

*CRUEL TO BE KIND: LAUGHING WITH THE MAD ON THE
EARLY MODERN AND THE CONTEMPORARY STAGE*¹.

Bridget Escolme
Queen Mary, London University

WHAT'S FUNNY?

In this essay I discuss the ethics of laughter in the theatre, through one early modern English drama - Dekker and Middleton's *The Honest Whore* - and through recent adaptations of another - Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Both plays feature places of incarceration for the mad - one an asylum named for the London Bethlem hospital, though the play is set in Italy, the other, a theatrical pretense, the 'dark house' improvised for the gull Malvolio. I am going to consider whether the mad are supposed to be funny in these plays and whether we can permit them to be so in production today. There are anxieties around the ethics of laughter circulating in early modern writings - particularly around whether laughter tends to the derisive and the cruel. The 'Mad' characters I examine here are always potentially excessive figures, their language a tumble of repetitive excesses which fails to keep within the boundaries of grammar and sense; they pay no attention to sumptuary

etiquette, entering wild haired and hat-less with their stockings ‘down-gyved’ (*Hamlet* 2.1.80). To laugh at them might be considered inappropriate, even cruel - in excess of the social regulation of emotional expression both in the early modern period and today.

Philip Sidney’s familiar theory of laughter from the *Apology for Poetry* is that laughter, particularly in the theatre, is potentially a cruel kind of pleasure: ‘naughty play-makers and stage-keepers have justly made [it] odious’.² Sidney argues that it is the responsibility of the play-maker to be sure that his final intention is educational delight, rather than mere laughter, and declares that the problem with plays

is that they stir laughter in sinful things, which are rather execrable than ridiculous; or in miserable, which are rather to be pitied than scorned. For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched beggar, or a beggarly clown; or, against the law of hospitality, to jest at strangers, because they speak not English so well as we do? What do we learn?³

Sidney ends his discourse on the comic by explaining that, although he counts plays amongst the ‘excelling parts of Poesy’ and drama is the most common poetic form in England, ‘none can be more pitifully abused’. The theatre play has the potential, ‘like an unmannerly daughter showing a bad education’ to cause ‘her mother Poesy’s honesty to be called into question’.⁴ Theatre appears to be the place where laughter causes Sidney the most anxiety. He links it with unruly female sexuality in this image of Poesy illegitimately mothering the theatre.

Rather less anxious on the topic is Laurent Joubert's *Treatise on Laughter*, first published in French in 1579, which repeatedly suggests that it is simply not natural to laugh at what ought to be pitied: 'What we see that is ugly, deformed, improper, indecent, unfitting and indecorous excites laughter in us, provided we are not moved to compassion.'⁵ His examples are accompanied by provisos, which demonstrate that it is only light and inconsequential mishaps and improprieties that move us to laughter. If the victim of an accident or mishap is likely to be seriously pained or humiliated without desert, we simply will not laugh at the incident. Joubert's study is of laughter in 'real life'; Sidney has the poetic and dramatic arts as the object of his *Apology* and it is significant that Sidney's attitude to laughter is more censorious. There is a danger for Sidney, which Joubert never touches upon, that poetry will induce its audiences to laugh at that which should be pitied; Joubert simply trusts that where something is pitiable, we will not laugh. Take Joubert's example of unseemly exposure of body parts that should properly be covered in public:

It is equally unfitting to show one's arse, and when there is no harm forcing us to sympathize, we are unable to contain our laughter. But if another suddenly puts a red-hot iron to him, laughter gives way to compassion unless the harm done seems light, and small, for that reinforces the laughter, seeing that he is properly punished for his foolishness and unpleasant foul deed'.⁶

Sidney is of course right to suggest that fictional violence, deception or impropriety are a great deal more likely to be laughed at than the same in social life: fiction is, in one simple sense, always inconsequential. However, I also want to suggest that that it is in moments of morally

dubious, impropriety and excessive laughter that spectators are asked to examine the community of laughers to which they belong, in a range of ambiguous and challenging ways. The theatre is not reality, despite Puritan fears that it might produce real emotions and have unwished for consequences. But it has a social and material reality more complex than that railed against in the anti-theatrical tracts of the early modern period,⁷ a reality produced when human subjects gather to watch actors pretending to be other human subjects and are asked to witness, react to, enjoy and accept the fictions produced by actors in spaces built for playing. The audience are really laughing, and here I consider moments when an audience is indeed invited to laugh at the supposedly pitiful and wretched. However, I am going to suggest that the relationship between laugher and laughed-at is a more complex one in the shared light of the Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouse than Sidney's examples and concerns suggest. 'What do we learn?', he asks, from the scornful, bullying, inhospitable forms of laughter he describes. I argue that we might learn much about laughing, community and communities of laughter.

LAUGHING AT THE MAD

Mad figures in the early modern drama are, as Carol Neely suggests in her brilliant study of gendered madness in the period, gesturally and linguistically excessive. Their language is characterized by quotation, fragmentation and repetition⁸ - repetition often reflective of obsession with the trauma that has driven them to madness. In Dekker and

Middleton's *The Honest Whore* Part 1, the mad figures in the (Italian) Bethlem monastery, of which more later, have been bereaved of lovers, lost all their goods at sea, or gone insane with jealousy; the troop of performing madmen in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* obsess on sex, cuckoldry and their past professions. Shakespeare's Ophelia, of course, sings and speaks fragments of her father's death and, perhaps, her own sexual betrayal. Edgar in *King Lear* invents a madman whose past dealings with a sexually corrupt court haunt him - though his 'Tom o'Bedlam' is also a construct of, and perhaps a comment on, residual notions of madness as demonic possession.⁹ Were any of these mad figures funny? And if they were, were they then paradigmatic of Sidney's doubts about laughter in the theatre, examples of the way in which theatre provokes us to laugh at that which Joubert assures us we never do? Mad figures in the theatre might have invited laughter at their excesses. But when those excesses have been produced by past trauma, Joubert explains that compassion overrides amusement:

...if a man who became frenzied or maniacal says and does some strange things, we cannot keep from laughing until we think about the great loss of his senses and understanding he has suffered. Then we experience compassion because of the misery, and more still if this misfortune does not come through his own fault.¹⁰

Ophelia's first entrance in *Hamlet* 4.5 can be read in the light of Joubert's analysis. The mad Ophelia is carefully introduced by the conversation between Gertrude and the Gentleman, thus:

Gertrude: I will not speak with her
Gentleman: She is importunate,
Indeed distract. Her mood must needs be pitied. (4.5.1-2)

The audience, as well as the Queen, are prepared for a ‘distract’ figure and warned that pity is the appropriate response to her. The rest of the dialogue before her entrance concerns how her speech might be read by ‘ill-breeding minds’ (4.5.15) who ‘botch the words up to fit their own thoughts’ (4.5.10). The fear is clearly that Ophelia’s fragmented discourses will expose the court in some way - and this introduction to her madness prepares the audience, too, to read her carefully. Interestingly, though, it is not until her second entrance in the scene, this time into the presence of her devastated brother, that anyone offers a compassionate commentary on her state, or appears clearly to be emotionally affected by it. Claudius and Gertrude’s splutterings of ‘How now, Ophelia?’, ‘Nay but Ophelia’, ‘Pretty Ophelia’ (4.5.22, 34, 56) might suggest embarrassment at her behaviour as much as compassion. Ophelia’s sudden and fragmentary shifts of subject - particularly her song of the young men who will do it if they come to it (4.5.60), inappropriate to the sane Ophelia’s gendered innocence as perceived by her brother and father - might be as funny as ‘Poor Tom’s’ leaping out at the Fool shouting fragments of Catholic superstition, or the comic non-sequiturs of *The Duchess of Malfi*’s mad professionals, were we not aware, to recall Joubert, of Ophelia’s great loss. What I want to suggest here is that in Ophelia’s first 4.5 mad sequence, the audience may be permitted momentarily to forget the death of Polonius and rather to laugh at the King and Queen’s desperate attempts to contain the madwoman. She might be read, according to the Q1 stage direction frequently used by modern editors, as a comical, incongruous, performing mad figure: her hair may suggest crazed female distress¹¹

but she is also playing a lute. It is only at her second entrance that we are offered a clear commentary upon her state (Claudius explains her madness as ‘the poison of deep grief’ (4.5.75) at her father’s death and Hamlet’s departure but only when she has left the stage), by Laertes, who makes clear that this particular kind of incongruity - ‘is’t possible a young maid’s wits/ Should be as mortal as an old man’s life?’ (101) - just is not funny. In Joubert’s treatise, the move from laughter to compassion in the face of the mad has a clear chronology. In the theatre, laughter and compassion uneasily share the stage.

