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**‘Blazing Stars’: Early Modern Celebrity
Culture,
1580-1626**

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Declaration

Material from pp. 54, 132-3 has been published in another sole-authored publication. It is entirely my own work.

Length

Exclusive of footnotes and bibliography, this thesis is 67, 492 words.

Thesis Abstract

What do a duelling crossdresser, a chicken, and an out-of-work clown who liked to gamble on himself have in common? They were, I will argue, all part of a constellation of early modern celebrities, sharing certain elements of celebrity culture. While each celebrity had a different persona, they shared appellations – like the term ‘blazing star’ – and at one stage or another, they were some variation of the talk of the town or in the ‘common report’ of the world. This thesis looks at celebrity across early modern literature and culture, and the different forms of media that helped transmit it, including gossip, playtexts, and chapbooks. Exploring celebrity as a social phenomenon transmitted by different media, this thesis will investigate how early modern audiences created and interacted with celebrities. Audience value for celebrities is expressed through narrative but also through money, betting on celebrities or paying for products associated with them. When the celebrity is monetised through gambling, social capital directly converts to economic capital, suggesting intense social connections between early modern fans and celebrities. Audiences alternatively used celebrities’ personas to assert status, seek allies and experience emotion. Celebrity was an important facet of identity creation in early modern culture, something literary texts such as *The Roaring Girl* (ca.1607-10) and *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) are occupied with trying to understand.

Textual Note

Where possible, I have cited page signatures.

I have kept original spellings and punctuation of primary sources, but for ease of reading have made the following changes throughout:

$vv = w$

$u = v$

$i = j$

$j = i$

Where this is not an obvious choice, I have kept original spellings.

Introduction: The Mechanics of Celebrity

When Will Kemp entered Norwich after his 100-mile Morris dance from London to Norwich in 1600, the press of people was so intense that a woman's skirt was pulled down by the crowd, and she reportedly did not have space enough to pull it back up. So many people crowded into the city to see Kemp that the famous clown had to jump over a wall to escape them. Is this the reaction Volumnia hopes for in *Coriolanus* (1608), when she wishes her son to achieve 'renown' and 'fame'?¹ Or is the reaction to Kemp something entirely different? Kemp's project – and many others that I will cover in this thesis – suggest a high degree of appreciation for and understanding of celebrity and its uses. Renown, reputation, fame, popularity and celebrity are concepts that haunt early modern literature, and this thesis will ask how the experience of celebrity on the streets – and other spaces – affects early modern culture and literature. How was celebrity used by people who came into contact with it, and celebrities themselves? Did celebrity even exist at this time, and how was it related to fame?

Possibly thanks to celebrity's unusual social position, celebrity itself has an air of the mysterious, often proving difficult to categorise or define. A whole field – celebrity studies – is devoted to untangling celebrity in all its aspects, and I have chosen the term 'celebrity' partly in order to put early modern texts in conversation with this field. Defining the complex set of interactions that make up celebrity, however, has proved difficult for theorists (the resulting debates, of course, creating celebrity studies as a field). Of course there is the OED definition, 'personal fame or renown as manifested in (and determined by) public interest and media attention'.² This identifies a crucial element of celebrity; that it is in some way personal, attached to a recognisable person. However, this definition elides 'celebrity', 'fame' and 'renown' as vaguely synonymous. Before finding a workable definition of celebrity it may be helpful to unpick these related ideas of fame and renown, coming to some conclusions about how they differ from 'celebrity', and also to think about the other related concepts of glory, popularity and reputation.

A keystone of celebrity is reputation, but reputation is also a distinctive feature of early modern life. As Craig Muldrew has argued, this was a society in which contracts and

¹ 'Coriolanus', in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., ed. by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 1.3.11,13.

² 'celebrity, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/29424> [accessed 29 May 2019].

credit were often oral, and loss of reputation could materially affect business as well as damaging someone's social position.³ It was important social currency, and defending or assailing reputation was a thriving business: in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, defamation cases surged in the church courts, prosecuted by almost anyone – male or female – with the means to go to law.⁴ Defamatory evidence could have a material impact on people's lives, altering their position in their own community or impacting individual relationships, for example stopping marriages from taking place.⁵ Reputation was important both for business and the multi-layered structure of relationships that make up society.

Early modern ways of talking about reputation are highly indicative, often imagining it as a commodity. To 'live in great reputation in the world' could be the whole aim of someone's life, defining personality. Someone could be 'a man of reputation, well knowne to very many.' Reputation is a prized commodity that can be held hostage, so desirable is it. Conversely damage to reputation is often imagined physically, as a 'foule stain' or 'blemish'.⁶ A bad reputation is unsightly; it contaminates the person. On losing his reputation in *Othello* (1603-4), Cassio almost does not see the point of living. He is not (necessarily) exaggerating when he cries, 'Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial.'⁷ Being contaminated, Cassio is fundamentally altered. As Jennifer Holl argues of the same speech, 'reputation, here, animates the base, material architecture of the human body, leaving behind only a "bestial" shell in its absence.'⁸ Reputation could also

³ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London: MacMillan Press, 1998).

⁴ Hundreds of cases of sexual slander were brought to the consistory court in London between 1570 and 1640: by 'the 1620s the court was seeing over 200 defamation cases a year'. Laura Gowling, 'Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London', *History Workshop*, 35 (1993), 1-21 (p. 1). See also: J. A. Sharpe, *Defamation and Sexual Slander in Early Modern England: The Church Courts at York* (York: University of York, Bothwick Institute of Historical Research, 1980); Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Laura Gowling, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁵ See Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*.

⁶ Anon, *The honourable actions of that most famous and valiant Englishman, Edward Glemham, Esquire* (London, 1591), sig. A4. Anon, *The life and death of Lewis Gaufredy a priest of the Church of the Accoules in Marceilles in France* (London, 1612), sig. B2v. George Abbot, *An exposition upon the prophet Jonah Contained in certaine sermons, preached in S. Maries chuch in Oxford* (London, 1600), sig. B3.

⁷ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997; repr. 2014), 2.3.258-60.

⁸ Jennifer Holl, 'Immortal Parts: Ghostly Renown in Shakespeare', *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference*, 7.6 (2014), pp. 78-9.

shape actions rather than necessarily being a consequence of action: one account from pirate Captain Jennings avers that if the Jennings' reputation had been more and the contempt for him less, he could have been a good citizen of the commonwealth rather than turning to the high seas for a life of piracy.⁹ Reputation is important, then, for societal cohesion as well as for the individual's place within it.

In short, reputation, or personal fame, was particularly important in everyday early modern consciousness, for men and women, higher and lower status individuals.¹⁰ Lawrence Stone has termed this fixation a 'cult of reputation'.¹¹ Although Stone is discussing aristocratic reputations, the importance of reputation (a similar but less widely disseminated concept to fame), to early modern Englishmen and women of all social classes cannot be underestimated. According to Stone, 'the hyper-sensitive insistence upon the overriding importance of reputation' was one 'of the most characteristic features of the age.'¹² The self-conscious enacting of reputation by individuals parallels shaping a celebrity image, only the celebrity is interacting with a much larger community. The obsession with reputation, equally, does also have strong continuities with medieval culture.¹³

Reputation, then, was often concerned with presenting the self to a smaller community than called for by celebrity or fame (although of course reputation is an important building block in the production of celebrity and fame). So why focus on celebrity and not the word used with much greater frequency during the early modern period: fame? For early moderns, 'fame' was almost universally presented as a positive quality, associated with heroism and good reputation.¹⁴ Describing fame's genealogy, Ben

⁹ This pirate was something of a celebrity at the time, popular appetite for his and other pirates' life stories resulting in the pamphlet. Anon, *The lives, apprehensions, arraignments, and executions, of the 19. Late pyrates* (London, 1609), sig. C2v.

¹⁰ It is of course still important, although again the media have changed; we may have 'character references' that essentially speak for a person's reputation in courts today, but we also have online credit checks, making some forms of community-constructed reputation less important.

¹¹ Laurence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 42.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See: Fester and Smail, *Fama*, and Chris Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance Among the Medieval Peasantry', *Past & Present*, 160.1 (August 1998), 3-24.

¹⁴ See Claire Walker and Heather Kerr, 'Introduction: New Perspectives on *Fama*', in *Fama and her sisters: gossip and rumour in early modern Europe*, ed. by Claire Walker and Heather Kerr (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2015), pp. 1-7, for a discussion of the more ambiguous concept of 'fama'.

Jonson writes, ‘honourable and true Fame, bred out of Virtue’.¹⁵ This is in the preface to his *Masque of Queens* (performed by and for the Stuart court in 1609), which treats on the subject extensively.¹⁶ Using fame almost synonymously with ‘Glory’ Jonson has Perseus say the lines, ‘Heroique Virtue sinks not under length / Of years, or ages; but is still the same, / While he preserves, as when he got good Fame.’¹⁷ Fame, heroism, virtue and glory for Jonson are closely interrelated, fame being a direct consequence of virtue – metaphorically its child. In this masque, his House of Fame, encircled with light, banishes the witches who have heretofore occupied the stage, making way for Anne of Denmark and her ladies to take the stage. Dwelling on fame could be a way of attaining virtue; for Edmund Spenser all forms of earthly love are tamed ‘Through thoughts aspyring to eternall fame.’¹⁸ Fame, as an ultimate end of virtuous action, can work to enforce correct standards of behaviour. In *Titus Andronicus* (1592) Shakespeare similarly characterises fame as the product of virtue, all characters onstage except Titus Andronicus remembering Titus’ dead son Mutius: ‘He lives in fame that died in virtue’s cause.’¹⁹ Not only is fame explicitly concerned with good, long-lasting reputation, it is the result of acts – such as dying for one’s country – that are deemed virtuous. There are instances in which fame can be negative; by the time he wrote *Coriolanus* (1608) Shakespeare seems to have been more cynical. Coriolanus is granted ‘fame’ with his new name after singlehanded military victory, but his warlike virtues are not appreciated by the populace of Rome.²⁰ However, he does gain respect and attention through a display of courage and traditional virtues associated with fame.

The history of celebrity is intertwined with the history of talk, the word ‘fame’ derived from the Latin ‘fama’, which itself derives from ‘feme’, meaning to say or to speak.²¹ In the early modern period, ‘fame’ could be used in the sense of an individual’s reputation and as the child of virtue, but it could also mean, ‘That which people say or tell; public

¹⁵ Ben Jonson, ‘The Masque of Queens’, in *Court Masques*, ed. by David Lindley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 35-53 (l. 6).

¹⁶ The Masque was strongly influenced by Chaucer’s dream-vision *The House of Fame*, itself engaging with classical literature; these ideas, then, are part of a longer literary genealogy.

¹⁷ Jonson, ‘Masque of Queens’, ll. 348-50.

¹⁸ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London: Penguin Books, 1978; repr. 1987), Book 4, Canto IX, ll. 2-5.

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, ‘Titus Andronicus’, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., ed. by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 155-182, 1.1.387.

²⁰ Shakespeare, ‘Coriolanus’, 2.1.161.

²¹ ‘fame, n.1.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2017) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/67941> [accessed 11 August 2017].

report, common talk; a particular instance of this, a report, rumour.’²² This second meaning was often embodied as *fama*, the popular ‘personification of public speech.’²³ Generally shown as a winged woman with many eyes, tongues, mouths and ears, *fama* signified rumour and could often mean the destruction of reputation. Indeed, this is the sense in which it seems to have been used in medieval jurisprudence, judges commonly asking witnesses to state who began the *fama* about the defendant/accused.²⁴ The concept of public reputation, therefore, was intimately bound up with forms of public talk. When trying to describe fame, Philip Sidney writes, ‘she borrowed all mens mouthes to joyne with the sounde of her Trumpet.’²⁵ The sound made by fame is speech.

Sean Geddes has included ‘glory’ as synonymous with fame in early modern culture, citing Montaigne’s essay ‘Of Glory’:

It seemeth that to be knowen is in some sort to have life and continuance in other mens keeping. As for me I hold that I am but in my selfe; and of this other life of mine which consisteth in the knowledge of my friends, being simply and barely considered in my self well I wot, I neither feele fruite or jovissance of it, but by the vanitie of fantastical opinion.²⁶

Geddes views this as ‘aware of the way in which fame stubbornly constitutes a sort of life that consists in the knowledge of others’, and in expressing opinion as being ‘fantastical’, ‘he picks out the element of imagination the odd sort of life that is fame.’²⁷

Montaigne interestingly refers to a distinct self that is not the ‘my selfe’ an individual recognises. It is a self composed of the opinions of others, which does not bring the individual any joy or change their private identity in any way. Montaigne argues that

²² Ibid.

²³ I will discuss gossip in greater detail in Chapter Two of this thesis, but for more on the relationship between gossip, rumour and *fama* in the early modern period, see Claire Walker, ‘Whispering *Fama*: Talk and Reputation in Early Modern Society’, in *Fama and her sisters: gossip and rumour in early modern Europe*, ed. by Claire Walker and Heather Kerr (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2015), pp. 9-36. Hans Jürgen Scheuer, ‘Fama’, Hubert Cancik and Helmut Schneider (eds.), *Brills New Pauly*, Antiquity Volumes <<http://referencewords.brillonline.com>> [accessed 27 March 2019].

²⁴ Thelma S. Fester and Daniel Lord Smail, ‘Introduction’, in *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Thelma S. Fester and Daniel Lord Smail (NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 1-14 (p. 2).

²⁵ Philip and Mary Sidney, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (London, 1593), p. 94.

²⁶ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays written in French*, trans. by John Florio (London, 1613), p. 354.

²⁷ Sean Geddes, ‘The Fortunes of Fame in *Much Ado About Nothing*’, *The Review of English Studies*, 70.293 (2019), (54-73), pp. 54-55.

glory should only be given to God, as humans are empty and ‘it is not with breath and words we should fill our selves.’²⁸ Similar to fame, then, for Montaigne earthly glory is created by speech, only for Montaigne earthly glory is distinctly negative.

Renown for early moderns tends to stand similarly for good reputation and etymologically is closely tied to ideas of report and reputation.²⁹ Renown, like fame, is attributed following actions that are considered heroic, although it is not necessarily the child of virtue. It is an object to be achieved through action, something that can be ‘got’ or ‘won’. Like fame, one can be ‘renowned for’ a particular virtue, such as courage or chastity. In dictionaries and grammars, it is often used as a synonym for fame and although there are subtle differences, ‘renown’ tends to share fame’s associations with heroic action and good reputation.³⁰ In his 250-year history of celebrity, Fred Inglis has built on this association of renown and action to argue that early modern culture did not have celebrity. Instead it had renown which ‘brought honour to the office not the individual, and public recognition was not so much of the man himself as of the significance of his actions for the society.’³¹ This assessment is somewhat skewed by Inglis’ choice of early modern examples; John Donne, Othello and Cardinal Wolsey are all figures remembered for particular roles – poet, soldier, statesman – unlike other early modern celebrities such as Moll Cutpurse, famous for her unusual mode of life: interest in her biography was at the foundation of Moll’s celebrity. Equally Philip Sidney, who combined the role of poet and statesman, was also invested with personal celebrity – audiences were interested in his private life far beyond the details of his personal politics. As I shall argue, his personal celebrity was in fact hugely disproportionate to any societal contribution.

A term that is used today to describe the celebrity phenomenon, often in a more ambiguous way than fame or renown, is ‘popularity’. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith call

²⁸ Montaigne, *Essays*, p. 350.

²⁹ ‘renown, n. and adj.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/162512> [accessed 29 May 2019]. In some instances it is used in place of good reputation.

³⁰ See Thomas Elyot, *The dictionary of syr Thomas Eliot knyght* (London, 1538), William Thomas, *Principal rules of the Italian grammer* (London, 1550).

³¹ See Chapter One for more detail on the history of celebrity, and celebrity theorists including Inglis arguing for different ‘beginnings’ of the phenomenon. Inglis follows other theorists to argue that celebrity began in the eighteenth century, with the emergence of newspapers, an entertainment industry, and industrialisation, which he believes created an increasingly fractured urban world. Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 4.

it ‘a downright seditious one in the early modern period’,³² citing courtier and influential essayist William Cornwallis’ complaint, ‘the cunning of Popularitie, is like that of Juglers, the cunningest of which can cast mists before mens eyes’.³³ Popularity, then, is suspect: someone who attains public popularity has effectively pulled off a confidence trick. Its ambiguous connotations are an interesting parallel for our use of the word ‘celebrity’ today, and refers usefully to an achieved status, attributed by a crowd or group of people. Of course, many early modern political figures also had hereditary status. Popularity is something that celebrities often possess, but in the early modern period tended to be associated with political favour or disfavour.³⁴ Kesson and Smith relate this to the ‘suspect’ nature of the bestseller,³⁵ and what J. W. Sanders has called ‘the stigma of print’, writers who were forced into print popularity by economic necessity pretending to shun this same suspect popularity.³⁶

What, then, distinguishes celebrity from fame, renown or popularity? In the early modern period, the word ‘celebrity’ itself did not have quite the same connotations as today, a fact that has been used to support claims that celebrity could only begin in the eighteenth century, when the word ossified into its current meaning.³⁷ Firstly, this argument is fallacious: a phenomenon can exist without a word to describe it. Secondly, the meaning of the word ‘celebrity’ was beginning to shift in the early modern era. Chaucer was using the word as synonymous with fame in around 1400, writing ‘What demest pou þan... þat is ryzt clere and ryzt noble of celebrete of renoun’?³⁸ Rather than referring to a person’s identity, the word generally continued to be used in this way through the early modern period, Henry Cockeram describing it in 1623 as ‘Great renowne’.³⁹ John Bullokar in 1616, however, kept more of the Latin meaning, defining

³² Andy Kesson and Emma Smith, ‘Introduction: Towards a Definition of Print Popularity’, Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (eds.), *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1-15 (p. 3). They also point out the differences between the popular as a scholarly concept and its early modern meanings.

³³ William Cornwallis, *Essayes* (London: 1600-1601), Essay 30, sigs. S3-S3v.

³⁴ I will discuss the popularity of publications in greater detail in Chapter One of this thesis, connecting early modern media to the transmission of celebrity reputations.

³⁵ Kesson and Smith, p. 2.

³⁶ J. W. Sanders, ‘The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry’, *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951), (139-64).

³⁷ ‘celebrity, n.’, OED Online.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Henry Cockeram, *The English dictionarie: or, An interpreter of hard English words* (London, 1623), sig. C3r.

celebrity as ‘Great resort to a place: famousnesse.’⁴⁰ Fascinatingly, the Latin root of celebrity – *celebritas* – refers, not to the individual, but to the ‘state of being busy or crowded’ associated with crowded festivals or games.⁴¹ Celebrity, then, is originally related to the concept of the crowd, and in the early modern period came to be associated with fame and renown.

How has this word changed, to differentiate it from fame and renown? As Marshall, Graeme Turner and Frances Bonner argue, there is ‘a syllogistic logic lurking behind discussions of celebrity: celebrities are people the public is interested in; if the public is interested in this person, they are a celebrity; therefore, anyone the public is interested in is a celebrity.’⁴² So public interest is a defining feature of celebrity; without public interest the celebrity is merely a person. Celebrity is difficult to define perhaps because of this inherently relational aspect, describing a connection between crowd, performer and media. Building on Richard Dyer’s work, P. David Marshall has argued that celebrity is ‘an area of negotiation between the public, the media, and the celebrity.’⁴³ Subject to change in any of these agents, the celebrity persona is a shifting concept.

Len Sherman has described celebrities as ‘the most watched, admired, privileged, and imitated people’.⁴⁴ This definition is entangled with the idea of status. By accepting the idea of status, we are accepting the idea of hierarchy. Not an objective hierarchy where, for example, a Duke can easily be measured against an Earl, but the *perception* of hierarchy; it is not necessarily measurable, but for whatever reason, one person has more social status than another in a group (giving them more social capital). The social nature of status is, in fact, expressed through hierarchies. It is ‘a person’s relative importance’, relative of course to other people.⁴⁵ I use the plural of hierarchy because most individuals will be a member of multiple hierarchies, themselves fluid as an individual’s relationships are fluid. In one social group an individual might occupy a higher place in the hierarchy than the same person’s place in another social group. So

⁴⁰ John Bullokar, *An English expositor teaching the interpretation of the hardest words used in our language* (London, 1616), sig. D4r.

⁴¹ ‘celebrity, n.’, OED Online.

⁴² *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 9.

⁴³ Marshall, *Celebrity and Power Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 12.

⁴⁴ *Big League, Big Time: The Birth of the Arizona Diamondbacks, the Billion-dollar Business of Sports, and the Power of the Media in America* (New York: Pocket Books, 1998), p. 189.

⁴⁵ ‘status, n. and adj.’, in OED Online, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/189355> [accessed 14 October 2018].

celebrity is intertwined with the perception of relational hierarchies, and is subject to change and interpretation.

While Sherman's definition is a useful one for thinking about the status-based nature of celebrity, 'the most watched, admired, privileged, and imitated people' is a difficult category to quantify. Admiration and privilege in particular are highly subjective. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody's definition of celebrity as 'the condition of being much talked about', is a less subjective one.⁴⁶ However, a person can be much talked about without being a celebrity; someone who has made the news, for example. I would argue that talk is the media component of Daniel Boorstin's earlier definition: someone 'well-known for his well-knownness.'⁴⁷ Because well-knownness is produced by talk, it allows for a cultural life beyond the control and even biological life of the celebrity themselves. Celebrity, for Boorstin, is a self-perpetuating category that feeds on itself. Boorstin uses this idea to attack modern society's emptiness, arguing that historical celebrities had talent, while those living under the public eye at his time of writing were talentless, terming them 'the human pseudo-event.'⁴⁸ A human pseudo-event is a public personality manufactured for the purposes of publicity, creating a kind of feedback loop in which the person is famous for being famous. While I do not share this pessimism, being well-known is a crucial component of celebrity. And it is perhaps the only component that characterises all types of celebrity; a celebrity is someone that we collectively agree is well-known.

An individual does not have to be talented or qualified in any way to be a celebrity, unlike someone who is renowned. Well-known for well-knownness highlights the relational nature of celebrity, as a status that others (often crowds) ascribe: a celebrity cannot themselves decide that they are a celebrity. Exploring celebrity as collectively ascribed means that we follow historical agents' judgment of their own social hierarchies. When a writer says that Mary Frith/Moll Cutpurse in her life was 'the Talk and Discourse of the Town',⁴⁹ we can translate this to well-knownness and, given

⁴⁶ 'Introduction: The Singularity of Theatrical Celebrity', in *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, ed. by Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-11 (p. 1).

⁴⁷ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', in *Counterfeit Ladies: The Life and Death of Mary Frith and The Case of Mary Carleton*, ed. by Janet Todd and Elizabeth Spearing (London: William Pickering, 1994), pp. 7-73, p. 7.

enough corroboration, celebrity. This definition of ‘well-knownness’ also, crucially, blurs the boundary between notoriety and celebrity, two phenomena which share many of the same characteristics, and can even apply to the same person simultaneously.⁵⁰ People do not need necessarily to be admired, imitated or privileged in order to be a celebrity; they can also provoke fear, awe, wonder, amazement – a catalogue of emotions to be deciphered. The constant is that their well-knownness is able to promote these emotions on a wide scale, and that this well-knownness is widely acknowledged. I will use Boorstin’s definition, then, of a celebrity as someone well-known for their well-knownness, as a yardstick to judge which early moderns may have counted as celebrities in their own time.

How does celebrity begin?

I have used Boorstin’s definition to theorise a celebrity as someone well-known for their well-knownness, but how does celebrity begin? What is it made from? Is it produced by the heroism, genius or manipulations of the celebrity, or is it constructed by producers, money men (and women), and make-up artists? In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a clearly defined academic area of celebrity studies may not have existed, but the theory of the ‘Great Man’ to describe many people we would now consider celebrities proliferated. In a series of lectures given in 1840, Thomas Carlyle argued that, ‘Universal History, the History of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here.’⁵¹ The notion of a ‘Great Man’ or ‘Great Woman’ presents celebrities as intrinsically different and extraordinary, overcoming obstacles to forge their way in the world. This idea remains in the popular press, and in celebrity biographies. As P. David Marshall has accurately summarised, ‘In contemporary biography, the psychoanalytic tales of how the star’s psyche was/is formed predominate as the elixir of truth.’⁵² The celebrity is generally described as extraordinary either in terms of hard work, acumen, or physical prowess, enabling them to overcome the obstacles littering the path to success, adulation and fame.

While Great Man theory is out of vogue, the notion of a celebrity who comes to their status through personal qualities has lived on somewhat through the idea of charisma.

⁵⁰ Such as Moll Cutpurse, who was notorious or famous depending on the preoccupations of the speaker, as I will explore in Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁵¹ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, ed. by David R. Sorensen and Brent E. Kinser (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 21.

⁵² Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, p. 3.

This approach is strongly influenced by sociologist Max Weber's work; although not explicitly discussing celebrity, his treatment of 'charismatic domination' is often used to frame theories of the phenomenon.⁵³ In Weber's account, a charismatic person wishes to lead, and disciples wish to be led. After a brief interlude of societal turmoil, in which charismatic persons become leaders, all participants of the drama settle into the same structure of everyday life. The charismatic leaders become ossified as society's notables, while disciples are their tax-paying citizens.⁵⁴ Charisma is certainly a factor many celebrity figures appear to have in common, a feature Joseph Roach sees as synonymous with 'It', an often sexual allure, 'the easily perceived but hard-to-define quality possessed by abnormally interesting people.'⁵⁵ Coined by novelist Elinor Glyn in 1927 to describe Clara Bow, Glyn described the ephemeral phenomenon of 'It' thus:

To have 'It,' the fortunate possessor must have that strange magnetism which attracts both sexes. He or she must be entirely unselfconscious and full of self-confidence, indifferent to the effect he or she is producing, and uninfluenced by others. There must be physical attraction, but beauty is unnecessary. Conceit or self-consciousness destroys 'It' immediately. In the animal world 'It' demonstrates in tigers and cats – both animals being fascinating and mysterious, and quite unbiddable.⁵⁶

Unconnected to any particular talent, 'It' is a kind of aura that marks the celebrity as inscrutable, cool, and therefore someone who needs to be discussed in order to decipher their personality. Roach has argued that 'It' is the 'capacity simultaneously to embody and communicate irreconcilable contraries'.⁵⁷ Like Weber, he attributes extrinsic value to this inner quality, 'rare and expensive to own', a value that multiple studies of advertising have attempted to define precisely.⁵⁸ Hamish Pringle's *Celebrity Sells* is a comprehensive outline of approaches in advertising, defining celebrity in terms of value to brands; for Pringle, a celebrity is 'anyone who is familiar enough to the

⁵³ See also Richard Sennett *The Fall of Public Man* (1986), studying the relationship between charisma and celebrity (Sennett uses the term 'star system' rather than celebrity culture). Sennett argues that the twentieth century saw a cult of personality in which the revelation of the charismatic person's inner impulses became exciting; 'a psychic striptease', that generates passivity for those who fall under its spell. (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 269.

⁵⁴ Max Weber, 'The Nature of Charismatic Domination', in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, pp. 17-24 (pp. 19-21).

⁵⁵ Joseph R. Roach, 'It', *Theatre Journal*, 56.4 (2004), 555-568 (p. 555).

⁵⁶ Elinor Glyn, *It* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1927), pp. 5-6.

⁵⁷ Roach, 'It', pp. 564, 568.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 568.

people a brand wishes to communicate with to add values to that communication by associating with their image and reputation.⁵⁹ Joseph Roach has extended this value-judgement to make a psychological claim; that consumers desire celebrities because the celebrity represents possibilities that will never be available to the consumer. It also returns us to the concept of social capital: a celebrity has a particularly desirable or rare form of social capital.

Drawing from Weber's work, theorists like Richard Dyer have figured celebrity as a utilitarian cog in the capitalist machine. He argues that 'Stars are made for profit' by a culture industry, the stars involved in the process of turning themselves into a commodity.⁶⁰ It is a top-down framework, in which a limited number of agents are creative and the masses consume their creations. However, too often this commodity approach assumes that celebrity requires a fixed set of circumstances, or 'cultural intermediaries' such as managers and agents, to mediate the celebrity image to the public.⁶¹ This does not account for the changing media of celebrity even in the last twenty years – the transition from agent-reliant models to Instagram stars, for example.⁶² While producing insightful viewpoints on celebrity and the culture surrounding celebrity, this approach tends to situate celebrity within a highly specific set of circumstances as an imposition on society, neglecting audience agency.

In recent years, the top-down model of celebrity has begun to be re-evaluated, with an increased focus on the role of the audience in creating the celebrity.⁶³ P. David Marshall

⁵⁹ *Celebrity Sells* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), p. xxiv.

⁶⁰ Advertising both markets the product as a commodity, and potentially serves to increase the celebrity's own commodity value. Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, 2nd ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), p. 86.

⁶¹ Roach, 'It', p. 10.

⁶² This type of 'self-branded' celebrity has been described as 'micro-celebrity' because of their smaller reach. The idea that self-branding strategies is a new phenomenon is, however, not substantiated by any past history of celebrity (as we will see in this thesis, particularly in the cases of Philip Sidney). For more on micro-branding and social media, see Susie Khamis, Lawrence Ang and Raymond Welling, 'Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers', *Celebrity Studies*, 8.2, 191-208.

⁶³ In part, it is this re-evaluation that has led to the distinct field of 'fan studies' (sometimes 'fandom studies'), exploring the role of fans and fandom, both in relation to celebrity and other cultural phenomena. 1992 is often seen as the defining moment for fan studies, with the publication of three foundational texts: Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), and the edited collection *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, Lisa A. Lewis (ed.), (London: Routledge, 1992). The field is expanding dynamically, as is celebrity studies: the journal *Transformative Works and Cultures* came into being in 2008, followed by *Celebrity Studies* in 2010 and finally the *Journal of Fandom Studies* in 2012.

has influentially argued that, the ‘categorical and formative power of the audience is at the center of the power of the celebrity.’⁶⁴ Audiences, in this taxonomy, are critical to the creation of celebrity. However, Marshall locates this within ‘the development of consumer capitalist culture.’⁶⁵ He argues:

The specific relationship between the celebrity and the emergence of the significance of the audience is the convergence within the celebrity sign of individual expression and personality within a constructed collective (the audience). The celebrity sign, then, contains the audience through positioning the type of identification in terms of individuality.⁶⁶

Celebrity is manipulative in containing the very audience that constructs it, giving audience members a kind of illusion of individuality, while they are really homogenised consumers. Graeme Turner has taken this model of linked individualism, consumerism and democratic capitalism to argue that celebrities perform a mirror function for their audiences, their documented lives acting as stories that ‘routinely present the celebrity as a model of consumption practice and aspiration for the reader.’⁶⁷ Like Pringle and Dyer, for Turner stars are closely allied to consumption. A swathe of celebrity studies, then, argues either that celebrity is a commodity produced and consumed by a capitalist machine, that it supports a capitalist regime, keeping citizens engaged in consumption, or some mediation of the two.⁶⁸

A crucial contention of this thesis will be to reverse this model, taking as a base assumption that people do things because they serve some emotional or material purpose. This is frequently connected to identity, intimacy, and ideas of status. Charles Kurzman et al., have defined celebrity as ‘status on speed’, and suggested that it replaces more traditional forms of societal status.⁶⁹ They argue that it differs as celebrity ‘confers honor in days, not generations; it decays over time, rather than accumulating; and it demands a constant supply of new recruits, rather than erecting barriers to

⁶⁴ Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, p. 61.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Graeme Turner, ‘The Economy of Celebrity’, in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (London: SAGE, 2007), pp. 193-205 (p. 198).

⁶⁸ Fan studies often similarly seeks to locate the fan within a stage of capitalist development; Paul Booth states his purpose in putting *A Companion to Media and Fan studies* together as, ‘to present fandom and fan studies as models of twenty-first-century production and consumption’. This is one of five aims. Paul Booth, ‘Introduction’, *A Companion to Media and Fan studies* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), pp. 1-10 (p. 1).

⁶⁹ Charles Kurzman et al, ‘Celebrity Status’, *Sociological Theory*, 25.4 (2007), 347-367 (p. 347).

entry.⁷⁰ Celebrity is a source of status for its possessor, and this affects – and is affected by – audience attitudes towards that status. As Christopher Rojek has acknowledged, ‘consumers are not merely part of a market of commodities, they are also part of a market of sentiments.’⁷¹ While sentiment may be rendered marketable, therefore, an element of celebrity exists beyond its being the instrument of capitalist economies to encourage compliance with particular ideals.

