

# Introduction

## Working Subjects

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Early modern England witnessed a series of remarkable economic changes that transformed the landscape of labor and the working subjects who populated it. In addition to dramatic population growth and substantial expansion in global trade and consumerism, as the economy shifted from feudal to wage labor the hegemony of the guilds began to give way to labor contracts and more casual economic arrangements. In the midst of this dynamic, proto-capitalist economy stood London's public theaters, a cultural institution indebted both to traditional guild structures and to the innovations of a burgeoning consumer society. As a result, the plays performed in early modern London's first purpose-built theaters by its recently professionalized playing companies were uniquely positioned to interrogate the shifting boundaries of England's labor economy. Early modern drama actively participated in this changing economic landscape by staging England's heterogeneous workforce and exploring the subject of work itself. The cast of characters who labored on the stage was diverse indeed, incorporating not only masters who worked in the formal economy regulated by the guilds or twelve great livery companies (and a host of new companies incorporated during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period), their wives, journeymen and apprentices, but also a growing population of masterless men and women, foreigners, and aliens, who migrated to London seeking work in its rapidly expanding informal economy. Merchants, usurers, clothworkers, cooks, confectioners, shopkeepers, shoemakers, sheepshearers, shipbuilders, sailors, perfumers, players, prostitutes, magicians, witches, servants and slaves are among the many working subjects examined in this collection whose lives and labors were transformed by England's shifting economic climate.

*Working Subjects* sets out to investigate the ways in which work became a subject of inquiry on the early modern stage and the processes by which the drama began to forge new connections between labor and subjectivity. The public theaters brought into heightened visibility a newly diverse range of occupational roles—including the hitherto unknown occupation of the “professional player”—and provided a platform upon which the contours and legitimacy of these roles might be investigated and their social implications played out. The visible forms of these roles shaped and were shaped by the material culture of the stage, including its costumes (such as the characteristic flat-caps of citizens, livery of servants, and so forth), properties (designating the tools and products of various trades), and stage-furniture (indicating the shop-stalls and workshops where workers plied

their trades), while their inner contours were forged and plumbed by the poetic tools of the playwright.

When Othello bids farewell to his occupation, his lament evokes both its external and internal dimensions:

O now, for ever  
Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!  
Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars  
That makes ambition virtue! O, farewell!  
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,  
The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,  
The royal banner, and all quality,  
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!  
And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats  
Th' immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit,  
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone. (3.3.347–57)<sup>1</sup>

Othello's lamented loss of self suggests that his peace of mind and the "content" of his character are inextricably bound to his occupation, war, in its most material manifestations or circumstances: plumed troops, royal banners, mortal engines, drums, fifes, trumpets and all. Indeed, the shrill, ear-piercing quality of these implements of war breaches the boundary between external and internal. The rude, clamorous labor of battle penetrates the body of the soldier, stirring his spirit to pride, virtue and ambition, a subjective state the good soldier experiences as contentment and tranquility. Othello's lament is but one example of the way in which work was defined in the drama of the period as constitutive of subjectivity, yet it gives eloquent voice to the manner in which working life in post-Reformation England had come to be associated with a "positive sense of vocation" that was crucially linked to social credit.<sup>2</sup> Reputation and social identity were not solely interiorized or ephemeral concepts, but were intimately connected to the ever-changing economic and material conditions and cultural discourses that shaped or interpellated working subjects.<sup>3</sup>

As the example of Othello reminds us, the connection between labor and subjectivity was not always an empowering one, but was often constructed through tropes of displacement, poverty, failure, and deprivation. It is significant that Othello's homage to the virtues of his occupation is occasioned by the advent of its perceived loss. The subjective experience of losing one's occupation was

<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, (eds.) G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). All further references to Shakespeare in this chapter are to the Riverside edition.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Shepard, "Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c.1580–1640," *Past and Present* 167.1 (2000): 92.

<sup>3</sup> On the concept of "interpellation," see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 121–76.

one that many early modern playgoers would have known firsthand, particularly during the economic "crisis" of the 1590s. Yet the form in which such subjective loss was voiced onstage, and the dramatic actions taken in response to it, varied greatly in accordance with the dictates of genre. Othello's tragic lament stands in stark contrast, for example, to the occupational flexibility and ingenuity manifested by the working subjects who appear in comedies. Faced with a rather more advantageous change of occupation, Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew* boasts of his former vocational versatility: "Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-heard, and now by present profession a tinker?" (Ind., 2.17–21). The subject positions that work produces in dramatic literature were thus conditioned as much by generic and formal structures as by the economic conditions of early modern society at large.