CRUEL AND KIND: PERFORMING THE PAST

For Sidney, some laughter is clearly cruel and tasteless: laughing at those in pain, laughing at those who cannot help their appearance or behaviours - the wretched beggar or beggarly clown, the stranger who cannot speak English - are his examples. Read the words ‘cruel’ and ‘cruelty’ in early modern writings and there seems to be a broad continuity of meaning across four hundred years. ‘Cruel’ then, as now, refers to inexplicably unkind people and actions and suggests an inhuman lack of empathy and a pleasure in unkindness on the perpetrator’s part. In early modern writing, cruelty is equated with a lack of humanity quite explicitly; to be cruel is to be less, or sometimes more, than human - and thus not to feel compassion for humanity’s trials. Death, war, fate and the law can all be cruel¹² – they are abstractions, without pity or compassion. Cruelty is un-kind-ness, where ‘kind’ means like, kin and kin-like: it is the opposite kind of act

or attitude to that which builds social bonds. So when Hamlet says ‘I must be cruel only to be kind’ (3.4.176), his line suggests that Gertrude - and the audience - will wonder at his lack of humane and filial compassion, so that he needs to explain his seeming perversity. The traitor Scroop is addressed by Henry V as a ‘cruel, Ingrateful, savage and inhuman creature!’ (*Henry V* 2.2.95); once rendered inhuman, he can be killed. The clown Launce, in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is dismayed at his dog’s dog-like cruel-heartedness, complaining

I think Crab, my dog, be the sourest-natured dog that lives: my mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in a great perplexity, yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear: he is a stone, a very pebble stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog...(2.3.5-11)

Despite the historical/semantic continuity of cruelty across four hundred years, however, the cultural industries that are in the business of recalling and reproducing the past today have a range of contradictory attitudes to that past’s perceived humanity or cruelty. The dramatic and medical treatments of mental illness that emerged from the early modern period give rise to very different iconographies of pastness four hundred years later. The early modern period produced some of the most valued cultural artefacts studied in the Humanities today (plays, in particular) but its authorities also perpetuated judicial cruelties around which a whole heritage industry has been built. Whilst supremely articulate women - witty Beatrices and stalwart Isabellas - are to be found at Shakespeare’s Globe, walk fifteen minutes through South London to the Clink prison museum and a very different cultural reality of scolds’ bridles and chastity belts is on

display. Broadly speaking, in the UK, those elements of ‘our’ past which ‘we’ wish to legitimate and universalise – the works of Shakespeare, for example - tend to be reproduced as ‘kind’, in both the senses of ‘compassionate’ and ‘like-us’. A production of *The Merchant of Venice* – the Shakespeare’s Globe production of 1998 comes to mind - tends to be roundly slammed by the critics if it seems to be inviting the audience to laugh at Shylock. Whilst Shylock is cruel in his insistence on having his pound of flesh, he must also be seen, in modern production, to be sorely provoked by a cruelly prejudiced Venetian gentile society, or the production will risk being dismissed as inhumane and anti-Semitic, contaminating Shakespeare’s currency as universally human. If Shakespeare’s Globe, as its website proclaims, offers the theatre goer and tourist ‘Not just theatre but the capital at its very best’,¹³ other London attractions relish the display of London Down the Ages at its violent worst. The Clink museum is dedicated to the prison of that name, first built on this site in 1144. Here, according to the museum’s website, ‘Visitors will experience a hands on educational experience allowing them to handle original artifacts, including torture devices...’; the site goes on to contextualize the museum geographically, culturally and historically thus: ‘This area housed much of London’s entertainment establishments including four theatres, bull-baiting, bear-baiting, inns and many other darker entertainments’. The last of these remain unnamed but I assume they include prostitution, which, unlike torture, is considered too dark to name for a website that offers an educational experience for all the family. I am unsure as to whether the list is intended to provoke

surprise at the closeness of the seats of culture to what modern visitors would regard as crueler entertainments, or whether theatre is deliberately being contaminated by the connection – but the website’s education page merrily declares

Whether you're looking for a fun visit to torture each other and learn of the truly horrible history or a visit filled with educational fun and learning, our tour team are able to offer it all and tailor to your own specific needs.¹⁴

A few hundred yards further East still, the London Dungeon museum offers a range of theme-park rides around the cruelties and dangers of London’s past, including a Torture Chamber exhibit where

London’s torturer always finds a way to get you talking, whether with the hook, the castrator, the jaw breaker, or the creeping agony of the rack. Maybe he’ll loosen your tongue the hard way, with the tongue-tearer!¹⁵

The excesses of the past in these two attractions are comically cruel and unthinkable distant from us. Where the Shakespeare trade seeks to teach us what is transhistorically human, the aesthetic of the Dungeon’s website and its entrance on Tooley Street seems to invite laughter at the ludicrous inhumanities of the past.

Another exhibit in the London Dungeon was, at the time of writing, dedicated to ‘Bedlam’ and was advertised in similar spirit:

Face the inmates of one of London’s first asylums: infamous for driving the slightly eccentric to the depths of insanity! Quick, they’re waking up. Move along before you cause bedlam!¹⁶

The very inclusion of the Bethlem Hospital in the Dungeon experience suggests that it was a cruel prison, which barbarically failed to recognize the true mental state of its inmates and whose tortures drove them mad. Interestingly, the Dungeon website both perpetuates and balks at the historical stereotype of the visitor who comes to Bedlam to be entertained: we are being invited to do exactly that but at the same time are jokily warned to run off before the madmen wake up. Little wonder that scholars might feel the need to recuperate the early modern period for a degree of humane good intention when the past is depicted in such cartoon-like images of barbarity. In my examination here of dramatic scenes in madhouses, I am going to suggest that mad figures in the early modern drama give us a more nuanced way in to considering histories of cruel laughter versus compassionate seriousness than what is on offer to the London tourist. The theatrical debate, however, is inflected with some of the assumptions and stereotypes to be found in the torture museum.