A popular model explaining the social rather than the economic drive for celebrity is the idea of a para-social interaction. This is a one-way relationship in which spectators feel a personal connection with a celebrity whom they will probably never meet. First coined by Horton and Wohl in 1956 as ‘para-social interaction’, they use the term *persona* for celebrity:

The spectacular fact about such personae is that they can claim and achieve intimacy with what are literally crowds of strangers, and this intimacy, even if it is an imitation and a shadow of what is ordinarily meant by that word, is extremely influential with, and satisfying for, the great numbers who willingly receive it and share in it. They “know” such a *persona* in somewhat the same way they know their chosen friends...⁷²

The celebrity in effect is absorbed into the spectator’s social network. Thinking about the phenomenon of television, Horton and Wohl theorise the conditions that bring about para-social interaction: the actor (in films/television) ‘often faces the spectator, uses the mode of direct address, talks as if he were conversing personally and privately. The audience, for its part, responds with something more than mere running observation’, participating in the action by involving themselves in the onscreen social dynamics.⁷³ Horton and Wohl posit that, ‘The more the performer seems to adjust his response to the supposed response of the audience, the more the audience tends to make the response anticipated. This simulacrum of conversational give and take may be called *para-social interaction*.’⁷⁴ It is a relationship relying largely on the imagination of one person, while the performer may adjust their performance according to audience response. Every para-social interaction will, therefore, be slightly different, but the

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Christopher Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 14.

⁷² Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl, ‘Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance’, *Psychiatry*, 19.3 (1956), 215-229 (p. 216).

⁷³ Ibid., p. 215.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

imagineer will be drawing on a store of common knowledge to fill in the personality of this person they have never met. Horton and Wohl saw, in this para-social interaction, a fundamental mental restructuring within the social network of the imagineer; para-social celebrity relationships could compete with primary social (friend/family) relationships. Their version of the para-social is expressly not imagined by the audience, although they are 'implicated imaginatively'. For Horton and Wohl, celebrity responds to its audience, but it is mediated and originally constructed by the celebrity and other mediators including the camera crew, who enhance 'the presumed intimacy by literally coming closer'.⁷⁵

As Christopher Rojek has elucidated, expanding on Horton and Wohl's ideas to theorise celebrity:

Other than religion, celebrity culture is the only cluster of human relationships in which mutual passion typically operates without physical interaction. The general form of interaction between the fan and the celebrity takes the form of the consumer absorbing a mediated image.⁷⁶

The celebrity/audience relationship, then, is forged on an abstract plane. I would extend this to regard talk as a form of mediation, spreading the celebrity persona through discourse around the signs that characterised it.

I am using the word 'persona' very deliberately as an excellent summary of what a celebrity is, compared to what a 'person', 'personality' or 'character' is. The word 'person', interestingly, has developed from the same Latin word *persona*, meaning 'mask', but the unaltered word 'persona' as we use it today is a later borrowing.⁷⁷ From referring to an 'assumed character or role', it has also come to mean 'The aspect of a person's character that is displayed to or perceived by others'.⁷⁸ Thomas Thomas called it 'an image, an appearance... a part', and it is this later definition that I will be using.⁷⁹ Celebrity is a matter of perception, a mask constructed both by the celebrity and the audience. However, there is a negotiated interplay between the person behind the persona and spectators who see them in a public context. This form of mutual

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 216.

⁷⁶ Rojek, p. 48.

⁷⁷ 'persona, n.', in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/141478> [accessed 17 April 2018].

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Thomas Thomas, *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* (London, 1587), sig. xxiii.

construction, inherent in the meaning of the term, is highly significant: theorists like Horton and Wohl have regarded persona as a mask created by the celebrity in order to manipulate audience reaction, or as ‘the image of him or her that is created by an audience member’s familiarity with his or her previous roles’.⁸⁰ While some celebrities may engage in conscious and effective manipulation of the persona, the extent to which they can shape it is limited by audience expectations and the ways in which their persona is being used by discourses as social capital. Often, it is composed of basic, recognisable signifiers, making it only partially realised as a personality, with the illusion of being complete. The rest is filled in by audience imagination. I will, therefore, explore celebrity persona as a partially realised character displayed to or perceived by others.

Persona suggests that the celebrity is a high-status individual in relation to a crowd or public. Rojek has theorised that the para-social element of celebrity means that these figures ‘offer peculiarly powerful affirmations of belonging and meaning in the midst of the lives of their audiences, lives that may otherwise be experienced as under-performing, anti-climactic or sub-clinically depressing’.⁸¹ He sees this as a particular indictment of society today, yet para-social feelings between performer and celebrity are not necessarily negative; there is no evidence that popular culture is produced by feelings of lack. ‘High’ and ‘low’ culture have been placed in opposition to one another for centuries, negativity towards the ‘low’ reinforcing the status of the ‘high’. It does not follow that, because Thomas Bodley described playtexts as ‘riffe-raffe’, they were used as a mass opiate by the society they were originally written for, or that audiences did not engage meaningfully and creatively with them.⁸² The same goes, I would suggest, for celebrity.

Fans and audiences

This critical viewpoint – associating celebrity with negative emotion like depression – has been challenged more recently with the emergence of fan studies as a discipline, which seeks to explore the meaningful and creative engagements fans could experience in their interactions with celebrities. However, like celebrity, can we talk about fans at all

⁸⁰ David Nicol, ‘The Stage Persona of William Rowley, Jacobean Clown’, *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies*, 74 (2008), 23-32 (p. 23).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁸² For more on Bodley’s place with the contemporary discourse around playbooks, see Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 31, and Zachary Lesser, ‘Playbooks’, in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, vol. 1: Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. by Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 520-34 (p. 529).

in the early modern period?⁸³ What differentiates audiences watching celebrities from fans, who also watch celebrities? Firstly, the concept of audience. At its most basic, all that is needed for a performance is an audience, a performer, and a space. Although most scholarship on early modern audiences has focused on the playhouse, when we tack the word ‘theatre’ onto the performer-audience relationship we are adding the idea of a building or space, and often implicitly referring to the practices associated with that space, for example the tensions between playwright and audience desires.⁸⁴ A performance can exist beyond the bounds of the theatre as a space, although some of the debates and tensions around the early modern stage are relevant to the study of celebrity. In this thesis, we will look at celebrities performing on the public streets, in taverns, at Court, and in the playhouse. Act-offs, in which celebrities like actor Edward Alleyn went head-to-head in competitions of acting ability or wit, sometimes took place in the playhouse, but also took place in the streets or possibly in taverns and other venues, creating opportunities for performance not reliant on one particular space. Paying for this entertainment, audiences were not only entertained, but they had the ability to judge their favourite celebrity, heaping invective on the performer if they failed, or applauding them if they did well. Although this is not theatre, it speaks to one of the period’s key debates about theatrical audiences: ‘whether they had a duty to pay intelligent attention to the drama, or whether their entrance fees had bought them the right to behave as they pleased within the playhouse.’⁸⁵ If an audience member has invested money or effort in seeing the celebrity, what rights have they over that person?

⁸³ Whether a ‘fan’ is defined as postmodern partially depends on whether critic defines the idea of ‘fan’ as inherently postmodern; John Fiske’s version of a fan, for example, relies on the capital economy of industrialised societies, although many of his conclusions would apply to an earlier period. Kathryn Fuller-Seely, on the other hand, argues that it is possible to study historical fandoms, suggesting that this ‘is necessary for us to understand that affinity relationships have long roots, and that few practices are truly new’. Seely herself, however, is only tracing the fan phenomenon back to the silent movie era. For an overview of fan culture and the rise of the ‘fan studies’ as a discipline see Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *Audiences* (London: Sage, 1998), pp. 121-158. John Fiske, ‘The Cultural Economy of Fandom’, Lisa A Lewis (ed.), *The adoring audience: fan culture and popular media* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 30-49. Kathryn Fuller-Seely, ‘Archaeologies of Fandom: Using Historical Methods to Explore Fan Cultures of the Past’, in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. by Melissa A. Click, Suzanne Scott, (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 27-35 (p. 27).

⁸⁴ The word ‘theatre’ comes from the Greek meaning ‘a place for viewing, especially a theatre’. ‘theatre | theater, n.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/200227> [accessed 13 March 2019]. See John Gordon Sweeney, *Jonson and the Psychology of Public Theater: To Coin the Spirit, Spend the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁸⁵ Rebecca Yearling, *Ben Jonson, John Marston and Early Modern Drama* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p. 18.

Without this attachment to the specific space of the theatre, an audience is, fundamentally, a group of people who pay attention: within the words ‘audience’ or ‘spectator’ themselves is the idea of listening to or watching, indicating that they pay attention to a communication from the performer (and by this I mean performer in a sociological sense, on a stage of sociability). A celebrity is someone whose communications are paid attention to by others; in being well-known for their well-knownness, audience attention maintains the state of being well-known.⁸⁶ Robert van Krieken has argued that celebrity is ‘about being visible to a broader public and possessing the capacity to attract relatively large amounts of attention’.⁸⁷ He distils the relationship between public and celebrity as a process of visibility, recognition, and attention: to be a celebrity is to be present in front of an attention-granting public.

As Stephen Purcell has pointed out, the earliest instances of the word ‘audience’ in Shakespeare are tied up with this idea of attention. He argues that Shakespeare mostly uses the term ‘in the sense of something that can be granted... ‘audience’ is something that one can give and receive, promise or withhold.’⁸⁸ This positions an audience as desirable, their attention a commodity that a performer may think it worth considerable effort to attain.⁸⁹ It also positions the audience as an entity that makes choices: they choose to give, receive, promise or withhold their attention. In the staged induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), Ben Jonson refers to ‘Spectators or Hearers’, which suggests that ‘any given audience member could participate in either interpretive group or perhaps that they might move between these categories at different times during the play’s duration.’⁹⁰ Jonson, as Peter Carlson has argued, was also concerned with what was happening internally once the senses of his audience had perceived his plays, attempting to ‘transform the spectator into an understander’.⁹¹ This refers to the problem of control, a performance to an extent taking on a life of its own once it has left

⁸⁶ Boorstin, *The Image*, p. 59.

⁸⁷ Robert van Krieken, *Celebrity Society: The Struggle for Attention*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 9.

⁸⁸ Stephen Purcell, *Shakespeare and audience in practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. xiii.

⁸⁹ This concept of attention as a commodity, or attention capital, is something I will discuss in greater detail in chapter five of this thesis.

⁹⁰ Amy J. Rodgers makes the point that Jonson’s combining the two types of interpreters as ‘spectators and hearers’ may suggest a ‘sensory amalgamation’ taking place within the theatre. The practice of theatre engages and often amalgamates the senses, complicating any either/or approach to defining audiences. *A Monster with a Thousand Hands: The Discursive Spectator in Early Modern England* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), p. 145.

⁹¹ Peter Carlson, ‘Judging Spectators’, *ELH*, 44.3 (1977), 443-57, (p. 443).

the actor's mouth. As Andrew Gurr points out, from 1600 Shakespeare seems to switch his terminology from 'audience' to 'spectators'.⁹² These words clearly meant different things, and may have marked a change in the understanding of theatre. However, the terms themselves are indicators of the type of sense used to pay attention to a performance. I will, therefore, use the broad term 'audience' when referring to the practice of one or more persons paying attention to a celebrity.

Distinguishing between types of audience, and individuals within that audience, how does an audience member become a fan? Is anyone paying attention to a celebrity – giving them the commodity of their time and focus – automatically a fan? Generally seen as a sub-category of an audience, fans give the celebrity attention, but they also tend to involve themselves in some way in the celebrity, for example actively researching a chosen celebrity's life. Fans are at the front of the audience: Lisa A. Lewis succinctly defines them as 'the most visible and identifiable of audiences.'⁹³ Defining fans as participating in some way in the cultural life of their admired object, Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst have characterised them as 'a form of skilled audience.'⁹⁴ This refers to the material output of fans (for example in eulogising the celebrity or reproducing/adapting their work), but Abercrombie and Longhurst argue that skill can also be applied to their contextual knowledge: a fan who knows a lot about the celebrity, and is able to tell stories about and/or interpret the celebrity's life, is skilful.⁹⁵ This version of skill, then, refers to evidence of interest and engagement in the celebrity's life and work.

In most scholarship on fans, their distinction from the rest of an audience relies on an emotional difference. The idea of affect has been used in order to think about fan responses, Lawrence Grossberg defining the fan's 'relation to cultural texts' as operating 'in the domain of affect or mood.'⁹⁶ Grossberg defines affect as 'closely tied

⁹² Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew fayre* (London, 1631), sig. A5r. Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 111.

⁹³ In this important edited collection Lewis re-evaluates the fan as a worthy object of study, long ignored thanks to both the academy's 'historical propensity to treat media audiences as passive and controlled, its tendency to privilege aesthetic superiority in programming, its reluctance to support consumerism, its belief in media manipulation,' and the popular press' association between fan and silliness/abnormality. Lisa A. Lewis, 'Introduction', in *The adoring audience: fan culture and popular media*, ed. by Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).

⁹⁴ Abercrombie and Longhurst, p. 121.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁹⁶ Lawrence Grossberg, 'Is There a Fan in the House?: The Affective Sensibility of Fandom', in *The adoring audience: fan culture and popular media*, ed. by Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 50-68 (p. 56).

to what we often describe as the feeling of life.⁹⁷ Affect is embodied emotion: the biological, automatic aspects of emotion-display. Just how much this encompasses in terms of emotion can vary;

Sometimes ‘affect’ includes every aspect of emotion and sometimes it refers just to physical disturbance and bodily activity (blushes, sobs, snarls, guffaws, levels of arousal and associated patterns of neural activity), as opposed to ‘feelings’ or more elaborated subjective experiences.⁹⁸

This embodied definition is almost the opposite to the meaning of ‘affectation’ in the Renaissance, which was an intensely rational display of emotion.⁹⁹ Since I am defining fans as purposeful and skilful in their engagements with celebrity, I will continue to use the word ‘emotion’, although there is certainly affective power in the celebrity performance.

This emotional/affective quality also relates to the origins of the word ‘fan’. From ‘fanatic’, the word took on its current meaning – either a lover of a particular sport or ‘enthusiast for a particular person or thing’ – more widely in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ The OED cites the first use of the word in this sense in 1682, but ‘fanatic’ in the sense of fantastical action or speech was being used, particularly in a religious context, from at least 1549.¹⁰¹ The concept of the ‘fanatic’, associated with frenzy and almost overwhelming enthusiasm, implies a highly emotional connection between a person and the object of their enthusiasms. The object/subject position may even become confused; associated in the sixteenth century with the type of speech that comes from being possessed by a deity or demon, a fanatic has the potential to lose themselves within another being or to be taken over by the identity of another. The fan is not an impartial observer: they may be in the process of losing themselves in the life of celebrity and conflating their own subjectivity with that of their favourite celebrity.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (London: Sage Books, 2020), p. 2.

⁹⁹ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 15-9.

¹⁰⁰ Joli Jensen argues that this has in part led to the pathologising of fans, as ‘a deranged version of ‘us’, alongside a belief that ‘Fandom involves the ascription of excess, and emotional display’. Joli Jensen, ‘Fandom as Pathology’, in *The adoring audience: fan culture and popular media*, ed. by Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 9-29 (pp. 11, 20).

¹⁰¹ ‘fan, n.2.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/68000> [accessed 5 March 2019]. Hugh Latimer, *The seconde sermon of Maister Hughe Latimer* (London, 1549), sig. A3r.

This is not necessarily a passive or abject engagement: connecting to a celebrity may provide opportunities for status, communal connectivity, or other kinds of meaning.

The sometimes-extreme emotion experienced by the fan as a response to another being might be helpfully described as sympathy, or a sympathetic response. Sympathy is fundamentally a relational emotion, referring to the sense of affinity between sympathiser and object. Erasmus describes it as ‘the natural feelings of friendship’ and the opposite of antipathy.¹⁰² In scholarship today, the idea of sympathy has seen a resurgence in popularity after the discovery of ‘mirror neurons’ in the human brain,¹⁰³ which are activated both when a particular action is performed by person A and when the same action, performed by person B, is observed by person A.¹⁰⁴ Stephen Gosson describes something very like this effect when he denounces public performance in his *Playes confuted in five actions* (1582). Citing a classical incident, so moved were the audience by a display of love and lust between Bacchus and Ariadne that ‘when they [the actors] sware, the company sware, when they departed to bedde; the company presently was set on fire, they that were married posted home to their wives; they that were single, vowed very solemnly, to be wedded.’¹⁰⁵ He draws from this that ‘players are... corrupters of all things by their gestures.’¹⁰⁶ Part of the danger of performance is its emotive power, audiences sympathising to such an extent with characters that they mirror the actions being performed in front of them.

This process of sympathy, however, is not simply mirroring, or at least is not *only* mirroring. It might be better described as magnetism, affecting the actions of the sympathiser in relation to the object.¹⁰⁷ Sympathy refers to the influence an object can have on the sympathiser both during and beyond their initial mirroring; developing skill in the life of the celebrity is a tangible way to perceive this extended influence. As

¹⁰² Erasmus does, however, define it as a quality that can exist between inanimate objects. Desiderius Erasmus, *Colloquies*, trans. by Craig R. Thompson, vol. 2 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 707.

¹⁰³ See Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. by Peter Heath (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2008), Eric Schliesser, *Sympathy: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), and Mark Eli Kalderon, *Sympathy in Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁰⁴ V. Gallese and A. Goldman, “Mirror Neurons and the Simulation Theory of Mind-Reading,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2.12 (1998), 493–501.

¹⁰⁵ Stephen Gosson, *Playes confuted in five actions proving that they are not to be suffred in a Christian common weale* (London, 1582), sig. G5v.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ As Ann E. Moyer has pointed out, early discussion of magnetism in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used the term ‘sympathy’ to describe and theorise its effects. ‘Sympathy in the Renaissance’, in *Sympathy: A History*, ed. by Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 70-102 (p. 73).

sympathy between fan and celebrity grows, subjectivity can become tangled, relating to the sense of passion or possession at the root of 'fanatic'. Sympathy means that the fan has invested emotion in the celebrity, but their relationships may affect the identity of the celebrity (whether public or private). Sympathy may also work to a fan's advantage, enhancing their own social network and personal status. In this thesis, I will use the word 'fan' when there is evidence of a person or group expressing sympathy with a celebrity, continuing to use 'audience' to describe people who pay attention to the celebrity, but who are not necessarily in engaging with their life and identity by writing about them, imagining the details of their lives, or sympathising with them.

Although the idea of paying attention to a celebrity as an audience, and expressing sympathy with them as a fan, may be present at any time celebrities exist, the ways in which audiences could pay attention, and the media fans could use to express sympathy, have undergone huge change. This thesis, then, will be concerned with the ways in which media shape celebrity persona, analysing the distinct versions of the same celebrity that different media create, and arguing for the importance of gossip as a media form in the creation of celebrity. However, gossip also highlights the underlying social nature of celebrity. I will argue that celebrity could stand as a sign, invoked by speakers or writers to provoke particular emotions, assert their own social status, or find allies with the same social preferences (i.e. knowledge of the same celebrity). Well-knownness could serve as a common currency in popular talk, standing for other meanings connected to status and sociability.

If celebrities are social products of talk and other popular media, to what extent celebrities could influence their own persona is an important research question. How the sociability of celebrity is disseminated through different media is another important strand, as well as the ways in which this social aspect could be monetised during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, audiences betting on celebrities or paying to see them perform particular feats. Celebrity was an important as a way of understanding self and other, attested to by its prevalence in the literature and culture of the time, writers and speakers seeking to disentangle how the phenomenon worked, how other people saw celebrities and how to profit from celebrity.

I will start by outlining some of the media that went into producing celebrity culture. Chapter One of this thesis, 'Early Modern Celebrity Culture', will explore how celebrity was constructed in the early modern period, the relatively new technology of print

contributed to a thriving celebrity culture. During this time, there were established modes of thinking and talking about celebrity, including shared appellations such as 'blazing star' or 'wonder'. Engaging with celebrity studies and early modern scholars, the chapter will argue that celebrity is a social phenomenon, and that tracing its beginning to one moment of media production is problematic.

Chapter Two, 'Circulating the Celebrity Persona' will introduce talk and gossip as other media contributing to early modern celebrity culture. Looking at a figure on the border of notoriety and celebrity – Moll Cutpurse, crossdresser, dueller, and fence – this chapter considers the different versions of her that we find across different texts, particularly Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (ca.1607-10), which re-stages the gossip about Moll's celebrity to show a figure who is more a body of discourse than a material body. In the case of Moll Cutpurse, there was an extraordinary diversity of media through which this discourse was transmitted, including plays, pamphlets, news material, and a biography. Looking at the talk around Moll's life, I will explore how a critical mass of discourse could transform an individual: from *having* a public reputation to *being* a celebrity.

Similarly showing the body not as a physical object but as a body of discourse, Chapter Three, 'Joke, Jestbook and Celebrity Clown', will think semiotically about a celebrity who had a similarly extensive media representation. What signifiers were used to connote the sign of Richard Tarlton, one of the most popular celebrities of his day? How were these signifiers used by fans and audiences? I will argue that the sign of celebrity could be used to increase fans' own social status, and that Tarlton was co-opted into fans' social networks, used to connect one speaker to another and as social capital. Exploring gossip and printed media about Tarlton illuminates the social element of early modern celebrity.

Turning to court spectacle, Chapter Four, 'Philip Sidney and the Performance of Celebrity', explores some of the tensions that go with celebrity being a social phenomenon. Relying on charisma rather than any particular talent, reactions to Sidney are full of wonder, often unable to account for the effect he has on people. He became an icon for his time and after, the epitome of an Elizabethan gentleman. Sidney's sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) meditates on the potential disjunction between a celebrity's desires and their audience's. In the tilt, he recounts that each member of the audience brings their own expectations of what a celebrity should be to the

performance, creating disjunction if the celebrity does not perform according to these expectations.

Chapter Five, 'Identifying with Animal Celebrities', will continue to think about the ways in which audience expectations create celebrity, turning to animal celebrities as examples of celebrities who must be entirely constructed by their audience. The celebrity fighting cock lipsey, famed for his courage, had fans closely associating their own identities with his. Using animals as emotional conduits, the persona of the animal celebrity could create meaning and/or status for the spectator's own identity. lipsey is unusual in the extent of the celebrations recorded around one of his victorious fights.

Finally, Chapter Six – 'Following the Money' – will highlight the economics of celebrity. Synthesising the findings of the thesis, this chapter will look across different types of celebrity –actors, animals and clowns – to find moments at which celebrity status was converted into profit, including the act-offs actors and comedians like Edward Alleyn or John Taylor engaged in. If, as I have argued, the celebrity is manufactured primarily by their audience, when we follow the money, it should primarily be this audience that assigns value – and is willing to pay for – the same celebrity. When celebrity personas were monetised through gambling, the social element of celebrity could be converted to profit, and audiences could fulfil their own desires to rank celebrity, similar to an A-list and a B-list. I will explore Will Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600) as an extended meditation of gambling from the point of view of a celebrity, monetising his own celebrity persona.

The conclusion will return us to the idea of a shared celebrity culture, presenting connections across the case studies from each chapter, and thinking about future applications for this social model of the celebrity phenomenon. I am tracing a dynamic celebrity culture that took place in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period in part thanks to the printing press and an obsession with personal reputation, both enabling the cross-media discourse. The explosion of popular printing during this time may not have changed the number of celebrities in relation to population size (a study for another project), but it generated a huge body of material about celebrities to analyse, preserving some of the contemporary discourse that took place around a variety of

celebrities.¹⁰⁸ It also produced new kinds of celebrity, and mechanisms for capitalising on audiences' interest in those celebrities.

Celebrity is a contested feature of early modern life: simultaneously desirable, difficult to maintain, and potentially suspect. Writers like Philip Sidney, Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton testify to its importance, their own work thinking through some of the more contested aspects of celebrity. I take 1580 as my starting point, when Philip Sidney was at the height of his fame, also marking a transition from hereditary, aristocratic celebrity to achieved celebrity. For my end date, I take 1626, a year after the death of James I, and the date of Edward Alleyn's death, one of the most famous actors of his time. It marked, for some eulogists, the end of a generation, Burbage having died in 1619, Robert Armin in 1615 and Kemp in 1603 (probably). With any death, however, a new celebrity is ready to step onto the scene, rising and falling in a pattern apparently without end.

To help unpick the complex set of interactions that go into making a celebrity, in each chapter, alongside a discussion of broader context, I have chosen outliers: celebrities are outliers themselves, but the examples in each chapter are outliers even within the realm of celebrity – Philip Sidney, for example, was possibly the most mourned man of his generation, while lipsey the fighting cock participated in the most elaborate celebration of an animal's fame I have been able to find in the period. Moll Cutpurse saw the most varied and extensive media iterations of any celebrity crossdresser, and Richard Tarlton's and Philip Sidney's deaths produced similarly extensive media iterations. Writers found it difficult in some cases to comprehend a world without them in it. Will Kemp embarked on an ambitious publicity stunt that explicitly discusses the enterprise as a money-making project, dunning his readers for the money they bet on his completing a 100-mile Morris dance. Choosing these examples is intended to cast the nuanced and often sub-textual interactions between celebrity and audience into high, and more legible, relief.

¹⁰⁸ Tessa Watt argues that 'There were roughly 3,000 distinct ballads printed in the second half of the sixteenth century', estimating that the 'total number of copies would reach between 3 and 4 million'. *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 11. See also: Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen, 1981), Lauren Kassell, 'Almanacs and Prognostications', and Joad Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Vol. 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Each chapter begins with an exploration of relevant texts related to a particular celebrity or group of connected celebrities, in order to establish partly that these people (and animals) really were celebrities, and partly to establish how early modern celebrity operated in different contexts. Each chapter (other than chapter one, which introduces some aspects of early modern celebrity culture) then focuses on a single text, the particular complicating the general. A close focus on individual texts acknowledges that each audience-member's version of the celebrity will differ from another's. The celebrity's version of themselves will also be distinct even from the most devoted fan's.

Chapter One: Early Modern Celebrity Culture

Until now, I have discussed early modern celebrity culture. I will seek, in this chapter, to begin thinking about how it was disseminated, and the links between individual celebrities that create a network of interconnections. First, however, it is necessary to outline the differences between celebrity dissemination, and the celebrity phenomenon. In the field of celebrity studies and among scholars looking at the history of celebrity, types of media have been attributed to the ‘beginning’ of celebrity. The way in which celebrity has been disseminated, whether through the newspaper or through film, has been the assumed starting point for its creation. I will suggest that this is the form of celebrity, rather than the phenomenon itself, and question the idea of a clear beginning for celebrity.

There is as much debate on how celebrity begins as *when* exactly it begins, and the two questions are often intertwined. Looking at Western culture, many scholars argue that celebrity began either in the eighteenth or twentieth centuries. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody have summarised the argument for celebrity beginning in the eighteenth century, stating that ‘celebrity is above all a media production: only in the eighteenth century does an extensive apparatus for disseminating fame emerge.’¹ According to Luckhurst and Moody, this apparatus is primarily the mass circulation of newspapers, a phenomenon that had been on the rise for over a century, but really took off during the eighteenth century.

Fred Inglis has argued that media combined with a change of attitudes to create celebrity. From the mid-eighteenth century,

The rise of urban democracy, the two-hundred-year expansion of its media of communication, together with the radical individualisation of the modern sensibility made fame a much more transitory reward and changed public acclaim from an expression of devotion to one of celebrity.²

However, the extended example he cites of earlier renown as opposed to celebrity is Elizabeth I, who ‘is renowned as being the monarch; her fame is conferred by her people on behalf of God and England’.³ His taxonomy ignores all other early modern figures not

¹ Luckhurst and Moody, p. 3. See also Rojek, *Celebrity*, pp. 103-116.

² Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity*, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

connected in some way to God, politics, and nation. Celebrities such as Moll Cutpurse, as we will discover, were certainly not treated with devotion, and audience reaction showcases a range of emotional responses. This is related to Kevin Sharpe's work on the celebrityisation of monarchical power under the Tudors as a space of performance and audience manipulation. Where Henry VIII was 'the jock who wanted to be an international sporting celebrity', Sharpe argues that Elizabeth I 'owed less to a sanctity proclaimed by official scripts and images and more to a celebrity status granted by subjects'.⁴ This is an important re-evaluation of the relationship between monarch and their public, the process of rule informed by the public rather than being entirely didactic. Monarchs, he argues, cultivated popular celebrity but were also reliant on their subjects deciding to grant this celebrity status.

Putting the emergence of mass culture and therefore of celebrity later, Joshua Gamson's influential *Claims to Fame* (1994) has argued that it was not until the nineteenth century and the mass circulation of newspapers that 'celebrity motifs' transformed, like the newspaper, into a 'mass phenomenon'.⁵ Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi also cite the nineteenth phenomena of 'newspaper readership, popular lithography' and photography as the foundation of celebrity.⁶ They argue that because the 'famous and celebrated' constituted a 'tiny elite' prior to the nineteenth century, celebrity in the way we know it today did not exist,⁷ although they do not state precisely how these famous and celebrated people were different from later celebrities.

Thanks to film, theorists like Richard Schickel confidently state that 'there was no such thing as celebrity prior to the beginning of the twentieth century'.⁸ However, as Leo Braudy has argued, this is merely a change to the means of reproducing the famous image.⁹ The image retains its power regardless of the material, and indeed the

⁴ Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 158, p. 78.

⁵ Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994), p. 19. Similarly, P. David Marshall has argued that celebrity emerged from broad changes in the nineteenth century, including mass-circulation of newspapers, urbanisation, and the invention of the photograph. See *Celebrity and Power*, p. 37.

⁶ Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi, 'Introduction', in *Constructing Charisma: Celebrity, Fame, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 1-20 (pp. 1-2).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1985), p. 23.

⁹ Although he does argue that, 'As each new medium of fame appears, the human image it conveys is intensified and the number of individuals celebrated expands.' Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 4.

competing claims of scholars for different types of media as beginning the celebrity phenomenon seem to support the claim that the material of the media is in service of the phenomenon, rather than the other way around. The scholars quoted above have clearly identified that celebrity *does* exist within their time frames, from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

Compared to eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century taxonomies of celebrity, there is little scholarship on early modern celebrity. Joseph Roach's work on Restoration actors is the most extensive published body of work on the subject, but he begins at the Restoration in 1660. Roach argues that although 'It' (otherwise describe as charisma, ethos, or *sprezzatura*) has been present at many times in history, modern 'It' began after 1660, with the Stuart court, Restoration comedy, and the advent of actresses onto the English stage. He connects, 'the Stuart Restoration and the theater it launched, a marketing revolution within the larger consumer revolution of the long eighteenth century, to Hollywood', and argues that the eighteenth century is not over yet.¹⁰ Its presence is felt in the model of celebrity we interact with today.

Also arguing for the importance of the theatre in the creation of celebrity, Jennifer Holl has challenged celebrity and literary theorists to contend that celebrity started earlier, in the late sixteenth century and with the building of London's public playhouses in the 1570s. Her unpublished dissertation *Stars Indeed: The celebrity of Shakespeare's London* argues for an early modern version of celebrity that is intensely theatrical. Her model argues that we should regard celebrity 'not as a media production, but rather, a theatrical one, constructed through the reciprocal exchanges between live bodies during the fleeting, but highly charged theatrical event.'¹¹ This is supported by her 2019 article "'The wonder of his time': Richard Tarlton and the Dynamics of Early Modern Theatrical Celebrity', which mainly focuses on the celebrity of Elizabethan clown Richard Tarlton, but also makes the point that there is a 'new, emergent system of fame generated from the 16th-century stages of London playhouses'.¹² Holl, then, places the genealogy of celebrity further back in time than most celebrity theorists, something James Loxley also argues for in an analysis of Ben Jonson's 1618 walk from London to

¹⁰ Joseph R. Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 40.

¹¹ Cited in Robert van Krieken, 'Celebrity's histories', in *Routledge Handbook of Celebrity Studies*, ed. by Anthony Elliott (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 26-43 (p. 38).

¹² Jennifer Holl, "'The wonder of his time': Richard Tarlton and the Dynamics of Early Modern Theatrical Celebrity', *Historical Social Research*, 32 (2019), 58-82 (p. 60). I will explore Holl's reading of Tarlton further in Chapter Three of this thesis, see p. 94.