The essays assembled in this collection investigate the interface between changing or historically emergent modalities of work and the forms of subjectivity to which they gave rise in a broad range of dramatic genres, including chronicle and "citizen" history plays, comedies, tragedies, tragicomedies, travel plays, progress entertainments and civic pageants, demonstrating the vibrant and significant role dramatic literature played in responding to England's changing labor economy and helping to define the cultural meanings of work. Deploying a diverse range of methodologies, they are nonetheless all grounded in a concept of working subjectivity located at the nexus between individual or communal forms of agency and the larger social structures that shape and are shaped by them. The collection as a whole reveals that work was a culturally resonant topic that profoundly shaped the plots, themes, generic structures, poetic forms, and ideological frameworks of the period's drama, as well as the material culture of the stage, including its costumes, props, and stage-furniture, which were themselves constructed by laboring hands. Individual essays consider texts as disparate as William Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money*, Will Kempe's *Nine Daies Wonder*, and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and focus on a range of topics, including the labor networks associated with the public theaters, acting as labor, women's work, labor and citizenship, global networks of trade, indentured servitude and slavery. Taken together, they offer compelling new readings of both canonical and lesser-known plays and a clearer understanding of the complex ways in which the stage reimagined England's labor economy and its own place within that economy.

The plays performed in early modern London's first purpose-built theaters by its professional playing companies were well positioned to interrogate the shifting boundaries between different definitional categories of work because the playing companies were themselves transitional economic formations. Situated on the cusp of residual and emergent modes of production, they retained aspects of the guild and patronage systems, while in other respects assuming the innovative form of joint-stock, proto-capitalist ventures. As such, they were open to attack by civic and religious authorities who refused to recognize the legitimacy of playing as a

skilled, and sometimes lucrative, vocation. In the eyes of city officials and Puritan prelates, playing was not a proper calling—indeed, it was the very antithesis of work. Players were classed among the idle parasites or “Caterpillers of a Comonwelth,” who sought “a more idle and easier kinde of Trade of livinge ... [than] manuell Labours and Trades did or coulede bringe them.”<sup>4</sup> The commercial theater was, according to Stephen Gosson, a “nurserie of idelness” that lured apprentices away from their legitimate trades:

Most of the Players have bene eyther men of occupations, which they have forsaken to lyve by playing ... or trayned up from their childehoode to this abhominable exercise & have now no other way to gete their livinge. We are commaunded by God to abide in the same calling wheerein we were called, which is our ordinary vocation in a commonweale. This is the standing, which as faithfull souldiers we ought to kepe, till the Lord himselfe do call us from it. ... If we grudge at the wisdom of our maker, and disdaine the calling he hath placed us in, aspyring somewhat higher then we shoulde, ... if privat men be suffered to forsake their calling because they desire to walke gentleman like in sattine & velvet, with a buckler at their heeles, proportion is so broken, unitie dissolved, [and] harmony confounded. ... Wherefore I hope the wise will accompt it necessarie, that such as have lefte their occupations ... be turned to the same againe, ... aske God forgiveness for the time so evill spent, and apply them selves speedely to live within the compasse of a common weale. Let them not looke to live by playes, the litle thrift that followeth their greate gainne, is a manifest token that God hath cursed it.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Othello, a faithful soldier who fetches his very life and being from his occupation and deeply laments its perceived loss, the professional actors were accused of blithely forsaking their God-given callings “to lyve by playing,” rather than honest work. Their occupational flexibility and social mobility as described by Gosson recall the rapid ascent of Christopher Sly, who is one minute a mere “rogue,” and the next “gentleman like in sattine & velvet.” In Gosson’s view, players threaten the proportion, unity and harmony of the social hierarchy, and earn their living at the expense of the commonwealth (rather than, like the faithful soldier, serving to protect it). The professionalization of playing thus required that playwrights actively engage in contemporary debates surrounding the subject of work, and that they defend the status of players as *working* subjects. Unlike Gosson, Othello does not view his own occupation in opposition to that of the professional player. To the contrary, he defends the former by drawing on the vocabulary of the latter: “Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it / Without a prompter” (1.2.83–4), he says, suggesting that the occupation of the soldier and

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse. Conteyning a Pleasaunt Invective Against Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, Jesters and Such Like Caterpillers of a Comonwelth* (London, 1579); see also *Statutes of the Realm*, (ed.) John Raithby (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1819), 4: 1038–9.

<sup>5</sup> Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (London, 1582), G6v–G7v.

the player share common skills. In such instances, play-texts subtly cued audiences to the players’ claim to occupational legitimacy.

Previous scholarship has demonstrated the importance of reading early modern English dramatic literature with and against the vibrant economic and material culture of which it was a part.<sup>6</sup> Attending to the complexities of England’s nascent capitalist economy, including the networks of credit and debt it fostered, the systems of literary patronage it enabled, and the poverty and displacement it produced, has helped to foster a critical practice that illuminates the material conditions in which texts are produced as shaped by historical pressures of the period. *Working Subjects* contributes to this body of scholarship, while extending it in significant new directions. Older scholarship such as Louis B. Wright’s *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (1935) and L.C. Knights’s *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (1937), while foundational texts for thinking about early modern dramatic literature in relation to its economic contexts, tended to focus on citizen culture (and the figure of the “new man”) as depicted in citizen and city comedies.<sup>7</sup> These works paved the way for numerous studies of city comedy in particular,<sup>8</sup> a genre that as Jean Howard has shown attempts to make sense of a rapidly changing and expanding city increasingly populated by *non-citizen* subjects, such as foreigners, aliens and women.<sup>9</sup> The essays in this volume likewise attend to this diverse population

<sup>6</sup> Some recent examples include Linda Woodbridge (ed.), *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare’s England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (eds.), *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Wright’s study focuses on “the average citizen’s reading and thinking, his intellectual habits and cultural tastes” (vii), and devotes only a few pages to the depiction of working subjects onstage (626–31). Knights focuses on the rise of capitalism and the figure of the “new man” (esp. 88–95) as depicted in citizen and city comedies. See Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935) and L.C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1937).