LET'S ALL GO AND SEE THE MADFOLK

Did early seventeenth century Londoners go to visit the inmates of the Bethlem hospital for entertainment? The London Dungeon exhibit drew on an assumption that they did and a range of cultural and theatrical histories have assumed so too; Carol Neely's study of *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* challenges this assumption.¹⁷ She suggests that historical evidence for these visits before the Restoration is scant, based

on five dramas in which incarcerated mad people perform for audiences,¹⁸ and a much-paraphrased reference to the Percy children visiting London in 1610, where they saw their father in the tower and were taken on a number of London outings, including ‘The Show of Bethlehem’. This the only existing reference, outside of a dramatic text, to a visit to the hospital supposedly for entertainment before 1632 and Neely argues it is unlikely to have referred to a visit to the hospital: the children more probably visited a Christmas entertainment – a show about Bethlehem.¹⁹ Neely, following Andrews, points out that visits to Bethlem may have occurred for a range of purposes, including charitable donation and moral instruction.²⁰ The notion that previously held assumptions about visiting Bedlam for a laugh are anachronistic is key to Neely’s recuperation of Bedlam as an institution with a genuine charitable and therapeutic purpose.²¹ The hospital was hopelessly underfunded and certainly resorted to cures that might be considered cruel and certainly ineffective today but, argues Neely, ‘Visiting seemed to have begun (or increased) gradually in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. It accelerates in the Restoration’.²²

Neely is right to suggest that fictional visits to madhouses in plays do not equate to a common practice of voyeuristic and insensitive visits to madhouses for entertainment in social life. But I want to challenge an implication that I think lies beneath her recuperation of early modern Bethlehem: that compassion and entertainment are somehow opposed or contradictory and that laughter must be justified or denied if we are not to dismiss early modern attitudes to the mentally ill as cruel and benighted. “The hospital does not confine mad-persons cruelly or

indiscriminate; but stage madhouses make spectacles of them as the hospital is imagined to do”, argues Neely on her opening page.²³ I argue that this notion of ‘spectacle’, with its connotations of voyeurism, imagines the nineteenth century freak show rather than the early modern theatre. Neely points to the moments when onstage audiences laugh together at the mad and suggests that ‘these communal responses protect audiences from individual engagement with particular madpersons’.²⁴ But on the early modern stage just such an individual encounter is very possible, should a mad figure turn to address an individual in the audience. At such a point there is the potential for communal laughter which, far from protecting, renders the confronted audience member the object of that laughter. In revisiting the dramatic treatment of mad figures on the early modern stage, I want to suggest that, whether or not real early modern gallants regularly or ever payed visits to Bedlam for entertainment, theatre audiences might have laughed at fictional mad figures in ways that produced complex and ambivalent relationships between madness and sanity and between fiction and culture. In support, I offer a reading of a scene from Dekker and Middleton’s *The Honest Whore*, which features incarcerated mad figures; then I will shift to a recent performance of Malvolio’s wrongful incarceration in *Twelfth Night* which deals explicitly with whether an audience’s laughter at this figure is in excess of compassion and good taste.

THE HONEST WHORE PART I

Part one of *The Honest Whore*²⁵ contains a substantial Bethlem Monastery sequence (this particular Bethlem is situated outside Milan), in which the much put-upon Candido, a linen-draper, is incarcerated by his wife; she pretends he is mad and has him committed to an asylum in order to provoke him to an anger that he frustrates her by refusing to vent. The asylum is visited in turn by two young lovers who hide there, to get married against the will of the father of the bride. When this father, the Duke of Milan, discovers the lovers' plot, he and his followers arrive at the madhouse intent on stopping the marriage. This is the exchange between the Duke and his followers, in which a visit to the madmen is posited, quite literally, as a pastime

Duke: Castruchio, art thou sure this wedding feast
Is not til afternoon?
Castruchio: So 'tis given out, my lord.
Duke: Nay, nay, 'tis like. Thieves must observe their hours;
Lovers watch minutes like astronomers.
How shall the interim hours by us be spent?
Fluello: Let's all go and see the madmen.
All: Mass, content. (1 *Honest Whore* 5.2.100-6)

This unhesitating chorus of enthusiasm for the idea suggests to me, *pace* Neely, that watching the mad might have been something might have been thought of as a fun thing to do, though a passage in which the Duke insists that the party does not arrive in a crowd suggests that treating the mad as theatre might have been considered suspiciously

indelicate.²⁶ When faced with their first madman, the visitors' reaction is one of pity and compassion:

Duke: How fell he from himself?
Anselmo [the friar who runs this Bethlem Monastery]:
By loss at sea.
I'll stand aside: question him you alone,
For if he spy me, he'll not speak a word
Unless he's thoroughly vex'd.

He reveals an old man wrapped in a net

Fluello: Alas, poor soul!
Castruchio: A very old man.
Duke: God speed, father. (5.2.173-79)

Once the traumatised old merchant gets into his stride, however, and begins to spout the fragmentary memories, repetitions and imagined encounters that typify mad discourse in early modern drama, presumably whilst getting more and more tangled in his net, the party clearly begins to find him entertaining:

1st Madman: [...] Stay, stay, stay, stay, stay – where's the wind, where's the wind, where's the wind, where's the wind? Out, you gulls, you goose-caps, you gudgeon-eaters! Do you look for the wind in the heavens? Ha, ha, ha, ha! No, no! Look there, look there, look there! The wind is always at that door – hark how it blows – poof, poof, poof!
All: Ha, ha, ha! (5.2.194-99)

The madman behaves as if the gallants are part of the scene of his trauma, directing them where to look for the ever-present wind that has wrecked his ships. At first, this audience behave as a community of laughers external to the scene; but the madman insistently draws them

in, first by confronting their laughter and denying that his plight is mere theatre, then by disrupting the social hierarchy of the occasion by teasing the Duke, then by drawing them into the imagined scene of his trauma. His response at being laughed at is to upbraid the gallants for their lack of respect for an elder: 'Do you laugh at God's creatures?' he demands, 'Do you mock old age, you rogues? Is this grey beard and head counterfeit, that you cry, "Ha, ha, ha?"' (5.1.201-3). Having ticked off these young puppies and accused them of laughing as if at a play, where his beard might be counterfeit - and thus, of course, implicating the paying audience in the disrespectful laughter - he takes on the epithet of father his audience has given him and, moreover, the authority of the father figure, as he turns abruptly to the gallant Pioratto and asks 'Sirrah, art not thou my eldest son?' (203). Falling in with the joke Pioratto agrees that he is, to which the madman retorts that indeed he is not, as he looks quite different. Next the madman turns to the Duke, addressing him with the demeaning 'Sirrah' (207), minutely examining and then insulting the state of his hands, to the amusement of the gallants.

Having brought the gallants into close physical proximity to him and implicated them in his comical insults at their lord's expense, the madman calls upon the Duke to 'Kneel down, thou varlet, and ask thy father blessing.' And once the whole party is clustered around him, he is back in the scene of the shipwreck, with his audience as his fellow sailors, and then as his enemy:

If you love your lives, look to yourselves. See, see, see, see, the Turks' galleys are fighting with my ships! Bounce goes the guns! "Oooh!" cry

the men. Romble romble go the waters. Alas! There! 'Tis sunk, 'tis sunk!
I am undone, I am undone! You are the damn'd pirates have undone me!
You are, by th' Lord, you are, you are, stop'em, you are! (221-26)

Within one short sequence, the madman's audience can pity, laugh at and interact with him. The madman is, at one moment, seemingly helplessly entrapped in his net, a theatrical spectacle, whilst the next moment he has the power to pull his spectators into a comic dialogue with him, the jokes of which are very much at the spectators' expense, and then into the narrative space of his trauma. The madman forms and reforms communities of laughers; particularly interesting here is the way in which he re-makes social hierarchy by getting the Duke to kneel to him and the gallants to laugh at the Duke. His unpredictability is disarming, to a group which has already been literally disarmed at the door of the madhouse, where the very reason given for their having to hand in their swords is the unpredictability of the inmates (although in fact Anselmo is allied with the Duke's daughter and her lover and disarms the party to foil them in the plot to abort the wedding):

Anselmo:
Yes, you shall,
But, gentlemen, I must disarm you then.
There are of mad men, as there are of tame,
All humour'd not alike: we have here some,
So apish and fantastic, play with a feather,
And tho 'twould grieve a soul to see God's image
So blemish'd and defac'd, yet do they act
Such antic and such pretty lunacies,
That spite of sorrow they will make you smile;
Others again we have like hungry lions,
Fierce as wild bulls, untamable as flies,
And these have oftentimes from strangers' sides
Snatch'd rapiers suddenly and done much harm,

Whom if you'll see, you must be weaponless. (5.2.153-66)

In this prologue to the Bethlem scene, the mad are no more subsumable into one humour - or stereotype - than the sane. Anselmo suggests that watching them will conflate pity and smiling. According to Joubert, we laugh at the madman's predictable behaviour until we remember his suffering;²⁷ in Anselmo's speech, compassion is the assumed state when first confronting the mad, smiling the inevitable reaction to the theatricality of the madmen's 'antic and...pretty lunacies'. The scene suggests that it was possible for the early moderns to find a madman amusing and simultaneously to empathise with him - indeed, to have a complex and shifting relationship with him as a human subject.