Edinburgh.¹³ He argues that ‘what we see in Jonson’s work is an author continually playing off his own reputation, recognising the terms in which it is returned to him through the circulation of his writing.’¹⁴ Like Holl, Loxley engages with celebrity theory to argue that a genealogy of celebrity should extend further back in time than the eighteenth century, although he is more cautious in labelling any aspect as categorically ‘new’.

In a shorter study, Alexandra Halasz has pioneeringly challenged this narrative that any particular media form began the celebrity phenomenon. She challenges the focus on nineteenth and twentieth century celebrity, ‘as if celebrity image were a creation of the mass media and fully developed capitalism’.¹⁵ Halasz also points out the assumption underlying many of these histories of celebrity: that the particular media of one time generated celebrity. Exploring early modern clown Richard Tarlton’s celebrity status through the evidence of pamphlets, chapbooks, and his image used on inn signs, Halasz argues that ‘the layering of meanings onto his reputation suggests that celebrity, rather than being created by the media, actually participates in the development of the media and the (proto)capitalist organization of both daily life and national identity’.¹⁶ Rather than the celebrity being an automatic production of the media, the celebrity is a response to societal preoccupations, functioning as a ‘mythic reputation – a name and a persona around whom allusions gathered that came to function as an icon.’¹⁷ This distinguishes the form, and the outer appearance of celebrity at one time, from the celebrity phenomenon as someone well-known for their well-knownness, identified by the group around them as singularly public.

Celebrity, then, is not reliant on one form of media to exist, and in fact as we have seen makes use of many, from the newspaper and the screen to pamphlets and inn signs.

¹³ Regarding other literary celebrities, much has of course been written on Shakespeare’s posthumous celebrity; see Joseph R. Roach, ‘Celebrity Culture and the Problem of Biography’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 65.4, 470-81 and Jennifer Holl, ‘Shakespeare Fanboys and Fangirls and the Work of Play’, in *The Shakespeare User*, ed. by Valerie M. Fazel, Louise Geddes (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), pp. 109-128. Margaret Cavendish (writing in the mid-seventeenth century and so beyond the scope of this study) may also qualify as a literary celebrity in her own time; see Mona Narain, ‘Notorious Celebrity: Margaret Cavendish and the Spectacle of Fame’, *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 42.2, 69-95.

¹⁴ James Loxley, ‘“Public feasts”: Ben Jonson as literary celebrity’, *Celebrity Studies*, 7.4, 561-573, p. 573.

¹⁵ Alexandra Halasz, ‘“So beloved that men use his pictures for their signs”: Richard Tarlton and the Uses of Sixteenth Century Celebrity’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 23 (1995), 19-38 (p. 20).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Celebrity is instead judged by its audience, the fact of there being someone in society not known personally, but well-known for being generally well-known. As Alexandra Halasz has argued, celebrity can influence media production in itself. The form a celebrity takes, however, is also influenced by the media through which it is transmitted. Like the clothing someone wears, media can be influenced and influential. I do not make any claims, therefore, as to celebrity beginning during the period 1580-1626, but nor does it seem that as a social phenomenon it began in the eighteenth, nineteenth or twentieth centuries, even while its form changed hugely over this period.

Building on Halasz's work on Tarlton's celebrity, Louise Geddes has traced the celebrity of clowns like Tarlton and Will Kemp to professional fools like Will Somers, Henry VIII's court jester, further questioning that celebrity definitely 'began' in the Elizabethan period.¹⁸ She argues that the rise of fools like Will Somers was tied to commoditisation; 'The premise of the professional fool was predicated on a certain degree of celebrity, in which favored clowns could expect a moderate fame, and by extension, some level of fiscal security from their noble patrons.'¹⁹ In some respects, Somers had a similar celebrity persona to Tarlton, known for extemporal jests and 'much loved' by the people.²⁰ Robert Armin gives a lengthy account of some of Somers' jests in *A Nest for Ninnies* (1608), and recalls, 'The world was in love with this merry foole, and said he was fit to the time indeed, therefore deserved to be well regarded.'²¹ He featured in plays, chap and jestbooks long after his death. The early Tudor clown was something of a zeitgeist, a person who perfectly embodied the time he lived in.

Any claim for a 'beginning' of celebrity in the late Elizabethan period, then, is certainly problematic. As Robert van Krieken puts it:

No matter how one defines celebrity, its component aspects did not fall from the sky, they had a prior existence and history, a prior field of conditions which underpin its subsequent shape, that are important to understand if one is to grasp its dynamics and how it is configured today.²²

¹⁸ Louise Geddes, 'Playing No Part But Pyramus: Bottom, Celebrity and the Early Modern Clown', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 28 (2015), 70-85 (p. 71).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Robert Armin, *A Nest for Ninnies* (London, 1608), sig. Fv.

²¹ Ibid.

²² van Krieken, 'Celebrity's histories', p. 26.

Early moderns, in fact frequently compare their own celebrity actors like Richard Burbage and Edward Alleyn either with Quintus Roscius Gallus, ‘a Roman comic actor of such celebrity that his name became an honorary epithet for any particularly successful actor’,²³ or similarly celebrated tragic actor Clodius Aesopus, and sometimes both. Not only did the Romans’ lives parallel Alleyn and Burbage’s own as an acclaimed actor, he also marked their celebrity status. Ben Jonson asks:

If Rome so great, and in her wisest age,
Feared not to boast the glories of her stage,
As skilful Roscius and grave Aesop, men
Yet crowned with honours, as with riches then,
Who had no less a trumpet of their name
Than Cicero, whose every breath was fame:
How can so great example die in me,
That, Alleyn, I should pause to publish thee?²⁴

Jonson explicitly compares Roscius, Aesop and Alleyn’s fame, placing himself as – like Cicero – the means of the celebrity actor’s publicity. An anonymous elegist wrote on Burbage’s death that, ‘what Roscius / Was unto Rome, that Burbage was to us.’²⁵ This is not, of course, evidence of classical celebrity, only that the frame of reference was used as a comparison with early modern celebrities, suggesting that early moderns saw a parallel.²⁶

²³ Continuing into the eighteenth century, Barbara Hodgdon calls this ‘the period’s honorary epithet for “star quality”’, although she paradoxically argues that in general ‘the notion of stardom is alien to early modern thinking’. Barbara Hodgdon, ‘Shakespearean stars: stagings of desire’, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 46-66, p. 48. ‘Roscius, Roman Actor’, in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2018) <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Roscius>> [accessed 18 January 2018].

²⁴ Ben Jonson, ‘To Edward Alleyn’, in *Epigrams and the Forest*, ed. by Richard Dutton (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 58.

²⁵ Anon, ‘A Funeral Elegy on the Death of the famous Actor Richard Burbage who died on Saturday in Lent the 13th of March 1618 [19]’, in *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660*, ed. by Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 181-2, ll. 31-2.

²⁶ This eulogy in particular is evidence for fan culture, outlining the writer’s intense emotional connection to Burbage. So overwhelming is Burbage’s death that the writer is unable to ‘express my woe’. *Ibid.*, l. 2.

Early modern media

I have established, then, a difference between celebrity as a social phenomenon, being well-known for well-knownness, and the media it both influenced and was influenced by. Perhaps the two elements of early modern society that most influenced the construction of a shared celebrity culture are the developments in print and the importance of reputation – the latter expressed through various media including legal cases, texts, and gossip.²⁷ The influence of print technologies on the early modern period cannot be underestimated, Francis Bacon famously stating in 1620 that it has ‘altered the face and state of the world’ and, alongside gunpowder and the compass, ‘Innumerable changes have followed from these, so that no empire, no sect, no star has been seen to exercise a greater effect and, as it were, influence on human affairs than these mechanical devices.’²⁸ Although referring mainly to the literary impact of the printing press, it is significant that Bacon traces the press’ influence ‘on human affairs’ – printing apparently changed the way humans conducted themselves in some fundamental ways.²⁹ Most important for celebrity, the printing press enabled experiments in publicity. Crucially for this study, it also provides material evidence of the circulation and construction of celebrity. The mass of surviving materials means that we have evidence not only of the celebrity’s actions, but also some record of audience reactions to them.

Different media could, of course, interact with one another: the stage relied heavily on printed playbills to publicise its productions, while manuscript newsletters were still in circulation in England during the whole of the early modern period.³⁰ Manuscript publication indeed had its own publicity apparatus including a formal ‘pronunciation’ of release, an event with parallels to a book launch. However, as Daniel Hobbins has put it ‘publishing before print meant something very different: less drama, more complexity and variety, and a much longer time scale.’³¹ It also generally required institutional or private support if the writer was not themselves already wealthy.³² Print, then, allowed a

²⁷ See pp. 11-16 of this thesis for more on early modern reputation.

²⁸ Francis Bacon, *Instauratio magna* (London, 1620), pp. 147-8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Printed texts were also copied into manuscript, and vice versa. Curt Bühler, *Fifteenth Century Book, the Scribes, the Printers, the Decorators* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), p. 16.

³¹ Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity Before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 153.

³² The idea of patronage is of course also in a state of flux in the early modern period, print books generally addressed to an influential patron. And it has also been argued that buyers of printed

faster transmission and increased proliferation of texts. In terms of celebrity circulation, print enabled something of a democratisation of celebrity biography, with different versions of the same life that circulated and interacted with one another.

In terms of publicity, Elizabeth Eisenstein has argued that publishers were ‘early practitioners of the advertising arts’, partly thanks to new technologies of blocks and plates that made ‘repeatable visual aids for the first time.’³³ Narrowing this to early modern printed bills and title pages, Tiffany Stern has discussed their ‘measured use of “advertising language”’, and points out that they ‘must have been a significant feature of the city’, being printed in great numbers for ‘what takes time is not printing itself but setting type.’³⁴ She makes the connection that, ‘Although playhouses themselves were banished to Southwark or the outskirts of the city, London was filled with printed mementos of what it hated: one reason why plays were a constant source of tension.’³⁵ Writing in 1629, John Taylor recounts that one ‘might see what Play was to be playd on every Poste.’³⁶ Publicity was an unavoidable feature of daily life for Londoners, or anywhere entertainments were promoted, and publicising entertainments involved mentioning the circumstances of performance, which could include celebrities.

Although no pre-Restoration examples of playbills survive,³⁷ we do have evidence like the following advert for a bear bait:

aie
Tomorrowe beinge Thursd
in
shalbe seen at the Beargard
on the banckside a greate

material can be viewed as types of patron, participating in a similar form of economic exchange. See Richard A. McCabe, *‘Ungainfull arte’: poetry, patronage, and print in the early modern era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³³ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The printing press as an agent of change: Communications and cultural transformations in early-modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 60, 53.

³⁴ Tiffany Stern, ‘“On each Wall and Corner Poast”: Playbills, Title-pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 36.1, 57-89 (pp. 66, 69).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³⁶ John Taylor, *All the Workes of John Taylor the water-poet* (London, 1630), p. 183.

³⁷ Tiffany Stern, ‘On each Wall and Corner Post’, p. 58.

Mach plaid by the gamstirs
of Essex who hath challenged
all comers what soever to
plaie v dogges at the single
beare for v pounds and also
to wearie a bull dead at the
stake and for your better

t

content shall have plasant spor
with the horse and ape and
whiping of the blind beare

Vivat Rex³⁸

As Tiffany Stern points out, 'Tomorrowe being Thursdaie' means that 'the advertisement [is] only relevant for today'.³⁹ Another advert for the same event would need to be printed and publicised separately. Important details of date and place are given first, and then a challenge is issued: Londoners are challenged to try their luck against Essex gamesters, potentially encouraging an 'us' vs. 'them' mentality. The bill is also notable for the huge amount of detail it gives of what attendees are to expect; a whole programme of bloodsports, including a guarantee that the bull will be killed in front of them. The reader is assured of the feelings that will attend this programme: they will be rendered 'plasant' and 'content' in return for their money. The words suggest a kind of emotional mirroring between reader and bill, using a variety of persuasive techniques to drum up an audience for the bait, and suggesting that the type of entertainment generated different publicity styles.

Also available for study are title pages that show similarly careful attention to audience tastes, attempting to make them feel certain emotions and invest in the book as a result. The frontispiece of *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1594), for example, leads with a kind

³⁸ Cited in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage*, Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 3.

³⁹ Tiffany Stern, 'On each Wall and Corner Post', p. 67.

of emotional headline: ‘pleasant’ and ‘merry’ are the sensations its readers are likely to feel should they buy the text. We then have the title, catchy thanks to the alliteration of all the non-connective words. Next we are promised novelty and familiarity; ‘Newlie set foorth, as it hath sundrie tymes been played’. This text is new, but readers who have enjoyed the play are reassured that reading/watching will be relatively similar. The play’s actors have also been deemed a significant enough draw for the title page; ‘ED. ALLEN and his Companie’ are mentioned. Alleyn’s name is the first use of all-caps in the text, closely followed by ‘With KEMPS applauded Merriments of the men of Goteham, in receiving the King into Goteham.’ The men of Gotham had long become something of a legend, feigning madness before a visit from King John to avoid paying tax. The text capitalised on Kemp and Alleyn’s reputations, both included on the title page and their names capitalised. The allusion to Kemp also seems to advertise what must have been a particularly popular scene, perhaps part of the public talk about the play, and a favourite moment of anyone who had seen it. The scene itself is very short, suggesting that Kemp and other clowns’ improvisations may have lengthened the scene, and helped make it so popular.⁴⁰ Popular public display in this case decides the best way to advertise the play. Finally, the bookseller is advertised: buyers know where to return for more of the same, should they enjoy this play. A less available mode of publicity is crying the play, actors from a company walking the city streets crying out the play of the day.

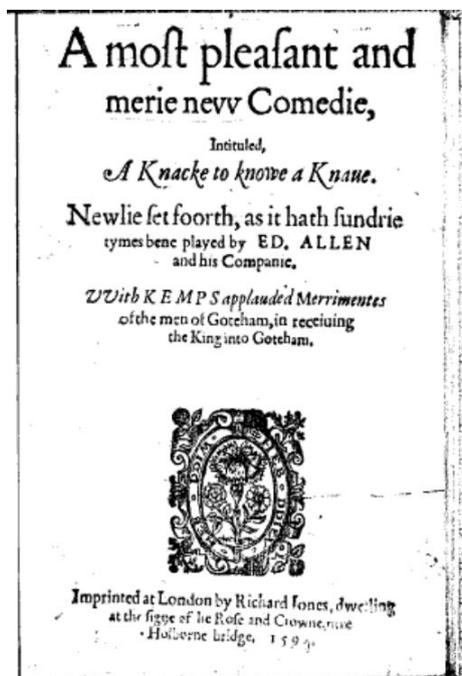


Fig. 1 Title page of *A Knack to Know a Knave*.

⁴⁰ See Louis B. Wright, ‘Will Kemp and the *Commedia Dell’Arte*’, *Modern Language Notes*, 41.8 (1926), 516-20 (p. 519), and Stephen Purcell, ‘Editing for Performance or Documenting Performance?: Exploring the Relationship Between Early Modern Text and Clowning’, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 34.1 (2016), 5-27 (pp. 8-10).

Print also enabled the printing of celebrity likenesses; in *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1590), a character called Simplicity is selling images of Richard Tarlton.⁴¹ These may have been from a title page, or specially created souvenirs, capitalising on the celebrity clown's death (which occurred two years before the play was printed), and a fascinating experiment in publicity that testifies to the desire for celebrity and paraphernalia associated with them. The media possibilities provided by print can also offer clues as to how celebrity may have affected cultural attitudes and memories more broadly. The legacy of Edward Alleyn's performance as Tamburlaine seems to have had an impact in understanding the historical Tamburlaine. Although purporting to be a factual history of various historical rulers, in Richard Knolles' *The General History of the Turks* (1603), the featured engraving of Tamburlaine (by Lawrence Johnson) is shown not as a historical Turkish ruler but as Edward Alleyn. Although John Astington has cast doubt on the provenance of the portrait, suggesting it is instead 'an author's invention',⁴² the image was at least strongly influenced by Alleyn, as it has his features including a beard that Knolles omits in his history.⁴³ This image and play's descriptions are identical, featuring imposing brows and light, curly hair. Of the 22 Turkish rulers illustrated in the *General History*, all except Tamburlaine are shown wearing headwear of some kind, suggesting that Tamburlaine was different in some way, perhaps because the image was based on Alleyn rather than an imaginary Turkish man.



Fig. 2 - Edward Alleyn as 'Tamberlane'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Robert Wilson, *The pleasant and stately morall, of the three lordes and three ladies of London* (London, 1590), sig. Cv.

⁴² John H. Astington, 'The "Unrecorded Portrait" of Edward Alleyn', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44.1 (1993), 73-86 (p. 83).

⁴³ Knolles does describe his version of the legendary conqueror as 'the Scythian Tamerlane', suggesting that he was influenced by the wording of Marlowe's stage play. Richard Knolles, *The General History of the Turkes* (London, 1603), p. 650.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

four playhouses were also constructed in inn yards within the City of London, and in 1598 another was constructed just outside Aldgate.⁴⁷ As well as providing a performance space for actors, the stage was a space in which individuals from the audience could publicise themselves: as Ben Jonson acerbically comments, some people ‘are not content to be generally noted in Court; but will presse foorth on common Stages, and Brokers stalls, to the publique view of the world.’⁴⁸ They used contemporary media to build their own reputation, capitalising on public spaces as opportunities for display. Rebecca Yearling has argued that the rise of commercial theatres – rather than private entertainments whose content was (at least to some degree) directed by a patron – gave the common audience greater control over the content of plays.⁴⁹ She writes that ‘spectators became more vocal and demanding about what they saw’.⁵⁰ Earlier performances were of course just as much subject to audience tastes, and processions, pageants, and courtly entertainments continued to have broad popular appeal, as we will explore in Chapter Four on Philip Sidney’s place in courtly entertainments. However, they did not expect long runs like the London playhouses, with audiences able to dictate ‘that *Doctor Faustus* stayed in the repertoire up to the closing of the theatres while *Sejanus* died at its first performance.’⁵¹ In the theatres, wrote Thomas Dekker, ‘your Stinkard has the selfe same libertie to be there in his Tobacco-Fumes, which your sweet Courtier hath’.⁵² This eliding of social class means ‘that your Car-man and Tinker claime as strong a voice in their suffrage, and sit to give judgement on the plaies life and death as well as the prowdest *Momus* among the tribe of *Critick*’.⁵³ Like fame, it is a collective

29). ‘First Playhouses Timeline’,

<https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1AGaQDv_hUnV4W6J8JDxRIDxp3wUknawZ7KNURWowYjU&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650>

[accessed 4 July 2019]. Alan Somerset also points to the huge numbers of smaller, provincial entertainments throughout this period and earlier at great halls and country houses. See Alan Somerset, ‘Coming Home: Provincial Gentry Families: Their Performers, Their Great Halls, Their Entertainments, and REED’, in ‘Bring furth the pagants’: *Essays in Early English Drama presented to Alexandra F. Johnston*, ed. by David Klausner and Karen S. Marsalek (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 77-90.

⁴⁷ David Kathman, ‘London Inns as Playing Venues for the Queen’s Man’, *Locating the Queen’s Men, 1583-1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing*, ed. by Helen Ostovich, Holger Schott Syme and Andrew Griffin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 65-75. Herbert Berry, *The Boar’s Head Playhouse* (Washington: Folger Books, 1986), pp. 32-7.

⁴⁸ Ben Jonson, *The fountaine of selfe-love, or Cynthia’s Revels* (London, 1601), sig. Hv.

⁴⁹ Yearling, p. 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵¹ Alexander Leggatt, ‘The Audience as Patron: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*’, in *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England*, ed. by Paul Whifield White and Suzanne R. Westfall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 295-315, 298.

⁵² Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horne-booke* (London, 1609), p. 28.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

popular voice – each individual voice apparently the equal of the others – that makes a play live or die, just as celebrity reputation lives or dies according to popular estimation.

However, as Andy Kesson points out, permanent playhouses performing to audiences in London may be part of a long process rather than a revolutionary change in the second half of the sixteenth century: no playhouse was open for longer than 48 years, and they were frequently closed.⁵⁴ This echoes the temporary nature of earlier theatrical performance, and of events like one-off courtly entertainments. William Ingram argues that ‘the erection of a playing structure in 1567 is the culmination of something antecedent as well as the beginning of something yet to come’.⁵⁵ He suggests that the development of the playhouse and play culture cannot be charted with a straight line or a big bang, but is a combination of gradual and sudden moments of change.⁵⁶ Performances, I would argue, have always been more or less reliant on their audiences’ willingness to watch them. Plays, then, are an important media for celebrity transmission, but they are one of many, and the boom in playhouses in the late sixteenth century does not account for the celebrity phenomenon.⁵⁷

A popular voice, of course, also decides what play and other texts to buy, some of which could – as in the case of Knolles’ *The General History of the Turkes* – be linked to celebrity reputation. Although a partially literate society, Joad Raymond has argued that ‘print culture can be described as “popular” not because it is the voice of the people... but because the people were understood to be involved in the publicity dynamic’, having some effect on how print was marketed.⁵⁸ On the surface, this is the most limited version of popular influence possible, suggesting that ordinary people do not influence the content of texts. However, there is also a publicity element to content: a buyer who likes one author, idea, theme or indeed celebrity subject is likely to return for more of the same. Print was also not solely fixed to the page: individuals read to one another, sheets were pinned up on the street and read aloud there. Text had an oral quality it is difficult to recreate.

⁵⁴ Kesson, ‘Forum’, p. 32.

⁵⁵ William Ingram, *The Business of Playing: The Beginnings of the Adult Professional Theater in Elizabethan London* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 65.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁷ I will discuss this further in Chapter Two of this thesis.

⁵⁸ Joad Raymond, *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Vol. 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. by Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 6.

To what extent different genres of printed texts were more or less popular is contested: Peter Blayney has argued that playtexts ‘never accounted for a very significant fraction of the trade in books’ and that, because of this low demand, ‘not one in twenty would have paid for itself during its first year’.⁵⁹ However, Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser have challenged this perspective, looking at playbooks’ reprint rates and stationers’ balance sheets to claim that plays were a comparatively low-risk enterprise for stationers, amassing reasonable profits with little risk.⁶⁰ They acknowledge that the market for playbooks, on the other hand, was dynamic and responded to demand. In 1600, they conjecture, ‘as earlier plays were being reprinted in greater numbers, stationers began to see professional plays as books that stood a sound chance of selling out and justifying further editions.’⁶¹ Kesson and Smith, however, point out the fallibility of relying entirely on these metrics: a book that was not reprinted ‘may simply indicate a book which sold moderately well, or whose publisher became involved in other ventures, or which was inherited by a new publisher with no interest in that genre.’⁶² Manuscript circulation was still in operation, and some texts remained valuable stage properties without being printed. Texts such as pamphlets and ballads were, of course, also subject to consumer demand, although these could enjoy briefer popularity as they were often highly topical. These were also cheaper, ballads and broadsheets/sides in particular, as they are single-sheet texts.

While some broadsides were commissioned and some served as adverts, their trade was also very much driven by consumer demand, possibly subsidising the riskier and more expensive business of book publication. As Angela McShane argues, the ‘sheer profitability of the broadside trade can be judged by both the large fortunes made by their publishers and the stiff competition for the perks of printing and licensing them.’⁶³ In the second half of the sixteenth century, approximately 600,000 million ballads were

⁵⁹ Peter Blayney, ‘The Publication of Playbooks’, in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 383-422 (pp. 384, 389).

⁶⁰ Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, ‘The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56.1 (Spring 2005), 1-32 (p. 28).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10. These reprints were often given novel touches for the market; see Jonathan R. Olson, ‘“Newly Amended and Much Enlarged”: Claims of Novelty and Enlargement on the Title Pages of Reprints in the Early Modern English Book Trade’, *History of European Ideas*, 42.5 (2016), 618-628.

⁶² Kesson and Smith, p. 9.

⁶³ Angela McShane, ‘Ballads and Broadsides’, in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Vol. 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. by Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 340-63 (p. 344).

circulating up and down Britain (often by itinerant pedlars carried where they were not bought from publishers), while in 1664 publisher Charles Tyus alone had 90,000 octavo and quarto chapbooks pass through his hands.⁶⁴ This is one for every fifteen families in Britain, an extraordinary level of popular dissemination considering Tyus was by no means the only publisher in the realm. How these types of media could work in tandem to construct versions of celebrity persona is a common theme through this thesis, but is evident particularly in Chapter Two, as its subject – Moll Cutpurse – was the star not only of *The Roaring Girl* (c. 1607-10), but a biography, multiple pamphlets, jestbooks, and she also finds herself featuring in forms of news dissemination such as John Chamberlain's diary.

Tracing a distinct popular voice or popular market, when it comes both to celebrity and the media that transmitted it, is of course problematic: just as Joad Raymond points out that print culture was not one popular voice, anything popular will not necessarily be universally so. Peter Burke has broadly defined popular culture 'as unofficial culture, the culture of the non-elite', but does not himself suggest that the 'non-elite' were one homogenous group, looking particularly in his study *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* at the different cultures of various occupations.⁶⁵ An idea or text may be popular in a very limited way, for example within a specific group or community. Stephen Purcell has usefully articulated this sense of the popular in relation to the idea of popular theatre; the label of 'popular', he writes, 'implies no shared political standpoint or stylistic features, no distinctive audience demographic, nor any particular measure of commercial success.'⁶⁶ He cites Victor Turner's concept of *communitas* as one of two ways of understanding the popular. Turner's collectivist concept describes any large gathering of people and provokes, 'a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities'.⁶⁷ In Turner's words this manufactures a sense of magic, power or holiness, 'possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured

⁶⁴ Watt, p. 42. Spufford, p. 100.

⁶⁵ Dimmock, Hadfield and Shinn also point out that the popular/elite divide was not as codified for some activities including bear baiting during the early modern period. Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield and Abigail Shinn, 'Introduction: Thinking About Popular Culture in Early Modern England', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield, Matthew Dimmock and Abigail Shinn (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-10, pp. 1-2. Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. i.

⁶⁶ Stephen Purcell, *Popular Shakespeare: Stimulation and Subversion on the Modern Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 8.

⁶⁷ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1982), p. 132.

and institutionalised relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.⁶⁸ In what Turner terms spontaneous *communitas*, group experiences might, in their very sense of power, create the idea of an impossible popular voice, every participant seeing, thinking and feeling the same things. However, in truly spontaneous instances of *communitas*, he maintains that each person maintains their individuality.⁶⁹ How coordinated a *vox populi* really is, then, may be somewhat immaterial, if a group has sincerely believed to have spoken as one.

Early modern celebrity culture

Within some communities, a popular voice generated specific vocabularies for the discussion of celebrity. The title of this thesis – ‘Blazing Stars’ – is a useful way of beginning to think about celebrity culture generally. The term ‘blazing star’ was used to describe diverse figures including Moll Cutpurse, Philip Sidney, Thomas Butler (the Earl of Ormond), Prince Henry (a celebrity who inherited many of Sidney’s associations), and Princess Elizabeth Stuart.⁷⁰ This is an interesting early association of celebrity power and the idea of a ‘star’, although ‘star’ did not come to mean celebrity until the late eighteenth century.⁷¹ Connected by the words used about them, celebrity forms an incorporeal community.

Blazing star is an interesting appellation because it not only suggests a short, intense vision, but major comets in the early modern period attracted crowds of spectators. They were celebrated events, and ‘like a blazing star’ is often used as a description for

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-39.

⁶⁹ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 273.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, Princess Elizabeth was described as ‘Beauties blazing starre, / Whose worth amazes earths remotest ends’. The appellation of ‘blazing starre’ for Elizabeth, then, seems to be used to describe the reach of her celebrity; the whole earth knows about her. Robert Allyne, *Tears of joy shed at the happy departure from Great Britaine, of the two paragons of the Christian world* (London, 1613), sig. B2v. For Moll Cutpurse see Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, ‘The Roaring Girl’, in *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies*, ed. by James Knowles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 225-310, 2.134. For the Earl of Ormond see Thomas Churchyard, *A scourge for rebels wherin are many notable services truly set out, and thorowly discoursed of, with everie particular point touching the troubles of Ireland, as farre as the painfull and dutiful service of the Earle of Ormond in sundrie sortes is manifestfestly knowen* (London, 1584), sig. B2. For Prince Henry see John Davies, *The muses-teares for the losse of their hope; heroic and ne’re too-much praised, Henry, Prince of Wales* (London, 1613), sig. A2.

⁷¹ ‘star, n.1.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/189081> [accessed 27 June 2019].

something that draws public attention.⁷² Indeed, to ‘blaze’ meant to draw attention to, synonymous with the way we use ‘publicise’ today. Blazing star when applied to a person could mean dazzling, difficult to look at because of their finery or overwhelming looks.⁷³ This speaks in interesting ways to Sidney’s choice of stars in his sonnet sequence: Stella is an individual star, while Astrophil means ‘star lover’. Is Astrophil a fan of Stella’s? She is certainly the centre of his attention, just as Astrophil is often the centre of the crowd’s attention in the sonnet sequence. In his biography of Sidney, Fulke Greville terms Sidney a ‘leading Star’ among his countrymen.⁷⁴ Comets were also associated with omens; there is a sense of secret knowledge behind the flash of light, and an ambiguity that aptly speaks to the reputation of someone like Moll Cutpurse. The concept of a blazing star, then, is emblematic for celebrity culture, bringing together many of the individuals I will be considering in this thesis.

Another appellation used to describe Sidney was wonder, as in Matthew Roydon’s description, ‘the wonder of our age’.⁷⁵ In his 1594 poem memorialising Sidney, poet Richard Barnfield hyperbolically combined blazing star and wonder,⁷⁶ also throwing siren into the mix as another way of describing Sidney’s emotional effect. He writes:

SYDNEY, The Syren of this latter Age;
 SYDNEY, The Blasing-starre of Englands glory;
 SYDNEY, The Wonder of the wise and sage;
 SYDNEY, The Subiect of true Vertues story:
 This Syren, Starre, this Wonder, and this Subject;
 Is dumbe, dim, gone, and mard by Fortunes Object.⁷⁷

The use of capitals is interesting, acting as a blazon before different terms that will summarise Sidney’s uniqueness. ‘Wonder’ was also used to describe celebrities like Tarlton, the traveller Thomas Coryat, King James VI and I and John Taylor, evoking a similar sense of astonishment to blazing star (something itself often wondered at), and

⁷² See Henry Crosse, *The schoole of pollicie: or The araignement of state-abuses* (London, 1605), sig. D1v. R. Cottington, *A true historical discourse of Muley Hamets rising to the three kingdoms of Moruecos, Fes, and Sus* (London, 1609), sig. G2v.

⁷³ Ben Jonson, *Volpone* (London, 1607), sig. Dv. George Chapman, *Al fooles a comedy* (London, 1605), sig. D2v. *The passionate morrice* (London, 1593), sig. C3v.

⁷⁴ Fulke Greville, *The life of the renowned Sr Philip Sidney* (London, 1651), p. 7.

⁷⁵ Matthew Royden, ‘Sir Philip Sidney’, in *Parnassus: An Anthology of Poetry*, ed. by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880), p. 268.

⁷⁶ These ideas were frequently elided generally.

⁷⁷ Barnfield, *The affectionate shepherd* (London, 1594), sig. E4v.

suggesting a common reaction to the idea of a celebrity.⁷⁸ And it is audience reaction that the term refers to: a ‘wonder’ is someone who is wondered at, someone people cannot understand and therefore discuss. Jennifer Holl has argued that this term ‘encapsulated the modern concept of celebrity’, and points out that it could also mean curiosity or wanting to know someone, related to audience curiosity about the celebrity.⁷⁹ Thinking more about the word ‘wonder’ suggests that Kemp’s choice of the title – the *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600) – for his 100 mile morris dance from London to Norwich may have been deliberately engaging with the concept of his own celebrity. Already a ‘wonder’ himself, Kemp’s performance of the Morris markets the wonder – or the emotional effect – of his own celebrity.⁸⁰ These celebrities’ shared categorisation as wonders or blazing stars suggests that, while the features of their biographies are very different, they inhabited similar spaces in popular imagination and provoked similar reactions, at least at times. If not part of a celebrity or star ‘industry’, shared vocabularies suggest a celebrity culture within some communities during this period.