<sup>8</sup> See for example Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton* (New York: Methuen, 1980); Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985); Theodore Leinwand, *The City Staged: Jacobean City Comedy, 1603–1613* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598–1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Howard, *Theater of a City*, 22.

of working subjects, while demonstrating that both they and the subject of work itself were taken up in a broad array of genres that includes but is not limited to citizen and city comedy.

Much of the recent economic and materialist criticism of early modern culture has been focused on consumption rather than production. Studies such as Lisa Jardine's *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* and John Brewer and Roy Porter's edited collection *Consumption and the World of Goods* have contributed in important ways to our understanding of early modern material culture, and the ways in which manufactured wares functioned as signifiers of social distinction and differentiation.<sup>10</sup> Yet such scholarship has often had little to say about the working subjects who labored to produce the expanding "world of goods." A collection of essays entitled *Materialist Shakespeare: A History*, for example, while providing an overview of two decades of materialist scholarship on the stage in Shakespeare's time, contains not a single index entry under "work" or "labor."<sup>11</sup> By focusing on the manner in which early modern subjects and objects were inscribed within social relations of production as well as consumption, *Working Subjects* broadens the interpretive possibilities of materialist and economic criticism, opening up fresh scholarly conversations about the ideological underpinnings, material practices, laboring bodies, shifting attitudes, and new technologies that gave rise to early modern England's consumer culture.<sup>12</sup>

Moving away from the tendency of recent criticism to focus narrowly, and at times almost fetishistically, on the stuff of consumer culture, this volume adopts a broadened perspective that considers the national and transnational, as well as local, networks of trade in which commodities were produced and exchanged, while also attending to the forces of historical change. In so doing, it takes up the subject of work in relation to a range of issues of concern to traditional Marxist thought—e.g., the processes of commodification, workings of capital,

<sup>10</sup> Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (New York: Talese, 1996); and Brewer and Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993). See also Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) and Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Ivo Kamps (ed.), *Materialist Shakespeare: A History* (London and New York: Verso, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Several recent studies have likewise focused on shifting conceptions of work in early modern English culture. This important body of scholarship has brought much-needed critical attention to the subject of labor as both a literary and an economic construct in the period. See John Michael Archer, *Citizen Shakespeare: Freeman and Aliens in the Language of the Plays* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Michelle Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2009); Valerie Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); and Tom Rutter, *Work and Play on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

changing modes of production, divisions of labor and social hierarchies and forms of oppression they produce—while approaching them from a variety of critical perspectives influenced by post-Marxist thought. A number of the essays find useful, while seeking to develop and engage critically with, Marx's analysis of the economic forces that led to the transition from feudalism to capitalism in early modern England, and in particular his account of the "primitive accumulation" or amassing of private property through land enclosures and consequent creation of a landless "proletariat" or wage-laboring class. Crystal Bartolovich, for example, offers a more nuanced account of the alliances formed between old (landed) and new (monied) elites over and against the interests of labor in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Amanda Bailey points to contradictions in Marx's analysis of the colonial system and the role played by slave labor in the rise of capitalism and demonstrates how this account is complicated by the hybrid institution of indentured servitude in the New World, which combined elements of domestic service with chattel slavery.

A number of contributors attend to the ways in which early modern cultural and economic discourses sought to account for the historical processes that transformed the landscape of labor and, in the process, gave rise to the profession of playing. In his analysis of contemporary ways of understanding autonomous financial representation, for example, David Hawkes links the practice and discourse of usury to the rise of the credit-dependant commercial theaters. The rise of the professional stage relied on the availability of large-scale credit made possible by the 1571 usury statute, and theater people, including Shakespeare and Philip Henslowe, supplemented their incomes by lending money at interest. It is therefore not surprising that the plots of so many plays pivot on the vicissitudes of credit relations and instruments such as bonds. Another vein of contemporary economic thought that influenced theatrical representation, as Valerie Forman demonstrates, was the discourse of mercantilism, which laid the ideological groundwork for the joint-stock companies upon which the professional playing companies were in certain respects modeled.