The reciprocity between performer and audience demonstrated here is also a condition of the early modern playhouse and it is worth reconsidering here the indoor playing conditions in which early modern dramas featuring the incarcerated mad were produced. Dekker and Webster's *Northward Ho* was performed at Paul's by Paul's Children; Fletcher's *The Pilgrim* at court and then at the Blackfriars by the King's Men; Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* at the Cockpit by Lady Elizabeth's men. Two plays featuring the incarcerated mad, including *The Honest Whore*, were played in outdoor, public amphitheatres; nevertheless, *The Duchess of Malfi* was in the King's Men's repertoire when they owned the Blackfriars (and Webster's irritation at the way in which his tragedies were received by the commoner crowd out of doors is clear from his preface to *The White Devil*²⁸), whilst *The Honest Whore* itself, first performed at the Fortune by the Prince's

Company in 1604, was one of only two plays of Dekker's to be revived for indoor showing - by Queen Henrietta's men at the Cockpit around 1635.²⁹

The good-humoured confrontation and flattery by teasing used by Shakespeare when he jokes about noisy groundlings and mad Englishmen in *Hamlet* (3.2.10-12, 5.1.149-51) reappears in plays written with the private playhouses in mind, sites of entertainment where the rich and fashionable have their behavioural and sartorial habits and dramatized and satirized. Sarah Dustagheer has argued persuasively that speeches such as Jonson's prologue to *The Devil is an Ass*, in which the playwright complains of stage-sitters restricting the playing space to the size of a 'cheese trencher' (Prologue 7-8) and telling players to move out of their sight lines when they have finished speaking, shows the artist reclaiming the stage space from recalcitrant playgoers rather than deliberately drawing attention to them in order to please them.³⁰ I have no doubt that there is some genuine exasperation at play on Jonson's part here, just as there may have been in Shakespeare's advice to those clowns inclined to show off to those less interested than they should be in necessary questions of the play. What interests me here, though, is what Tiffany Stern³¹ and Ralph Cohen³² have noted as an indoor playhouse tendency to include audiences quite explicitly within the theatrical form and fictional content of the theatre event. Nova Myhill, in her study of 'Spectators as Spectacle in the Caroline Private Theatres' suggests that inductions featuring gallant stage-sitters suggest 'that the experience of playgoing is as subject to judgment of the plays themselves' by this elite audience

of self-appointed critics.³³ What we have in *The Honest Whore's* madhouse sequence is an audience for the madmen made up of the kinds of gallants who might have sat on the stage at play's c.1635 revival, attentive and empathetic at one moment, raucous and disrespectful the next, always inclined to find jokes at the expense of another in their party hilarious. Myhill concludes that the on-stage audience staged by (and mingled with the real on-stage audience in) the Inductions written by Jonson and Brome, 'ultimately expands the frame of the play to include the entire theater, placing the theater audience on display in the terms of the playwright rather than the reverse'.³⁴ The fact that in its original incarnation this play probably played at the Globe suggests that the scene's shifts from laughing at the mad to laughing at those that laugh at them was of comic value anywhere. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider the ways in which proximity to the stage and the particular audience demographic of the private playhouse might conspire here to turn a self-constituting - and perhaps self-satisfied - in-group of laughers into a group laughing at themselves with a distinct 'other', the madman.

MALVOLIO

I now want to consider the implications of this argument about shifting sympathies and comic excess for a Shakespearean text, *Twelfth Night*, via two recent theatrical versions of Malvolio. Of course, Shakespeare did not write a madhouse scene as such: *Twelfth Night's* scene of incarceration is one of false imprisonment in a makeshift madhouse.

But it is of particular interest here in the light of a recent interest, in theatre production, in stripping the scene of its comedy.

In 2009, the Shakespeare Theatre Company of Washington DC staged a mock court case, *Malvolio's Revenge*, in which Olivia appeals against the millions of dollars' worth of damages Malvolio has won in a successful suit against the 'False imprisonment, violation of constitutional rights, and...intentional infliction of emotional distress' inflicted upon him by Sir Toby et al.³⁵ This courtroom drama could stand as a parody of what Becky Kemper suggests is a particularly modern interpretation of Malvolio's incarceration: that it is extremely cruel - though, as we will see, a view of Malvolio through a prison grate became a scenic convention from the 1850s.³⁶ In her article subtitled 'Reclaiming the Humor in Malvolio's downfall', Kemper follows C. L. Barber's warning against rendering Malvolio too pitiable,³⁷ arguing that the sight of Malvolio tortured and broken is a theatrical anachronism that 'can so sour the final moments of the play that they ultimately rob the audience of a satisfying conclusion'.³⁸ She also suggests that in comparison to the real cultures of punishment and treatment of the mentally ill in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, Malvolio is let off very lightly: merely deprived of light and visited by a comedy priest, as opposed, say, to having his leg chained to the floor and being beaten with brambles, the fate suffered by the wife treated as mad, as a punishment for scolding, in Barnaby Riche's 'Two Brethren and Their Wives', a possible source text for *Twelfth Night*.³⁹

Kemper lists the following examples of modern productions in which the incarceration scene is staged as 'nothing short of torture':

Henry Irving's 1884 production put the steward in 'a dungeon worthy of fidelio'. Jacques Copeau in 1914 preferred the image of Malvolio's desperate fingers clawing at a grate. Bell Shakespeare company in 1995 had Malvolio stuffed in a portable dumpster that Feste beat with a baseball bat. In 2005, Dian Denley of the Globe Center Australia paraded a black-hooded Malvolio onstage, echoing Iraq's Abu Ghraib Prison'.⁴⁰

She points, as other scholars have, to the folio stage direction for the scene 'Malvolio, *within*', reminding us that the audience never actually see Malvolio during this scene, and to the fact that, though Sir Toby suggests binding him, this humiliation would not have been staged in the early modern playhouse. As David Carnegie has argued, the convention of a visible Malvolio in his makeshift madhouse emerged as a convention on the mid-Victorian pictorial stage.⁴¹ For Gayle Gaskill, 'the shadow of this representational staging still falls over the dark house scene' and she adds Bill Alexander's RSC production of 1987 (Malvolio: Anthony Sher) and Trevor Nunn's 1996 film (Malvolio: Nigel Hawthorne) to Kemper's list of pitiable Malvolios, pointing particularly to how the conventions of film close up invite an emphasis on the 'psychology of humiliation' in the play.⁴² The *Malvolio's Revenge* mock trial was produced by the Shakespeare Theatre Company, but its lawyers were real ones. Malvolio's lawyer was former U.S. Solicitor General Paul Clement, who made a passing joke about his defence of Guantanamo imprisonments without trial during the performance.⁴³ The linking of Malvolio's treatment to a particularly raw and current form of inhumanity could not have been clearer. In the productions listed by Kemper, the audience is asked to recognise that the joke against Malvolio has finally transgressed the boundary

between comedy and cruelty and that they should stop laughing at him and empathise. If this treatment of the 'mad' Malvolio is indeed an anachronism, it is one that *Malvolio's Revenge* clearly enjoys enormously and which the performance tradition instigated by Irving asks its audiences to take very seriously.

