to me' (1.1.24–5). Immediately, a woman of tricks enters – his 'courtesan'. They plan to put out that 'Jane' is a rich and landed widow, betrothed to Witgood but also eminently stealable. Lucre, Witgood's uncle, greedily cancels his nephew's debts in the hope that this will secure the match (thinking he might later gain her wealth for himself), but is pre-empted by his life-long rival Hoard who marries her first. All too late, Hoard discovers that he has been 'whored', and worse, contracted to a woman who has nothing. The play owes much to Plautine and Terentian comedy and also to Jonson's *Volpone*, though it lacks the witty servant of those precursors.[49] Wayne points to the ways in which 'Jane' has been stereotyped. She argues that although Witgood refers to her as a whore (in fact he does this twice), he also defends her, 'She ne'er had common use, nor common thought' (5.2.125–8).[50] Moreover, as 'Jane' herself alleges in the final scene, Hoard and his associates' coercion of her into marriage falls not far short of 'rape': she has been forced and 'stolen' into marriage (5.2.131–4). Wayne concludes that Jane's treatment in the play 'manages to highlight the ways in which marriageable women are treated as whores, because they are also bought and sold like property and for property'.[51] There is doubtless some truth in the statement but in order for the play to work through its intrigues towards a conclusion, it matters less whether 'Jane' was a

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[47] See Valerie Wayne, 'The Sexual Politics of Textual Transmission', in Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger, *Textual Formations and Reformations* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 179–210.

[48] For Wayne's introduction to her edition, see Taylor and Lavagnino, op. cit., 373–6.

[49] See Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980), 114–115.

[50] See Taylor and Lavagnino, op. cit., 375

[51] Ibid., 376.

prostitute, 'kept woman' or a mistress, and more that Hoard's marriage to her is his humiliation. Hoard scorns Witgood as 'The spume of a brothel-house' (2.2.34), so imputing 'whoredom' to 'Jane'. Witgood himself never addresses 'Jane' by name, instead calling her 'Wench'. He encourages her to marry Hoard (3.1.110–15), for which advice she thanks him. Picking up the familiar stage-joke about marriage to a prostitute, Middleton returns the courtesan character to the conventions of civic comedy. Witgood creates much laughter when he tells Lucre of Hoard's mistake: 'He is married to a whore, i' faith' (5.1.9–10). And when, at the dénouement, Hoard's brother recognizes her as 'Witgood's quean', the fact is confirmed by Limber and Kix: 'In your old age dote upon a courtesan …. Marry a strumpet!' (5.2.88, 90). Hoard has fallen for the old gag and married a punk, a fitting end for an elderly, niggardly lecher. The play finishes with 'Jane' and Witgood kneeling penitently, the courtesan promising (unconvincingly) no longer to have anything to do with enticing glances, waving fans, nibbling her lip, mincing or showing leg, secret liaisons, billet-doux, bawds' greetings, chamber visits and switching beds (5.2.166–85). She declares herself 'reclaimed', and, of course, we do not believe a word of it (ll. 165, 185). Wayne wants to take this speech seriously, recommending that it 'does not reflect on Jane's past so much as her future', but in the context this seems tendentious.[52] 'Jane' ends not as an empowered woman exactly, but as one who has devised a means to be married, if not happily then wealthily, and the upshot has been the niggardly Hoard's humiliation and profession of repentance.

Shakespeare had broached the 'marry a whore' storyline in *Much Ado About Nothing*, where Claudio indignantly repudiates Hero at the altar. The motif is most powerfully evoked in *Othello*, a tale he took from the seventh novella of Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565), itself loosely derived from Bandello and Boccaccio, in which a dark-skinned captain married a Venetian woman, only to be deceived by his servant into thinking this woman an adulterer. Introducing the tale, Cinthio expressed his view that 'those women who, free of the sacred bonds of matrimony, offer their bodies to the delights of every man, err less than married women who commit adultery, even if only once'.[53] A whore breaks no promises, no hand-fasts, and no wedding vow, but a faithless wife commits sacrilege. In this story, one of the captain's men, a friend of his wife's, is attacked late one night and fatally wounded by the servant as he is leaving the house of 'a whore with whom he used to take his pleasure'.[54] Cinthio used just a single, solitary mention of the word 'cortigiana', translated in recent two editions of *Othello* as both 'whore' and 'courtesan'.[55] Departing from his source, Shakespeare gives this 'cortigiana' not just a part and a name, but also a voice. Bianca complains that Cassio keeps from her bed; she falls, hangs, lolls about his neck, and shows herself jealous that other

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[52] Ibid., 412.