We might want to consider books of epigrams like John Weever’s *Epigrammes in the oldest cut, and newest fashion* (1599) or Thomas Bastard’s *Chrestoleros Seven books of epigrammes* (1597) as further evidence of shared celebrity culture. In these texts, actors and writers are assembled with knights, doctors, lawyers and privateers. The factor linking the people chosen seems to be well-knownness, introducing each person merely by name rather than giving any biographical detail. Jokes within the epigrams often depend on some readerly knowledge of biography, a set of associations that the readers already understand. In one of Weever’s epigrams, Philip Sidney is invoked as the epitome of poetry. The poem imagines:

The Peeres of heav’n kept a parliament,
And for Wittes-mirroure *Philip Sidney* sent,

⁷⁸ Taylor’s description of Coryat as ‘the wonder of the English Nation’ is meant to mock Coryat’s ‘fruitlesse travell’ and over-inflated reputation, claiming that ‘worlds of Writers, through the world have spread him’. John Taylor, *Odcombs complaint* (London, 1613), sig. B3v. Dekker describes the new (to England) King as ‘this 45. yeares wonder now brought forth by Tyme’. Thomas Dekker, *The magnificent entertainment* (London, 1604), sig. A3r. As previously noted, Edmund Howe describes Tarlton as ‘the wonder of his time’ in an amend to Stow’s *Annales*.

⁷⁹ Holl, “The wonder of his time”, pp. 58, 62.

⁸⁰ Thomas Churchyard explicitly compares the two, saying that ‘A wonder lasts but nine days, a signe in the ayre is but wondered at... a blazing starre makes people but babble a while’. Churchyard, *The wonders of the ayre, the trembling of the earth and the warnings of the world before the Judgement day* (London, 1602), sig. C2.

To keepe another when they doe intend,
Twentie to one for *Drayton* they will send,
Yet hade him leave his learning, so it fled,
And vow'd to live with thee since he was dead⁸¹

To fully understand the poem, one must already know something about Philip Sidney and Michael Drayton's reputation as poets; this link is nowhere expressed in the text itself. Collections like Weever's present personas composed of a set of signifiers that are assumed to be common knowledge among readers.

John Davies' *Scourge of Folly* (1610) similarly groups together epigrams on famous personalities, including the 'English Aesop'. The poem is almost certainly about a tragic actor, and may allude to Alleyn or Burbage, both compared to Aesop. The epigram is particularly interesting because it elides the status positions of monarch and great actor:

I Came to English Aesop (on a tide)
As he lay tirde (as tirde) before the play:
I came unto him in his flood of pride;
He then was Kind, and thought I should obay,
And so I did, for with all reverence, I
As to my Sovereaigne (though to him unknowne)
Did him approch: but loe, he casts his Eye,
As if therein I had presumption shownes
I, like a Subject (with submissee regard)
Did him salute, yet he regreeted mee
But with a Nod, because his speech he spar'd
For Lords and Knights that came his Grace to see.

⁸¹ John Weever, *Epigrammes in the oldest cut, and newest fashion*, (London, 1599), sig. B6v.

...

I him ador'd too much, be he (unholy)

Too'kt on him smoothly; But well, let that passe.⁸²

Davies approaches the actor with humility, acknowledging their relative status positions. The actor is dressed as a King, and Davies puts monarch and actor within similar status positions, worthy of submissive regard. This supports the shared appellations 'wonder' or 'blazing star' for both celebrities and royalty, both categories enjoying celebrity. Christopher Rojek has distinguished this as 'achieved', 'ascribed' or 'attributed' celebrity, arguing that royals enjoy 'ascribed' celebrity.⁸³ However, monarchical and non-hereditary celebrity here and in the popular appellations 'wonder' or 'blazing star' are conflated, suggesting that both forms provoked similar reactions, regardless of origin. When the actor does not behave according to Davies' expectations, Davies removes his social support, seeing his former submission as an excess of adoration that the actor proved unworthy of. The same could be enacted for a monarch: James VI and I was careful to enact humility during his accession pageants through the streets of London.⁸⁴ Fan support and love for the celebrity is conditional. According to his poem, Davies is offended because the actor only nods at him, a stranger. Nodding at a stranger rather than engaging them in conversation is not a great social crime, but Davies takes it as such, perhaps because he feels that he knows the actor very well – well enough for the lack of engagement on the actor's part to be a social solipsism. Davies has a strong para-social connection to 'England's Aesop'.

Akin to the collections of epigrams, later texts like Thomas Fullers' *The history of the Worthies of England* (1662) and John Evelyn's book on medals *Numismata* (1697) similarly group people well-known for their well-knownness. John Aubrey included Philip Sidney as one of many biographies thought worthy of inclusion in his *Brief Lives* (1680-1). Evelyn states his project partly as being, 'Collecting the Names of the most Renowned, Famous and Illustrious of our and other Nations worthy the Honor of Medal, or at least of some

⁸² Davies, *The scourge of folly*, p. 85.

⁸³ Rojek, p. 17.

⁸⁴ I have written more extensively on Elizabeth and James' respective propaganda strategies in Sophie Shorland, 'Womanhood and weakness': Elizabeth I, James I and Propaganda Strategy', *Renaissance Studies* (2019) <10.1111/rest.12582> [accessed 8 September 2019].

Memory'.⁸⁵ His list includes Tarlton, Alleyn and Sidney, among many others. Although only Fuller describes his subjects as 'worthies' all three texts suggest worthiness; a life that deserves acclaim and memory. They feature, however, people who have already been remembered: the texts themselves are recording which celebrities from an earlier period were still the subject of talk. These are celebrities who have stood the test of longevity, well-known for some time after their deaths. But why have they been remembered? Is it because they have lived a particularly exemplary life, worthy of valorising? It would be difficult to claim Tarlton as a 'worthy', instead making the list because of his well-knownness, and perhaps an assumption that to be so well known, the person must be worthy in some way.

The number of epitaphs written also hints at the cultural importance of reputation; as Helen Swift points out, epitaphs 'look backwards – recording a person's death, a life that was – in order to project a record of that life forwards into the memory of those passers-by who will view its text and recall the deceased in that anticipated instant.'⁸⁶ Epitaphs offered in collections of poetry for sale suggest that readers are willing to pay to relive their memories of the celebrity. Richard Braithwaite, for example, chooses Kemp's hundred-mile Morris as of particular note in one of his epitaphs. He writes:

Welcome from Norwich Kempe: all joy to see
Thy safe returne moriscoed lustily.
But out alasse how soone's thy morice done,
When Pipe and Taber all thy friends be gone?
And leane thee now to dance the second part
With feeble nature, not with nimble Art:
Then all thy triumphs fraught with strains of mirth,
"Shall be cag'd up within a chest of earth:
Shall be? they are, th'ast danc'd thee out of breath,
"And now must make thy parting dance with death."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ John Evelyn, *Numismata, a discourse of medals, ancient and modern together with some account of heads and effigies of illustrious, and famous persons in sculps, and taille-douce* (London, 1697), p. 257.

⁸⁶ 'Posthumous Reputation Unravelled in Sixteenth-Century Epitaph Fictions', *Early Modern French Studies*, 40.1, 11-24 (pp. 11-12).

⁸⁷ Richard Braithwaite, *The Good wife, together with an exquisite discourse of epitaphs* (London, 1619), sig. P8v.

Braithwaite represents the popularity of Kemp's publicity stunt; 'all joy to see' the clown's return. The poem imagines a continuation of his vigorous, physical celebrity persona. It ends with Kemp not 'cag'd up', but dancing with death. Interestingly, Braithwaite also hints at Kemp's signifiers of celebrity: besides the Morris, he is known for the pipe and tabor, mirroring his predecessor Tarlton.⁸⁸

As clowns sharing the same comedic style, Kemp and Tarlton were often connected in texts and ephemera, with Kemp as a successor to Tarlton both in terms of style and celebrity.⁸⁹ In *An Almond for a Parrot* (1589), Thomas Nashe famously addresses Kemp as 'Jestmonger and Vice-gerent generall to the Ghost of Dicke Tarlton.'⁹⁰ He is serving and perpetuating Tarlton's legacy. Thomas Heywood recalls that Kemp succeeded Tarlton 'as well in the favour of her Majesty, as in the opinion & good thoughts of the generall audience.'⁹¹ According to Heywood, Kemp occupied a similar space to Tarlton in the minds of his audience, standing for 'good thoughts'. This is an idea that will recur throughout this thesis: celebrity reputation is built on the thoughts of their audience. Heywood's testimony is important in establishing that both clowns occupied similar imaginative space. Heywood continues, comparing them with other actors:

*Gabriel, Singer, Pope, Philips, Sly, all the right I can do them, is but this, that though they be dead, their deserts yet live in the remembrance of many. Among so many dead let me not forget one yet alive in his time the most worthy famous, Maister Edward Allen.*⁹²

All the actors listed, beyond their profession, are united by their continuing to live within the mind's eye of their audience. The celebrity persona of each lives on, kept alive by well-knownness.

Collections of epigrams, epitaphs and miscellany offer potential avenues for types of celebrity beyond the scope of this study: pirates, lawyers/judges, divines, prostitutes/bawds, travellers like Sir Anthony Shirley, and writers. Indeed, it was not uncommon for privateers like Francis Drake to have appellation like the 'Valiant and

⁸⁸ I will discuss celebrity signifiers, and in particular Tarlton as a celebrity sign, in Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁸⁹ The *Jests* has Robert Armin succeeding Tarlton, but Kemp and Tarlton's comedic styles and celebrity personae were much more similar, playing a 'man of the people' role.

⁹⁰ Thomas Nashe, *An almond for a parrat, or Cutbert Curry-knaves* (London, 1589), sig. A2.

⁹¹ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), E2v.

⁹² *Ibid.* Another example of this kind of close association falls in Nashe's *Pierce Pennilesse*.

Renowned *Sir Francis Drake*'.⁹³ Other sources like ballads, pamphlets and plays all full of evidence of notorious figures like Walter Calverley, who stabbed his two eldest sons to death, before attempting to murder his wife and youngest son. The sensational story was immediately published as a pamphlet. Later the same year the Calverley murders were dramatised (with thin aliases for the characters) by George Wilikins, becoming the domestic tragedy *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*. Near the close of 1605, Thomas Pavyer published the story in ballad form. It is astonishing how quickly and how often the story was retold immediately after the event. In 1608, Pavyer's ballad was rewritten and published as a second domestic tragedy: *A Yorkshire Tragedie: not so New as Lamentable and True, Written by W. Shakspeare*.⁹⁴ Intense interest in the story of Walter Calverley did not end in the seventeenth century: youths in the nineteenth century reported creating a magic circle, strewn with breadcrumbs and pins, and chanting 'Old Calverley, old Calverley, I have thee by 'th ears, / I'll cut thee in collops unless thou appears', in an attempt to resurrect the ghost of the long-dead murderer.⁹⁵ According to the writer, the chant worked: 'At this culminating point the figure used to come forth ghostly and pale'.⁹⁶ Riding a headless horse, his ghost persecuted the inhabitants of Calverley up to at least the mid twentieth century, riding forth (according to one 1966 newspaper) every Boxing night.⁹⁷ His notoriety lived on, as did the notoriety of many early modern figures. The public reputation of notorious criminals would fill another study, but it may be useful to think about how and why audiences constructed these figures, and what social work notorious criminals like Calverley performed when they were being discussed. Moll Cutpurse, on the border of notoriety and celebrity, remained a celebrity long after her death. Stories about her life became apocryphal, recasting her as a Royalist highwaywoman, robbing General Fairfax's carriage.⁹⁸ Imaginative posthumous engagement on the part of fans and audiences, then, seems to be a significant feature of early modern celebrity.

⁹³ Robert Almond, *The English horsman and complete farrier* (London, 1673), p. 360.

⁹⁴ J. Andreas Löwe, 'Calverley, Walter (d. 1605), murderer', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4411>> [accessed 19 July 2018].

⁹⁵ 'Calverley, Forty Years Ago', *Bradford Observer*, 28 March 1874.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Pudsey News*, 5 January 1966. Quoted in A. C. Crawley and Barry Gaines, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 114.

⁹⁸ Griffiths, 'Frith', Paul Griffiths, 'Frith [*married name* Markham], Mary [*known as* Moll Cutpurse]', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10189>> [accessed 8 April 2019].

Turning to more literal status-based connections, Sidney was godfather to Tarlton's son. Despite their very different personas and backgrounds, they came into physical contact, and thanks to their celebrity both seem to have occupied a powerful place at court. His public popularity seems to have given Tarlton – to an extent – the ability to speak truth to power. Edmund Bohun recalls:

*Tarleton, who was then the best Comedian in England, had made a pleasant Play, and when it was acting before the Queen, he pointed at Sir Walter Rawleigh, and said, See the Knave commands the Queen; for which he was corrected by a Frown from the Queen; yet he had the confidence to add, that he was of too much, and too intolerable a power; and going on with the same liberty, he reflected on the over-great Power and Riches of the Earl of Leicester, which was so universally applauded by all that were present, that she thought fit for the present to bear these Reflections with a seeming unconcernedness. But yet she was so offended, that she forbad Tarleton, and all her Jesters, from coming near her Table, being inwardly displeased with this impudent and unreasonable Liberty.*⁹⁹

The Queen can express some displeasure, potentially limiting the scope of future jests, yet so long as popular opinion is so resoundingly in support of Tarlton, she is unable to fully express her irritation. A crucial element of Tarlton's continued celebrity seems to have been keeping popular opinion onside. It is this social capital that enables him to speak the truth to the Queen without more severe consequences. Both Sidney and Tarlton cashed in on their public popularity to speak truth to power in different ways, Sidney circulating a public letter to better coalesce public opinion against the Alençon match.

While a link between Sidney and Tarlton might be unexpected, perhaps more surprising is the connection between Moll, Tarlton and celebrity animals. In one case, a fighting cock was named 'Tarleton', 'because he always came to the fight like a Drummer, making a thundering noyse with his winges'.¹⁰⁰ In a fascinating intermingling of the celebrity associations, Tarleton the fighting cock is named after perhaps the most famous human celebrity of the era because one of their recognisable acts, drumming, is shared. This elision of human and animal celebrity has at least one other case: the bear Moll Cutpurse, listed among other famous bears and bulls performing at the Bear

⁹⁹ Edmund Bohun, *The Character of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1693), sig. Aar.

¹⁰⁰ George Wilson, *The commendation of cockes, and cock-fighting* (London, 1607), sig. D4.

Garden in 1638.¹⁰¹ Why she was given this name I do not know: perhaps her gender preferences in some way resembled the human Moll's, or she liked to steal from her keepers/spectators. It could also have been a tribute to the original Moll Cutpurse's intense involvement in the bait: *The Life and Death of Mrs Mary Frith* (1662) reports that as she got older, 'I grew to be more reserved in my boisterous exercises of bayting, &c. and could content to be a spectator and a better onely'.¹⁰² This may refer to a front-of-the-audience position, or it may suggest that Moll acted as a bookkeeper/performed some other attributable part in the bait. Being associated through name with these high-profile humans could of course have worked to raise this cock and bear's respective statuses, connecting them to the emotional reach and power of established celebrities. It also suggests a shared and permeable celebrity culture, ideas about public identity moving across the human/animal divide, connected by the idea of celebrity. Implying that animal celebrities were understood in anthropomorphic terms, shared names also furthers a notion of celebrity culture being a shared imaginative space.

During the period 1580-1621, then, celebrities came into physical contact, but also seem to have been associated with one another imaginatively. Both names and descriptions cross between types of celebrity, from animal celebrities to monarchy to clowns. They are associated in collections of writings and memorialised as worthy of remembrance, particularly interesting thanks to their celebrity status rather than any particular shared talent or attribute. Celebrity could help publicise material objects, but was also publicised by media including broadsides, chapbooks and playbooks. Newly-cheap texts and images, hot off the printing press, enabled experiments in publicity. These media may have altered during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, but that is not to say that celebrity did not exist in the early modern period, transmitted by sixteenth and seventeenth century media production. In the next chapter, I would like to extend this discussion of media to include talk, orality and print intermingling to transmit Moll Cutpurse's celebrity persona.

¹⁰¹ John Taylor, *Bull, beare, and horse, cut, curtaile, and longtaile* (London, 1638), sig. D7v.

¹⁰² Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', p. 42.

Chapter Two: Circulating the Celebrity Persona

Born Mary Frith, Moll Cutpurse's career was long and colourful. She was a fence, crossdresser, and inveterate tobacco-smoker.¹ On the borders of legality, she helped victims find their lost or stolen possessions through her criminal contacts. She ran 'a sort of criminal-intelligence network that helped victims... locate their lost goods and passed on to the authorities the names of pickpockets and cutpurses.'² Most often referred to as Moll Cutpurse rather than Mary Frith, 'Mall' was sometimes substituted for 'Moll', possibly referring to the Latinate prefix mal-, meaning unpleasant/evil. Presumably in relation to her profession, one account claims of Moll's honesty, 'To touch but pitch, 'tis known it will defile'.³ Whether she was notorious or famous, Mall or Moll, depends entirely on the preconceptions of the reporter. Various called 'Mal', 'Mall', 'Moll', and 'Mary', because I am looking at the collective, social construction of public identity, where possible I will refer to her as Moll (in contrast to a more private version of her name like Mary Frith or post-marriage Mary Markham).⁴ Similarly, I am using the pronouns 'she/her' because they were used by early texts discussing Moll, most particularly the biography that she may have had a hand in producing herself, *The Life and Death of Mrs Mary Frith* (1662). This chapter will consider some of these versions of Moll, and the media that transmitted them, most significantly the oral media of gossip. Dekker and Middleton's play *The Roaring Girl*, I will argue, re-stages the practice of to explore the public construction of celebrity persona.

Helen Wilcox has described Moll as,

... the most notorious of the women in early modern London who chose to wear men's clothing and take to the streets, where their activities generally

¹ I am using the word 'crossdresser' here because it most accurately describes Moll's actions. While she was often described as a 'hermaphrodite' by her contemporaries, in today's parlance this has a medical definition that is very different to an early modern one (not that 'hermaphrodite' was by any means the universally agreed-upon manner of describing Moll). See: Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', p. 7. Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 19-25.

² Griffiths, 'Frith'.

³ Thomas Freeman, *Rubbe, and a great cast Epigrams* (London, 1614), sig. E4r.

⁴ This elision of ostensibly fictional and factual accounts is entirely on purpose, as Moll's public persona is, itself, a fictional construct. Most often called 'Moll', the 'Cutpurse' part of her nickname is often left out in these accounts.

comprised smoking, swaggering, swearing, working as prostitutes, picking pockets and getting into fights.⁵

However, it is usually her crossdressing that is highlighted by contemporary texts, suggesting that this was the source of her celebrity. Stephen Orgel has argued that this is connected to cultural concerns about masculinity and gender. He writes, ‘Mary Frith’s greatest notoriety, at least in so far as the surviving sources convey it to us, coincided with a growing public concern over what was seen as a significant masculinization of feminine style.’⁶ Orgel cites John Chamberlain’s 1620 report that ‘King James command the Bishop of London instruct the clergy’:⁷

... to inveigh vehemently and bitterly in their sermons against the insolency of our women, and their wearing of broad-brimmed hats, pointed doublets, their hair cut short or shorn, and some of them stilettos or poinards, ... adding withall that if pulpit admonitions will not reform them he would proceed by another course.⁸

Regardless of whether women really were dressing as men on a regular basis, the potentially disruptive ‘insolency in our women’, was perceived as a problem, at least by the King. Orgel argues that this spoke to wider patriarchal anxieties ‘to do with the authority of the father’.⁹ It also speaks to problems of categorisation, exploring what differentiates a woman from a man.

By no means the first or only crossdressing woman of the early modern period, Simon Shepherd has viewed Moll alongside Long Meg of Westminster in the tradition of ‘the Spenserian warrior woman.’¹⁰ Shepherd argues that discussion about Moll was just one part of a wider contemporary concern about female clothing, and its potential to break down gender roles. Shepherd is supported by texts including Stubbs’ infamous *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), and its complaint that women ‘blush not to wear’ the ‘kinde of attire

⁵ Helen Wilcox, *1611: Authority, Gender and the Word in Early Modern England* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), p. 132.

⁶ Stephen Orgel, ‘The Subtexts of the Roaring Girl’, in *Erotic Politics: The Dynamics of Desire in the Renaissance Theatre*, ed. by Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 12-26 (p. 14).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ John Chamberlain, quoted in Stephen Orgel, ‘The subtexts of *The Roaring Girl*’, p. 14.

⁹ Orgel, p. 14.

¹⁰ Long Meg of Westminster was seen as shocking for her height and masculine propensities, including a willingness to beat her adversaries up with a staff. Anon, *The life and pranks of Long Meg of Westminster* (London: 1582), sig. A2v. Simon Shepherd, ‘Roaring Girls: Long Meg of Westminster and Moll Cutpurse’, in *The roaring girl: authoritative texts, contexts, criticism*, ed. by Jennifer Panek, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), pp. 199-212 (p. 199).

appropriate onely to man... and if they could as wel change their sex, & put on the kinde of man, as they can weare apparel assigned onely to man, I think they would as verily become men indeed'.¹¹ In response to this gender-constricting categorisation, Shepherd concludes, 'Moll cannot be contained by male society as it is presently constructed', instead choosing to become deviant and reveal her society's unjust attitudes towards female gender.¹² This seems to construct her, however, as a literary rather than an actual subject, representing a narrative of deliberate deviance rather than felt identity. It also contradicts the (admittedly unreliable) account in *The Life and Death of Mrs Mary Frith*, a biography that claims to have been written in part by Moll herself. *The Life* reports that from a very young age she preferred to dress as a boy, describing her as a 'Tomrig or Rumpscuttle' who 'delighted and sported only in boys play and pastime, not minding or companying with the Girls'.¹³ Her identity in this version of her life is internally consistent rather than added on later as a feminist form of defiance against patriarchal values.

In scholarship Moll has seen iterations as feminist icon, masculine woman, lesbian, and is currently popularly theorised as an example of drag, trans identity, or non-binary gender.¹⁴ All are valid perspectives with strong support from text and ephemera, using historical perspectives to think about current discourses, but thankfully this thesis is not concerned with unpicking the internal truth of Moll's identity, but with how different contemporary versions of her were constructed using different media. Ruth Gilbert has argued that 'this Mary/Moll character appears to have been created as much from the charged contemporary debates about gender as the person of Mary Frith.'¹⁵ She points out that the name 'Cutpurse' partly fictionalises her, an urban mythology, resonating 'with the contemporary slang which denoted prostitute, pick-pocket, vagina, and eunuch, suggesting multiple sexual personae.'¹⁶ Finding one distinct version of Moll

¹¹ Stubbs, sig. F5v.

¹² Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981), pp. 209, 212.

¹³ Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', p. 9. Shepherd's conclusion that Moll's subversion is contained by her society may be accurate, but it also falls very neatly into a classic New Historical model of containment and subversion.

¹⁴ See Majorie Garber, 'The Logic of the Transvestite: *The Roaring Girl* (1608)', in *Staging the Renaissance*, ed. by David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 221-34, Geraldine Wagner, 'Dismembering Desire: Cross(dress)ing the Boundaries of Gender and Genre in *The Life and Death of Mary Frith, Commonly Called Moll Cutpurse*', *English Studies*, 92.4 (2011), 375-399, and Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*.

¹⁵ Gilbert, p. 92.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

even from her celebrity nickname, conjuring her identity, proves an impossible task. Rather, her collective identity among communities was composed of individual versions of Moll. She was featured widely across different early modern media forms; the star not only of *The Roaring Girl*, but a biography and multiple pamphlets, Moll also found herself featuring in forms of news dissemination such as John Chamberlain's diary.

These depictions were sometimes intended to be humorous, and Moll made her (probable) first appearance in print as *Merry Mall of the Bankeside* in 1610, a now-lost jest biography that 'depicted her going about in man's apparel and playing the lute without a licence in taverns and in the streets.'¹⁷ Jestbooks were a cheap, popular form of print, one of many types of chapbook that were only really categorised into their own distinct genre in the nineteenth century. Although they were cheap to purchase, Ian Munro and Anne Lake Prescott challenge the idea that jestbooks were part of a distinctive 'low' culture: they often copied ideas from humanist sources, and were read across the social scale.¹⁸ The lost jestbook *Merry Mall* seems to focus on her crossdressing and lute playing. Another, later, jestbook portrays a slightly different version of Moll:

Whether Mrs. *Mary Frith*, commonly called by some *Mall Cut-purse*, having formerly done so good service at the *Bear, Garden*, and many other things for the good of the Nation, being now aged and having no children of her own body lawfully begotten, as ever I heard of, might not do a pious Act to appoint one to succeed her to help the people to their purses again when she is gone?¹⁹

Printed in the year of her death, the jestbook suggests that there is a cultural lack without Moll, one of the best-known fences in the city, emblematic of her profession as well as practicing it. It is familiar with some of the facts of her biography, i.e. not having children, and may throw light on another reason why a famous bear was called Moll Cutpurse: Moll was present at baits and entertainments at the Bear Garden in order to relieve spectators of their purses.

Perhaps because of her celebrity status, Moll could be emblematic of ideas, not just her profession. In a cheaply-printed chapbook of 'merry mad queries' that could be categorised as a jestbook, John Taylor mockingly argues that Moll Cutpurse is an

¹⁷ Griffiths, 'Frith'.

¹⁸ Ian Munro and Anne Lake Prescott, 'Jest Books', in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁹ Anon, *Endlesse queries: or An end to queries laid down in 36 merry mad queries for the peoples information* (London, 1659), p. 6.

example of modesty, 'For she doth keepe one fashion constantly'.²⁰ In an ironic nod to Moll, Taylor suggests that if she represents a positive standard of behaviour, the other fashionable figures of these 'mad times' must be truly mad. Similarly, *The Embleme of a vertuous woman* (1650) uses Moll as an example, although this time of incorrect behaviour:

A vertuous woman thinks it a disgrace,
To paste her body, or to paint her face.
And in despight of such as *Mary Frith*,
What nature sends she is contented with²¹

Here Moll's crossdressing represents disruption and unnaturalness. Moll's persona, then, is shaped in subtly different ways according to the agenda of the writer at that time. Although the media form may be very similar, versions of her persona alter, and while some facts are similar, there is no one easily distinguishable 'truth' of identity from these different sources.

Playtexts including *The Roaring Girl* and *Amends for Ladies* (c. 1618) told a different version of Moll yet again. *Amends for Ladies* frames Moll as a procurer trying to tempt the virtuous Grace Seldom into an illicit affair with Sir John Lovall. As Steve Orman has argued, Moll is shown attempting to damage the 'harmony and respect between the sexes' that 'enables the healthy functioning of society'.²² Here, she is entirely disruptive, described as 'a rogue and a whore under a hedge', both male and female elements disreputable.²³ Discussing the apparent impossibility of her two bodies, the character Grace Seldom (exemplifying 'virtuous' womanhood) outlines several theories; 'nature shaming to acknowledge thee... hath produc'd thee to the World / Without a sexe, some say thou art a woman, / Others a man; and many thou art both / Woman and man'.²⁴ In this play, her body is constructed through comparison to other disruptive figures like Long Meg of Westminster. By fictionalising Moll's life and relating her to other transgressive figures, the play constructs its own distinctive version of her

²⁰ John Taylor, 'A prodigall Country Gallant, and his new made Maddam', in *All the works of John Taylor the water-poet* (London, 1630), p. 6.

²¹ Anon, *The Embleme of a vertuous woman* (London, 1650), pp. 4-5.

²² Steve Orman, *Nathan Field's Theatre of Excess: Youth Culture and Bodily Excess on the Early Modern Stage (1600-1613)*, PhD Dissertation, Canterbury Christ Church University, 2014, p. 162.

²³ Field, *Amends*, sig. C2r.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

identity. Unlike the jestbooks, the depiction of Moll Cutpurse in *Amends for Ladies* is humorous in a melodramatic sense. She is a stage villain, fitting the demands of Field's plot and neatly contrasting characterisation with the virtuous Grace Seldom. The way Moll is represented, then, is altered by the agenda of the writer and the form of the media used to transmit her persona.

Interestingly, the biography that may in part have been written by Moll herself frames her as a figure of orthodoxy, attracted to the masculine as superior to the feminine. In some ways this, too, is potentially thanks to form, biographies explaining unusual behaviour to their readers in a comprehensible (to them) way. *The Life* argues that it was partly Moll's disdain for typical femininity that explains her crossdressing:

She could not endure the Bake-house, nor that Mag-pye Chat of the Wenches; she was not for mincing obscenity, but would talk freely what ever came uppermost; a spice she had... of prophane and dissolute language, which in her old days amounted to down-right Swearing²⁵

Better to down-right swear, it would seem, than to mince maliciously with words. *The Life* also speculates that Moll decided to dress as a man after realising 'that she was not made for the pleasure or delight of Man; and therefore since she could not be honoured with him she would be honoured by him in that garb and manner of rayment He wore'.²⁶ The wearing of men's clothing here is aspirational, Moll attempting to lift herself towards masculinity, that patently superior state of being. She shuns male-to-female crossdresser/possible hermaphrodite Anniseed-water Robin, recalling 'I begot in me a naturall abhorrence of him that what by threats and my private instigating of boys to fall upon and throw dirt at him, I made him quit my walk and habitation'.²⁷ Rather than a consciously subversive, liberated (according to today's social mores) statement, Moll's personal choices in *The Life* support a patriarchal version of hierarchy, in which being a female-to-male crossdresser is more acceptable than male-to-female.²⁸

News, yet again, shows Moll in a different light, retelling her immediate actions and what is recounted to the reporter. John Chamberlain describes Moll's penitence at

²⁵ Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', pp. 11-12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁸ Concerned with Moll's frequent utterances in *The Roaring Girl* that support patriarchal structures, Jane Baston has argued that 'Moll seems to have taken on not only the apparel of men but also many of their prejudices.' Baston, 'Rehabilitating Moll's Subversion', p. 328.

Paul's Cross in a letter to Dudley Carleton dated 27 January 1612. He prefers to use the term notorious rather than famous, terming her a 'notorious baggage (that used to go in mans apparel and challenged the feild of divers gallants)', a relatively unsympathetic description.²⁹ Interestingly, his summary in brackets seems to be repeating the popularly-discussed facts of her life; a kind of potted biography that makes up the basics of Moll's reputation. Chamberlain's incidental way of referring to her also suggests general well-knownness. He continues, 'where she wept bitterly and seemed very penitent, but yt is since doubted she was maudelin druncke, beeing discovered to have tipled of three quarts of sacke before she came to her penance'.³⁰ There is considerable interest in unpicking Moll's behaviour and motivations; the phrase 'yt is since doubted' suggests that some time after the event, speculation on Moll's actions is lively. Her motivations are the subject of discourse. A rogue even while repenting for her crimes, Chamberlain alleges that the crowd stayed on to hear what Moll had to say rather than feigning any interest in the preacher's words. In this performative arena of the public penance, Moll is the spectacle the assembled crowd were waiting for, and she did not disappoint, performing as an extreme version of the repentant sinner, before revealing the whole thing to be a practical joke. She was drunk the whole time! It was deliberately staged spectacle! As Jane Baston has more eloquently stated, 'Through her apparent acquiescence to the ritual humiliation of public shaming, Moll subverts the dominant power mechanisms of the community with an individual charisma, turning the event into a theatrical extravaganza.'³¹

The account in *The Life* presents Moll as being entirely in control of the theatrical element of the public penance, announcing that 'for a halfe-penny I would have Travelled to all the Market Towns in *England*', showing off the white sheet of penance and being 'as proud of it as that Citizen who rode down to his Friends in his Livery-Gown and Hood'.³² The project of public shaming backfires, Moll apparently willing to transform the single performance into a travelling show and very explicitly seeing her penance as street performance. Reclaiming the narrative drive of her own story, *The Life* claims to offer the authoritative version of Moll's persona.

²⁹ John Chamberlain, 133. *To Sir Dudley Carleton* (London, February 12, 1612), in *The Letters of John Chamberlain, Vol. 1*, ed. by Norman Egbert McClure (Philadelphia: Lancaster Press, 1939), p. 334.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Jane Baston, 'Rehabilitating Moll's subversion in *The Roaring Girl*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37.2 (Spring 1997), 317-335 (p. 318).

³² Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', p. 34.