These and other essays in the collection help to illuminate the ways in which economic processes may bear on cultural production, albeit in more complex ways than the classical Marxist "base / superstructure" model maintains. As noted above, the playing companies were transitional economic formations that retained certain aspects of a feudal-patronage and guild-system while embracing emergent capitalist methods. As such they were hybrid entities that represented diverse, and sometimes competing, economic interests. It was the tension between these competing interests that shaped the theater's diverse depictions of working subjects and gave rise to new and hybrid generic forms. Such forms include, for example, the genre of "citizen history," which as Crystal Bartolovich maintains, held "the mirror up to labor in order to refuse that image as its own," the hybrid genre of tragicomedy, which as Valerie Forman demonstrates, represented the "high costs of conducting long-distance overseas trade" as recuperated by a Christian and economic "logic of redemption," and the genre of the travel play,

in which as Daniel Vitkus shows, acknowledgment of the travail associated with travel gradually gave way to a fantasy of labor-free global commerce.

Other essays in this collection that build on, while moving beyond, a strictly Marxist analysis of labor by drawing on affiliated modes of inquiry are those that incorporate materialist feminist insights into the analysis of gendered divisions of labor and interarticulations of gender with other axes of social differentiation and oppression. Along these lines, Michelle Dowd examines female domestic service, while Ronda Arab looks at emergent forms of working masculinity, as performed by the professional players. Natasha Korda and Sara Mueller examine the gendered division of theatrical labor itself, looking beyond the all-male professional theater to consider "amateur" female performers who participated in the staging of various types of work coded as female in progress entertainments at Bisham and Harefield and civic pageants at Norwich and London, and at the ways in which these performances were influenced by changing modes of economic production.

The single play that has perhaps attracted greatest attention by previous scholarship for its representation of laboring bodies onstage is Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. The first two essays in *Working Subjects* contribute to the critical dialogue on this play, while also challenging it to move in new directions. In "Mythos of Labor: *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and the Origin of Citizen History," Crystal Bartolovich examines the representation of labor in *Shoemaker* and its relation to the generic conventions of history plays, which have not traditionally been read as concerning themselves with work at all. For this reason, *Shoemaker* is typically included among the city comedies, although the Simon Eyre plot is clearly "historical." Bartolovich argues that Dekker both makes visible and effaces labor by displaying it as part of a distant past. As a kind of "counter-factual" history, the play depicts the rise of Simon Eyre by way of his craft in a narrative that deviates considerably not only from known facts, but from plausibility. Marking a shift from chronicle to "citizen history," she argues, the cultural work performed by the play takes precedence over historical narrative. The play works first to indicate that tensions between old money and new were resolved long before, and, second, to suggest that the upward mobility of the nation, as of the individual, requires severing the link between labor and money, even as the expansion of the market and waged labor are intensifying the relation between the two. Like the terrain rendered laborless in country house poems, she maintains, *Shoemaker's Holiday* is keen to divert, recode and efface the labor it supposedly admires. History, in this sense, does for the city what pastoral does for the country.

John Michael Archer likewise examines the changing parameters of citizen-subjectivity as constituted in relation (or opposition) to labor and to non-citizen subjects in his essay, "Citizens and Aliens as Working Subjects in Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*." Archer focuses on the play's representation of the troubling figure of the "Dutch" or Flemish immigrant, who, although inherited from medieval times, caused new anxieties about labor for sixteenth-century London citizens. The Flemish shared a common "northernness" with their civic

hosts: from the north of Europe, commonly thought of as "fair" and hearty, they were also Protestant opponents of Hapsburg Spain who had left behind citizen identities based on guild membership. At the same time, now aliens in London, the Flemish appeared radically different to their hosts. Sudden competitors for labor in the cloth trades and shoemaking, they also confounded north and south, for they came from the impoverished ten southern provinces that remained under Hapsburg rule. The seven northern provinces, including Holland, had meanwhile risen to rival the English at sea, trading with southern parts and the Moluccas. The word "Dutch," then, confused north with south, industry with imposed idleness, and wealth with poverty in Londoners' commercial, and theatrical, vocabulary. Archer takes up two mid-sixteenth century interludes, *Wealth and Health* and Ulpian Fulwell's *Like Will to Like*, as well as Dekker's 1590s comedy, to show how these contradictions generated an ethnic type out of antagonisms over work and trade. Lacy's disguise as Hans the shoemaker perpetuates earlier Dutch or Flemish stereotypes, and borrows directly from Tudor moralities that carried urban motifs from the Middle Ages into court culture and its pressing concern with international politics. With Dekker's play, the Dutch type returns to the popular sphere, this time as a performative strategy. In his revisiting of this familiar comedy, Archer demonstrates how closely engaged it is with the terms of guild or livery company identity, and also how it manages class differences inside and outside companies through an ethnic typing generated out of perceived competition over work. Commonness and competition created rather than dispelled anxieties about identity. London citizens averted their gaze from the presumed enjoyment of the oddly similar others among them because it embodied their own industrious, northern way of life to excess.