[53] Michael Neill (ed.) *Othello, The Moor of Venice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 434.

[54] Ibid., 441.

[55] Ibid., 441; Ernst Honigmann (ed.) *Othello* (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 382.

women might prove 'minx' to him (3.4.179; 4.1.151). Iago describes her as, 'A hussy that by selling her desires / Buys herself bread and clothes: it is a creature / That dotes on Cassio' (4.1.94–6). Both Q and F print 'huswife' at the beginning of these lines, a reading emended to 'hussy' by both the Oxford Complete Works and single edition of the play by Michael Neill, the latter on the grounds that 'the insulting *hussy* (= prostitute) is Iago's primary sense'.[56] But 'huswife' ['housewife'] also appropriately conveys Iago's implied slur against wives like Desdemona – that they are at heart slatterns. When Iago goads Cassio with the rumour that Bianca expects him to marry her, Cassio responds with contemptuous laughter and remarks, 'I marry! What, a customer? Prithee, bear some charity to my wit – do not think it so unwholesome. Ha, ha, ha!' (4.1.116–118). Marriage to a prostitute elicits incredulity, scorn and laughter. Cassio explains, 'This is the monkey's own giving out. / She is persuaded I will marry her out of her own love and flattery, / not out of my promise' (4.1.126–9). Shakespeare's Bianca may not be chaste but she is resilient, and after Cassio's fatal wounding, she expresses genuine grief, rejecting the loathing, censure and hostility such women might attract: 'I am no strumpet, but of life as honest as you that thus abuse me' (5.1.124–5). Although Othello denounces Desdemona as 'that cunning whore of Venice' (4.2.91) and Emilia as 'a subtle whore, / A closet, lock and key of villainous secrets' (4.2.21–2), the only woman designated as a 'curtizan' in the Folio's list of parts rejects that term as a slander. Construing adultery as whoredom, Shakespeare's play turns on a familiar anxiety, not simply that a man should prove a cuckold, but that his wife should turn whore (4.2.91). *Measure for Measure* is another play concerned with prostitute marriage, localizing that anxiety in a Vienna that reads very much like Jacobean London. The strict deputy Angelo, quite undone by Isabella's vulnerable innocence confesses, 'Never could the strumpet, / With all her double vigour – art and nature – / Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid / Subdues me quite' (2.2.188–91). But it is Angelo who is 'double' and paints 'nature' with 'art'. At the play's end, his compelled marriage to Mariana makes good a broken promise of betrothal. Having dispensed his own rather peculiar brand of justice to Angelo, Mariana and Isabella, the Duke turns to the scoundrel Lucio and orders him to be married to Kate-Keepdown and then 'whipt and hanged' (5.1.511–512). This is the worst of fates for Lucio: 'Marrying a punk, my lord is pressing to death, whipping and hanging' (ll. 521–2). Literarily, it is nevertheless a fitting humiliation both in Vincentio's Vienna and on Shakespeare's stage: as the Duke observes, 'Slandering a prince deserves it' (l. 523).

Perhaps the most extraordinary moment in the whole of Renaissance comedy involves one of Middleton's courtesans, Frank Gullman, whose main role is to act as her surname suggests. In the central scene of *A Mad World, My Masters* (SR, 4 October 1608), Harebrain's wife cuckolds her over-protective husband when she makes a visit to her supposedly sick friend and confidant, who is in fact the courtesan and arranger of this liaison. Master Harebrain waits aside in

[56] Michael Neill (ed.) *Othello, The Moor of Venice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 331.