How does the fate of Malvolio relate to the ambivalent theatrical treatments of an incarcerated mad figure such as the *Honest Whore's* merchant? The wrongly incarcerated Malvolio is a stage mad figure in more ways than one. Like the *Duchess of Malfi* madmen after him, he is a member of the upstart professional classes whom the audience love to hate (interestingly, of course, the *Duchess of Malfi* is a play about an aristocratic woman who actually does marry her Steward⁴⁴). Malvolio has imagined serving the lust of his mistress's heart as Edgar, in *King Lear*, imagines that his Poor Tom has done. And if Kemper and the scholars she cites are right and the audience never see him in his dark house, he is like the mad figures in the *Changeling* subplot, who shout their mad fragments from off stage and are attended to and upbraided by an onstage carer. The joke of the sane man wrongly incarcerated, who cannot prove his sanity because everything he does and says seems to confirm his madness, is repeated with Candido in *The Honest Whore*, imprisoned in the madhouse as part of his wife's plan to provoke a manly anger from this impossibly calm and cheerful husband, and in Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*,⁴⁵ where the saintly Alina's furious father Alphonso is wrongly incarcerated, reconciled to his daughter's marriage and cured of his excessive anger. In *The Pilgrim*, as in *The Honest Whore*, the father is made to reconsider his

equally comic flaw of pride reduces him to the plight of a madman but is far from redeemed by the last scene. Malvolio will never see that he has ‘ma[de] [his] own afflictions’ and swears revenge on the on and off-stage communities of laughers that have made him their object. One can assume that audiences of 1602 and 1621 respectively are intended to laugh at both these self-deluded figures - but the ‘satisfying conclusion’, to recall Kemper, that *The Pilgrim* offers is that the deluded are brought to self-containment. All Malvolio seems to be brought to is anger at the fact that he has been duped and an understanding that we have all laughed at him.

Much late twentieth century criticism of *Twelfth Night* was determined, as Kemper suggests recent theatre production has been, to leave audiences and readers with a ‘dark’ ending for the play, and has read Malvolio’s last line - ‘I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you’ (5.1.370) - as a serious disruption to the play’s celebratory ending.⁴⁶ In this reading, the audience is told that it has been enjoying itself too much and we are made to face the cruel community of excessive laughers that we have become. But it can only be so if Malvolio has been seriously abused in his makeshift madhouse. If the audience have not seen him, if Sir Topaz has been enjoyably ridiculous and one has only been provoked to the mildest of pity for Malvolio, or indeed simply enjoyed the incarceration scene for its ludicrous and unnecessary theatricals, Malvolio continues to be laughable when he offers revenge as an ending to this play instead of comedy.

I would argue, with Kemper, that we cannot assume an early modern audience would have considered Malvolio’s treatment excessive at all

and I suggest that what *Twelfth Night* does is generate communities of laughers at Malvolio's expense.⁴⁷ He is a ludicrous social climber with ideas above his station and it is for this that he is punished; in laughing at him, the audience are constructed as a community that understands it is ludicrous for the 'Lady of the Strachey' to marry 'the yeoman of the wardrobe' (2.5.38-9). The fact that Sir Toby Belch recognizes that the whole joke has gone too far (4.2.64-70) may suggest that he fears the trouble that the joke will cause for him rather than that he necessarily recognizes its cruelty. Thus *Twelfth Night* can be read as a comedy of social 'othering' that is certainly unkind to the social climber but suggests that ostracization and contempt are exactly what he deserves. The play un-kinds Malvolio, makes it clear he is not one of us. It is impossible to know what an early modern audience might have felt when Malvolio declares he will be revenged on the whole pack of them. I am suggesting here that they may not have felt implicated in some dreadful psychological torture, or particularly sorry for the fallen proud man at all.

I, MALVOLIO

I, Malvolio, a play by Tim Crouch that re-reads *Twelfth Night* in terms of laughter and its excesses, assumes that Malvolio *has* been cruelly tortured - but also that this is potentially hilarious for an audience. The play tells the story of *Twelfth Night* from Malvolio's perspective and the audience is presented, from its opening moments, with Malvolio as both a victim of early modern shame punishments and the inmate of an

imagined asylum from a dark and unspecified past. The piece is one in a series written and performed by Crouch, in which he re-tells four Shakespeare plays from the perspectives of what he calls minor characters (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is narrated by Peaseblossom, *The Tempest* by Caliban, *Macbeth* by Banquo). In an online interview, Crouch asserts that he is giving these characters a voice that Shakespeare does not permit them and thus he suggests that he is in some way subverting or undoing the power politics of the plays in question.⁴⁸ The production is of particular interest here, because throughout the hour-long monologue, all addressed to the audience, Malvolio/Crouch repeatedly makes the audience laugh, something that is predicted in the stage directions of the published text of *I, Malvolio*; he then confronts them with accusatory questions and upbraids them for their laughter:

I am locked away in hideous darkness. Without light, without toilette.
He shows the audience his behind. The audience laughs.
Find that funny still? Is that the kind of thing you find funny?
Oh such fun, you think. A sport royal, I warrant.
You bullies. You big bullies.⁴⁹

This Malvolio is a figure disgusted by the excesses both of his world and the one he is addressing, which he assumes to be one and the same - excesses that include Belch's drinking and carousing, Viola's cross-dressing (which he dismisses as completely inexplicable, the actions of a mad woman), and any indulgences he assumes the audience members like to partake of. He belligerently suggests that we all enjoy dropping litter, spitting, drinking, smoking, laughing at those who are different to ourselves, and, most repulsively to him it seems, going to the theatre,

a place, he insists, where people might enjoy watching a man like Malvolio hang himself.⁵⁰ He also repeatedly claims not to be mad. Malvolio is dressed for most of the performance as just the kind of victim of abuse to which Kemper and Neely might object in their revisions of the end of *Twelfth Night* and the historical treatment of inmates of Bedlam respectively. He wears filthy, in parts bloody, off-white ‘combinations’, full of holes that suggest someone has poked at him with something sharp, or burnt him with cigarettes. The garment has a split in the behind through which it can be seen, when he first bends over, that he has soiled himself - presumably out of fear at some unspeakable treatment or because he has not been given anywhere to relieve himself in his prison. Large toy flies are attached to him. On his back is a sign that reads ‘Turkey Cock’ and underneath it another reading ‘Kick Me’. His headwear seems to represent something between said turkey and the familiar horns of the cuckold; beneath his chin is a red turkey’s wattle on an elastic strap: It is clear that he has been subjected to some charivari-like display, shown to the world as an object of contempt.⁵¹ His costume speaks a history of the social pariah, from the receiver of the theatricalized medieval shame punishment, still part of legislative practice in Shakespeare’s life time,⁵² through the Victorian asylum inmate to the modern day homeless victim of abuse. Despite the grim visuals, Malvolio’s audience is constructed and reconstructed as a group that enjoy laughing at him, even as they are upbraided for doing so. My own experience as an audience member was of laughing openly at Malvolio’s pompous accusations that we were all part of a cruel, decadent and chaotic society conspiring to

incarcerate one of its only decent members, abruptly followed by genuine moments of pity for this figure, by moments of repulsion (not so much at his vilely soiled attire but at his desperate love for Olivia, of which more later) and by moments of awkwardness where the script appeared overtly to signal that one's laughter was cruel and excessive.