Each of these media is, however, influenced by another mode of transmission that I have not touched on, and that is gossip. When early moderns wanted to talk about celebrities, they had many ways to do so. They might, of course, simply talk about them, but they could also chatter, babble, charm, discourse, declaim, denounce, discuss, tittle-tattle, prattle, chat, twattle – any number of forms.³³ Because talk about celebrity is inherently social, the discourse that makes up celebrity persona is often gossip. The meaning of this word has changed considerably over time; from ‘god-sib’, or ‘god-sibling’, the sponsor at a baptism, within an early modern context ‘gossip’ generally refers to close female friends, often those invited to be present while a woman was giving birth.³⁴ However, during the early sixteenth century the word was beginning to take on its present meaning as a verb denoting a particular speech act; in one ballad the anonymous author wishes that ‘Death would Gossip now and then, / amongst the crabbed Wives’.³⁵ ‘Wives’ are the participants in gossip, not ‘Gossips’. In another text, women are counselled that ‘They may chat and converse with a modest freedome, so they do not gossip it’, implying that gossip is similar to chat, yet makes a discreet category of its own, associated with a more negative type of social talk.³⁶ In humanities scholarship and philosophy, research on gossip has focused either on malicious gossip, which social psychologists have found to be a small proportion of actual gossip,³⁷ or its political value as a subversive form.³⁸ I will take my cue from anthropologist and evolutionary neuroscientist Robin Dunbar, however, to define ‘gossip’ as to talk broadly about ‘social topics’.³⁹

Gossip was an important feature in the spread of information across early modern Britain. As Natalie Zemon Davies argues, popular print transmitted information in ‘addition’ to more oral forms of dissemination, including ‘rumour, street song, private letters, town criers, fireworks displays, bell-ringing, and penitential processions’.⁴⁰ Moll’s

³³ Emily Butterworth and Hugh Roberts, ‘Gossip and Nonsense in Renaissance France and England’, *Renaissance Studies*, 30.1 (2016), 9-16.

³⁴ ‘gossip, n.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/80197> [accessed 11 December 2018].

³⁵ Anon, *Deaths dance* (London, 1625). See also Anon, *Everie woman in her humor* (London, 1609), sig. B4v.

³⁶ Richard Braithwaite, *The English gentlewoman* (London, 1631), sig. H1v.

³⁷ See Robin Dunbar, ‘Gossip in Evolutionary Perspective’, *Review of General Psychology*, 8:2 (2004), 100-110 (p. 105).

³⁸ See Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1985), p. 4, and Jack Levin, Amita Mody-Desbureau and Arnold Arluke, ‘The Gossip Tabloid as Agent of Social Control’, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 65.2 (1988), 514-517.

³⁹ Dunbar, ‘Gossip’, p. 105.

⁴⁰ 1965.

penitential procession, as we have seen, was initially a live performance, recorded as news by Chamberlain and as recent history by *The Life*. Chamberlain's letters to Dudley Carleton are a result of his daily news gathering trip to St Paul's Cathedral, where he would listen to and sift through gossip, packaging it within long letters. In reporting his speech as text, Chamberlain takes part in a complex process of news dissemination. As Joad Raymond describes it:

News is communicated by word of mouth, and in this process the mouth is as significant as the news. News communication is only partly a matter of conveying information and intelligence; it is as much a way of developing and cementing social relationships. It was a currency integral to early modern popular culture. Print and manuscript supplemented that currency.⁴¹

The mouth conveying information has various social motives: it may be exchanging information as a way of acquiring status in the group as someone 'in the know', for example. Information exchanged will go through various iterations as it is transformed by speakers, writers, and different media.

Talk has other social functions, of course, and some of these are relevant to the construction of celebrity persona. Evolutionary psychologists have found (regardless of other cultural differences) that the vast majority of time gossiping is spent 'keeping track of other individuals in the network' and 'advertising one's own advantages as a friend, ally, or mate (or perhaps the disadvantages of potential rivals)'.⁴² Social talk forms the vast majority of talk, whatever the appellation given to this kind of discussion. In expressing sympathy with their lives and acts, celebrities are often seen by audiences to form part of their own social 'network'. Gossip about celebrities, then, is a way of keeping track of people felt to be part of the interlocutors' social networks. A celebrity may also, because of their high status, help the interlocutors 'advertise one's own advantages' to others, as associating with higher status individuals can increase one's own status.⁴³ A crucial way to showcase that you do indeed closely associate with higher status individuals is to know privileged information about them, giving certain kinds of gossip a higher value: information that should be kept secret because of its scandalous,

⁴¹ Joad Raymond, 'News', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Vol. 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. by Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 378-97, p. 378.

⁴² Dunbar, 'Gossip', p. 105.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

personal, or otherwise controversial nature. Finally, if the interlocutor feels that they are competing with celebrities for attention or other social benefits, they may disparage them through gossip, refocusing attention on the speaker.

At its foundations, gossip is the circulation of stories about other people. I will argue that if a celebrity is a measure of publicly expressed and aggregated reputation, gossip must be at its foundations. If not for gossip circulating through social groups, how does a celebrity become public knowledge? Stories about the person create this public version of that person, or their persona. Texts and ephemera can be records of gossip, in that they have certain shared features including:

1. Being concerned with a social topic.
2. Passed from one person to another.
3. Language-based expressions.
4. Formulated to enact a particular social purpose; benefiting the speaker/writer in some way.

While the source of gossip – the original speaker – is often cited, texts and ephemera can be permanently attached to a name, representing what the writer is willing to commit to publicly. They are also fixed, showing gossip at one moment. Spoken and written forms could intersect, something Thomas Dekker pastiches in *The Guls Horne-booke* (1609). To the aspiring poet entering a room, he recommends, ‘After a turne or two in the roome, take occasion (pulling out youer gloves) to have some Epigrams, or Satyre, or Sonnet fastned in one of them that may... offer itself to the gentlemen.’⁴⁴ Concealed in their gloves, the young aspirant to poetic fame carries a pre-prepared satire or witty poem on the subject of someone else, and pretends to have composed it off the cuff, as it were. The aim is to generate the speaker’s own reputation as a wit, while enhancing or detracting from their subject’s reputation.

Adam Fox has argued for ‘the essential reciprocity between the substance of the ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ realms,’⁴⁵ stressing that, ‘The boundaries between speech and text, hearing and reading, were thoroughly permeable and constantly shifting so that the

⁴⁴ *The Guls Horne-booke* (London, 1609), p. 24.

⁴⁵ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 39.

dichotomy is difficult to identify and impossible to sustain.⁴⁶ Fox cites an incident in 1607 when ‘a scurrilous ballad was set above the door of a Durham townsman... “no man passed by” without “reading the verses”... while “others that had no skill in letters, got them perused by such as could.”’⁴⁷ These rhymes can be difficult to differentiate from the printed ballads that survive today, particularly because of the way ballad-makers seem to have been perceived, as people who ‘may compose... *Libels* into *Metre*’.⁴⁸ If we do read ballads as gossip, the explosion of print culture worked to spread resonant social talk far beyond its original community of actors and reporters.

Interestingly, print also marks a commercialisation of gossip, something letter writers selling the news to interested parties outside the capital were already doing.⁴⁹ Printed stories and ballads about public figures give gossip an exchange value, capitalising on pre-existing demand for interesting tales about other people.⁵⁰ In early modern Britain, then, we have an active gossip culture circulating through various media. Does this idea of gossip encompass the celebrity phenomenon? The discussion of celebrity constitutes social talk, being about another person, but I would like to throw another word into the mix: discourse, suggestive of the way gossip was used, shaped, and reasoned with to construct celebrity in skilful ways.⁵¹ This version of discourse is distinct from a Foucauldian model of discourse analysis, which analyses the ways speakers dominate and govern through discourse, although it is closely related in its associations of social power and speech.⁵²

The Life describes Moll as ‘the Talk and Discourse of the Town’, the use of these two almost synonymous words in the same clause suggesting a vital distinction between

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Fox, p. 38. This type of libel tended to be produced differently depending on the gender of the accused; see Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 152-85.

⁴⁸ J. H., *Two essays of love and marriage* (London: 1657), p. 91.

⁴⁹ Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, ‘News Networks in Early Modern Europe’, in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 1-16.

⁵⁰ Gossip theorist Joseph Epstein has seen the introduction of the printing press as a definitive break with intimate, and the beginning of public, gossip. However, as Shakespeare teaches us in *Henry VI Part 2*, it would be wrong to underestimate the range of word of mouth, and gossip certainly became public before the advent of the printing press. Joseph Epstein, *Gossip: The Untrivial Pursuit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), p. xii.

⁵¹ I am not suggesting that gossip cannot be skilful, only that there is a step beyond talk involving deliberate construction, which makes the use of a distinct word helpful.

⁵² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1989), and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991).

them.⁵³ In *The Life*, Moll is at once talk *and* discourse, the second of these terms associated with reason, and often written more fully as ‘discourse of reason’.⁵⁴ Discourse implies a reasoning through of a particular problem via speech. In letter to his brother, Philip Sidney defines ‘a Discourser, which name I give to who soever speaks *non simpliciter de facto, sed de qualitatibus et circumstantiis facti;*’ (‘who ever speaks not just about the facts, but about the qualities and circumstances of the facts’).⁵⁵ The discourser might repeat gossip, but they will also attempt to narrativise it themselves, shaping the story according to their own experience and logical processes. Celebrity is not solely gossip, but the use of gossip to reason through the facts known about the celebrity, compiling and narrativising these facts into a personality or persona. The celebrity may simultaneously be different for every speaker, their image imaginatively created in the mind’s eye and communicated through speech. It is a paradoxical way of creating a personality: constructing the celebrity by effectively attempting to unpick it down to its component parts. In this model, audiences are not passive receivers of information about the celebrity: they are creative participants in constructing the celebrity persona. Further blurring boundaries of text and speech, ‘discourse’, for early moderns could also mean written text.⁵⁶ A proliferation of texts and ephemera on the subject of one particular person may denote a particularly problematic public identity, and the desire to reason through the problem of this persona.

It is problematic or unusual identity that requires discoursing. Jerry M. Suls has suggested that ‘gossip can be employed to illuminate those ambiguous areas of behavior about which group members have little consensus.’⁵⁷ Speech can be employed as a way to work through trauma as well as milder cases of rupture or dissonance, taking the place of touch to soothe away fear.⁵⁸ Discussing abnormal cases – known as outliers – is a way to understand our own place in the social hierarchy, and the fabric of

⁵³ Anon, ‘The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse’, p. 7.

⁵⁴ ‘discourse, n.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/53985> [accessed 3 July 2019].

⁵⁵ ‘To Robert Sidney’, *The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, Vol. 3, ed. by Albert Feuillerat, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 130-3, p. 131.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Thomas Cooper, ‘Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae’ (1578), in *Lexicons of Early Modern English* <<https://leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry/1400/108475>> [accessed 3 July 2019].

⁵⁷ Jerry M. Suls, ‘Gossip as Social Comparison’, *Journal of Communication*, 21:1 (1977), 164-168 (p. 165).

⁵⁸ In fact, gossip has been referred to by some anthropologists as ‘grooming’, the literal substitution of talk for touch. See Robin Dunbar, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* (London: Faber, 1997).

our social network: the people we have relationships with. Discouraging about our own social network can explain instances of dissonance and potentially threatening abnormality. When regarding their own personal reputation, people look to the outliers in society, those whose fame is unusual, as a way of understanding themselves. Celebrities as outliers, therefore, are an important site of gossip. They are talked about because they are on the edge of normal behaviour, and perhaps counter-intuitively, it is the mechanism of processing this behaviour, discourse, that builds and spreads their celebrity. The story is told and re-told as a means of understanding their outlying behaviour. Celebrity, therefore, can be seen as an extension of social network organisation, and personal reputation-building.

As an outlier, whose persona is difficult to understand because it is so unusual, Moll serves to set both gossip and discourse into high relief, so much time and energy is spent trying to understand her public identity. The problem discoursed across multiple texts is Moll's identity, speakers attempting to resolve the apparent opposition of male and female contained within her public persona, and her status as someone on the borders of legality in business and lifestyle. *The Life* describes her: 'nothing appertaining to her, being to be matcht throughout the whole Course of History or Romance; so unlike her selfe, and of so difficult a mixture, that it is no wonder she was like no body.'⁵⁹ In trying to understand Moll, her celebrity is continually reshaped by gossip and discourse.

Restaging Gossip

Alongside her appearances in the media discussed above, Moll Cutpurse is the character in Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's Jacobean city comedy *The Roaring Girl* (in which Moll is the titular roaring girl). Like many of Middleton's and other city comedies, it is interested in the exchange value of goods and services. Brian Gibbons has summarised this wider societal impact, Middleton 'transforming typical elements of city life into significant patterns, expressing consciously satiric criticism but also suggesting deeper sources of conflict and change.'⁶⁰ I would argue that *The Roaring Girl* extends this economic interest into the value and exchange of personalities, exploring the foundations and utility of public persona. Restaging gossip, *The Roaring Girl* shows a

⁵⁹ Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', p. 4.

⁶⁰ Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1980), p. 5. Setting more abstract economic factors besides the material also sees Middleton examining intellectual labour and its value. See Katharina Boehm, 'The Economics of Intellectual Labour in Thomas Middleton's City Comedies', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 56.2 (2016), 351-372.

public version of Moll that circulates through talk, and that is separable from her private persona. Jennifer Holl has argued that gossip on Shakespeare's stage 'was wielded as a narrative strategy, substantiating characters through the immaterial force of others' words in much the same way that, offstage, gossip shapes that second, immortal body of reputation.⁶¹ Moll's character is built partly through gossip in the play, allowing the audience to see differences between Moll as a character and Moll as she is spoken about. This, I argue, restages the act of celebrity creation and indicates the kinds of talk to be expected in discussion around Moll's celebrity persona.

Moll is from the first highlighted as the star attraction of *The Roaring Girl*, and her celebrity may in fact have been down to a natural dramatic talent. When she walked through the streets of London, it was said that 'No blazing star draws more eyes after it'.⁶² Sebastian Wengrave, the hero of Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's play, supports this assertion of her celebrity within the city, crying:

There's a wench

Called Moll, Mad Moll, or Merry Moll, a creature

So strange in quality, a whole city takes

Note of her name and person.⁶³

The play's existence itself is testimony to popular interest in Moll, her celebrity acting as a commodity that would sell plays and attract audiences. The printed play's subtitle is '*Moll Cut-Purse*', and the frontispiece features a large image of Moll with no backdrop other than the boards she is standing on (which may represent the stage). She is prominently cross-dressed, holding a sword and smoking tobacco, aligning with Chamberlain's potted summary of her persona: a crossdresser and dueller. Nathan Field's *Amends for Ladies* similarly uses Moll's celebrity reputation to advertise the 1639 edition of the play: 'With the merry pranks of Moll Cutpurse' is emblazoned directly beneath the title.⁶⁴ Her very short part in the play (a mere 11 lines) suggests that the name of this famous fence was used primarily as an advertising technique to sell more

⁶¹ Jennifer Holl, "'if this be worth your hearing": Gossip on the Early Modern Stage', in *Who Hears in Shakespeare?: Auditory Words on Stage and Screen*, ed. by Laury Magnus, Walter W. Cannon (Madison: Fairleigh Dickson University Press, 2012), pp. 61-80 (p. 62).

⁶² Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, 'The Roaring Girl', in *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies*, ed. by James Knowles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 225-310, 2.134.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1.94-97.

⁶⁴ Nathan Field, *Amends for Ladies* (London: 1639), sig. A2r.

copies. The 1618 edition does not advertise Moll on the title page, however, suggesting that she may not have been seen as such a draw at this time, or that the play had recently been seen by a play-purchasing audience, and expected to sell itself.

In composing *The Roaring Girl*, Dekker and Middleton build audience anticipation for the celebrity appearance (or at least the actor playing the celebrity) by outlining the different types of roaring girl; 'One is she / that roars at midnight... Another roars i'th' day-time'.⁶⁵ This formula of information followed by quick denial suggests that the apparition we are about to see will be even more thrilling than the roaring girls so far proposed. It gets more interesting; Dekker and Middleton's roaring girl 'flies / With wings more lofty'.⁶⁶ Finally, when we have reached a fever-pitch of anticipation, the name is revealed; 'would you know who 'tis? Would you hear her name?'⁶⁷ At this point the audience may have been loudly attempting to answer these questions, as they almost certainly knew that Moll was the roaring girl of the play, sharing shouts of 'Moll' as the speaker finally concurs, pronouncing, 'She is called Mad Moll; her life our acts proclaim'.⁶⁸ The fact that the prologue culminates with her name is important: Moll is the star, despite not being a romantic lead.

In their play, romantic hero Sebastian Wengrave pretends to be in love with Moll so that his father, the miserly Sir Alexander Wengrave, will be pleased when Sebastian marries his true love Mary Fitz-Allard. Sir Alexander is suitably horrified by the idea that his son plans to marry the gender-ambivalent Moll, and finally pleased to learn of Sebastian's marriage to marry the alternative prospect, Mary Fitz-Allard. A citizens' plot runs alongside the romantic one, linked only in vague way, and which features some of the more comic characters such as Mistress Gallipot and Laxton, who are having an affair. After the anticipatory build-up of the prologue, we might expect the immediate entrance onstage from our titular roaring girl. However, the character Moll does not make her grand entrance until Act 2, Scene 1 is well underway. And this first entrance is a farce of celebrity recognition, her name repeated ten times within the first eight lines after her appearance onstage, all the gallants present crying, 'Moll, Moll, pist, Moll!'⁶⁹ Such attention-seeking suggests a high level of status, each gallant desiring to be

⁶⁵ Dekker and Middleton, 'The Roaring Girl', Prologue, ll. 16-17, 19.

⁶⁶ This description, as well as referring to angelic moral character, could be a nod to Moll's fame; the goddess Fama was generally depicted with wings. Ibid., ll. 25-26.

⁶⁷ Ibid., l. 29.

⁶⁸ Ibid., l. 30.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1.179.

recognised by and associated with Moll. They all know her name, but the gallants themselves are left anonymous, embodying a homogenised popular voice. Prior to this much-heralded entrance, we hear (or perhaps overhear) various characters talking *about* Moll, re-staging the act of gossip to circulate particular perceptions about her character. Through this re-staging, the play displays the interaction between Moll herself and the discourse about her. This discourse, however, turns out to be more informed by the unnamed gallants' concerns than the Moll that appears before them.

Perhaps the scene that most dissects the processes of gossip and discourse is Act 1 Scene 2, where we find Sir Alexander in the middle of 'A merry day / 'Mongst friends'.⁷⁰ He announces his intention of gossiping, which his friends support:

Because time's glass shall not be running long,
I'll quicken it with a pretty tale.

Sir Davy

Good tales do well

In these bad days, where vice does so excel.

Sir Adam

Begin, Sir Alexander.⁷¹

Attention is called for the 'tale', which Sir Alexander advertises as 'pretty'. The other speakers declare their willingness to listen in return, Sir Dapper in particular desiring a 'good' tale. Sir Alexander begins his piece of gossip with a framing device: 'Last day I met / An agèd man upon whose head was scored, / A debt of just so many years as these'.⁷² An explicitly social situation has been laid out: Sir Alexander is about to report a conversation between himself and a man of a similar age. To further add authenticity to his account Sir Alexander apparently reports this man's speech verbatim: "Oh my good knight,' says he'.⁷³ However, all of the listeners are unsatisfied with this account, asking 'His name, I pray you, sir'.⁷⁴ The gossip is more valuable if it has the ring of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2.40-41.

⁷¹ Ibid., 2.62-3.

⁷² Ibid., 2.63-66.

⁷³ Ibid., 2.70.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2.67.

authenticity: Sir Alexander has been careful to locate the tale in time and situation, but his interlocutors desire even more context.

The social dynamics of this group of friends listening to Sir Alexander's tale bears much examination. Sir Alexander is hosting; his 'bounty spreads the table', and he repeatedly compares friendship to 'double interest' or 'gold saved'.⁷⁵ This miser is, perhaps, only able to understand friendship in terms of money expended or saved. His friends seem to be expected, in return for this hospitality, to fall in with his opinion and praise his possessions, but their real feelings are left somewhat in doubt. Neatfoot terms Sir Adam Appleton, for example, 'a back friend', referring to a false friend.⁷⁶ As soon as Sir Alexander gets to the point of his tale and begins to describe Moll, his cronies are anxious to fall in with his way of thinking. He terms her 'A creature... nature hath brought forth / To mock the sex of woman.'⁷⁷ Sir Alexander's colourful description of Moll's gender, provokes Sir Davy Dapper to exclaim, 'A monster! 'Tis some monster!', supporting Sir Alexander's account.⁷⁸ This is a fairly predictable pattern for gossip: after all parties have agreed to gossip and the gossip begins, 'supporting and elaborating statements or comments from the people not in the role of the gossip' are generally made.⁷⁹ Sir Alexander, heartened by this conclusion that concurs so precisely with his own opinion, cries, 'She's a varlet!', a masculine slur meaning knave.⁸⁰ Together, Sir Alexander and Sir Davy have created overlapping images of Moll that, while they use different descriptors, have similar associations, 'creature' and 'monster' standing as similes in most circumstances. Sir Alexander has transferred his idea of Moll, through a detailed and evocative word-picture, into the mind of his friend, Sir Davy. This constructed idea of Moll circulates through the group, heard by other onstage characters including Sir Adam Appleton, Goshawk and Laxton. Sir Adam is moved to describe Moll as 'a poison', paralleling the unseen yet invidious way her image has entered the consciousness of this group of friends.⁸¹ Speculating on Moll's monstrosity

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.3, 39, 41.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.49.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 2.127-8.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.134.

⁷⁹ Sally Yerkovich, 'Gossiping as a Way of Speaking', *Journal of Communication*, 27.1 (1977), 192-196 (p. 192).

⁸⁰ Dekker and Middleton 'The Roaring Girl', 2.135. 'varlet, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2017) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/221596> [accessed 15 August 2017].

⁸¹ Dekker and Middleton 'The Roaring Girl', 2.148.

leads them to construct a shared idea of her, distributed from speaker to listener and back again, changing with each iteration.

As an audience watching characters either exchange or overhear gossip (indeed overhearing it ourselves), we see reputation-building in action. The audience's observation positions them as the mass of spectators who make celebrity possible, listening to gossip and themselves representative of the many voices that iterate and reiterate the celebrity persona. Sir Alexander perceives the playhouse's galleries as the extensive picture 'galleries' in his home.⁸² Significantly, he describes them as 'Stories of men and women, mixed together', their public face 'like the promising titles of new books'.⁸³ Each of the watchers in the galleries, themselves potentially well-known to other Londoners, is made up of stories that can be transmitted to readers and so disseminated through the crowd. In this public space identity is equivalent to story, in itself an imaginative collection of ideas rather than a flesh-and-blood thing. The word itself deriving from 'history', other contemporary meanings of the word 'story' overlay story-as-idea or anecdote here, primarily 'A pictorial representation of a historical or legendary subject; (hence) any work of art depicting human figures.'⁸⁴ The playwrights, in a sense, are painting a legend or history of 'Mad Moll', and the audience watching her movements is an essential part of the legend. It is, after all, the collective gossip about Moll that will be remembered as her legend. The slurs used by Sir Alexander and his cronies to define and describe Moll construct a powerful public image, and can be read like book titles or headlines.

In his play *The Staple of Newes* (1625), Ben Jonson pastiches this function of play audiences as the circulators and progenitors of gossip. On the onstage stools usually reserved for high-paying audience members sit instead the characters Gossip Mirth, Gossip Tattle, Gossip Censure and Gossip Expectation. Gossip Tattle then reveals the source of her knowledge.

Why, I had it from my maid *loane Heare-say*: and shee had it from a *limbe o'the schoole*, shee saies, a little *limbe* of nine yeere old; who told her, the *Master* left out his conjuring booke one day, and hee found it, and so the *Fable* came about. But whether it were true, or no, we Gossips are bound to beleeeue it, an't be

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.14.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2.17, 22.

⁸⁴ 'story, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2017) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/190981> [accessed 11 October 2017].

once out, and a foot: how should wee entertaine the time else, or finde our selues in fashionable discourse, for all companies, if we do not credit all, and make more of it, in the reporting?⁸⁵

Interestingly, Jonson uses a synonym for ‘story’ here, choosing ‘*Fable*’. For Tattle, gossip often comes from indeterminate sources; ‘*Hear-say*’.⁸⁶ Channelled through the senses, the story is inevitably altered in the process of individual perception, and continual re-telling. It circulates between people speaking intimately, yet manages to become common currency thanks to a whole series of intimate conversations. Nova Myhill has argued that the gossips ‘serve to demonstrate the centrality of the audience to the playhouse experience’, paralleling the role of Sir Alexander’s galleries, and themselves instrumental to the play’s performance and reputation.⁸⁷

And as Sir Alexander and his cronies demonstrate, when sharing their knowledge of the celebrity, closely-connected groups of people are likely to have a similar opinion. This phenomenon is known by some psychologists as ‘socially distributed cognition’, social networks seen to a certain degree as an extended mind.⁸⁸ Eliot R. Smith explains:

In everyday life, person perception is ordinarily performed not by isolated individuals but as a form of *socially distributed cognition*. Perceivers share their impressions with others and draw on information provided by others, as well as directly observing and interacting with social targets. The result is not simply an impression represented in one perceiver's mind, but an impression that is socially shared and consensual (to a greater or lesser extent) and is often explicitly communicated. In short, people gossip.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Ben Jonson, ‘The Staple of News’, in *The works of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1641), p. 49.

⁸⁶ Hans-Joachim Neubauer has seen hearsay as the medium through which rumours are transmitted, yet his description of this process could apply to gossip, emphasising the difficulty in distinguishing one from another. Of hearsay Neubauer writes: ‘In the background of conversations in which this voice speaks there is a chain of anonymous speakers begun somewhere indeterminate and leading nowhere in particular. This series, this virtual network of further speakers, gives rumours their strange authenticity.’ *The Rumour: A Cultural History*, trans. by Christian Braun (London: Free Association Books, 1999), p. 21.

⁸⁷ Nova Myhill, ‘Taking the Stage’, in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642*, ed. by Jennifer A. Low and Nora Myhill (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 37-54, ap. 48.

⁸⁸ Eliot R. Smith and Elizabeth C. Collins, ‘Contextualizing Person Perception: Distributed Social Cognition’, *Psychological Review*, 116.2 (2009), 343-364.

⁸⁹ Eliot R. Smith, ‘Evil Acts and Malicious Gossip: A Multiagent Model of the Effects of Gossip in Socially Distributed Person Perception’, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 18.4 (2014), 311-325 (p. 311).

Moll's public persona is a socially distributed idea, rather than a flesh-and-blood thing. When audiences express sympathy or antipathy, it is in relation to this idea. As her persona is subjective to continual discourse, it takes shape through a collective process. Elizabeth Cook has argued that before *The Roaring Girl* was written, Moll was 'already A Subject: an item of popular mythology in her own lifetime.'⁹⁰ Myth, she argues, 'is a collective creation, owned by no-one.'⁹¹ Similarly Valerie Forman has argued that Moll acted as 'the locus of cultural fantasies', not a coherent character but 'an embodiment of the culture's contradictions.'⁹² Both Forman and Cook present a sense in which Moll's persona was created by her culture.

However, this myth varied considerably as it was told and retold, never an entirely replicable story or an entirely coherent myth. Audiences are not homogenous. In *The Roaring Girl*, Dekker and Middleton are careful to illustrate the effect of the interlocutor on gossip. Shopkeeper and citizen Mistress Gallipot, perhaps, has too many sources of gossip, and cannot make her mind up about the nature of Moll's persona. Instead she attempts to explain Moll's strangeness, repeating other talk: 'Some will not stick to say she's a man, and some, both man and woman.'⁹³ As soon as Mistress Gallipot leaves the stage, fellow-shopkeeper Goshawk comments, 'Tis the maddest, fantasticallest girl! – I never knew so much flesh and so much nimbleness put together!'⁹⁴ For both speakers, Moll is a construction of outward appearances. In their utterances, she takes the object position. Goshawk is fascinated with how Moll is 'put together'. And this gets to the heart of Moll's persona: it is continually in the process of construction and re-construction, so that it can be circulated. It is perhaps significant that Mistress Gallipot and Goshawk are shopkeepers, and that this conversation takes place in Mistress Gallipot's tobacco shop (one of three shops shown onstage). Like the process of unpacking merchandise to display in a shop, and re-packaging it for the customer, Moll's persona is taken out for discussion, subtly changing function with each new conversation – from wholesale to merchandise to possession.

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Cook, 'Introduction', *The Roaring Girl* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. xiii-xl (p. xx).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² For Forman, these cultural fantasies are economic, Moll and Mary Fitzallard acting as counterfeits for one another to signify simultaneous submission and subordination to the early modern marketplace. Valerie Forman, 'Marked Angels: Counterfeits, Commodities, and *The Roaring Girl*,' *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54.4 (2001), 1531-1560 (p. 1542).

⁹³ Dekker and Middleton 'The Roaring Girl', 1.209-10.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 1.204-5.

The third speaker onstage in this scene would like to buy Moll's persona, as both a possession and an investment for his future children. The gallant Laxton is secretly plotting to 'lay hard seige to her' and buy Moll's 'maidenhead', believing that 'where the walls are flesh and blood, I'll ever pierce through with a golden auger.'⁹⁵ Categorising her as a woman who can be paid for sex, the only question is how much gold Laxton will have to expend. Standing in Mistress Gallipot's tobacco shop, Moll is another object for sale. Although part of this three-way exchange of opinions, his reaction to Moll is very different to Mistress Gallipot's or Goshawk's. Immediately on seeing Moll, Laxton tells the audience in an aside, 'Methinks a brave captain might get all his soldiers upon her, and ne'er be beholding to a company of Mile End milksops'.⁹⁶ Moll seems so strong and virile that she is bound to give birth to incredibly strong soldiers. Laxton, whose name hints that his character 'lacks stones', is attracted to Moll as she will make up for his lack of virility. So while Moll is common currency, the way in which various characters react to her also says something about them personally. Laxton interprets as he likes from the socially distributed image of Moll.

Finding the 'truth' of her personality beneath these layers of illusion is almost impossible, as Moll herself protests to the highest-ranking character in the play, Lord Noland:

must you have

A black name, because ill things you know?

Good troth, my lord, I am made Moll Cutpurse so.

How many whores in small ruffs and still looks?

How many chaste whose names fill slander's books?

Were all men cuckolds, whom gallants in their scorns

Call so, we should not walk for goring horns.⁹⁷

Crucially, she is 'made' Moll Cutpurse through the circulation of knowledge, and has very little chance to combat this constructed version of her personality. Pointing out the frequent disjunction between public knowledge (or reputation) and the most private

⁹⁵ Ibid., 1.195, 196-7.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.171-3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 10.315-320.

kinds of knowledge (sexual intimacy), in this speech Moll asks that Lord Noland judge her on the basis of personally-acquired knowledge rather than what is stored and distributed across communities.

After Laxton tries to pay her for sex, an affronted Moll challenges him to a duel in order 'To teach thy base thoughts manners'.⁹⁸ In physically fighting Laxton, Moll is able to fight his libellous assumptions, crying, 'Would the spirits / Of all my slanderers were clasped in thine, / That I might vex an army at one time!'⁹⁹ Temporarily, Moll can physically fight the untruths that are usually transmitted invisibly. However, it is always a futile enterprise. Instead, Moll decides 'Perhaps for my mad going, some reprove me; / I please myself, and care not else who loves me.'¹⁰⁰ Whatever action she takes, Moll will be treated according to her public reputation, and the reactions of each individual to this collectively stored and distributed idea. Straddling the boundary of celebrity and notoriety, she does not court her audience's love.

Two shadows with one shape

As I have suggested, the reason for much of the early modern discourse about Moll was her ambiguous gender position. Accounts of her life often attempt to explain her predilection for men's clothing, her behaviour requiring repetition and discussion before it can be made into a comprehensible form of action. Fear is often expressed; she is a threat, 'two shadows to one shape'.¹⁰¹ The idea of shadows suggests illusion or impermanence in her image, but it is also an important visual marker: a shadow replicates the body's shape, and Moll has two. Mythological readings anchor her unusual dress within an established visual and literary culture; she is alternately a 'mermaid', an 'hermaphrodite', or 'Of man and horse, as the old Centaures were faign'd'.¹⁰² As Tara E. Pederson points out, mermaids were particularly worrying in the early modern world as they were associated with uncontrolled female sexuality and 'ambiguous sexual organs'; this leads Sir Alexander Wengrave in *The Roaring Girl* to posit that his son Sebastian will be 'shipwrecked' by Moll's wiles, unmoored from normative sexuality by her presumed sexual deviance.¹⁰³ Trying to understand Moll's fluid gender

⁹⁸ Ibid., 5.67.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 5.108-10.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 10.322-3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2.132.