a curtained off area of the stage, as though outside the sick woman's chamber. As Mistress Harebrain and her lover Penitent Brothel make love off-stage, the concealed courtesan covers their sexual moaning with her own gasps, groans and exclamations, all designed to make the eavesdropping Harebrain believe she is being comforted in her ailments by his wife. In a solo comic *tour-de-force*, the courtesan reinvents the husband's betrayal as a kindly act of wifely charity: 'Huff, huff huff … Hey, hy, hy hy … suh, suh … Oh no, lay your hand here, Mistress Harebrain. Ay there; oh there, there lies my pain, good gentlewoman. Sore? Oh ay, I can scarce endure your hand upon't'. Mistaking the rise in gasps for pain, the credulous Harebrain shows the audience his caring side: 'Poor soul, how she's tormented' (3.2.226). Middleton choreographs the scene to a dramatic climax, with Harebrain telling himself (and the audience) in all earnestness, 'Fall back, she's coming'. When his wife eventually emerges from her liaison, he joyfully greets her, 'Never was hour spent better' (3.2.239, 258). Harebrain's jealousy has in the end facilitated his own cuckoldry. The scene draws, Daileader has shown, on similar passages in *I Ragionamenti*,[57] re-situating Aretino in the heart of London: 'Aretino offers pure social satire, with the required darkness and acerbity, whereas Middleton gives his audience comedy with a satirical edge'.[58] The courtesan's feigned farewell to Mistress Harebrain asks her to commend her to her family, 'Uncle Winchcomb', 'Aunt Lipsalve', her cousins 'Falsetop', 'Lickit' and 'Horseman', and 'all my good cousins in Clerkenwell and St. John's', reminding the audience that among *topoi* of venery, Clerkenwell and its adjacent streets were foremost by reputation (3.2.244–7).[59]

Continuing the pattern of deceptions, Middleton blends witty homoeroticism into an ensuing scene of high comedy, where Follywit disguised as the courtesan (whom Bounteous has kept) risks not only seduction by his grandfather's servant, Gunwater, but also Bounteous's fulsome kiss. Bounteous notes something different about 'her': 'methought her breath had much ado to be sweet, like a thing compounded, methought, of wine, beer, and tobacco' (4.3.52–4). But for all its frolics, *A Mad World* cancels the raciness of its innuendo once Penitent is visited by a succubus dressed as Mistress Harebrain, prompting a compunction that turns the couple towards virtue. In scenes that deliberately echo Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Penitent turns penitent, Follywit falls in love with the (supposedly virginal) courtesan, marries her, and attempts to outwit his grandfather one last time with a playlet in which a constable is forcibly restrained. Middleton crowds the stage at the end, with Harebrain no wiser about his wife's former misdemeanours, and Follywit announcing he has married 'a gentlewoman and a virgin' (5.2.259). Follywit's come-uppance lies in his final realization that, in fact, he has wedded his grandfather's 'quean'.

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[57] Taylor, 431.

[58] See Celia Daileader, 'The Courtesan Re-visited', 235.

[59] For a lively discussion of this scene, and the editorial squeamishness it has induced, see Daileader, *Eroticism on the English Renaissance Stage* (Cambridge, 1998), 32–5.