Like Archer's essay, Natasha Korda's "Staging Alien Women's Work in Civic Pageants" contributes to recent scholarship detailing the cultural impact of the massive numbers of Dutch- and French-speaking Protestant refugees who migrated to England during the Dutch Revolt and French Wars of Religion. Although it is well known that many of these religious refugees were skilled artisans in the luxury textile and clothing trades, and that their importation of new skills and technologies of manufacture had a huge impact on this sector of the economy, there has been no study of the ways in which the revolution in textile manufacture effected by alien workers influenced theatrical production, in light of the theaters' dependence on the clothing market, or how it may have shaped contemporary dramatic depictions of aliens. Korda sets out to investigate this area of inquiry, and discovers that attending to the material culture of the stage from the vantage of production, rather than consumption, illuminates important aspects of its hitherto obscured gendered division of labor. For the luxury attires manufactured by alien craftswomen from the Low Countries, she argues, played a vital role in the civic pageant staged by Norwich weavers of the "New Draperies" for Queen Elizabeth in 1578 and the Dutch triumphal arch staged by London's Netherlandish community as part of King James's coronation pageant of 1603–1604. The immigrant communities of Norwich and London sought to defend their status as working subjects (rather than

idle parasites) and contributors to the commonwealth by staging their imported skills in textile manufacture in civic pageants in which female artisans feature prominently.

Holly Dugan's "Osmologies of Luxury and Labor: Entertaining Perfumers in Early English Drama" likewise attends to the ways in which the gendered labor of aliens was re-presented (and absented) onstage, focusing in particular on the ephemeral work of the perfumer. As Dugan demonstrates, the occupational identity of the perfumer shifted dramatically with the increasing demand for luxury goods in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, becoming a focal point for cultural anxieties surrounding working women and aliens in London's expanding informal economy. Dugan's essay pivots on Borachio's theatrical performance as a perfumer in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Reading this and other theatrical representations of perfumers in relation to their economic histories, Dugan reveals the extraordinary labor or "much ado" of alien perfumers that stood behind the insubstantial "nothing" of the ephemeral commodity, perfume. Dugan, like Korda, demonstrates the ways in which the staging of purportedly insubstantial, luxury commodities, such as perfume or lace, may point to offstage histories of a highly-skilled immigrant labor force that vitally contributed to the English economy while at the same time being denied the prerogatives of citizen-laborers or "freemen." In so doing, both authors contribute to our understanding of the contingent, discursive categories or divisions of labor that determine which categories of work and worker are defined as legitimate or illegitimate in a given historical time and place.

Tom Rutter, in "*Englishmen for My Money: Work and Social Conflict?*," analyzes the way in which the discursive category of the "alien" was articulated in relation to another crucial category through which labor was divided and hierarchized: social status or "class." Rutter is particularly interested in the way in which status defined the labor of particular playing companies, and in turn, the ways in which these companies represented work onstage. Critics such as Andrew Gurr and Robert Weimann have seen the revival of the companies of child actors in 1599–1600 as heralding a split between popular and elite theatrical cultures. This is reflected in the contrasting uses of different playing companies made of the idea of work: dramatists writing for the children represented their playhouses as spaces from which workers were absent, while the Admiral's Men (in particular) asserted the dignity of manual labor in plays like *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *Patient Grissil*. By contrast, the 1590s are often represented as a period when the adult companies produced plays that appealed to, and identified with, a "homogenous, all-inclusive social range."<sup>13</sup> Rutter questions whether this social inclusiveness, too, was reflected in the dramatic treatment of work, focusing in particular on William Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money*, a play that seems to unite workers of diverse types with idle gentlemen against a demonized foreigner or alien.

<sup>13</sup> See Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 158.

Ronda Arab's "Will Kempe's Work: Performing the Player's Masculinity in *Kempe's Nine Daies Wonder*" likewise takes the division of laboring bodies in accordance with social status as a central category of analysis, focusing on its relationship to the gendered division of labor, and in particular, its construction of what she calls "working-class" masculinity. Gender, she argues, cannot be understood outside of its intersection with social status. In 1600, Will Kempe, the son of a printer or a gentleman's servant, and former actor and clown for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, danced a morris dance from London to Norwich over a period of nine days in order to raise money for himself from sponsors of his activity. Shortly afterwards, he published an account of that dance entitled *Kempe's Nine Daies Wonder*, a text that carefully mediates discourses of masculinity, labor, and the professional player. Arab examines the intersection of Kempe's self-construction with ideas about working men that circulated in his day. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century masculinities were often seen in terms of the body and through its descriptions of his dancing, Kempe's text foregrounds the significance of the physicality of the male working body. Ideal masculinity, according to dominant discourses, was achieved through outward signs of bodily strength and refinement and also through controlling passions and desires that were understood to originate from the body—any excess of sorrow, anger, vengefulness, appetite, lust, etc., could be considered unmanly behavior. Existing scholarship on the social identity of laboring and low-born men has called attention to the way these ideas about bodily refinement were used *against* them, by representing working male bodies as open and out of control, and thereby reinforcing social hierarchy. Kempe challenges this paradigm by celebrating the power and strength of the working man's body, a power and strength that results from his involvement in the vigorous, manual activity of work. At the same time, Kempe's narrative constructs the professional player as a skilled working man in order to counter accusations of idleness leveled at theater workers in the period. The professionalization of playing, as both Arab and Rutter show, required that players and playwrights actively engage in contemporary debates surrounding the subject or work, and that they defend their status as working subjects.