¹⁰² Ibid., 2.214. Anon, 'The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse', p. 7. Field, *Amends*, sig. C2r.

¹⁰³ Tara E. Pederson, *Mermaids and the Production of Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 42.

roles, Sir Alexander muses that perhaps, ‘her birth began / ‘Ere she was all made’.¹⁰⁴ Her auto/biography *The Life* reports, ‘I was taken for a Woman of a single and strange Humour, and lookt upon as one of the conceits of the Times which laboured under very new and Exotick Fashions.’¹⁰⁵ The text suggests that she took up smoking to further this ‘Exotick’ image, ‘because of its affected singularity; and no Woman before me ever smoakt any’.¹⁰⁶ Although she was not the first ever woman to smoke, smoking at all was fairly novel, contributing to a sense of the unusual. These accounts figure her as an exotic anomaly, akin to a centaur or ‘mermaid’, a mythical beast, and *The Life* implies that Moll very self-consciously fashioned this image, cultivating an unusual reputation. *The Life* justifies its own existence ‘partly from the strangeness and newness of the subject’.¹⁰⁷ Going into hyperbole, its address to the reader defines Moll as ‘*the Living Discription and Port[r]aiture of a Schism and Separation*’.¹⁰⁸ For the anonymous writer, Moll’s uniqueness justifies speculation and interest in the subject of Moll’s life. Her celebrity is based on a seeming contradiction: that she is unusual enough to cause talk, and typical of a type of discourse, based on anxiety about gender roles. This essential doubleness is often characterised as deeply problematic, rendering Moll an ‘Ambodexter’.¹⁰⁹ The attempt to reconcile two apparently opposite elements within one body is, because of its unusualness or perceived outlying position, the foundation of her celebrity.

Amongst the contemporary speculation on Moll’s life and gender, Dekker and Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl* seems an attempt to give the official line on Moll’s gender identity. However, as the play progresses, the playwrights point out the impossibility of showing one definitive version of Moll, highlighting the impossibility of finding the ‘truth’ of her persona via gossip. The playwrights’ apparent attempts to define Moll’s gender reach their climax in the tailor scenes of *The Roaring Girl*. Unnecessary for either the love plot or the citizens’ plot of the play, the tailor scenes show Moll being measured for a new suit of clothing. The character of the tailor himself, stitcher and cutter of the body’s outer shell, may at least partially embody contemporary anxiety about clothing deviance, and the capacity for clothing to alter gender binaries. James M.

¹⁰⁴ Dekker and Middleton, ‘The Roaring Girl’, 2.131.

¹⁰⁵ Anon, ‘The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse’, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Bromley has read the play as an exploration of queer fashion, particularly in the character of Jack Dapper, whose sartorial extravagance (including spending an hour shopping for a feather) ‘offers the play’s urban audiences nonstandard forms of embodiment and sociality based on the eroticized display of the clothed male body.’¹¹⁰ Clothing, then, is an important feature in understanding the identity of characters in *The Roaring Girl*.

The tailor first enters with the cry of ‘so ho ho so ho’ traditionally reserved for falconers, a call that encourages the bird to stoop to the lure, attempting thereby to catch Moll in his trap.¹¹¹ His trap, of course, is the carefully planned and cut clothing which codifies the parts of the body with its fixed, permanent shape, so definitely categorising Moll as one gender or another. However, a source of uneasiness in contemporary texts is the notion both that difference in dress is breaking down, and that a tailor can fundamentally alter one’s shape; in a book of sermons, Puritan divine Thomas Adams writes, ‘God made him a man, he hath made himself a beast; and now the Taylor (scarce a man himself) must make him a man againe: a brave man, a better man than ever Nature left him.’¹¹² Is the tailor, then, able to do what nature cannot, and create or complete their clients’ gender? The tailor in *The Roaring Girl* explicitly refers to Moll’s desire for ‘the great Dutch slop’ rather than breeches as a ‘change’ in ‘fashion’.¹¹³ But fashion could mean both what is in style, and to give shape to.¹¹⁴ Great Dutch slops are woefully out of date in fashionable terms, suggesting a more fundamental sense of fashioning and the relationship between celebrity and outward appearance, including the signifiers of gender.¹¹⁵

After having had no success trying to create an earlier suit of clothes, the tailor tells us, ‘I know my fault now: t’other was somewhat stiff between the legs, I’ll make these open enough, I warrant you.’¹¹⁶ The sexual innuendo is of course unequivocal, but the tailor also seems to have had a practical difficulty in shaping slops around Moll’s body. He

¹¹⁰ James M. Bromley, “‘Quilted with Mighty Words to Lean Purpose’”: Clothing and Queer Style in *The Roaring Girl*, *Renaissance Drama*, 43.2 (2015), 143-172 (p. 146).

¹¹¹ Dekker and Middleton, ‘The Roaring Girl’, 5.68. Andor Gomme, *The Roaring Girl* (London: Ernest Benn, 1976), p. 48.

¹¹² Thomas Adams, *Diseases of the soule a discourse divine, morall, and physical* (London, 1616), sig. F1v.

¹¹³ Dekker and Middleton, ‘The Roaring Girl’, 5.76.

¹¹⁴ ‘fashion, v.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/68390> [accessed 10 September 2018].

¹¹⁵ Loose slops had been rendered clownish by Richard Tarlton’s predilection for wearing them, showing the influence of celebrity on fashion in general.

¹¹⁶ Dekker and Middleton, ‘The Roaring Girl’, 5.83-4.

returns to the stage repeatedly in order to get Moll's measurements and seems to struggle at pinning down the right numbers. Why does the tailor have such difficulty in shaping slops for Moll? It might be because a change of fashion can, very literally, re-fashion the flesh beneath. Helkiah Crooke's 1613 *A Description of the Body of Man* describes how the clitoris, 'sometimes... groweth to such a length that it hangeth without the cleft like a mans member, especially when it is fretted with the touch of the cloaths, and so strutteth and groweth to a rigiditie as doth the yarde of a man.'¹¹⁷ It seems that wearing breeches, which unlike skirts may rub against the clitoris, could cause a dramatic physical transformation. Considering that Crooke describes the clitoris as the 'womans yard', the female body is always remarkably close to transformation.¹¹⁸ The fact that Moll needs more space in her breeches suggests that her clitoris is beginning to rival any man's penis in size.

Substantiating this version of anatomical change, an epigram by poet Thomas Freeman on Moll (in a collection of 300 epigrams that mentions many other contemporary celebrities) may also be referring to this idea. It too explicitly references the effect clothing, and the material practice of wearing breeches, may have:

Moll weares the breech, what may she be the while;
Sure shee that doth the shadow so much grace,
What will shee when the substance comes in place?¹¹⁹

The shadow may refer both to Moll's place in a shadowy underworld, but also her outline which – at least when crossdressed – casts a different shadow to a woman wearing women's clothing. The last laugh is potentially on Moll, however, as Freeman speculates on what Moll will do when wearing breeches has a physical effect on her body, the substance of flesh filling out what had been illusion or shadow. The epigram suggests, like the tailor scenes in *The Roaring Girl*, that the substance of Moll's body was the subject of considerable interest and speculation. By deconstructing the making and measuring of Moll's clothing, Dekker and Middleton are revealing the very information that renders Moll a subject of speculative discourse: they are promising to show not only the secrets of gender, but the secrets of celebrity.

¹¹⁷ Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia a description of the body of man* (London: 1615), p. 238.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Freeman, *Rubbe*, sig. E4r.

Whether the secrets of celebrity are revealed as promised is questionable. If the tailor is responsible for giving shape to Moll's body, how are we to ever 'know' her? In fashioning clothing 'somewhat stiff about the legs' has he created Moll's gender difference? In the theatrical space, to remove her clothing would be to remove her presence, revealing the boy/man playing Moll. It is the curmudgeonly character Sir Alexander who draws our attention to this: 'a Dutch slop and a French doublet, a codpiece-daughter' is how he refers to Moll.¹²⁰ The tailor's promise that Moll's breeches will 'stand round and full', seems to refer to her characterisation as a 'codpiece-daughter'. Moll Cutpurse is her clothing, only clearly defined by what she wears. In showing the making of her clothing, do Dekker and Middleton eliminate the celebrity body rather than facilitating the privileged access to this body that the play seems to promise? The play undercuts the notion of a real celebrity with a real body, only able to gesture at what lies beneath Moll's clothing with allusions to that same clothing.

The impossibility of finding the 'substance' behind the 'shadow' of Moll's clothing reflects the fluidity of Moll's persona as it circulates through speakers, impossible to ossify in one form. *The Roaring Girl's* epilogue makes clear that it is impossible to show one essential form to the audience, as each spectator will be disappointed if this form does not live up to their expectations. In the epilogue, the playwrights fascinatingly seem to promise the real Moll Cutpurse's future appearance onstage, vowing 'if what both have done / Cannot full pay your expectation, / The Roaring Girl herself, some few days hence, / Shall on this stage give larger recompense'.¹²¹ Moll Cutpurse may have made an appearance at the Fortune while *The Roaring Girl* was running. Mark Hutchings argues, based partly on the evidence of the epilogue, that Moll may have spoken the prologue or given an impromptu song, jig or speech of some kind.¹²² According to the Consistory of London Correction Book, she 'sat there upon the stage in the public view of all the people there present' and watched the performance, perhaps enlivening some scenes with commentary.¹²³ While Moll Cutpurse physically watches *The Roaring Girl*,

¹²⁰ Dekker and Middleton, 'The Roaring Girl', 5.86-7.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Epilogue, ll. 33-36.

¹²² For an excellent *précis* of what Moll may or may not have done in this appearance (or appearances), see Mark Hutchings, 'Mary Frith at the Fortune'. He argues that her literal presence was an act of subversion, re-appropriating the stage for the cutpurses who were sometimes shown hanging on it, in a reconstruction of the scaffold, a type of scene I will examine in depth in the following chapter. *Early Theatre: A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama*, 10.1 (2007), 89-108.

¹²³ *The Consistory Court of London Correction Book* (Nov 1611-Oct 1613), London Metropolitan Archives, DL/C/310, fols. 19-20.

then, she watches a boy dressed as a woman who prefers to dress as a man perform a version of herself written by two men. Hence the playwrights' self-consciousness in their representation.

Although in Moll's physical presence, no one can seriously complain that her representing herself is inaccurate, it may not fit with public perception, and the persona already circulating as discourse. Physical contact, then, does not triumph over the imaginative element of celebrity construction. She herself apparently acknowledged this – the ecclesiastical court records state:

... namely being at a play about three-quarters of a year since at the Fortune [Theatre] in man's apparel, and in her boots, and with a sword by her side, she told the company there present that she thought many of them were of the opinion that she was a man, but if any of them would come to her lodging they should find that she is a woman¹²⁴

Moll promises to reveal the secrets of her body in private, simultaneously revealing the secrets of her celebrity. Like the play's version of Moll in her imprecation to Lord Nolan, Moll asks her audience to base their conclusions on personally-acquired knowledge. This is almost certainly titillation (she is not actually inviting people home to look at her genitalia), but the joke itself stands as proof that Moll is ready to defend what she sees as her gender identity, at least in verbal sparring. This defence seems to refute the notion that 'Moll is strangely impervious to the scrutiny of others', suggesting instead that Moll was very much concerned with the construction of her own body public.¹²⁵

The play asks, however, whether Moll can alter public knowledge with personal experience. Dekker and Middleton compare their representation of Moll in *The Roaring Girl* to a painting 'Limned to the life', at which 'People who passed along, viewing it well, / Gave several verdicts on it'.¹²⁶ Limning of course is associated with very fine manuscript illumination or illustration, suggesting that the painter has made an almost photographic representation. Even if Dekker and Middleton's depiction of Moll is a photographic representation, even if her literal body appears onstage, onlookers will bring their own preconceived ideas to her image. No one version of this public figure will

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Matthew Kendrick, "'So Strange in Quality': Perception, Realism and Commodification in *The Roaring Girl*", , 60.1 (2018), 99-121 (p. 99).

¹²⁶ Dekker and Middleton, 'The Roaring Girl', Epilogue, ll. 3, 4-5.

be the same, because she is an image within the hearer's imagination, more powerful than any bodily reality. Dekker and Middleton presenting a 'knowable' image of Moll Cutpurse onstage, the 'blazing star' of her day, proves therefore to be a sleight of hand. Since Moll's public persona is a matter of perception, even her presence will not satisfy those who carry a different version of her in their heads.

The Roaring Girl is particularly self-conscious of its own role in restaging and spreading gossip about this already gossip-worthy figure. Aware of the percolating talk, Dekker and Middleton write: 'Worse things, I must needs confess, the world has taxed her for than has been written of her'.¹²⁷ The play's epistle is careful to position the playwrights as thoughtful bystanders rather than sycophants employed by Moll, or perpetrators of malicious gossip, and suggest that the degree to which reports are negative or positive depend on the teller. They write, 'we wish rather in such discoveries where reputation lies bleeding, a slackness of truth than fulness of slander.'¹²⁸ The equation of reputation with a bleeding body underlines the notion of slander as a prosecutable crime, comparable in jurisprudence to bodily harm. The play's authors are also concerned with justifying themselves for representing Moll in a manner that their audience may not agree with. Her image, it seems, is already circulating the environs of the playhouse, and Middleton and Dekker assert the right, as playwrights, to manipulate it as they wish; 'tis the excellency of a writer to leave things better than he finds 'em'.¹²⁹ The prologue which follows seems to further manage and manipulate audience expectations of this figure already very well-known to them. Each audience member, they declare, 'brings a play in's head with him... If that he finds not here, he mews at it.'¹³⁰ The playwrights, presumably, are expecting their audience to disagree with their portrayal of Moll, and so justifying themselves before the complaints can begin.

Jeffrey Knapp has argued that 'Moll... frustrated observers by refusing to commit herself entirely to one group, one gender, one identity.'¹³¹ But it is speculation around an outlying identity – perhaps even frustration – that fuelled talk, creating celebrity persona. Moll's representation is so uncertain because it is a composite of multiple discourses, rather than one singular identity. There is no instantly recognisable,

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Epistle, ll. 19-20.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, ll. 28-30.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Epistle, ll. 20-21.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Epilogue, ll. 4, 6.

¹³¹ *Pleasing Everyone: Mass Entertainment in Renaissance London and Golden Age Hollywood* (Oxford: OUP, 2017), p. 65.

authentic body beneath. Her persona is a fluid idea that metamorphoses as it circulates through audiences as discourse. In a vast game of ‘secret message’, each speaker changes the nature of the message as they imaginatively interact with and repeat it. During the game ‘secret message’, a word or phrase is whispered from ear to ear, until it is almost unrecognisable from the original message. The circulated celebrity persona may be similarly unrecognisable from the original person. Moll Cutpurse’s persona seems to have been a constant source of speculation, discourse and disagreement during her lifetime and after, and as her persona was transmitted through oral and literate media forms, it altered to fit the preoccupations of the speaker or writer as well as the media through which it was transmitted. I will focus, now, on the signifiers used to circulate persona as discourse, and the social uses of celebrity.

Chapter Three: Joke, Jestbook and Celebrity Clown

The subject of multiple accounts, images and pamphlets, sixteenth century clown Richard Tarlton offers an example of an early modern celebrity whose persona was circulated through these various media as a sign. I will explore Tarlton as a semiotic construct that audiences used to further their own social agendas. First, however, let us establish Tarlton the celebrity, and gain some understanding of his persona. Starting life in the provinces, Tarlton's quick improvisations and down-to-earth humour launched a career as a stage clown, becoming one of the founding members of the Queen's Men. After Tarlton's death, writing master and poet John Davies recorded the following in an epitaph:

Here within this sullen *Earth*
Lies *Dick-Tarlton*, Lord of mirth;
Who in his Grave still, laughing, gapes
Syth all *Clownes* since have beene his Apes:¹

Not only is Tarlton the 'Lord of mirth', all stage clowns since his death have copied him, which we are assured is the most sincere form of flattery. Davies was writing 29 years after Tarlton's death, by which time the clown's influence has clearly not been forgotten.

He was hugely influential for other clowns, but he also affected the writing of playtexts. Louise Geddes has argued that this was thanks to 'the force of his charisma and personal celebrity'.² Tracing this influence to written stage clowns including Bottom and the courser in *Doctor Faustus*, she argues, 'To put it in contemporary terms, Tarlton was a star, evident in the evocation of Tarlton that echoed throughout dramas for the next twenty years'.³ His clowning style was certainly influential, and Geddes argues that celebrity also had a far-reaching impact on the early modern stage in that Tarlton was able to sabotage the action of the play with his popularity.⁴ For Geddes, celebrity is a commodity that can be wielded as a force of subversion and is necessarily contained by the playwright: 'In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare delicately balances the

¹ John Davies, *Wits bedlam* (London, 1617), sig. K6r-v.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³ Geddes, pp. 73-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

desires of the audience – to see a celebrity, performing as they expect – and the desire to adhere to dramaturgical unity.⁵ The audiences' longing for their favourite celebrities to act as they expect creates a problem that early modern playwrights including Shakespeare must grapple with.

Brian Walsh has argued that, in staging history plays 'that draw much of their power from the present-tense centered presence of clowns such as Tarlton, the Queen's Men make awareness of history as an absence, as precisely what's not present in the presence of theater'.⁶ Attention was so distracted by the presence of Tarlton that it drew attention to the temporality of watching a history play, similarly disrupting the action onstage. Jennifer Holl too has argued for Tarlton's importance as a stage celebrity. It was Tarlton's 'particular skills as an extemporizer' that 'perfectly positioned him amidst the competing tensions of accessibility and distance that foster celebrity identification.'⁷ However, Holl suggests that this all took place within the bounds of the theatre, and that 'the sheer newness of Tarlton's enterprise in the 1580s likely rendered his craft as especially unpredictable... thus thwarting the overfamiliarity that dissolves indetificatory bonds even as his regular presence of the stage spurred a sense of acquaintance.'⁸

However, Andrew Gurr writes that Tarlton was 'the first to become a national figure, and most significantly his fame was equally potent at court, in the playhouse, and in provincial towns'.⁹ Tarlton was not just the principal comedian for the Queen's Men, but he may also have owned a tavern, and certainly seems to have performed extemporal jests in taverns and on the streets (the semi-official nature of tavern performance is entangled with the history of early theatre and inn performance). He also served as Elizabeth I's court jester. This questions how new Tarlton's role of public intimacy with audiences was when he came to stage playing, and his newness as an extemporer. That the stage created his celebrity is not certain: there were other mechanisms for its transmission including popular texts and performances in at court or on the streets. Thomas Fuller, in fact, reports that Tarlton was effectively talent spotted by the Earl of Leicester's servant, who brought him to court, beginning his public career in the space

⁵ Ibid., p. 82.

⁶ Brian Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 4.

⁷ Holl, 'Wonder', p. 65.

⁸ Ibid., p. 66

⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

of the court.¹⁰ He almost certainly was well-known, perhaps even well-known for his well-knownness, before coming to the stage. This undercuts the notion that playhouses originated celebrity in early modern London.

The exact circumstances of Tarlton's biography are, however, somewhat obscured. In this chapter, I will be analysing texts written almost entirely by someone other than Richard Tarlton (often after the clown's death). As Peter Thompson has put it, 'Any attempt to reconstruct Tarlton's life is bedevilled by contradiction, partly because no other Elizabethan actor was so much spoken and written about after his death.'¹¹ The wealth of source material leads to confused accounts and origin stories: Thomas Fuller recalls that the clown was born at Conover in Shropshire, but calls Tarlton 'Thomas Tarlton', suggesting that some elements of Fuller's story at least have become distorted.¹² In his own project on clowning, David Wiles has noted that the 'problem lies in separating the man from the projected public image.'¹³ Finding the original, authentic Tarlton is an impossible and frustrating exercise for any biographer. However, evidence of a public persona is abundant. David Wiles has suggested that Tarlton's persona was formed of a combination of earlier Vice and rustic types of clown, that were formerly enacted as two separate characters.¹⁴ On and offstage, Tarlton was known for hilarious improvisations, and onstage a 'performative routine outside the fiction of the play: jigs, themes, ballads, rhymes, songs, and dances'.¹⁵ His personality was particularly on display, acting in these moments as himself (or some version of himself) and it is this performance of personality that John Astington argues made clowns like Tarlton 'one of the best known personalities of the playing troupe, and so he was celebrated.'¹⁶ Like Moll, then, Tarlton had a public version of personality.

It is this persona that makes Tarlton such an important figure in the study of celebrity in early modern England. In the previous chapter, I looked at the way in which discoursing about the social network can explain outlying personalities and behaviours, arguing that Moll Cutpurse's celebrity persona was a body of discourse removed from her physical

¹⁰ Thomas Fuller, *The history of the worthies of England* (London, 1662), p. 47.

¹¹ Peter Thompson, 'Tarlton, Richard (d. 1588)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26971>> [accessed 4 September 2019].

¹² Fuller, *worthies*, p. 47.

¹³ Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, p. 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ John H. Astington, *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time: The Art of Stage Playing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 120.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

body. But how did the physical body and its accessories – such as Moll’s slops or tobacco pipe – interact with and/or stand in for the celebrity itself, with its nebulous and discursive meaning? Thinking semiotically is useful in theorising the celebrity as a form of communication, between celebrity-audience, audience-audience, or some permutation of fan-celebrity/fan-audience. It can reveal cognitive processes, the systems of reference that constitute cultural meaning and underlie apparently spontaneously sympathetic reactions to the celebrity. This collection of more abstract meanings makes up the sign of celebrity. The sign can be conjured by tangible signifiers like Moll’s slops, and I will suggest that the celebrity sign, invoked through signifiers, could be used as social capital by audiences. It also gives the mechanism by which audiences could quickly circulate celebrity as discourse.

This builds on Alexandra Halasz’ pioneering work on Tarlton’s celebrity. She explores the use of the clown’s image as a popular sign posted outside alehouses, using as her source a marginal note in John Stow’s 1615 *Annales* that remarks; “‘Tarlton so beloved that men use his picture for their signs.’”¹⁷ Halasz has speculated that the image used on alehouse signs ‘was a crude version of the performer with tabor and pipe’, and uses this evidence to argue that the image, ‘defines Tarlton as a kind of common currency: his image circulates, available for anyone’s use.’¹⁸ Halasz’ argument that the image became ‘common currency’ suggests that his audience could serve their own interests by investing in this persona, sharing information about it to advance their own status. Before considering this social function, let us first consider Tarlton as a sign and its constituent signifiers.

Tarlton as a sign

During his discussion of wrestling in the *Mythologies* (1957), Barthes has touched on the idea of celebrity without naming the phenomenon. He highlights the essential difference between physical body and celebrity sign:

When the hero or villain of the drama, the man who was seen a few minutes earlier possessed by moral rage, magnified into a sort of metaphysical sign, leaves the wrestling hall, impassive, anonymous, carrying a small suitcase and arm-in-arm with his wife, no one can doubt that wrestling holds the power of

¹⁷ John Stow, *Annales, or a general Chronicle of England* (London, 1615) p. 19. I will explore the connection between persona and economic value in more detail in Chapter Five of this thesis.

¹⁸ Halasz, p. 19.

transmutation which is common to the Spectacle and to Religious Worship. In the ring, and even in the depths of their voluntary ignominy, wrestlers remain gods because they are, for a few moments, the key which opens Nature, the pure gesture which separates Good from Evil, and unveils the form of Justice which is at last intelligible.¹⁹

Barthes' interpretation sees celebrity as part of a wider, semi-religious and above all mythological schema. Wrestlers, in their extraordinary bodily performance, are self-consciously performative, generating the spectacle that their audience clamours for. In consequence, they come to represent meanings far removed from their physical contortions, extraordinary as these contortions may be (an admiring Barthes compares them to geometry). These specific motions are generalised into meanings that represent justice being performed, a universal meaning for the entire audience to comprehend and marvel at. The mythological function that Barthes analyses – part of a great mythology of good and evil – are second level, connotative meanings as opposed to the wrestlers' geometrical contortions, which are denotative. This is a useful exposition of the difference between signifier and signified, encompassing the semi-religious and mythical power that celebrities can frequently embody as long as they are performing their persona (unlike Barthes' wrestlers, some performances of persona never end).²⁰ So signifiers can indicate Tarlton, but the sign of Tarlton can also take on broader cultural meanings.

Building on Barthes' mythological conception of the sign, Alexandra Halasz argues that 'Tarlton... was always a mythic representation – a name and a persona around whom allusions gathered that came to function as an icon.'²¹ She suggests that, 'it might be argued that Tarlton's death allows the stabilization of his reputation and thus provides the ground of mythmaking: a persona that can be constructed in accord with a singular and no longer contestable image.'²² Even if this is not the case, she continues, 'Tarlton's death makes his name available as a signifier for the activities in which he once supposedly engaged.'²³ Stopping short of celebrity, David Wiles similarly relates clowns

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 25.

²⁰ Although I am not fully convinced by one element of Barthes' conclusion; 'What wrestling is above all meant to portray is a purely moral concept: that of justice.' I will read the celebrity sign as having a less morally unified meaning. *Mythologies*, p. 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Halasz, p. 22.

²³ *Ibid.*

to the *Mythologies*, seeing the deployment of the clown as a conscious act on the part of Henslowe and Shakespeare ‘just as they deployed bears, to create a flesh-and-blood spectacle capable of yielding complex meanings.’²⁴ So Tarlton may have been used by both playwrights and pamphleteers to communicate particular messages, inscribed with the writer’s own preoccupations.

The diversity of ‘complex meanings’ the clown might be deployed to perform hints at the potential mutability of Tarlton-as-sign. Again building on the *Mythologies*, P. David Marshall has influentially conceptualised celebrity in our present moment as a form of sign. This is a useful structure, he argues, because:

... as a sign, the celebrity sheds its own subjectivity and individuality and becomes an organizing structure for conventionalized meaning. Like the sign, the celebrity *represents* something other than itself. The material reality of the celebrity sign – that is, the actual person who is at the core of the representation – disappears into a cultural formation of meaning. Celebrity signs represent personalities – more specifically, personalities that are given heightened cultural significance within the social world.²⁵

Again, the celebrity persona has an extended, mythological meaning beyond their identity as an individual, just as Moll represented her audiences’ desires and expectations back to them. The persona gains this extended meaning through association with culturally resonant ideas. Rather than understanding the celebrity as a subject, we begin to understand them within a culture. Marshall points out, however, that the ‘term *connotation* indicates and implicates in its own meaning, a degree of indeterminacy of meaning in any sign.’²⁶ Crucially, mythology of the celebrity is not fixed, and while ‘At any given moment, there may be a consensus about what the celebrity represents... this representation may be from a variety of positions and perspectives.’²⁷ Even relatively stable celebrity signs may ‘transform and mutate, thereby representing different interests to different audience groups.’²⁸ Because of this complex interaction between the celebrity itself and other cultural signs, Marshall posits that interpreting ‘the celebrity as a *text* as opposed to simply as a sign is a fruitful way to

²⁴ Ibid., p. 172.

²⁵ Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, pp. 56-7.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 57-8.

²⁸ p. 58.

extend the insights derived from breaking down the structure of signs.’ His conclusion is that the celebrity ‘is by definition a fundamentally intertextual sign’, maintaining the idea of celebrity as sign, while highlighting its relational nature: the sign of celebrity is constructed from and mediated by multiple sources.

It is this intertextuality, Marshall posits, that enables the celebrity sign to transform, mutate, and take on connotative meaning. The ‘image is informed by the circulation of significant information about the celebrity in newspapers, magazines, interview programs, fanzines, rumors, and so on.’²⁹ This is very close to the discourse model of persona I proposed in the previous chapter, but there is one fundamental difference. While Marshall argues that ‘Without the domain of interpretive writing on cultural artefacts, the development of celebrity personality would be stunted’, I am exploring interpretive writing and cultural artefacts as a product of public discourse and interest, rather than acting as the foundations for discourse.³⁰ Both Barthes and Marshall characterise celebrity in an essentially ‘top-down’ way; for Barthes the wrestler performs an ideological version of justice created by a rather indistinct ‘society’, while for Marshall the intertextual media that make up celebrity signs are a product of the state, broadly serving state interests.³¹ I intend to read this process as a more cooperative formulation. These meanings are processed by the reader or auditor who adds whatever stems from their own experiences and imaginations. As the celebrity is interpreted, discoursed, and re-interpreted, its meanings change.³² Fans and audiences cooperate or disagree as they interpret the sign of celebrity according to their own agendas.

The performance of recognisable signifiers can work to broadcast messages at particular moments in the performance – like ‘this is funny’ or ‘laugh now’. Umberto Eco outlines this idea in his influential essay on the ‘Semiotics of Theatrical Performance’. Following one of semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce’s thought experiments, Eco imagines ‘what kind of sign could have been defined by a drunkard exposed in a public place by the Salvation Army in order to advertise the advantages of temperance’.³³ Of course, this drunkard has been chosen by the Salvation Army sergeant because he fits

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 64.

³² Eerily like the field of literary studies and its attention to texts, in fact.

³³ Umberto Eco, ‘Semiotics of Theatrical Performance’, *The Drama Review*, 21.1, 107-117 (p. 109).

an ideal, 'a sort of iconographic convention'.³⁴ The sergeant 'has been looking for the right man just as one looks for the right word'.³⁵ The result is that,

... the drunken man has lost his original nature of 'real' body among real bodies. He is no more a world object among world objects – he has become a semiotic device; he is now a *sign*.³⁶

No longer 'the drunk who he is', the man being exhibited in order to advertise the virtues of temperance is now 'a drunk'; every drunk the watcher has ever met or will meet and none.³⁷ His audience recognise this man as 'a drunk', Eco argues, through signifiers such as a red nose and dishevelled hair. In Eco's conception of performance – the red nose that causes observers to equate the man before them with 'drunkard' – the audience understands the performance before them based on their own preconceptions of what a drunkard looks like.

The equivalent of the red nose for Tarlton seems to have been his pipe, his tabor (or small drum), and his suit of russet, all signifiers of his celebrity that conjure laughter and are available for interpretive use. In *Tarlton's Newes out of Purgatorie*, the clown's purgatorial torment is to play his pipe and tabor night and day. It is no coincidence that the author has conjured up an endless repetition of two of the most recognisable signifiers of Tarlton's celebrity. David Wiles has posited that his squint also helped to mark him as a clown. Wiles argues that '[t]he first job of the historical critic must be to reach for the signifiers – costume, voice, eye contact with audience, etc. Only by this means can we grasp at that which was once signified, and distinguish past from present significations'.³⁸ Henry Chettle's pamphlet *Kind Hearts Dream* (1593) does not mention the squint, but the author knows Tarlton instantly, 'by his sute of russet, his buttond cap, his taber, his standing on the toe, and other tricks, I knew to be either the body or resemblaunce of Tarlton'.³⁹ 'Russet' had particular associations of 'Rustic; homely; simple' and could refer to peasant/lower social class. Wearing a suit of russet, then, conjures particular meanings for the wearer, clothing in itself signifying that Tarlton is 'one of us'.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 111.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁸ Wiles, p. 172.

³⁹ Chettle, sig. B2v.