Middleton develops this world of thieves, pickpockets, gamesters, pimps and courtesans in *Your Five Gallants* (SR, 22 March 1608), an intricately-told tale of pawned garments, stolen pearl-chains and swapped gold rings that connect characters in patterns of exchange. Besides the five gallants, the play includes three courtesans and a 'Novice', all unnamed. Being new to the game, the 'Novice' is advised early on to learn how to cheat, trick and so thrive. Unusually, the play has a wife, Mistress Newcut, who attends the brothel for 'sheer pleasure and affection' rather than for 'gain' (2.1.19–20). But near the end of the play, the courtesans turn aggressively on Newcut for stealing their custom, and (ironically) attack her as a whore: 'Come forth, you wary, private-whispering strumpet! Have we found your close haunts, your private watchtowers, and your subtle means' (51.1.1–4). Newcut is a gentlewoman who can walk the streets alone because she wears fine clothes, whereas they, in their 'tires' or aprons, will always arouse suspicion: 'You can steal secretly hither, you mystical quean, you at twilight, twitterlights; / You have a privilege from your hat forsooth, / To walk without a man and no suspicion; / But we poor gentlewomen that go in tires / Have no such liberty; we cannot do thus' (5.1.6–12).[60] Middleton deliberately undermines distinctions regarding virtue and class, between respectable wives and disreputable whores, or between strumpets and 'poor gentlewomen'. It is unclear whether the courtesans resent her more for taking their custom, or for her economic advantages: 'You must have your milk-baths to white you, your rose-leaves to sweeten you, your bean-flour bags to sleek you and make you soft, smooth and delicate for lascivious entertainment' (5.1.17–21). Newcut reacts to this criticism with her own class-based contempt: 'were you not a fellmonger's daughter at first, that run away with a new courtier for the love of gentlewoman's clothes, and bought the fashion at a dear rate, with the loss of your name and credit? Why, what are all of you but rustical insides and City flesh, the blood of yeomen and the bum of gentlewomen' (5.1.24–9). A 'fellmonger' was a skinner of sheep and dealer in hides. Newcut regards her assailants as country punks dressed in the fashions and trappings of gentility. But despite this difference, Middleton assigns Newcut among the courtesans in the dénouement. Once the five gallants have been exposed as the scoundrels they are, the courtesans are compelled to marry them, even though, as one declares, they had rather be confined 'to strict chastity, / A mere impossible task, than to wed these / Whom we loathe worse than the foul'st disease' (5.2.64–6). Middleton puts the wife/whore distinction thoroughly into question by making Newcut – now widowed – one of the courtesans. Accepting marriage, she promises that her regained status of wife will not deter her from promiscuity: 'wenches, be ruled by me: let's marry 'em an it be but to plague 'em; for when we have husbands, we are under covert-baron and may lie with whom we list. I have tried that in my t'other husbands' days' (5.2.83–6).

Middleton's courtesans typically end up, as at the close of *Women Beware Women*, betrothed to men who have been compelled into a humiliating match,

[60] 'Twitterlights' is a Middleton coinage.

and for this reason, they serve a partly ameliorative function of exposing male hypocrisy and pretension. But they also broadly lack historical, regional, or personal specificity. Middleton's courtesans act according to established literary patterns, rather than to contemporary realities. For this reason, they cannot be regarded as a sure basis on which to assert a range of historical social advantages for women, advantages to which they might point. Five days after *Honest Whore Part One* was registered, Agnes Clarke who lived with her brother in the parish of St. Sepulchre explained that she had been approached improperly by one Thomas Clarke in her brother's chamber: 'she said I hope you will do noe hurte to me soe she went upp and hee the said Thomas as this exa*min*at saith tooke her & threwe her on a bedd and there hee had the use & carnall knowledge of her bodie; and shee this exa*min*at saith shee is w*i*th childe by him'. Agnes Clarke was not punished, but another servant, 'Rob*er*te Peeter', who confessed to having sex with her on three occasions, and claimed 'he was thereunto urged by the said Agnes', was whipped for his crime.[61] On the same day as *The Dutch Courtesan* entered the Register, Elizabeth Watha stood accused of keeping company with a married tailor by whom she had a child of two years. She had had a second child in Southwark, 'w*hi*ch is dead & buried at Newington in Surrey'. She was whipped and bound by the court not to meet again with the tailor. Two days later, Ann Graye, who boarded at the house of Morris Jones in Whitefriars, confessed that William Bryan, a 'turnbroache' or turn-spit in 'the Kings privy kitchen' had fathered her child which she was 'delivered thereof in S*ain*t Giles parish in ye fields'.[62] Eight days after *Michaelmas Term* was entered, Sara Anderson confessed that she had moved from St. Sepulchres to one Harrison's house in 'Creetchurch' ['Christchurch' in Aldgate or Farringdon wards] and was lately delivered of a child in notorious Turnbull Street. The father was a Master Tyse, silkweaver of Shoreditch, who had persuaded her he was a bachelor living in Cheapside. Her child was being wet-nursed in Clerkenwell. Tyse 'councelled' her to 'make away the child' and gave her 'drinck for that purpose'. Initially, she had tried to refuse him but he had sex with her 'fower several tymes'. On the fourth of July, she was whipped and set free. A fortnight after *A Trick to Catch the Old One* was registered, 'Goodwief Coutloe', dwelling in Blackhouse Alley off Fleet Street, stood accused of suspiciously sheltering Mary Stephens, Elizabeth Edwards and Ellen Eaton. Stephens had left Buckinghamshire for London after having a 'bastard child' by her 'masters son', and taken up residence with a Master Arrowsmith in Charing Cross who gave her thirty shillings a year. Falling sick, she recuperated at Coutloe's where she received money to 'card and spine woole'. Edwards, a widow from Wales, moved to Southwark, then 'Bride Lane' and finally to Goody Coutloe's where she earned 'meat and drinke and six pence a week' also for carding and spinning wool. Eaton, originally from Cumberland, had lived in St. Bride's parish for some twenty years and o worked at Coutloe's. They were all