The division of laboring bodies in accordance with social status is further explored in Elizabeth Rivlin's essay, "The Rogues' Paradox: Redefining Work in *The Alchemist*," which examines the occupational flexibility and ingenuity manifested by working subjects in comedy as reflective of the way in which hierarchies of labor are at once foundational to and destabilized by a market economy. When Master Lovewit leaves his house in plague-ridden London in the care of his household retainer in Jonson's play, the servant and his confederates implement a variety of illicit schemes that seemingly allow them to redefine work as a capitalist venture that would avoid the conventional strictures of hierarchical service and labor. Rivlin argues, however, that in *The Alchemist*, Jonson's rogues are trapped by the recursive logic of labor, which continually reasserts itself as the only means that these workers have to enter an emerging market economy. One implication of this ironic turn is that subjects subsisting in a metamorphosing society are empowered



but also restricted by their marginal positions. In an environment where profit is seen as widely accessible and social distinctions as insubstantial, obligatory and laborious forms of work exert a renewed claim on those who are already at the bottom of social, economic, and occupational hierarchies. While perceptions of work were undeniably in flux in early modern England, *The Alchemist* suggests that the effects of change were unevenly distributed across the social landscape.

Rivlin's focus on the figure of the servant is shared by Michelle Dowd's "Desiring Subjects: Staging the Female Servant in Early Modern Tragedy," although Dowd, as her title suggests, is interested not only in the way feudal forms of service were defined in England's nascent market economy but in the gendering of the servant trade both in early modern culture at large and in the dramatic genre of tragedy. Looking primarily at Dekker, Ford and Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* and Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, she examines how early modern tragedies dramatize the work of female domestic service. Dowd is especially interested in how tragic form both elides and makes possible specific narratives of women's service during this transitional period in English economic history. Domestic service was by far the most common occupation for early modern Englishwomen between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, and women were increasingly replacing men as servants in middling and wealthy households. Removed from their birth homes and direct parental supervision, female servants were often viewed as transient, sexually vulnerable, and potentially disorderly single women. Furthermore, despite the general cultural expectation that women would get married immediately after leaving positions in service, many women experienced a significant gap between the end of their service in their early to mid-twenties and their marriages in their late twenties. Indeed, demographic and economic realities prevented many female servants from ever marrying. The notion of a seamless trajectory for female servants leading from work to marriage was thus more social fantasy than reality. Dowd argues that Jacobean tragedies such as *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Changeling* stage the sexual vulnerability of the female servant in part as a cautionary narrative about domestic order and the changing parameters of the service economy. Yet the plots in which these female servants find themselves are also heavily indebted to cultural fantasies of marriage and domestic harmony, formal trajectories that seem antithetical to the genre of tragedy. Looking at the structural features of these plays and the (often oddly romanticized) narratives of service that subtend them, Dowd explores how these tragedies conceptualize the sexualized subject positions of female servants as part of a process of narrative displacement whereby fictions of desire replace both real sexual coercion and the economic imperatives that attended England's commercial labor market.

Gender and the domestic economy are similarly at the center of Sara Mueller's study, "Domestic Work in Progress Entertainments." Mueller examines the entertainments staged for Queen Elizabeth by Lady Elizabeth Russell at Bisham in 1592 and by Lord Thomas Egerton and Lady Alice Egerton, Dowager Countess of Derby, at Harefield in 1602, both of which foregrounded women's performances

of domestic work. Because new economic conditions took aristocratic men away from their country estates, women became increasingly powerful on these estates. These changes created a representational crisis in the aristocracy, since noble legitimacy had previously been demonstrated by patriarchal presence, control, and management on the estate. Bisham and Harefield respond to this representational crisis in two crucial and distinct ways. First, the focus on women's domestic work in the entertainments functioned synecdochally to demonstrate the commitment of the host to the proper governance and care over the estate as a whole, presenting it as a place of unchanging noble values and patriarchal authority. However, the entertainments by their very focus on women's domestic labor—and not men's—resist an uncomplicated endorsement of nostalgic, noble ideals. Instead, they acknowledge women's active labor within the new realities of country life in a changing economy. Alongside Bisham and Harefield's obligatory assertion of traditional, patriarchal, and noble legitimacy, both entertainments register a very timely recognition of women's importance and changing roles on country estates, a recognition that stages—with radical implications—the material and symbolic contributions of women to their estates.

If the staging of domestic work in progress entertainments reveals a great deal about the gendered division of labor in early modern England, so too does the staging of witches, as Meredith Molly Hand demonstrates in "You take no labour': Women Workers of Magic in Early Modern England." Hand explores early modern representations of women's magical practices as work. Focusing primarily on two texts, Fletcher and Massinger's play *The Prophetess* and Edmond Bower's pamphlet *Doctor Lamb Revived, or, Witchcraft Condemn'd in Anne Bodenham*, she examines the ways in which the eponymous characters of both texts are depicted both as magicians (as opposed to witches) and as workers. Delphia of *The Prophetess* for example, is both a working woman and a magician so capable that she clearly upstages her literary predecessors, Faustus and Prospero. The master/apprentice relationship between Doctor Lambe and Anne Bodenham, which Bodenham seeks to recreate with a younger woman—the ostensible "victim" of her witchcraft—highlights the way in which Bodenham imagines herself as a professional who would pass along her knowledge and skills. By appropriating (or being imbued with) characteristics more typically ascribed to male magicians, Hand argues, Delphia and Anne Bodenham resist and respond to satirical and demonizing treatments of women workers of magic.