Chettle's version of Tarlton closely matches the image of the clown used as the title page of another posthumous publication, *Tarltons Jestes*: suit, tabor (a small drum), and cap are easily-recognisable features that constitute a replicable image of the celebrity clown. *Greenes newes from both heaven and hell* (1593) simply assumes that its readers know what clothing marks a clown, directing only: 'in comes Dick Tarlton, apparelled like a Clowne'.⁴⁰ The collection of signifiers standing for 'Clowne', it is assumed, already exist within the reader's mind. Other accounts have clowns wearing 'slops' (a very wide breech extending below the knee). When worn overlarge and 'sagging downlike a Shoemakers wallet' these are a feature of fun.⁴¹ One joked that Tarlton had transformed the garment into 'clownish hose' rather than 'Gentlemens breeches', evidence of Tarlton's influence on fashion (or at least, perceived influence).⁴²

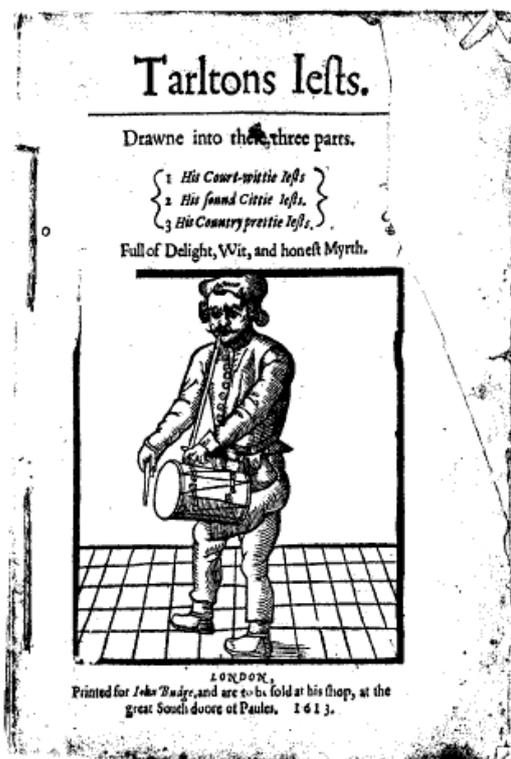


Fig. 4 (left) Title page of *Tarltons Jestes* (1613), showing Tarlton playing the tabor.⁴³

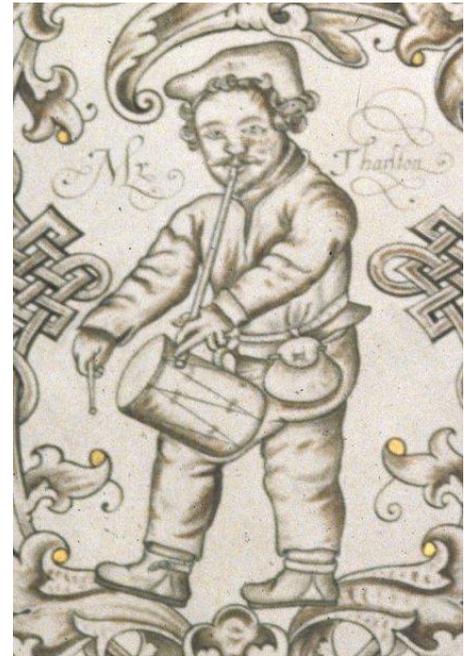
⁴⁰ Barnabe Rich, *Greenes newes both from heaven and hell* (London, 1593), sig. D1v.

⁴¹ Nashe, *Pierce Pennilesse*, sig. A3v.

⁴² Valerie Cumming, Cecil Willett Cunnington and Phillis Emily Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), p. 190. Samuel Rowlands, *Humors ordinarie where a man may be verie merrie, and exceeding well used for his sixe-pence* (London, 1605), sig. C4r.

⁴³ Anon, *Tarltons jestes* (London, 1613), sig. A1r.

Fig. 5 (right) Tarlton makes up the letter 'T' in an alphabet book.⁴⁴



Tarlton's face itself could stand as a signifier. *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592) recalls a stage performance in which, 'the people began exceedingly to laugh, when *Tarlton* first peept out his head.'⁴⁵ This is part of a more general contemporary clowning practice of 'peeping'; attributed by Dromo in *A Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (1598-99) to Kemp. He writes, 'clownes have bene thrust into plays by head and shoulders, ever since Kemp could make a scurvey face'.⁴⁶ However, since Tarlton preceded Kemp by a generation, his celebrity may have been the first to instigate the practice. In a seemingly unscripted cameo, only Tarlton's face provokes the habitual reaction to the clown's presence onstage. He could in fact disrupt the action of a play because audiences knew to laugh at the sight of this clown, just as the watchers know the haggard, red-nosed man to be drunk in Eco's imagined scenario. Tarlton, in peeping out onstage and disrupting the events happening within that space, has changed the nature of that space by focusing attention on him. He has become the centre of attention, his appearance drawing attention away from the exigencies of script or action. Similarly, Tarlton's persona generally triumphed over any attempt at characterisation. As Louise Geddes has argued, 'Like a modern film star, the clown's trade was dependent on the transparency of their

⁴⁴ All images of the clown are modelled after this one, making his posthumous image something of a signifier: gesture, expression and even profile are all replicated and therefore highly recognisable. Harley 3885, British Library, MS, f. 19.

⁴⁵ Nashe, *Pierce Pennilesse*, sig. D1v.

⁴⁶ *A Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (1598-99), in 'The Pilgrimage to Parnassus with The Two Parts of The Return from Parnassus' ed. by W. D. Macray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), pp. 1-24, 5.675-7.

on-stage role, through which their “true” personality could be seen.⁴⁷ Character became unconvincingly artificial when pitted against the force of the Tarlton’s ‘real’ personality, which was highly developed. In other words, persona was too strongly embedded within audience discourse to be uprooted.

In 1583, Tarlton became a founding member of the Queen’s Men. He was a star in the company, but *The famous victories of Henry the fifth* (1580s?) features Tarlton’s only definitely attributable part for the Queen’s Men, Dericke the tailor. Dericke has a preamble before his entrance proper, taking one pass on the stage, so that the audience can see him, before disappearing. Equivalent to peeping, this seems to be a mechanism to generate applause and enthusiasm for what is to come. It gets the moment of pleasurable recognition of persona out of the way and anticipates a longer reunion with the clown when he returns to the stage. When Dericke reappears, we hear that he has been robbed. His fellow clownish tradesperson Robbin then exclaims: ‘Why I see thou art a plain Clowne.’⁴⁸ To this Dericke indignantly replies:

Am I a Clowne, sownes maisters,

Do Clownes go in silke apparell?

I am sure all we gentlemen Clownes in Kent scant go so

Well⁴⁹

Playing on the meanings of the word ‘clown’ as meaning both ‘countryman’ and ‘comedian’, the joke is one the play’s audience are complicit in. They have immediately recognised the famous clown, and it relies on their not seeing him as anything else. Even while he is not wearing them, this is the Tarlton of the slops or suit of russet. Robbin, in fact, takes the place of the watching audience, telling Dericke that, regardless of his costume, he has not fooled anyone: they see beneath the disguise, so well do they recognise the celebrity.

⁴⁷ Geddes, p. 73.

⁴⁸ *The famous victories of Henry the fifth containing the honourable Battell of Agin-court* (London, 1598), sig. A4r.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

An anecdote about Tarlton's performance of Dericke is related in *Tarltons Jests* (1638).

The tale runs:

At the Bull at Bishops-gate was a play of Henry the fift, wherein the Judge was to take a boxe on the eare, and because he was absent that he should take the blow: Tarlton himselfe (ever forward to please) tooke upon him to play the same Judge, besides his owne part of the Clowne: and Knell then playing Henry the fift, hit Tarlton a sound boxe indéed, which made the people laugh the more, because it was he: but anone the Judge goes in, & immediately Tarlton (in his Clownes clothes) comes out, and askes the Actors what newes? O saith one, hadst thou béene here, thou shouldst have seen Prince Henry hit the Judge a terribly boxe on the eare: What man, saith Tarlton, strike a Judge? It is true y faith, said the other: no other like, said Tarlton, and it could not be but terrible to the Judge, when the report so terrifies me, that me thinkes the blow remains still on my chéeke, that it burnes againe. The people laught at this mightily, and to this day I heard it commended for rare⁵⁰

This joke is again reliant on the idea that no one is fooled for a second by Tarlton being temporarily disguised as a judge. In fact, the contrast between the idea of a judge and the ideas associated with Tarlton provoke instant laughter as soon as he appears in this guise. The fact of its being Tarlton, even, makes them 'laugh the more', paralleling his cameo appearance which provoked a storm of habitual laughter. By addressing the audience, Tarlton draws attention to the fictional nature of the story, and the reality of his body performing – and suffering – underneath. Pointing out that Dericke is a non-integrated clown, his plot almost entirely separate from the play's main action, David Mann has argued that, 'the play incorporates his plot as a semi-independent vehicle for the comic *persona* which Tarlton has created and in which, judging by *Tarltons Jests*, he indulges in both on and off the stage.'⁵¹ The continued commendation of the jest 'to this day' (years later) shows Tarlton as part a fabric of social discourse, his popular persona re-circulated as talk that the anonymous writer hears.

We can understand some of Tarlton's visual markers, then, as signifying the sign of his persona. Recognition for Tarlton's person, through physical signs like his squint, tabor

⁵⁰ Anon, *Tarltons jests* (London, 1638), sigs. C2v-C3r.

⁵¹ David Mann, *The Elizabethan Player: Contemporary Stage Representation* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 59.

and clothing, was matched by the recognition of his name, an element of celebrity persona that served to generate a specific set of associations, just as the name Moll Cutpurse does. William Philips describes his character Merry Andrew as ‘a *Tarlton* upon the Stage’, *Tarlton*’s name acting as shorthand for a set of characteristics readers will automatically ascribe to the character, just as the descriptor ‘*Tarltonizing wit*’ was used as a phrase without explanation, implying that readers are expected to understand it automatically.⁵² If she wished, a lady could sing ‘to the tune of *Tarlton*’, the clown’s name effectively gaining its own franchise and selling other media.⁵³ In Robert Armin’s *Quips upon Questions* (1600), the narrator turns to the reader to claim:

So with thy selfe it seems, that knows he’s dead,
And yet desires to know where *Tarleton* is:
... Go too, hee’s gone, and in his bodyes stead,
His name will live long after he is dead.

...

Tarletons name is heare, though he be gone.

You say not, Whers his Body that did die?

But, where is *Tarleton*? Whers his name alone?

His Name is here: tis true, I credite it.⁵⁴

Armin plays with the distinction between the idea of *Tarlton* as a name and his physical body: his fame or name lives long after the physical body. Armin, it seems, was aware of the distinction between flesh-and-blood person and the sign of their celebrity. He may even have experienced it himself. Within the *Jests*, there is a tale in which Armin apparently inherited *Tarlton*’s suit, signifying Armin’s inheriting the older clown’s

⁵² William Philips, *A new fairing for the merrily disposed* (London, 1688), sig. A3v. Nashe, *Pierce Pennilesse*, sig. l3r. For use of the verb ‘*Tarltonizing*’, see also Gabriel Harvey, *Foure Letters and sonnets especially touching Ribert Greene* (London, 1592), p. 9.

⁵³ Cyril Tourneur, *Laugh and lie downe* (London, 1605), sig. D1v.

⁵⁴ Robert Armin, *Quips Upon Questions* (London, 1600), sig. E1r.

position as preeminent clown.⁵⁵ Perhaps as long as Tarlton's signifiers are still recognisable, his celebrity lives on, a test of popular relevance. The next section will consider how the sign of his celebrity could be used, incorporated into the imaginer's own social network and used to advance their social status.

Finding Tarlton

As in the case of Moll Cutpurse, each imaginer/speaker creates their own subtly different version of Tarlton, making an 'authentic' version impossible to reconstruct. This difficulty has not stopped critics like Peter Thompson from trying to find him through the texts written about his life and comedy style, in particular the popular pamphlet *Tarltons Jests*. Thomson has argued that, as the *Jests* were compiled fairly close to the celebrity clown's lifetime (the first, short version was published in 1613, followed by extended editions in 1620 and 1638), 'the figure of Tarlton they cumulatively represent must have seemed to the anonymous compiler sufficiently plausible to convince people who had known him alive.'⁵⁶ This is undermined somewhat by references to the clown's ghost in other pamphlets written very shortly after Tarlton's death, as well as instances in the pamphlet where Tarlton is used as a narrator to circumstances he was not at all connected with during his life. However, the anecdotes are certainly associated with a figure called 'Tarlton' and have some features of his biography, regardless of how recognisable this identity may have been to people who knew him.

Rather than particularly plausible real-life accounts, the *Jests* is full of highly structured scripts. Many jests follow the structure of a duel, and some even narrate an actual fight. They all show Tarlton, after some struggle, restoring order and re-setting the stage for the next performance: at the end of each fight, Tarlton's status returns to what it was before. He is, in this text, an outlier of socially dominant behaviour, presenting him to readers as worthy of their attention. The jestbook is organised into three sections based on place and status, the frontispiece outlining:

1 *His Court-wittie Jests*

2 *His Sound Cittie Jests.*

⁵⁵ *Tarltons jests*, sig. C2r.

⁵⁶ Peter Thompson, 'The True Physiognomy of a Man: Richard Tarlton and His Legend', 14.2 (1997), 29-50 (p. 36).

3 *His Country prettie Jests*.⁵⁷

However, the script of the jest follows the same structure regardless of the circumstances of performance.⁵⁸ By winning almost every challenge, Tarlton is a high-status figure with whom social interaction is desirable. The only challenges in which he is bested, interestingly, are when Tarlton pits himself against women, including his wife. This may be because they are not sexual competitors or perhaps attributable to the status of women – Tarlton can lose a battle of wits to a woman and maintain his status among other men.

Much of Tarlton's celebrity was built on improvisation and extempore jesting. In the *Worthies of England*, Thomas Fuller recounts Tarlton's 'discovery' by a servant of the Earl of Leicester, who 'was so highly pleased with his *happy unhappy* answers that he brought him to Court'.⁵⁹ His verbal dexterity may have been an important attraction to the playhouse, audiences attending to hear the set-downs he gave hecklers. It may have been part of the entertainment in its own right; according to the *Jests*, 'it was his custome for to sing *extempore* of Theames given him'.⁶⁰ When the Queen's Men were overnighting in Worcester, one gallant called out:

Me thinkes it is a thing unfit,
To see a Gridiron turne the Split.

The people laughed at this, thinking his wit knew no answer thereunto, which angered *Tarlton* exceedingly, and presently with a smile looking about, when they expected wonders, he put it off thus.

Me thinkes it is a thing vnfit:
To see an Asse have any wit.

The people hooted for joy, to see the Theame-giver dasht, who like a dog with his taile betwéene his legs, left the place: But such commendations *Tarlton* got,

⁵⁷ *Tarltons jests*, sig. A1r.

⁵⁸ There are of course other factors at play besides the structure of the duel: for a thorough reading of how the different settings affect the text, see David Wiles, pp. 12-15.

⁵⁹ Thomas Fuller, *The history of the worthies of England who for parts and learning have been eminent in the several counties* (London, 1662), p. 47.

⁶⁰ *Tarltons jests*, sig. C4r.

that hee sapt with the Bailiffe that night, where my Theamer durst not come, although he were sent for, so much he vexed at that unlookt for answer.⁶¹

The real genius of Tarlton's riposte is turning the language of his challenger back on him. It might not have been so bad if the gallant had not given out the day before 'that the next day hee would give him [Tarlton] a Theam to put him to a *non plus*'.⁶² But Tarlton's improvisation has bested him: the famous clown is heaped with accolades and rewarded by supping with a high-status person that evening. In *Tarltons Jests*, these incidents generally follow a similar pattern in which a heckle is called out, Tarlton responds, and the audience judges Tarlton the winner. The heckler leaves the scene, ashamed. In this version, the gallant's emotions are still too raw to be fit company by dinner time. The field is clear for Tarlton to celebrate his victory.

The structure of the jest is sometimes more explicitly violent, taking the physical as well as the emotional structure of a fight. One account features 'a little swaggerer, called blacke *Davie*... being hired to draw upon *Tarlton*, for breaking a jest upon huffin *Kate*, a punke as men tearmed her'.⁶³ Here, violence creeps upon Tarlton unawares, *Davie* drawing on Tarlton as he was 'walking towards the Tilt-yard'.⁶⁴ The original joke on 'punke' (sex worker) *Kate* was played some time before in a tavern over a glass of wine. Despite beginning in the recognisable, appropriate space of the tavern, the explosive laughter of the joke has had far-ranging repercussions, essentially leading *Kate*, the victim of the joke, to hire a hit man in order to get her revenge on Tarlton. As a location, the Tiltyard may have phallic connotations, and it implies knowledge of Tarlton's habits and skills: he was made Master of Fence in 1587. Following the fight, the loser (*Davie*) is particularly affected; 'falling upon his nose,' he 'broke it extreemely, that ever after he snuffled in the head'.⁶⁵ This returns the joke to a humorous form, trivialising *Davie*'s permanent injury with the onomatopoeic 'snuffle'.⁶⁶ From 'blacke *Davie*' he is transformed to 'poore *Davie*', butt of the joke. Similarly, after 'one *Bankes*' plays a joke on him, Tarlton reciprocates, at which point 'the people had much adoe to keepe peace,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, sigs. C4r-v.

⁶² *Ibid.*, sig. C4r.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, sig. A4r.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ 'snuffle, v.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/183583> [accessed 4 September 2019].

but *Bancks & Tarlton* had like to swarde' (i.e. to fight with swords).⁶⁷ Luckily, violence in this case seems to have been avoided.

Other incidents are more obliquely to do with restoring the status quo or correcting behaviour. *Tarlton*, for example;

... séeing in Gréenwitch two Gentlewomen in the Garden together, to moue myrth, comes to them, and enquires thus: Gentlewomen, which of you two is the honester? I, saies the one, I hope without exceptions: and I quoth the other, since we must speake for our selves: so then saies *Tarlton*, one of you by your owne words is dishonest, one being honester then the other, else you would answere otherwise: but as I found you, so I leave you.⁶⁸

Firstly, it is significant that this exchange takes place in the garden, often seen as a reflection of orderly domesticity within the house.⁶⁹ Into this safe space, *Tarlton* intrudes, coming 'to them', the two women who presumably had been peaceably conversing before his arrival. Solely 'to move myrth', the famous clown then questions their honesty.⁷⁰ Each begins their claim to honesty with the word 'I', which is transformed into seeming selfishness by *Tarlton*'s last words; 'as I found you, so I leave you', asserting that he did nothing other than bring out the women's extant faults. The women are the victims of the joke, but their own hubris has brought this punishment about. Introducing disorder, *Tarlton* leaves the gentlewomen in a state of fracture and self-examination.

Henri Bergson has influentially theorised that, 'Our laughter is the laughter of a group. ... However spontaneous it seems, laughter always implies a kind of secret freemasonry, or even complicity, with other laughers, real or imaginary.'⁷¹ In laughing at the gentlewomen in Greenwich, do we become part of this freemasonry, united against outsiders? Psychologists have suggested that it also performs an important social

⁶⁷ Peter Thomson has made the suggestion that, because Banks worked for the Earl of Essex, and Essex himself was a proto-Puritan spokesman, in this jest '*Tarlton* humiliates a Puritan adversary', uncovering hypocrisy. Since we have no evidence of *Tarlton*'s political or religious leanings, and the *only* information given is that Banks was one of the Earl of Essex's men, this is far from certain.. *Tarltons jests*, sig. C2v.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, sig. A3r.

⁶⁹ Jill Francis, 'Order and Disorder in the Early Modern Garden, 1558-C.1630', *Garden History*, 36.1 (2008), 22-35.

⁷⁰ 'honest, adj. and adv.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/88149> [accessed 4 September 2019].

⁷¹ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p. 6.

function. Within social groups, disruption is checked through the creation of insiders and outsiders, and,

By using irony, teasing, sarcasm, or satire to make fun of certain attitudes, behaviors, or personality traits, members of a group can communicate implicit expectations and rules concerning the kinds of behavior that are considered acceptable within the group. These types of humor can take the form of ridiculing members of an out-group, or they can be directed at deviant behaviors of individuals within an in-group⁷²

Interestingly, this type of humour is generally practiced from a position of social dominance. While Tarlton's persona was that of a plain man, the kind of person you might enjoy drinking with at the pub, he is in fact a high-status member of the group, perhaps in part explaining an audience's willingness to award him celebrity status. In laughing with Tarlton, we are potentially associating with him, bringing this high-status figure into our own social network.

In an account of one of Tarlton's crueller extempore jests, he remarked of a lady with 'her face full of pimples with heate at her stomacke', that 'a murren of that face which makes all the body fare the worse for it'.⁷³ Heat in the stomach and spots being common symptoms either of pregnancy or a period, Tarlton instead implies that her pimples are an infection affecting the rest of her body and everybody present though her ill temper. The jest made 'the rest of the Ladies laught, and she blushing for shame left the banquet'.⁷⁴ This is all very well for the laughing ladies, but the victim of the joke flees in shame as laughter is galvanised and directed as a social force against her. She is an outsider while the group is temporarily connected in their position of insiders.

The people upon which Tarlton chooses to play a jest very frequently end up escaping the scene, including the would-be comedian who flees 'like a dog with his tail between his legs'.⁷⁵ Just as dramatically, a 'simple Country fellow in an Ale-house', after some word play by Tarlton, 'was driven into such a maze, that out of doores he got, and tooke

⁷² Rod A. Martin, *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach* (Burlington: Elsevier Academic Press, 2007), p. 119. Bergson also alludes to this in his essay on laughter; 'By the fear which it inspires, it restrains eccentricity... it pursues a utilitarian aim of general improvement.' *Laughter*, p. 20.

⁷³ *Tarltons Jestes*, sig. A2v.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. C4v.

him to his hées, as though wildfire had followed him.⁷⁶ Ashamed of his own confusion, the poor man makes a frantic effort to save face. A jest on the opposite stock character – a sophisticated Londoner affluent enough to afford a gallery seat in the playhouse – ends similarly, despite the victims’ social differences. After Tarlton got the better of the Londoner in a jest about the horns of cuckoldry, ‘the standers by counselled him [the Londoner] to depart... lest his cause grew desperate: so the poore fellow plucking his Hat over his eyes, went his wayes.’⁷⁷ Both ashamed of being stupid and ashamed of being thought a cuckold, the Londoner admits defeat not only through leaving the scene, but by covering his face, the avoidance of eye contact a mark of shame and submission. Both the ‘simple Country fellow’ and the London sophisticate were, in an ale house and playhouse respectively, inhabiting familiar spaces in which they have certain behavioural expectations. Tarlton has overturned this, making hostile the familiar space, and forming them into temporary outsiders where they have been insiders. In the case of the Londoner, Tarlton was certainly asserting his own dominance; the jest is a reaction to the man’s pointing ‘his finger at him, saying to a friend that had never séene him, that is he’.⁷⁸ David Mann has explained the anecdote’s significance as showing ‘Tarlton’s popularity, not as a farcical addendum to the play, but eagerly awaited as the star attraction.’⁷⁹ In challenging this man’s finger-pointing, Tarlton decides (in this instance) who can and cannot gain social prestige by being associated with his celebrity, protecting his own socially dominant position.

Within this type of contest, there is always the threat that the victim position will be reversed, and that the joke will turn on Tarlton. Laughter, as a weapon wielded by Tarlton to enforce social balance, is a potentially volatile instrument. There is one particularly ignominious episode in which Tarlton is left sans clothing. A ‘Cony-catcher’, noticing that Tarlton had ‘come foorth in his shirt and night-gowne to drinke’ with some fiddlers, ‘tooke *Tarltons apparell* which every day he wore’.⁸⁰ The thief, in this anecdote, clearly has the upper hand and is described with approbation by the author of the text as ‘nimble’, physical dexterity equalled by quickness of thought as he plans, ‘if he were espied to turne it to a jest’.⁸¹ While accepting the indignity of having his clothes stolen,

⁷⁶ Ibid., sig. B3v.

⁷⁷ Ibid., sig. B2v.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Mann, p. 61.

⁸⁰ *Tarltons jests*, sig. B3r.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Tarlton refuses to let the thief have it all his own way. During a play at the Curtain the next day, an audience member mocked the celebrity clown for the incident. Tarlton returned with:

When that the theefe shall pine and lacke,

Then shall I have cloathes to my backe:

And I together with my fellowes,

May see him ride to *Tiburne* Gallowes.⁸²

Even though the challenger is only victim-in-potential, having not actually been caught for his crime, Tarlton has saved face and is once more in a position of power with this extempore display of wit by *imagining* the thief in a position of shame. This would suggest that, in order to be successful in the long term as a celebrity, Tarlton needed to defend himself against challenges from spectators, improvisation echoing the practice of the duel, control over the tongue as important as bodily practices. In his seminal study of French Renaissance rhetoric, Terence Cave argued that improvisation is a ‘moment in which discourse reaches self-mastery’ for rhetorical theorists.⁸³ Tarlton’s long-term celebrity relies, quite literally, on getting the ‘last laugh’, and winning the fight, retaining his socially dominant position. The joy of watching his extempore jests like this one, however, lies in their potential failure: every jest begins from the same starting point, and Tarlton has to prove himself each time. Although he restores order, this is not guaranteed, and the order he restores is his own status as a performer.

The writer of *Tarltons Jestes*, then, has outlined a clear script: a challenge, followed by the duel (with words, bodies, or both). Tarlton triumphs, the stage is reset and we are ready for the whole event to begin again. The would-be-challenger is often forced to leave in disgrace, Tarlton’s status assured. What we see in the *Jestes* is apparently a clear, hegemonic personality: the text’s interest lies in its showcasing of this outlier, who continually proves his outlier position in terms of status and behaviour, showcasing a control over tongue and body that enables each anecdote to follow the same pattern, ending with Tarlton on top.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 126.

Using Tarlton

What work, beyond a model for how to preserve one's status, does the persona of Tarlton enact for fans and audiences? We have little evidence of specific fan reactions, but Tarlton seems to have been used by some sources as emblematic of social capital, paralleling the model of social dominance presented in the *Jests*. I would like to offer some speculative readings of how this social capital may have been used within the speaker's social networks.

The induction of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) offers an interesting use of Tarlton's celebrity persona. An unnamed stage-keeper wishes for 'such a *Jig-ajogge* i'the booths, you should ha' thought an earthquake had beene i'the *Fayre*'.⁸⁴ Instead of accepting this advice, he says that the author of *Bartholomew Fair* 'has (*sirreverence*) kick'd me three, or foure times about the Tying-house, I thanke him, but for offering to put in, with my experience.'⁸⁵ Alongside a jig, the stage-keeper is kicked for suggestions like: 'a fine *Pumpe* upon the Stage... and a *Punque* set under her head, with her *Sterne* upward'.⁸⁶ Instead of using these fine suggestions in the action of his play, Jonson 'will not heare o'this!'⁸⁷ An exchange of insults is implied instead: I am an *Asse*! ! and yet I kept *Stage* in *Master Tarletons* time, I thanke my starres.⁸⁸ The stage-keeper seems to claim status through association with Tarlton. Although Jonson is mocking the stage-keeper – and by extension Tarlton's outmoded style of humour – the stage-keeper asserts his claim to superior knowledge about comedy through association with the dead clown, using Tarlton's influence to defend himself from a perceived social attack, in response to being called an ass. Although (like the *Jests*, and almost any representation involving Tarlton), this is fictional, *Bartholomew Fair* gives us an example of possible social use of the Tarlton's persona: a defence against social attacks.

Feelings towards Tarlton were, apparently, so strong that some fans refused to believe he had died. According to a jest in Robert Armin's *Quips upon Questions*, a collier convinced himself that 'the squint of *Tarletons* eie, / Was a sure marke that he shoule

⁸⁴ Jonson, *Bartholomew fayre*, sig. A4v.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

never die.⁸⁹ The man accordingly went to the theatre ‘to see him there’ where he ‘calles a loud, and said he would see him’.⁹⁰ Luckily the collier is not to be disappointed:

Within the Play past, was his picture usd,
Which when the fellow saw, he laught aloud:
A ha, quoth he, I knew we were abusde,
That he was kept away from all this croude,
The simple man was quiet, and departed,
And having seen his Picture, was glad harted.⁹¹

Richard Levin convincingly argues that the poem is referring to a performance of *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*.⁹² The Collier has a predictable reaction, immediately laughing, but most importantly he returns home ‘glad harted.’ The associations our unnamed collier has of Tarlton work to create a material change in the man’s mood. The image of Tarlton, rather than his actual presence, has triggered this. For the collier at least, it does not appear to matter whether Tarlton is present, only that his signifiers are somehow conjured.

Audiences felt a personal loss at the death of Tarlton that affected their behaviour and dominated talk. A remark from pamphleteer Henry Chettle suggests that Tarlton was the subject of intense discourse for two years after his death, and ‘living for his pleasant conceits was of all men liked’.⁹³ Another mourner wrote, ‘Sorrowing as most men doe for the death of *Richard Tarlton*... The wonted desire to see plaies left me’.⁹⁴ He was ‘a mad merry companion, desired and loved of all’.⁹⁵ This highly emotional reaction suggests that this anonymous mourner was a fan of Tarlton, his behaviour following the clown’s death profoundly affected. In this particular pamphlet he goes on to dream-hallucinate a vision of Tarlton, putting words in the clown’s mouth and showing both skill – in being able so vividly to reconstruct the details of Tarlton’s personality – and a

⁸⁹ Armin, sig. F4v.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Richard Levin, ‘Tarlton’s Picture on the Elizabethan Stage’, *Notes and Queries*, 47.4 (2000), 435-6.

⁹³ *Kind-harts dreame* (London, 1593), sig. B2v

⁹⁴ Anon, *Tarltons newes out of purgatorie* (London, 1590), sig. B1v.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

sense of entangled subjectivity, the anonymous writer's voice speaking for both himself and Tarlton. Many other mourners experienced an intense sympathy for Tarlton, Thomas Heywood terming him 'in the good people's general applause'.⁹⁶ Writers before and after his death often speak familiarly of 'Dicke' or 'Tarlton',⁹⁷ as though Tarlton has joined a tapestry of friends and acquaintances; someone they identify with, whose word they trust, and who they will defend against detractors.

Although fictional, an episode in *The Three Lords and Three Ladies* offers a well-observed example of a similar connection between Tarlton's celebrity persona and social status. According to the 'poore Frée man' Simplicity, a clown, the general admiration for Tarlton transfers onto another character, Wit the page, through the page's association with this celebrity:

Sim. ... if thou knewest not him, thou knewest no body: I warrant her's two crackropes knew him.

Wit.

I dwelt with him.

Sim.

Didst thou? Now give me thy hand, I love thée the better. ... there will never come his like while the earth can come. O passing fine *Tarlton* I would thou hadst lived yet.⁹⁸

This time, it is Wit's status that has increased through association with the celebrity. Through his apparent association with Tarlton, Wit has been recommended to Simplicity as though by a close and much-respected friend. Indeed, Simplicity knows enough personal information about the famous clown to have been his close friend. In the text, he narrates Tarlton's biography, telling his listeners that Tarlton was once a water carrier, paralleling Simplicity's former trade. Peter Thompson takes this seriously as being a likely story about Tarlton's pre-clown life, arguing that Wilson, the writer of *Three Lordes and Three Ladies* 'was, after all, a close colleague of Tarlton's during their years with the Queen's Men.'⁹⁹ He also suggests that the association with water was a

⁹⁶ Thomas Heywood, *The actors vindication* (London, 1658), sig. E2v.

⁹⁷ Thomas Nashe, *The apologie of Pierce Pennilesse* (London, 1592), sig. C1v.

⁹⁸ Wilson, *Three lordes and three ladies*, sig. C1v.

⁹⁹ Thomson, 'Tarlton'.

joke based on the close connection in the public imagination between taverns and Tarlton. Both are plausible explanations, but finding a truth about biography from Simplicity's story neglects the fact that this is a literary document: Wilson is telling the story through Simplicity, a gullible former water carrier who thinks Tarlton was an earthly paragon, mocking Simplicity in a similar way to Jonson's mockery of the stage-keeper: both characters are easy targets because of their lack of self-awareness. In associating his own story so closely with Tarlton's, Simplicity has re-interpreted Tarlton's life to create his own unique version of the celebrity that aligns with Simplicity's own biography.¹⁰⁰ It may be a bid for status like the stage-keeper, but it may also be a bid for connection: by projecting his own life onto Tarlton, Simplicity knows more about the private life of his favourite celebrity. They have a realm of shared experience to draw on.