[61] BCB 5.1^{v}–2^{r} (14 November 1604).

[62] BCB 5.39^{r} (26 and 28 June 1605).

detained and set to work in the prison. Micro-narratives like these show that for many such women, migration, displacement, homelessness and hunger were all familiar, daily hazards.[63] Ten days before *Your Five Gallants* was listed, Elizabeth Crane, alias Williams, was charged with living incontinently with Richard Carter, also known as Williams, despite the fact that she had a husband, now 'prisoner in the kings bench'. Carter met Crane in Salisbury and, having 'cam up to London togeather', lodged her in Aldersgate in the house of one Edward Woodes for two shillings a week. She confessed to having pawned a feather bed, blankets, pillows, 'pillowbers' [covers], a gown, petticoat, silk apron and a chest without her husband's consent, all for barleycorn and oats, pleading that Carter had forced her to do so to maintain him. They were both whipped and set to work.[64] Eight days after *A Mad World My Masters* was listed, Mary Bearr was arrested for being drunk, abusing the constable and keeping a bawdy house in 'Turnbull Street'. She was bound for her good behaviour and ordered to leave the parish within eight weeks.[65] The social aspirations of these women lay well below those of Jonson's Lady Would-Be, or most of the other literary courtesans we have encountered. Their needs were immediate: food, shelter, clothing, and, where possible, money. These privations and necessities are what we do not read in Middleton. The literary and non-literary depictions of women's experience here part company. It would be a mistake, then, to disregard the significant ways in which the contents, genres and social purposes of these texts diverge. Any argument that whore-plays offered women new ways in which to imagine themselves, or to 'draw and redraw the boundaries of permissible action' seems implausibly sanguine when set against what we learn from historical sources of the reality of women's lives.[66]

Dekker's Bellafront and Marston's Franchesina mark the beginning of the end of depictions of continental courtesans on the English Renaissance stage. Middleton's prostitutes belong more properly to literary character-types than to

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[63] I am grateful to Ann C. Christensen for pointing me to Patricia Fumerton's *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006). Fumerton writes, 'The mostly young itinerants so affected wandered from place to place, tentatively forming and re-forming relationships, enacting their alienation from any settled whole' (11).

[64] BCB 5.254^{v}–255^{r}. This case took place on 12 March 1607/8 before Lady Day (25 March) and the change of year. Conditions did not improve for such women. Just under a year later at a court hearing dated 18 March 1608, Ellen Bassett, Jone Prouse, Dorothie Downeham and Katherine Heyer were charged with lodging in the same room, Prouse having 'committed whoredome in the presence of the other three'. Heyer was spared punishment having hurt her hand while working in the Bridewell mill and was sent to St. Thomas's Hospital 'to be cured'. The same day, Katherine Harrison was accused of lodging Katherine Davies and Margaret Freese, 'being lewd ydle loose persons'. Davies confessed she had lost a child born out of wedlock. She was 'for her whoredome ponished', and the other two released at the behest of neighbours and a beadle (BCB 5.333^{r}).

[65] BCB 5.294^{r} (12 October 1608).

[66] Howard, op. cit., 27.

the lanes of Clerkenwell and St. John's. The vogue for picaresque city drama highlighting the foolishness of blades and paramours was starting to wane. Conversion narratives, for example *The Costly Whore* (1633) and *Amanda: or, The reformed whore* (1635), continued to have enduring popular appeal. But the courtesan had to go. A narrative desire to tie things up neatly and fully accommodate wayward women ended with plays pulling the most unquestionable vanishing trick of all – presenting a woman with all the appearance of a teasing, scandalous and purchasable flirt who was and is, in truth, no courtesan at all.