This Malvolio figure contains two comic stooges - the proud man fallen and the social misfit. Crouch performs the play in two versions, one for its originally intended audience of 11+ and one for adults (the main differences being the strength of the swearing the piece contains and the amount of exposure offered by the character's underwear, with some improvised differences that change from performance to performance). The intended audience of young people is encoded in both versions: in Crouch's opening encounter with the audience, he accuses them of litter dropping. He has screwed up and abandoned Maria's forged letter, which he has been reading and re-reading as the audience enter, and then fires his accusatory questions at them:

I'll just drop this here, shall I? Is that what you'd do? In the absence of a bin. This thing here. Yes? Just leave it here. Dump it here. Let it rest and blow about. Let someone else pick it up, shall I? Someone else, shall I? Is that what you'd do, is it? That the kind of thing you'd get up to? The kind of thing you'd like? Is it?⁵³

The questions develop into a rant against the litter-droppers and spitters of this world, those who would reduce an ordered society to filth and chaos. Whether the audience largely comprise members who are younger than this Malvolio or not, he treats them as an authoritarian's nightmare of the younger generation, which generates

giggly rebellion. He insists that by the end of the evening he will have been revenged on the whole pack of us and suggests that this is what the audience is: a pack, a cruel community of laughers in whose interest it is to 'other' its weaker members, to laugh at his misfortune. Malvolio's monologue shifts at one point to a diatribe against the theatre:

The theatre. Where we can drink and smoke and fornicate and squeal with delight and give access to our baser feelings and care not a jot for any decent human sensibility.

Look. Look. LOOK. Look at yourselves. LOOK AT YOURSELVES. With a ghastly rictus of amorality frozen on your ugly faces. This is how you look. Like this. And this. You are all as bad as each other. All of you. ALL. ALL.⁵⁴

He admits to having Puritan tendencies - he wants the theatres closed - and suggests that we are all ghastly voyeurs who would happily kick 'the funny man' until he bleeds, or watch him hang himself: he sets up a noose, gets one spectator to hold the rope whilst another readies herself to pull away his chair, then tells us he is not going to give us the sensationalist satisfaction of seeing him die. When I attended the production, he asked a man in the front row what his name was and offered a comic construction of what might happen when 'Andrew' went home after the performance '- You're home early Andrew! - Oh yes, it finished early - he hanged himself.'

A critique of assumed audience passivity has been central to Crouch's recent work⁵⁵, although for this audience, the moments when Crouch very obviously appeared to want to bring us up short in our laughter, to consider whether we really would happily kick a man when he is

down, produced what I read as the silence of mild embarrassment at being preached to, rather than a genuine reappraisal of cultures of spectatorship. The performance was, I would argue, more successful in implicating its audiences when it let them laugh and laugh again a range of comic objects, from the primitively scatological (we laughed at the sudden appearance of Malvolio's arse, as Joubert has suggested we would) to the pitiful (some laughed at Malvolio's story of failed love and humiliation, even at his repeated assertion that his imagined requited love had brought him the only happy moments of his life, though others let out an 'Aah!' of sympathy), to the pompous (we laughed, like Toby Belch, at Malvolio's condemnation of the excesses of social life and are cast as the carnivalesque wreckers of the social order). The audience at the production I attended, then, both laughed and pitied as Joubert suggests we do - and laughed at the piteous, as Sidney (and Crouch's Malvolio) fears that theatrical comedy encourages us to do.

Crouch's nuanced portrayal of the awkward, pompous social misfit stages a trans-historical archetype: he is the socially inept social climber who desires the obvious signifiers of social success but misreads more nuanced social semiotics - most importantly, those that indicate how he himself is being read. Malvolio begins this play in the full realization that he has been made a laughing stock, then proceeds to demonstrate how and why. He accuses his audience of caring little for his upright, ordered social view of the world, casting them as teenage rebels even when the majority are adults; he accosts them in an embarrassing leopard-print thong, in the kind of awkward burst of sexual

enthusiasm that we assume must have revolted Olivia. His performance recalls the kinds of social disfunction we might associate with bullying in playgrounds and rejections within the adult social hierarchies of the work place. 'A kind of innocence irradiates Malvolio's joy' at finding Maria's letter', argues Robert H. Bell of Shakespeare's figure: 'What loser has not dreamed that the last will be first? Let him without foolish fantasies cast the first stone.'⁵⁶ But what Crouch's piece suggests is that it is easy to forget any kinship with Malvolio in our own joy at being 'big bullies'. Malvolio has been punished for being a poor reader - of Maria's trick letter and of social semiotics;⁵⁷ he who cannot read the signs is, to all intents and purposes, what Malvolio insists he is not: mad - and thus laughable. Crouch's Malvolio considers laughter an excess in and of itself, part of a society of Belch-like decadence, material excesses, and sensation-seeking behaviours in excess of decency, propriety and kindness. Crouch's production offers its audience members the opportunity to watch themselves laugh at Malvolio as part of a range of laughter communities - and suggests that *Twelfth Night* may just have let them laugh unthinkingly.

What implications does Crouch's performance have for production of *Twelfth Night*? For Crouch, in the end, it can have none, because it is giving Malvolio a voice that he does not have in the play. In one sense it offers exactly the reading of Malvolio's plight that Kemper objects to. It suggests that, far from being a subtle interplay of performer and audience, spectator and object of spectacle that I have argued is contained within the *Honest Whore* madhouse scene, *Twelfth Night* is a play that allows us to laugh in self-satisfied superiority at the social

climber. The mad figure on the early modern stage is an object of laughter, a generator of laughter, a laugher. Whether the wrongly incarcerated Malvolio can be seen in his improvised madhouse or not, it is clear that he cannot look back at those who are looking at him and laughing, as the *Honest Whore*'s madman can. He is in darkness, in a separate space from his on stage tormentors and his paying spectators. Considering the possibility of laughing at the mad in the early modern drama has reconfirmed my sense that performing early modern drama now has the potential to locate the audience in an oddly disturbing reciprocal relationship with traditionally and stereotypically constructed 'others'. It may also, as Crouch is suggesting *Twelfth Night* does, reconfirm such boundaries and stereotypes. *Twelfth Night* may have a more satisfying dramaturgical structure for a modern audience than the Jacobean dramas featuring the incarcerated mad. But modern production's need to show that its audiences have been guilty in laughing at Malvolio, that we have demonstrated an excess of laughter' and become a cruel pack, worthy of the abused man's revenge, suggests that the laughter that it generates may be relatively contained and comfortable. *The Honest Whore*'s madman gets to ask his laughing on and off-stage audience, 'Do you mock old age, you rogues?' (5.2.201-2), rather like Crouch's Malvolio as he asks us 'You enjoy that sort of thing, do you? Makes you laugh, does it?' *Twelfth Night*'s Malvolio only gets to storm off stage, swearing that he will take an impossible revenge. It is logical that a play should punish an anti-comical figure like Malvolio. But his ultimate punishment, our laughter, regulates the disconcerting shifts in spectatorial power that laughing at the mad

offers in the other plays I have been considering. Stephen G. Breyer, the ‘real’ judge at the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s mock appeal against Malvolio’s damages, finally decided in favour of Olivia: “‘No liability,’ he said. ‘And the reason is: I don’t like Malvolio’.”⁵⁸ The raucous, laughable, shifting excesses of a mad character such as the ruined merchant in *The Honest Whore* may not permit such a simple and self-contained judgment.

1 | Partly reprinted from Bridget Escolme, *Emotional Excess on the Shakespearean Stage*, Chapter Two, “Do you mock old age, you rogues?” Excessive Laughter, Cruelty and Compassion’, published by Arden Shakespeare, London 2013.

2 | Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defense of Poesie)* (c.1579) (Manchester, 2002), 98.

3 | Sidney, *Apology*, 112-3

4 | Sidney, *Apology*, 113

5 | Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter (Traité du Ris)* trans Gregory David de Rocher (Tuscaloosa, Al., 1980) 20. Joubert’s French translation from the 1560 Latin edition of the Treatise was published in 1579.

6 | Joubert, *Laughter*, 20

7 | Jonas Barish’s account of early modern Puritan anti-theatricality is still a useful one: see Chapter 4, ‘Puritans and Proteans’ in *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), 80-131.

8 | Carol Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca and London, 2004) 50.