The relationship between magic, theatricality and work is equally central to David Hawkes's "Raising Mephistopheles: Performative Representation and Alienated Labor in *The Tempest*." Dr. Faustus's question to Mephistopheles, "Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee?" recurs in various guises throughout the English drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It asks whether magic is efficacious: can the signs and rituals employed by magicians achieve practical, objective effects in the real world? Mephistopheles's reply: "That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*" gives some idea of the issue's complexity. Magic does indeed make things happen, but only as the material expression of a deeper, ultimate causal

factor. Hawkes's essay identifies that factor as alienated human labor which, in the early modern period, was in the process of displacing traditional magic as the main supernatural influence on the lives of English people. The decades between 1580 and 1640 laid the ideological groundwork for financial capitalism. The financial signs that represented alienated labor were becoming autonomous and self-generating. With the relaxation of the usury laws, they were acquiring the power to reproduce. Their influence, invisible yet clearly powerful, was insinuating itself into every crevice of experience. In the first stages of this process, according to Hawkes, people understood the independent force of alienated labor as a phenomenon similar in kind to the spiritual powers manipulated by magicians. The Tudor and Stuart theater offered a vehicle for studying the transmutation of labor into symbolic form. If *Doctor Faustus* demands that the audience consider the causal relation between the sorcerer's spells and the demonic labor performed by his familiar, Hawkes maintains, *The Tempest* externalizes Prospero's magical power in Ariel and Caliban, who carry out his will through both natural and supernatural work. In Hawkes's view, the popular drama of the early modern period attempts to teach its audience that money is more benign than magic, and our current impression of money as a neutral, even natural, and decidedly unmagical, power is testimony to that enterprise's success.

The final three essays in the volume make clear that the subject of work in early modern English drama cannot be fully understood in isolation from the global networks of trade in which England was embedded. Amanda Bailey's "Custom, Debt, and the Valuation of Service Within and Without Early Modern England" builds on recent scholarship on the dynamics of colonial labor, which challenges long held assumptions about early seventeenth-century England's geopolitical standing. While England was on the fringes of a trading network centered in the Mediterranean, larger shifts in commerce transformed it from a nation on the European margins to one positioned to take advantage of new opportunities to the West. It was in this period that London came "to dominate the servant trade," making indentured men "the most liquid form of capital in the New World." Bailey's essay explores a nation poised between worlds old and new in order to show how the period's drama forged a framework for New World mastery in the crucible of Old World slavery. While in theory indentured servitude was not slavery, in practice labor predicated on economic obligation blurred the line between the two. Indenture was always a labor contract *and* a promissory note; the promise to repay the cost of transport and room and board, for instance, was waged against the security on the loan and that security was the person of the borrower. Young, single, unskilled men, bound by the chains of debt, were ever in arrears to their masters, who in turn were under no obligation to teach them a trade, provide livery, or pay wages. Moreover, what began as a limited economic relation all too often slid into lifelong subordination sustained by extra-economic factors. Terms of labor were modified and extended, and in the end there was little guarantee that these men would receive their "freedom due" of £10 or a small plot of land. In those cases in which an indentured servant died before satisfying his

debt, his children were obligated to perform compulsory labor. The indentured man had the status of neither slave nor servant, yet the mechanism by which he secured his voyage rendered him the property of those to whom he was indebted. Bailey focuses her analysis on the way Fletcher and Massinger's *The Custom of the Country* represents compulsory service, and how the English imagination of indenture complicated notions of slavery and service both at home and abroad. By casting the familiar dynamics of credit and debt in an international context, she argues, *Custom* offers a window onto the transnational implications of local economies.

Valerie Forman offers a different perspective on the global ramifications of domestic economic structures in her essay, "The Comic-Tragedy of Labor: A Global Story." Like Bailey, Forman focuses on the representation of labor in tragicomedy in particular, the seventeenth century's most popular stage genre. Both tragicomedy and theories of early modern economic practices, especially those related to global trade, she argues, reimagine initial losses as expenditures that produce more prosperous futures. Yet neither the plays nor the economic theories ever fully illuminate the precise sources or catalysts for the transformations from potentially tragic loss to prosperity: these sources remain mysterious and often some form of the magical takes their place. Forman seeks to account for those elisions by exploring how the surplus value that enables losses to transform into profits depends on labor and especially un(der)paid labor. Reading early modern economic texts alongside Fletcher's *The Island Princess* and Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, she analyzes how the valuing or devaluing of labor corresponds both to the generic movements in the plays and to the potential to imagine prosperity as the result of global trade.