In *The Lady of Pleasure* (1637), James Shirley brought together two great sixteenth-century figureheads of licentious literature: Aretino, the scurrilous Italian author, and Celestina, the eponymous heroine of Fernando de Rojas's prose work, originally of 1499, which had lately been translated into English by James Mabbe in 1632. Shirley's Lady Bornwell, first name Aretina, longs to associate herself with the fashions, balls and bright young things of London (emptying her husband's purse into the bargain) but feels eclipsed by the arrival in town of the young, fifteen-year old widow, Celestina, whom Sir Thomas Bornwell pursues. Despite her name and its associations with the rogueish, spirited procuress of Rojas's epic, the lute-playing Celestina resolutely refuses to act the courtesan. She bars men from her chambers, distances herself from clients who 'scout for Venus' wild fowl' and coolly deflects Sir Thomas when he intimates that he would quite like to have sex with her. The play weaves together a series of ruses involving Decoy, a procuress, Lady Bornwell, her nephew Frederick, a mysterious bereaved Lord, and Sir Thomas, who only acts the wastrel and rake in order to make his wife see the error of her ways. Decoy is the play's 'common woman'. Appearing 'disguised like an old woman', she seduces the young blade Kickshaw in a scene that shows him prepared to sell his soul to a 'she-devil' for money, as he later admits in the final act. Decoy's appearance in the latter half of the play as a 'witch', a 'hag' and 'she-devil' seals her role as the very image of damnation, and Kickshaw's willingness to consort with what he thinks is a 'succubus', together with Frederick's drunken offer of sex to his aunt, all work to convince Lady Bornwell of her faults. A finely crafted closing scene sees Celestina utterly shame the lecherous Lord, with Lady Bornwell resolved to amend her life and persuade Decoy and Kickshaw to do likewise. Perhaps adapted to suit shifting tastes, the play lacks a clearly identifiable courtesan: Lady Bornwell appears to be heading that way, but displays shock when her nephew, Frederick, propositions her after he could not get 'a lay, a tumbler, a device, a *bona roba*' in the Strand taverns; and Celestina, a feisty, shrewd, intelligent and fiercely independent young woman, determinedly sets herself against male licentiousness. Decoy remains the play's only candidate for the role of scandalous woman, but she is too old for the part, the figure of a stage stereotype that has by this time become, to use a resonant Elizabethan term, stale.

A grand rebuilding of London's civic spaces – the New Exchange, Inigo Jones's Italianate re-designs for buildings in Covent Garden, the Lincoln's Inn area, the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall, and Westminster – provided the setting

for a number of plays that linked the realms of commodity, trade, property, estate, capital and desire. An expansion in London's market economy brought greater numbers of foreign visitors and merchants to the city, and the importance of fashion as a commodity that could be imported (and exported) took on increasing social significance. The desire to appear 'fashionable' becomes notably more marked throughout the seventeenth century, from early uses in Shakespeare and Dekker (see *Troilus and Cressida* 3.3.159; *Lanthorne and Candle*-light),[67] to a 1642 puritanical pamphlet advocating matrimonial virtue and restraint:

> But oh! the excesse of this sexe, both in married women, and Virgins (yea the wyves of those who should be Patternes to the world) is so woefull in these dayes, and so hideous, that it doth not onely helpe to make a world of Banque-rupts, but to fil the world with curiosity and Vanity! wherfore, let this be taken for a rule, Never was there curious, proude, and fashionable woman, who could stoop to be subject; by their ruffling, flinging, flaring, curling, dresses, tir[e]s, and forelocks, you shall know them.[68]