9 | As Kaara L. Petersen succinctly puts it in ‘Performing Arts: Hysterical Disease, Exorcism, and Shakespeare’s Theatre’, in Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Petersen, *Disease, Diagnosis and Cure on the Early Modern Stage* (Aldershot, 2004) 3-28, ‘residual beliefs of any kind are slow to alter and culture is simply not always in agreement with itself over what it perceives’ (22), so whilst Poor Tom quotes the invented names of demons from Harsnet’s *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (London, 1603), it is difficult to know how ridiculous or how terrifying Edgar’s evocations might have seemed to early modern audiences.

10 | Joubert, *Laughter*, 21.

11 | The Q1 stage direction for her first entrance in 4.5 is ‘Enter Ophelia playing on a Lute, and her hair down singing’. Queen Elizabeth in *Richard III* enters after the death of her husband ‘with her hair about her ears’; rejected by Iarbus, Anna, sister to Dido Queen of Carthage, threatens to ‘follow thee with outcries [...] And strew thy walks with my dishevelled hair’ (Marlowe, *Dido Queen of Carthage*, 4.2.)

12 | 'Fate' is cruel to Bardolph in *Henry V* (3.6.25); 'War' in the Prologue to *Troilus and Cressida*; 'Death' doubly cruel to Paris when he finds what he believes to be Juliet's dead body (*Romeo and Juliet* 4.5.56-7); 'Religious canons, civil laws' are cruel to *Timon of Athens*, (4.3.61).

13 | <http://www.shakespeareglobe.com/theatre/on-stage> [accessed 9.2.12]

14 | <http://www.clink.co.uk/Education.html> [accessed 6.06.10]

15 | <http://www.the-dungeons.co.uk/london/en/attractions/index.htm> [accessed 6.06.10]

16 | <http://www.the-dungeons.co.uk/london/en/attractions/index.htm> [accessed 6.06.10]. This exhibit appears now to have closed.

17 | Carol Neely writes that the analogy between early modern Bedlam and theatrical spectacle 'is firmly cemented in the twentieth century in two studies - Edward O'Donoghue's *Story of Bethlem Hospital* (1915) and Robert Reed's *Bedlam on the Jacobean Stage* (1952) - and it has stuck.' (Neely 206); the connection continues to be assumed by Michael MacDonald in *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1981) and Roy Porter in *Mind Forged Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London, 1990) (cited in Neely 208). 'Even *The History of Bedlam*' by Jonathan Andrews et al, writes Neely, 'committed to exposing 'pseudo-facts about the hospital and to separating the state of 'Bedlam' from the institution, Bethlem, cannot completely abandon the analogy between the theatre's and the hospital's spectacle and the visitors who underwrite it' (209). Andrews, one of the scholars cited by Neely as perpetuating the myth of a theatrical show at Bethlem - and who indeed insists that the Percy story is 'the first undoubted reference to a real-life visit to "the shew of Bethlem"' also propounds another theory for Jacobean theatrical interest in madhouse scenes: the proximity of two early modern theatres to the hospital, the fact that Edward Alleyn's father was its keeper and that the family remained in the parish after his resignation and the fact that Ben Jonson was a St Botolph's parishioner too: 'It is quite possible, therefore, that Alleyn's and Jonson's circles had a considerably greater acquaintance with Bethlem than most Londoners and visitors to the city' (Andrews 133).

18 | Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 185-6.

19 | Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 202-3.

20 | Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 200, drawing on Andrews, Jonathan, 'Bethlem Revisited: A History of Bethlem Hospital c. 1643-1770, PhD Diss, University of London, 1991, 11-133. In

Separate Theaters, Bethlem ('Bedlam') Hospital and the Shakespearean Stage (Newark, N.J., 2005) (see particularly 156-165), Ken Jackson's argument about Bethlem, charity and poor relief supports Neely to a degree; he suggests that there was a 'show at Bedlam' whose first purposes were primarily charitable - but he argues that this became recreation or entertainment 'at precisely the historical moment when new theatrical categories, Shakespeare and Jonson's modern representational stage, became visible' (165). He cites in support of this history the changing registration of names at the hospital - from proper names in the 1598 census of Bethlem, to 'more theatrical monikers' such as "Black Will, Welsh Harry, Old Madam, Joan of the Hospital'" in the 1607 census (Jackson, 165, citing Patricia Allderidge, 'Management and Mismanagement at Bedlam, 1547-1633', in Charles Webster, ed., *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1979, 141-64).

21 | Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 169-184.

22 | Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 203.

23 | Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 1.

24 | Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 188.

25 | Part I, considered here, by Dekker and Middleton, Part 2 by Dekker. Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker* (Cambridge, 1964).

26 | Ken Jackson has also noted that *The Honest Whore* 'assumes visiting the mad an acceptable practice, but it also seems to assume that some rules of decorum apply. The Duke and his men avoid being seen arriving in a group.' Jackson goes on to suggest that visits to asylums in this period were charitable and that this scene registers 'the subtle rules governing the exhortation and distribution of charity at the hospital' (Jackson, *Separate Theatres*, 120).

27 | Joubert, *Laughter*, 21.

28 | In his much-cited 'Letter to the Reader', Webster offers as a reason for publication of *The White Devil* the fact that 'it was acted in so dull a time of winter, presented in so open and black a theatre, that it wanted (that which is the only grace and setting-out of a tragedy) a full and understanding auditory'. John Webster, 'To the Reader', *The White Devil* (London, 2008), 5.

29 | Dates and places of performance from Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (3rd edn) (Cambridge, 1992), 215

- 30 | Sarah Dustagheer, paper given at the 'Jacobean Indoor Playing Symposium', London Shakespeare Centre, King's College, London 4.2.12.
- 31 | Tiffany Stern, 'Taking Part: Actors and Audiences on the Stage at Blackfriars' in Paul Menzer ed., *Indoor Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriar's Stage* (Selinsgrove, 2006), 35-53.
- 32 | Ralph Cohen, 'The Most Convenient Place: The Second Blackfriars Theater and its Appeal', in Richard Dutton ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* (Oxford, 2009), 209-224.
- 33 | Nova Myhill, 'Taking the Stage: Spectators as Spectacles in the Caroline Public Theaters', in Nova Myhill and Jennifer Low, *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke 2011) 37-54, 37.
- 34 | Myhill, 'Taking the Stage', 52.
- 35 | *Malvolio's Revenge*, Shakespeare Theatre Company Mock Trial, Sidney Harman Hall, Washington DC, June 2009. See <http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/events/details.aspx?id=221> [accessed 24.05.10]
- 36 | See David Carnegie, 'Maluolio within': Performance Perspectives on the Dark House', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52.3 (Fall 2001) 392-413 (395-6).
- 37 | See David Carnegie, 'Maluolio within': Performance Perspectives on the Dark House', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52.3 (Fall 2001) 392-413 (395-6).
- 38 | Becky Kemper, 'A Clown in the Dark House: Reclaiming the Humor in Malvolio's Downfall', *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* (2007) 42-50, 42.
- 39 | It is Barnaby Riche's tale 'Of Apolonius and Silla' that contains the obvious source for the narrative of the separated brother and sister and the cross-dressed love story. The incident Kemper sites is from 'Two Bretheren and Their Wives', from the same collection, Riche's *Farewell to Military Profession* (1581) (Ottawa, Canada : Dovehouse, 1992). Scolded at every turn by his wife and unable to please her, one of the brothers, 'seeing that by no manner of fair means he was able to reclaim her, in the end he devised this way: himself with a trusty friend that he made of his counsel, got and pinioned her arms so fast that she was not able to undo them, and then putting her into an old petticoat which he rent and tattered in pieces of purpose, and shaking her hair loose about her eyes, tore her smock sleeves that her arms were all bare and scratching them all over with a bramble that the blood followed, with a great chain about her leg wherewith he tied

her in a dark house that was on his backside [at the back of his house?], and then calling his neighbours about her he would seem with great sorrow to lament his wife's distress, telling them that she was suddenly become lunatic' (258). The wife proceeds to confirm her false diagnosis by becoming so angry that she does indeed seem mad, rather as Malvolio's complaints are used as proof of his madness by 'Sir Topaz'.