The concluding essay in the volume, Daniel Vitkus's "Labor and Travel on the Early Modern Stage: Representing the Travail of Travel in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and Shakespeare's *Pericles*," takes as its point of departure the observation that while in our own time, the word "travel" tends to be associated with leisure and pleasure, in early modern parlance it was not distinguished from what later came to be called "travail," so the various spellings of "travel/travail" signified the labor, trouble, hardship, and pain associated with travel. Vitkus focuses on the theatrical representation of overseas, long-distance travel, as a dangerous, uncomfortable, and labor-intensive. In a variety of plays, travel was staged by means of the audience's imaginative participation, and various stage devices were employed to indicate the time, labor, and expense necessary to make a long-distance voyage. While the early modern theater often produces a pleasing fantasy of instant, effortless mobility, it sometimes acknowledges the reliance of travelers on a transcultural, global network of labor. Vitkus draws upon a variety of examples to explore the tension between theatrical fantasies that concealed the exploitation of maritime laborers, on the one hand, and those moments in the plays that reveal the travail of mariners or the dependence of travelers on the labor of others. He is particularly interested in the dramatic representation of storms and shipwrecks—events that often bring out the contradictions present in the staging of travel's labor. In these



moments, and in the encounter with foreigners, the dependency of the traveler on a matrix of maritime workers becomes apparent and reveals the challenge to English identity that is posed by this kind of dependency, exchange, and interaction in faraway places. With reference to these texts, Vitkus argues that what we see happening during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods is a movement away from the notion of travel as labor or “travail” and toward the emergence of a modern conception of travel’s purpose as knowledge acquisition, corresponding to a shift from a literary-fantastic vision toward more “scientific” or imperial purposes. It is not that the labor and suffering of travel becomes less necessary; it is just that it becomes more thoroughly repressed or unevenly distributed in imperial or colonial accounts of travel. Over time, the mercantile traveler’s comfort increases at the expense of the lower-classes, slaves and foreigners.

In her Afterword, Jean E. Howard draws attention to three analytic categories—genres, structures of feeling, and the means of representation—that shape the essays in this volume as they explore the intersection between dramatic texts and the working world of early modern England.

Each of the essays in this volume seeks to interrogate the strategies by which early modern drama brought working subjects into being on stage, and in so doing, addresses hitherto unexplored questions raised by the subject of labor as it was taken up in the drama of the period: How were laboring bodies and the goods they produced, marketed and consumed represented onstage through speech, action, gesture, costumes and properties? How did plays participate in shaping the identities that situated laboring subjects within the social hierarchy? In what ways did the drama engage with contemporary social, political, economic, and religious discourses that defined the cultural meanings of work? How did players and playwrights define their own status with respect to the shifting boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate, profitable and unprofitable, male and female, free and bound, and paid and unpaid forms of labor? In addressing these questions, *Working Subjects* seeks to illuminate both the broad historical and cultural parameters of work as staged in early modern England and the local, textual nuances that animate these dramatic renderings.

## Chapter 1 Mythos of Labor: *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* and the Origin of Citizen History<sup>1</sup>

Crystal Bartolovich

History plays, like utopias, emerge from the peculiar social disruptions and dislocations of the early modern condition; they have no direct classical precedent. Their prevalence and popularity in late sixteenth-century London, despite their manifest novelty, are striking evidence that off-the-rack genres cannot fit all situations. This does not mean that every early modern history play works in the same way. To the contrary, the variations and contradictions among—and within—English history plays at the moment of their emergence are a symptom that “history” was unsettled, the condition that largely accounts for the appearance of the genre in the first place. Reformation mistrust of the “popish” monopoly on history writing in England prior to the 1530s provoked a revisionist impulse that proliferated into secular subjects with the expansion of print and the establishment of the public playhouses.

This is worth underscoring because the canonical dominance of Shakespeare is so strong that it has discouraged critics from recognizing alternatives to the “dynastic” model for history plays that he made so successful in the 1590s. Yet it is manifestly the case that the concept of “history” was not only used in a wide variety of ways at this time, but also *contested*—a state of affairs that could hardly be imagined to elude the playhouses. We might question, then, the putative waning of “history” on the English stage after 1600, as well as the exclusivity of the “dynastic” or “chronicle” model.<sup>2</sup> To view Thomas Dekker’s *Shoemaker’s Holiday* as a challenge to this model, for example, is particularly illuminating, not only for our interpretation of the play, but also for our understanding of historical struggle

<sup>1</sup> Earlier versions of this essay were presented at MLA and the Medieval-Renaissance Group at the University of Pennsylvania. I am particularly grateful to David Wallace, Margreta de Grazia, Peter Stallybrass, Rita Copeland and their wonderful graduate students for helpful comments. I am also indebted to Natasha Korda for encouraging me to develop the paper for this volume, as well as for her sage revision advice—and patience.

<sup>2</sup> For trends in this direction see the interesting collection of essays *English Historical Drama, 1500–1660: Forms Outside the Canon*, (eds.) Teresa Grant and Barbara Ravelhofer (New York: Palgrave, 2008).