Cultivation of a certain fashionability is especially evident in Richard Brome's *The Weeding of Covent Garden* (c.1632), a play in all likelihood written just after the building of the new piazza in that location, replacing a previously undeveloped area.[69] The 'weeds' in this play are London's 'lewdest blades and naughty packs' that the rich builder of great houses, Rooksbill, hopes will not contaminate his newest project, Covent Garden. Both he and a country gentleman, one of Rooksbill's lodgers named Crosswill, are troubled by disobedient and wilful children. Crosswill's niece, Dorcas, longs to follow the Italian fashions of the '*bona robas*' and demands to know why she cannot be one too. She appears richly dressed at her balcony, on show to the riotous young men who form the club of the 'Philoblathici' who fancy themselves 'Brothers of the Blade and Battoon'. She styles herself 'Damaris' and enters 'above upon a balcony' dressed 'like a curtizan of Venice', declaring: 'Why should not we in England use that free-dome / The famous Curtezans have in Italy: / We have the art, and know the Theory / To allure and catch the wandring eyes of Lovers; / Yea, and their hearts too: but our stricter Lawes / Forbids the publique practise, our desires / Are high as theirs; our wills as apt and forward' (1.1.319–26). Boldly but also scandalously, Dorcas espouses the virtues of sexual rebellion and freedom: 'Whilst I fly out in brave rebellion;

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[67] See E.D. Pendry, *Thomas Dekker, The Wonderful Year, The Gull's Horn-Book, Penny-Wise and Pound-Foolish, English Villanies Discovered by Lantern and Candlelight* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), 225.

[68] *Matrimoniall honour, or, The mutuall crowne and comfort of godly, loyall, and chaste marriage wherein the right way to preserve the honour of marriage unstained, is at large described, urged, and applied : with resolution of sundry materiall questions concerning this argument* : by D.R. (London: 1642).

[69] Used for grazing sheep; even Stow fails to note it in his famous *Survey of London* (1598).

/ And offer, at the least, to break these shackles / That holds our legs together: And begin / A fashion, which pursu'd by Cyprian Dames, / May perswade Justice to allow our Games' (ll. 335–9). Needless to say, Dorcas is converted from her fantasy of continental sexual liberty into an honest woman, and the 'weeds', the rest of the 'Philoblathici', are dispersed. Set against this evocation of exotic female enjoyment of sex is the play's stand-out scene of a fight between Bettie and Francisca, both listed as 'Punks' in the play's *dramatis personae*, that begins the fourth act. Brome's apparent point is to show the world of London prostitutes as vicious and dangerous, but the scene adds salacious (if rather absurd) spectacle after a lengthy, and somewhat pedestrian, third act. Although Dorcas initially longs after the freedoms she associates with continental women of pleasure, she converts to an honest wife, and never was, at any point, a courtesan. Brome makes this device the key revelation in his play *The Novella* (1632). The novice or newcomer to Venice in this play has set a price of two thousand ducats on her virginity, a fee that provokes both public sensation and considerable interest from suitors from a variety of nations. The Novella's chambers become a cosmopolitan resort of international visitors, men from France, Italy, Germany, Holland, and, England, who strive to win the courtesan's maidenhead. Brome's story centres on two pairs of lovers, both under pressure from their fathers to make economically advantageous but emotionally deleterious marriages. The Novella tricks Pantaloni, father to her lover Fabritio, by placing a blackamore, Jacconetta, in her bed to avoid having sex with him. The implicit racism of the episode is muted as Jacconetta laughs it off, 'I think I cool'd his grave concupiscence'. Adding to the confusion of races and genders, we later learn that Jacconetta is in reality a boy-eunuch, playing the role of a black serving-maid. Unsurprisingly, the much-coveted woman in this play turns out in fact not to be a courtesan at all, but Fabritio's long-lost, chaste and devoted Victoria, who has followed him all the way to Rome in the hope of foiling his marriage to Flavia. She risks rape at the hands of a Spaniard, and betrayal as a fraud, yet her servants, including Friar Paulo (known as Borgio) contrive to bring about a successful arrangement of happy marriages, and the fathers' eventual consent. If Shirley's courtesan was by now old and tired, Brome's were just faking it, like Aphra Behn's feigned courtesans. The courtesan was disappearing as a stage figure, but not as a reality. When the audience members filed out of the theatres at the close of a performance and into the city, they passed doorways and windows in lanes and alleyways that hid who knows how many stories of hardship, misery and abuse that have never been, nor ever will be, told.

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