40 | Kemper, 'Reclaiming', 42.

41 | 'Only from about the middle of the nineteenth century can a consistent tradition of allowing Malvolio to be visible be firmly documented' (395); David Carnegie cites a note in a c.1850s prompt book which describes a central door revealing a cell with chain and straw for Malvolio; then, 'Most promptbooks from 1850 until well into the twentieth century record a version of this staging, with Malvolio seen in a straw-littered dungeon through the grating of a dark-house door' (396). Carnegie suggests that Irving's split-stage design, which seems to follow the illustration in the Rowe edition of 1709 (Carnegie argues that it is unlikely Rowe was illustrating an actual stage setting of the play at this time (394)) was not much copied, if at all (397); however, he suggests that the staging led to the expansion of the possibilities 'for sentimental and piteous playing of Malvolio' and cites Edward Aveling declaring that 'The mental and physical horror of darkness and the longing yearning for deliverance were never so realized, I think, before. And with all this agony (it is literally agony) there is the sense of the grievous wrong done to him (Edward Aveling, *Our Corner*, July 1884, in Gamini Saldago, *Eyewitnesses of Shakespeare: First Hand Accounts of Performance, 1590-1890* (London, 1975) 214, in Carnegie 396. Gayle Gaskin takes Irving's performance to be paradigmatic of pitiable late Victorian Malvolios. Gayle Gaskill 'Overhearing Malvolio for Pleasure or Pity' in Laury Magnus and Walter W. Cannon, *Who Hears in Shakespeare? Auditory Worlds on Stage and Screen* (Madison, Wn., 2012) 199-218, 210.

42 | Gaskill, 'Overhearing Malvolio', 210.

43 | According to the *Legal Times* blog, BLT, <http://legaltimes.typepad.com/blt/2009/04/in-twelfth-night-mock-trial-malvolio-loses.html> [accessed 26.11.12]

44 | For a reading of Antonio and Bosola, the Steward and Steward-like figures in Malfi, via Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, see Barbara Correll, 'Malvolio at Malfi: Managing Desire in Shakespeare and Webster', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.1 (Spring 2007), 65-92.

45 | John Fletcher, *The Pilgrim*, in Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, Volume 6 (Cambridge, 1994).

46 | See for example Thad Jenkins Logan, 'Twelfth Night: The Limits of Festivity', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 22.2 (Spring 1982), where Logan suggests that Malvolio's exit makes impossible the reconciliation essential to a 'Festive Comedy': 'Malvolio's exit is as disturbing as Mercade's entrance in *Love's Labours Lost*, with his message of death. We feel, in the audience, the necessity of somehow making peace with him, and he is gone. His last line must certainly include everyone in the theater' (237). Margret Fetzer entitles her contribution to *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft 2006*, 'Staging Violence and Terror': Violence as the 'Dark Room' of Comedy: Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and aims to explore 'why audiences are still quite happy to laugh at the rather violent treatment Olivia's steward meets with.' She concludes by citing Manfred Pfister: 'in England [...] the mingling of laughter and tears, of the laughable and the pathetic or even the horrifying, and their tragicomic juxtaposition or conflation are the rule rather than the exception' (Fetzer, 'Violence', <http://shakespeare-gesellschaft.de/en/publications/seminar/ausgabe2006/fetzer.html> [accessed 26.11.06], citing Pfister, *English Laughter* vi-vii); Sean Benson, in "'Perverse Fantasies'? Rehabilitating Malvolio's Reading' argues that far from providing an easy satire on the Puritan solipsistic reader (Benson, "'Perverse Fantasies?'", *Papers on Language and Literature* 45.3 (Summer 2009), 261, citing Bevington 336), *Twelfth Night* depicts Malvolio as 'every bit as careful' a social and semantic reader 'as Sebastian and Viola' and suggests that 'instead of reading Malvolio as one who is imprisoned because of his tortuous reading, we ought to regard him as one who, despite his careful hermeneutic, is tortured for it' (286).

47 | I realize that such an assertion goes very much against the grain of recent criticism that has made similar assumptions about Malvolio's 'torture' to the ones that Kemper critiques in production... Malvolio, of course, is described by both himself and Olivia as having been 'notoriously abused' (4.2; 5.1); but it should be noted that though the transitive verb 'to abuse' is cited in the OED as meaning 'to mistreat (a person or thing); to injure, hurt; to wrong' from 1473, early modern usage is also cited as: 'to take advantage of wrongly', to 'misrepresent (a person or thing); to betray (a person's trust, confidence, etc.)' and in the passive 'to be deceived, mistaken'. The first citation of sense in which -- suggests Malvolio has suffered abuse - 'to subject a person [...] to physical, sexual or emotional abuse' is from 1978.

48 | Tim Crouch, interview for British Council Edinburgh Festival 2011 Showcase, <http://edinburghshowcase.britishcouncil.org/home/tim-crouch/> [accessed 24.11.12].

49 | Tim Crouch, *I Malvolio*, in *I, Shakespeare: Four of Shakespeare's Better Known Plays Retold for Young Audiences by their Lesser-Known Characters* (London, 2011), 26.

50 | Tim Crouch, *I Malvolio*, in *I, Shakespeare: Four of Shakespeare's Better Known Plays Retold for Young Audiences by their Lesser-Known Characters* (London, 2011), 26.

51 | The stage directions for this costume read

Filthy long johns; the tattered remains of yellow stockings. Obscene stains down his front and around his groin. His face smeared with dirt. The word 'Bawcock' written on his forehead. Devil horns on his head. A turkey wattle crudely attached under his chin. Crouch, *I, Malvolio*, 17.

52 | See Martin Ingram, 'Shame and Pain: Themes and Variations in Tudor Punishments', in Simon Devereaux and Paul Griffiths eds. *Penal Practice and Culture, 1500-1900: Punishing the English*, (Basingstoke, 2004) and David Nash and Anne Marie Kilday, *Exploring Crime and Morality in Britain, 1600-1900*, Chapter 2, 'Private Passions and Public Penance: Popular Shaming Rituals in Pre-Modern Britain', (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, 2010), 26-46.

53 | Crouch, *I, Malvolio*, 14.

54 | Crouch, *I Malvolio*, 17.

55 | *The Author*, which premiered at The Royal Court in 2009, took place entirely amidst the audience, where characters were placed who spoke, often directly to audience members, of their involvement in the making of a violent piece of theatre. The piece implicated both performers and audience in the complacent use of violence as spectacle. *England*, which premiered at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, in 2007 and toured to other art galleries in the UK, opened with the audience standing amidst the gallery's art work, addressed by two characters, one of whom was Crouch as a man in need of a heart transplant, the other his partner whose art dealing, it is hinted, has enabled her to buy him a heart from the family of a dead man in a developing country. The audience is implicated in the power and economic relationships between the rich, art-buying West and the developing world.

56 | Robert H. Bell, *Shakespeare's Great Stage of Fools* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke and New York, 2011), 90.

57 | Pace Sean Benson, above n.99, Malvolio is, for Justin A. Joyce, a poor reader of sartorial semiotics too. See Joyce, 'Fashion, Class, and Gender in Early Modern England: Staging *Twelfth Night*' in Cynthia Kuhn and Cindy Carlson eds, *Styling Texts: Dress and Fashion in Literature*

(New York 2007) 49-66, for an account of the ways in which Malvolio's fantasy of the 'branch'd velvet gown' clearly breaches sumptuary law (61) and the negative associations of the colour yellow in early modern England (62).

58 | Quoted in Celia Wren, "As You Litigate It", *American Theatre*, 26.6 (July-August 2009), 42-43, 43.