In this play Simplicity is also selling a picture of Tarlton to passers-by on the mock 'street' of the stage (possibly the picture the collier sees in Armin's anecdote). He is mingling, then, two forms of capital: both being paid by other fans for Tarlton's picture and using his associations with Tarlton as a claim for status. The monetary value of Tarlton's picture highlights this idea of social worth; there is a perceived value in associating with his picture, in owning it. To some extent, then, this follows Pierre Bourdieu's influential version of cultural life as 'economistic', in which knowledge, culture, social contacts and money are all forms of capital that are unequally spread across society. This has become a useful concept in the realm of fan studies, although it also implies a hierarchy of tastes, with fan/celebrity culture firmly at the bottom of the pile, a mark of the *petit bourgeois*. Terming it 'devalued information', Bourdieu attributes this kind of fan culture to a fundamental lack of discernment.¹⁰¹ He argues, 'The stockpiling avidity which is the root of every great accumulation of culture is too visible in the perversion of the jazz-freak or cinema-buff who carries to the extreme, i.e. to absurdity, what is implied in the legitimate definition of cultivated contemplation, and replaces consumption of the work with the consumption of the circumstantial information.'¹⁰² Ultra-fans of a particular form of popular culture, Bourdieu argues, are missing the point, obsessed with the trivia around the form rather than the form itself, a proper subject of 'cultivated contemplation', Bourdieu of course deciding what 'cultivated' – or rather 'legitimate' –

¹⁰⁰ This is complicated by the fact that Tarlton may have played the role of Simplicity in an earlier play. See Preiss, *Clowning*, p. 119.

¹⁰¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 329.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 330.

means. As Matthew Hills argues, this assumes ‘the legitimacy of a fixed a monolithically legitimate ‘cultural capital’, rather than considering how ‘cultural capital’ may, at any single moment of culture-in-process, remain variously fragmented, internally inconsistent and struggled over.’¹⁰³ We can see this in Bourdieu’s own hierarchy; being a cinema or jazz-buff today is seen as a relatively high-brow form of fandom. While cultural capital is unequally spread, then, it does not follow that one form is necessarily higher than the other. However, the concept of cultural and social capitals is a useful one for thinking about how Tarlton’s persona was used.

Tarlton’s signifiers, in these readings of both fictional and non-fictional sources, are made to perform social work. For the collier the signifiers merely make him glad, reinforcing pre-existing feelings of para-social intimacy with the clown. However, for Simplicity and the stage-keeper they are an opportunity for advancing the speaker’s own social capital. The high-status persona modelled in the *Jests* that consistently triumphs against challengers can be deployed in social contexts, signifiers like the clown’s name standing for a collection of triumphal, high-status associations. The ways in which social capital are produced and used alter, but consistent is the idea of the clown’s persona being social capital, a figure who can be used as social currency. Fans can forge a para-social relationship with Tarlton, drawing on their shared intimacy even after his death. However, in some of these instances, the signifier stands for outmodedness. While the speaker is invoking the high-status Tarlton who appears and defeats all challengers in the *Jests*, the audience laughs at another sign – the faded star, fans’ naïve devotion to this outmoded persona a joke. The current status position of the celebrity affects the way in which the sign can be used and read, but it can simultaneously mean different things to different speakers within the same conversation. I would like to continue to think about audience-celebrity relationships and about status as we turn to another type of celebrity entirely: courtly, aristocratic celebrity, forged in the competitive spaces of joust and court.

¹⁰³ Matthew Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 22.

Chapter Four: Philip Sidney and the Performance of Celebrity

The life of Sir Philip Sidney – knight, courtier, sometime diplomat, and perhaps the greatest celebrity of the Elizabethan period – was frequently acted out in front of an audience. In his laudatory biography, Fulke Greville tellingly refers to Philip Sidney as ‘a naturall Center’, becoming the leader of any event he took part in.¹ Wherever he went, ‘he was beloved and obeyed’, all people naturally following his lead.² The mourning for Sidney testifies to huge popular interest in his persona, but why he became such a beloved celebrity has been a topic of critical uncertainty. Looking at accounts of Sidney’s life and his own preoccupation with public performance, this chapter will argue that Sidney’s charisma rather than any particular talent engendered his celebrity, and it will consider the ways in which Sidney tried to exert control over his celebrity sign, and the ways in which it was controlled by fans and audiences.

Scholars writing about Sidney have tried to penetrate the mystery of what made him so special, preserving a sense of his indefinable appeal within their own pages. Sidney was possessed of an undeniably public personality, but to what degree this persona was separate from Sidney’s private personality, and whether he self-consciously shaped this persona are both topics of debate. Richard A. Lanham first pointed out the distinction between the legend and the life of Sidney, describing the knight as ‘The Ornament of his Age’.³ As John Buxton has argued, ‘Sidney was mourned not for what he had done but for what he was, not for the achievements for which we admire him, but for his personality.’⁴ In fact, Buxton stops just short of the term ‘celebrity’ in his explanation of this public display of emotion. He writes, ‘there was an indefinable quality in Sidney’s personality which contributed more to the mourning of him than any of his achievements, the quality which we call charm but was then called grace.’⁵ An unknown force rendered Sidney appealing, based on magnetic attraction rather than attributable circumstances or actions.

¹ Greville, *The life*, p. 21.

² *Ibid.*

³ Richard A. Lanham, ‘Sir Philip Sidney: The Ornament of His Age,’ *Southern Review: An Australian Journal of Literary Studies*, 2.4 (1967), (319-40).

⁴ John Buxton, ‘The mourning for Sidney,’ *Renaissance Studies*, 3.1 (1989), (46-56), p. 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Alan Hager has argued that Sidney's public image was a pattern card for the Elizabethan courtier, 'the product of Elizabethan propagandistic design'.⁶ He suggests that, 'If no "ideal courtier," if no "Renaissance man" ever existed, we would have to invent one.'⁷ Hager argues that 'Sidney is aware and attempts in his own life (and works) to make us aware of the ironies of being identified with such a role', exposing the 'dangers of the very idealism with which he has traditionally been identified.'⁸ Sidney, according to this version of his life, was somewhat in control of his public image, able to question an overly idealised persona, but simultaneously trapped in a role not of his devising.

Exploring his posthumous representation and the comparisons with later public figures including Prince Henry, Richard Hillyer has argued that 'the almost universal esteem for Sidney as a special or even unique case has repeatedly involved matching him with so many diverse others as to enshrine him collectively in a very capacious hall of differently distorting mirrors.'⁹ Because of his varied accomplishments and 'versatility', Sidney's image 'fulfilled an ideal expected of every gentleman both during the period in which he lived and for some time to come.'¹⁰ All agree that Sidney's image was used by others, was idealised either during or after his life, and had a created quality, Alan Hager describing him as an 'Exemplary Image', Richard Hillyer a 'Cultural Icon', Richard A Lanham an 'ornament' and Louis Montrose 'mythologized'.¹¹ These descriptions speak to a performative identity; life made into art, whether the product of that process is image, icon, ornament or myth.

Sidney, then, had a celebrity persona that emblematised an ideal gentleman. But how was this image created, and how did it become popularised to the extent that the esteem for Sidney was 'almost universal', across classes of Elizabethan society?¹² His status mainly came from his mother's side of the family, Sidney himself acknowledging that 'I may justly affirm that I am by my father's side of ancient and always well esteemed and well matched gentry... my chiefest honour is to be a Dudley'.¹³ Through

⁶ Alan Hager, 'The Exemplary Mirage: Fabrication of Sir Philip Sidney's Biographical Image and the Sidney Reader', *ELH*, 48.1 (1981), (1-16), p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Richard Hillyer, *Sir Philip Sidney, Cultural Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. xv..

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Louis Montrose, 'Celebration and Insinuation: Sir Philip Sidney and the Motives of Elizabethan Courtship', *Renaissance Drama*, 8 (1966), 3-35 (p. 7).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Philip Sidney, 'Defence of the Earl of Leicester', in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. By Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 129-141, p. 134.

his mother's brothers, Sidney was heir presumptive to the earldoms of Leicester and Warwick. He did, therefore, have hereditary aristocratic connections that gave him high status. But so did many other Elizabethan nobles. Why, then, was Sidney chosen as the model for the ideal gentlemen? Never of the highest status, not politically influential, and possessing an indefinable grace rather than strict beauty,¹⁴ Alan Stewart has convincingly argued that Sidney's father's title 'pro-rex' of Ireland contributed to his son's popular celebrity. After attending Christ Church, Oxford, Sidney accompanied Edward Fiennes de Clinton to Paris on a diplomatic mission, and continued to travel across the continent for three years, from 1572 (when he was 18) to 1575. The title 'pro-rex' and the names of Sidney's uncles were posted outside his lodging during the tour.¹⁵ Stewart suggests that Sidney's high-status associations with the pro-rex and two Earldoms, combined with Sidney's potential claim to the throne as Leicester's heir, should the Leicester-Elizabeth I marriage have materialised, gave him 'perceived princely status' across Europe during his tour.¹⁶ The title of Stewart's biography, *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* refers to Sidney's very different reception in England and the Continent, including his baronial status abroad (granted by the French king Charles IX) – a title not accepted by Elizabeth I at home.

As Stewart suggests, being in-demand abroad may have increased Sidney's perceived social value at home. Himself a well-known figure, printer and humanist scholar Henri Estienne wrote in a dedication to Sidney, 'somehow or other every time I see you and enjoy your company I feel more and more affection towards you.'¹⁷ However, Sidney's high social position does not quite account for Estienne's own sense of bafflement; why the scholar feels more affection towards Sidney every time they meet is unclear even to

¹⁴ In terms of personal appearance, Ben Jonson remarked 'Sir P. Sidney was no pleasant man in countenance, his face being spoiled with pimples, and of high blood, and long'. William Drummond, *Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*, 1619, ed. by R. F. Patterson (London: Shakespeare Society, 1842), p. 17. Richard Dutton has seen this as Jonson's falling to the temptation 'to believe the most salacious of stories about him [Sidney], if only to confirm his humanity... it was perhaps reassuring to know that the stuff of legend had some blemish, some touch of the ordinary. Even for his near contemporaries, then, the Sidney myth could be hard to swallow.' Richard Dutton, 'Introduction', in *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Writings*, ed. by Richard Dutton (New York: Routledge, 1987; repr. 2002), p. 9.

¹⁵ The title given to Henry Sidney as Lord Deputy of Ireland.

¹⁶ Stewart, *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), p. 6.

¹⁷ The Latin text refers to the motions of Estienne's sensitive soul; there is something divine in their connection. Estienne was to dedicate two books to Sidney; see Estienne, 'Novum Testamentum, Graece, cum H. Stephani praefatione & notis marginalibus' (Geneva, 1576), trans. by John Buxton, in *Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 57-8, and *Herodiani historiarum libri VIII* (Geneva, 1581).

Estienne. The celebrated humanist scholar Hubert Languet describes, again in a letter to Sidney, a similar experience to Estienne's:

As long as I live, I shall consider the day when I first laid eyes on you a most happy one; the inner virtue which shines through your face, in your conversation, and in your every act, immediately compelled me to make you my friend. And opportunity knocked when you turned up here [in Vienna]. I do not know how destiny made this happen, but it was my very good fortune, and, thanks to your kindness, I then easily achieved that which I had decided to fight for with all my might. When I grew closer to you, I discovered that you were naturally inclined to virtue, and desired it so intensely, that I considered myself so fortunate to have your friendship, and it was only the thought of you which brought me joy amongst the great misfortunes of my homeland.¹⁸

This is a seminal experience in Languet's life history; meeting Sidney is worthy of remembrance until death. Sidney's shining with virtue and Languet's being compelled to further their acquaintance, emotion embodied through a willingness to fight, are both suggestive of the supernatural. This reaction is substantiated by Théophile de Banos, another humanist who refers to Sidney's 'celeberrimi' or celebrity.¹⁹ Much like Languet, de Banos was struck by Sidney's 'mirabiles' or 'wonderful' ability to excite love from their first meeting.²⁰ Similarly Matthew Royden's elegy on Sidney laments that he 'loved and lost the wonder of our age'.²¹ In this there is a sense of the mystical: some indefinable quality about Sidney is intensely attractive.

What Sidney's interactions both abroad and in England hint at is an indefinable *something* that produced a reaction in those who met him. This effect seems to have also operated on those who only saw him rather than meeting him in a more intimate setting. Eulogising Sidney as Astrophel, Edmund Spenser describes the relationship between emotion and presence that Sidney engendered in audiences as he grew, transforming his spectators into fans, just as his own production is decidedly fannish:

¹⁸ Hubert Languet to Philip Sidney, 1 May 1574, Vienna, trans. by Alan Stewart in *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), p. 103.

¹⁹ De Banos, in his ed. Ramus, *Commentariorum de Religione Christiana* (Frankfurt, 1577), sig. v4.

²⁰ This also translates as a general sense of astonishment or amazement, but the sense of the miraculous is perhaps best rendered as wonderful. *Ibid.*, sig. v4v.

²¹ Matthew Royden, 'Sir Philip Sidney', 1595 in *Parnassus: An Anthology of Poetry*, ed. by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880), p. 268.

He grew up fast in goodnesse and in grace,
And doubly faire wox both in mynd and face.

Which daily more and more he did augment,
With gentle usage and demeanure myld,
That all mens hearts with secret ravishment
He stole away, and weetingly beguyld.²²

Rather than ‘wonder’ we see here the notion of ‘grace’, associated with an attractive quality and the presence of the divine; both the benevolence felt by God towards humanity and divine influence received by the individual.²³ Personal communion with a divine aspect is also suggested in ‘secret ravishment’; Sidney’s presence effects profound internal change. Significantly, it is Sidney’s ‘gentle usage and demeanure myld’ that effects this change. Actions directed towards audiences lead to their beguilement, Sidney’s life transformed into a performance of action and audience reaction.

Angel Day similarly, in his inability to adequately describe Sidney, associates him with the divine:

... His like in few before
was ever knowne, so quicke, so neate, and fine,
So full of weight, with humours so divine:
were all his words, his works, and actions fraught,
As seem’d from skies a secret power had raught.²⁴

Again the word secret, another way of saying ‘unknown’. Sidney’s essence seems to have been created by a mysterious, potentially divine power. Something about him is special, although quite how to explain this remains beyond Day’s reach. The effect

²² *Colin Clouts come home againe* (London, 1595), sig. E4v.

²³ ‘grace, n.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/80373> [accessed 20 February 2019].

²⁴ Day, *Upon the life and death*, sig. Br.

Sidney produces on fans strongly parallels charisma; ‘A free gift of favour specially vouchsafed by God; a grace, a talent.’²⁵ The proof of this gift lies in the details of Sidney’s performance: his actions are ‘quicke’, ‘neate’, ‘fine’ while his words are peculiarly weighty.

Fulke Greville also stresses Sidney’s popularity at home and abroad, and his writing is often fannish, a skilful engagement with his own version of Sidney’s life. However, Greville does also have his own agenda, and is a somewhat unreliable source: John Gouws makes a convincing case that much of the biography’s content is political, arguing ‘that the work was intended for the eyes of Prince Henry, since Greville lost interest in it after Henry’s death in November 1612.’²⁶ His praise of Sidney’s qualities, however, is sometimes very specific. He writes of Sidney’s ‘alluring, and improving men... so did the influence of his spirit draw mens affections and undertakings to depend upon him.’²⁷ Sidney had the ‘It’ factor; the alluring qualities that led others to look towards him as ‘a naturall Center.’²⁸ Greville implies that Sidney is where things are happening. Understanding his life is understanding the centre. Whether it is ‘charisma’, ‘grace’, magnetism or ‘It’, there is a charismatic quality akin to attraction that many of Sidney’s contemporaries describe, and which causes the kind of interested observation that can make fans of spectators to Sidney’s life and presence.

It is this charismatic *something* that in the words of Sidney’s father, made him, ‘a rare Ornament of this age, the very Formular, that all well-disposed young gentlemen of our court do also form their manners and life by’.²⁹ Returning to England in 1575, Sidney took up a prominent position at court, serving as a model for courtly behaviour while rather fruitlessly searching for a position, preferably involving military action. Sidney, it seems, had by this time begun to project the exemplary image that critics have pointed out, becoming a hugely influential pattern for courtly manners and appearance. It is important that despite his words being a letter between family members (directed to

²⁵ ‘charism | charisma, n.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2019) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/30721> [accessed 13 March 2019].

²⁶ ‘Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554-1628), courtier and author’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2007) <www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-11516> [accessed 6 February 2019]. For more on the performative quality, see Joseph Candido, ‘Fulke Greville’s Biography of Sir Philip Sidney and the “Architectonic” Tudor Life’, *South Central Review*, 2.1 (1985), 3-12.

²⁷ Greville, *The life*, p. 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁹ *Letters and Memorials of State*, ed. by A. Collins (1746), Vol. 1, p. 246.

Sidney's brother), Henry Sidney expresses himself in static images; his son Philip is an 'Ornament', a 'Formular', conferring distinction through his presence, an object of admiration or wonder. He merely needs to be present to be admired. This may be deliberately crafted by Philip Sidney, but as an object he is a rare ornament onto which audiences can project any meaning. After visiting England in 1579, Languet reports seeing Sidney in person, and similarly acting as a model for his contemporaries. He recalls, 'It was a delight to me last winter to see you high in favour and enjoying the esteem of your countrymen'.³⁰ However, his concern is that 'most of your noblemen appeared to me to seek for a reputation more by a kind of affected courtesy than by those virtues which are wholesome to the state'.³¹ Broadly esteemed by his countrymen, this suggests a popularity that may have helped lead to celebrity. For Languet, however, the reputation Sidney was generating in England was concerned with performance, rather than substance.

Celebrity performance

Despite his charismatic effect both in the English Court and during his Continental tour, the substance Languet desires from English courtiers was never really to materialise for Sidney. The young knight was not promoted to a position of responsibility, and few opportunities materialised for him to display military leadership. Why was this? Louis Montrose has argued that, 'he was trapped within a patronage system that was reluctant to promote him despite - in part, because of - his accomplishments and promise'.³² F. J. Levy has come to a similar conclusion, although he emphasises Sidney's aggressive Protestantism, which led him into conflict 'not only with a large number of the members of an earlier generation - principally with Lord Burghley, the Lord Treasurer and the Queen's most trusted advisor - but with the Queen herself'.³³ Without this hindrance, Levy argues, Sidney would have served as a successful statesman. The Queen, distrustful of Sidney and his fellows including Greville and Dyer, kept this group of young men 'at Court as ornaments, without any power to shape affairs'.³⁴ This presents a problem: since Sidney was kept out of political decision-making, his promise

³⁰ 'Languet to Sidney', Antwerp, 14 November 1579, trans. by Stuart A. Pears, in *The correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet, now first collected and translated from the Latin with notes and a memoir of Sidney*, ed. by Stuart A. Pears (London: William Pickering, 1845), p. 167.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Montrose, p. 22.

³³ Levy, p. 6.

³⁴ Ibid.

is what critics including Montrose and Levy rely on as evidence of his abilities as a statesman.

Sidney's mission to form a Protestant league to counter Catholic (particularly Spanish) influence in 1577 'made scarcely any progress', and in 1580 he rather tactlessly circulated a letter arguing against Elizabeth's proposed marriage to the Duc d'Alençon, youngest son of French King Henri II, which did not help to advance his reputation with Elizabeth.³⁵ Sidney's slightly threatening language in the publicly circulated letter was not exactly diplomatic. Crucially, he uses the necessity of popularity as a veiled threat: Alençon's allegiances and former actions 'gives occasion to all the true religious to abhor such a master, and so consequently to diminish much of the hopeful love they have long held to you.'³⁶ This reminder of the importance of public reputation was unnecessary for a Queen who had always been acutely aware that the love of her people was a political necessity. The manuscript was widely circulated, and although Elizabeth took no direct action against Sidney, publicising his opinion was an action unlikely to secure him political advancement from his monarch.

Related to the quarrels between the pro and anti-French marriage factions at Elizabeth's court is the tennis court incident, another emblematic event in Sidney's life as a courtier. On 28 August 1580, Sidney refused to give up a tennis court mid-game to the Earl of Oxford. They exchanged heated words, with Oxford terming Sidney a 'puppy'. According to Greville's account of the incident, Sidney waited a day before challenging the nobleman to a duel, 'to awake him out of his trance'.³⁷ It ended in the Queen publicly reprimanding Sidney and reminding him of his lower position on the social ladder. While Greville attributes all the blame to Oxford in his account,³⁸ the dispute suggests Sidney's lack of understanding about his own place in a codified social hierarchy, 'treating a courtier nobler in birth than himself with open contempt.'³⁹ This is hardly the mark of a promising diplomat. In Sidney's missions to both Ireland and Flushing contemporary accounts do not define a moment at which he shone politically. Greville (ever ready to say something positive about his friend) reports that when taking over government of

³⁵ Cited in: Woudhuysen, H. R. 'Sidney, Sir Philip', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2004)
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-25522>> [accessed 09/05/2018].

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Greville, *The life*, p. 78.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-6.

³⁹ Woudhuysen, 'Sidney'.

the Low Countries, nephew in tow, the Earl of Leicester acted ‘despising his [Sidney’s] youth for a counsellor, but withall bearing a hand upon him as a forward young man’.⁴⁰ Although Sidney might be eager or ‘forward’, even his uncle Leicester had a low opinion of his nephew’s capabilities when it came to offering counsel. In *The Life*, Greville also admits that his friend and idol was never ‘possessed of any fit stage for eminence to act upon’.⁴¹ While Sidney was superlative as a performer, Greville implies, the world stage let him down. Sidney’s potential as a statesman, then, was entirely unproven.

Alan Stewart has claimed that Elizabeth disliked Sidney because his popularity could prove a threat to her own; ‘Elizabeth was a shrewd monarch, who knew that she had to keep control over her court, and in that cause, over the last decade of Sidney’s life, she consistently belittled and embarrassed him.’⁴² However, no evidence is given that his popularity in Europe was a concern of Elizabeth’s.⁴³ Edward Berry’s insightful study of Sidney’s poetry and prose as imitations of his own life, part of a project of self-representation, similarly sees the search for royal patronage as ‘Sidney’s most compelling goal’.⁴⁴ According to Berry, this meant that:

The failure to find employment with the Queen affected him profoundly not chiefly for reasons of wealth or personal ambition, although both are relevant, but because service to the state was fundamental to his conception of the self.⁴⁵

The failure of Sidney’s political desires, Berry argues, led to a crisis within his own sense of self, which Berry maps across Sidney’s sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*. Regardless of Sidney’s promise (or lack of promise) as a courtier, the search for patronage has frequently been read as the sole lodestar of his literary endeavours. Sally Minogue’s *A Woman’s Touch: Astrophil, Stella and “Queen Vertue’s Court”* is a particularly insightful example of this Elizabeth-centric reading. She argues that Sidney’s misfortunes from 1580, including Penelope Rich’s marriage and his loss of status as heir to Leicester, led him to compose the sonnets, which ‘reflect the bitterness and tensions Sidney had experienced, but also reflect the inevitability of submission’ to Elizabeth, a

⁴⁰ Greville, *The life*, 18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴² Stewart, *A Double Life*, p. 7.

⁴³ She may have personally disliked him; Walsingham and Sidney certainly thought so. ‘Sidney to Walsingham, March 24, 1586’; cited in James M. Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 513-4.

⁴⁴ Berry, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

charged eroticism inherent within this submission.⁴⁶ Revaluating the addressee of the sonnet sequence, Minogue has argued ‘the courtly love format which he uses so flexibly enabled him to express the complexity of his submission to a monarch who was also a woman, and gave him the imaginative control as author to compensate for the political control he lacked as courtier.’⁴⁷ It is important to acknowledge the erotic and power dynamics that Minogue has explored so articulately, both in terms of the importance of Elizabeth on Philip Sidney’s canon, as well as her power over a courtier’s potential career.

However, if we do follow Minogue’s reading of the sequence and imagine Elizabeth I as Stella and Sidney as Astrophil, she is not the only observer of Sidney’s efforts in the joust. In Sonnet 53 he writes, ‘While with the people’s shouts I must confesse, / Youth, lucke, and praise, even filld my veins with pride.’⁴⁸ If Elizabeth is sole provider of power and prestige, Sidney’s careful cultivation of a public, popular reputation would be pointless. If all power stems from the queen, she is the only person who matters, and therefore the only person Astrophil should notice as he takes part in the joust. So why, in the sonnet sequence, is Astrophil affected by the ‘people’s shouts’? Are we to draw the conclusion that the courtier feels pride in acclaim solely thanks to personal vanity? The ‘people’s shouts’ may be a more powerful agent than they at first appear.

That courtiers performed aspects of their personality in front of audiences composed of non-courtly contemporaries is by no means an obscure or hidden idea. The handbook for sixteenth century courtiers like Sidney, Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* (1528), argued that ‘the courtier always has to humour’ the watching crowd during public spectacles such as jousts or displays of horsemanship.⁴⁹ Set out as a dialogue between courtiers at the court of the Duke of Urbino in 1507, the *Courtier* is obsessed with reputation-building. As Roger Kuin has noted,

... its tissue, its texture... is held together by the words “show” (*mostrare*), “seem” or “appear” (*parere*), “wonder” (*maravigliare*), “demonstrate”

⁴⁶ Sally Minogue, ‘A Woman’s Touch: Astrophil, Stella and “Queen Vertue’s Court”’, *ELH*, 63.3 (1996), 555-570 (p. 557, pp. 563-4).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 558.

⁴⁸ Philip Sidney, ‘Sonnet 53’, in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 3-4.

⁴⁹ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. by George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1967; repr. 2003), p. 63. Roger Kuin, ‘Sir Philip Sidney: The Courtier and the Text’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 19.3, 249-71, p. 267.

(*dimostrare*), "known" (*conosciuto*), "prove oneself" (*valersi*), "view" (*conspetto*), "value" (*estimare*), and "onlookers" (*chi vede or spettatori*).⁵⁰

Everything the courtier does 'is designed and coded to be read.'⁵¹ Every action is a performance designed to engender a reaction from their audience. Framed as a dialogue between the Duke of Urbino's courtiers, in the *Courtier* itself Count Ludovico suggests that the courtier should invest time in perfecting certain skills in order to 'build up a good reputation' at public spectacles, and 'above all, he should accompany his every act with a certain grace if he wishes to earn the universal regard which everyone covets.'⁵² Seeking universal regard is so obvious a purpose it barely needs stating: Castiglione certainly does not feel the need to qualify the idea that everyone is striving for it.

Federico gives very precise instructions as to how a courtier should best conduct himself at these spectacles;

He will ensure that the horse he has is beautifully caparisoned, that he himself is beautifully attired, with appropriate mottoes and ingenious devices to attract the eyes of the onlookers in his direction as surely as the loadstone attracts iron.⁵³

Personal magnetism is vital in the public performance of personality, capturing attention: the loadstone is another kind of 'natural Center', the charisma that makes some people looked to as leaders.⁵⁴ Castiglione recommends the courtier be one of the first to show himself in the spectacle, 'knowing the crowd, and especially the women, scrutinize the first far more than the last.'⁵⁵ This is flattery not of the monarch or ruler but of the people. In viewing the public spectacle as performance, Castiglione compares the courtier to an actor. Both manipulate space and circumstance so that they receive the most possible attention from their respective audiences. The purpose of all this is to feed 'the eyes of those who are looking on with everything that can give him added

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 254.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 62.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 116.

⁵⁴ Greville, *The life*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

grace.⁵⁶ Courtly spectacle is explicitly a performance directed at non-courtly as well as courtly onlookers.

This is a radical re-reading of the ideal courtier; rather than *grazia* or *spezzatura* being ends in themselves, ‘universal regard’ is the end of courtly perfection, a conclusion substantiated by Federico, who states,

... to be praiseworthy and highly thought of by everyone, and to secure the goodwill of the rulers whom he serves, the courtier should so order his whole life to exploit his good qualities generally, no matter with whom he associates, without exciting envy.⁵⁷

Importantly here, the goodwill of the rulers is cited second to having a generally good reputation. Envy is juxtaposed with reputation as the means of the courtier’s downfall; stirring such emotion among others will inevitably fracture the perfection of the courtier. Envy will lead others ‘to find fault or at least what looks like a fault.’⁵⁸ The discussants in the *Courtier*, while giving fleeting acknowledgment to the importance of the soul, are not concerned with a perfect courtier, but a courtier who is seen by others as perfect. Envy is the arch-enemy because it potentially undermines universal acclaim: as an emotion it is in some ways the opposite of sympathy.

The Book of the Courtier suggests, at least in Castiglione’s context, that building a popular reputation could help a courtier’s career. Translated into English by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561, the *Courtier* went on to set ‘the standards of social behaviour for the English cultivated public.’⁵⁹ Hoby also happened to be Sidney’s mother’s close friend, meaning Sidney may have been particularly conversant with Castiglione’s work.⁶⁰ It is significant that Thomas Nashe, reporting a discussion between ‘manie extraordinarie Gentlemen’ in 1589, discovers that they cannot agree on which of Castiglione’s qualities are most important.⁶¹ The only thing they can agree on is ‘that England afforded many

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ L. G. Kelly, ‘Hoby, Sir Thomas (1530-1566), courtier and translator’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2004)
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13414>> [accessed 09/05/2018].

⁶⁰ John Buxton has argued that, ‘He seemed to his contemporaries to make up the ideal courtier of Castiglione’s which they wished to emulate’. ‘The mourning for Sidney’, p. 47.

⁶¹ Thomas Nashe, *The anatomie of absurditie contayning a breefe confutation of the slender imputed prayeses to feminine perfection, with a short description of the severall practises of youth, and sundry follies of our licentious times* (London, 1589), sig. ¶4.

mediocrities, but never saw any thing more singular then worthy Sir *Philip Sidney*'.⁶² As Henry Sidney's language – casting his son as an 'Ornament' – similarly suggests, Philip Sidney is a model for right action. Sidney himself certainly believed that skill in tilting was important, worth time and effort spent practicing. Like Castiglione's processions and tourneys, tilting is an exercise designed to earn universal regard in display rather than being of any practical application on a battlefield. In 1580, he advised his brother to 'play at weapons... lustilie' as that 'will make yow a strong man at the Tournei and Barriers'.⁶³ According to this advice, the end of practicing at weaponry is the tourney rather than actual battle.

While those personally acquainted with Sidney testify to his magnetism, public displays of this kind offer a mechanism by which his celebrity status spread among the 'low estates' of Elizabethan society. The personal popularity friends testify to does not automatically equate to celebrity more broadly, and the phenomenon of being well-known for well-knownness. Perhaps the most extensive description of Sidney participating in such feats of pageantry falls in John Phillips' elegy. Phillips elides the knight's martial reputation with his reputation at tilt:

In marshall feates I settled my delight,
The stately steede I did bestride with joy.
At tilt and turney oft I tride my might,
In these exployts I never felt annoy.
My worthie friends in armes did oft imploy,
Themselves with me to breake the shivering speare,
But now my want they waile with many a teare.⁶⁴

Tilt and tourney are given considerably more attention in this stanza than Sidney's exploits in battle. According to Phillips, he is known to have 'oft... tride my might', and 'oft' employed his friends in arms, positioning Sidney as a kind of tilting mastermind. Like Phillips, Thomas Churchyard reports that Sidney: 'Ranne faire at Tilt, like Mars his Sonne with couched Launce on brest, / And good report of people won that passed all

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ 'To Robert Sidney', p. 133.

⁶⁴ Phillips, *The life*, sig. A4r.

the rest.⁶⁵ The fact that these lines form an enclosed couplet suggests that good report follows from tilting: it is certainly part of his celebrity image that Churchyard is familiar with. Grief for Sidney as a courtier, and as a participant in the tilt, substantiates the idea that Elizabethan court pageantry provided a platform for public performance of celebrity persona.

Phillips' and Churchyard's knowledge of these entertainments hint at a larger audience than the court itself. The spectacle of the courtly tilt, I would suggest, follows Castiglione's account of courtly spectacle in that it is dialogic, performed in part to win the sympathy of the 'people's shouts'.⁶⁶ A contemporary analogy supports the presence of non-aristocratic spectators at the tilt, although it denies their importance, asking, 'what careth he that runneth at tilt, if the ignorant people give sentence against him, so the judges give it with him?'⁶⁷ The 'sentence' of the 'ignorant people' may well correspond to Astrophil's awareness of the 'people's shouts', although in contrast their judgement fills his veins with pride. The framework of the tilt, then, was designed around mass spectatorship. Holinshed's description of courtly tilt *The Four Foster Children of Desire* (1581) dwells on the 'sumptuous' nature of the spectacle; a siege tower is manufactured, 'Upon the top wereof was placed two cannons of wood, so passing well coloured as they séemed in déed two faire field peeces of ordinances'.⁶⁸ When shot, one canon fired 'swéet powder, and the other with swéet water, verie odiferous and pleasant'.⁶⁹ These large-scale props are designed to be seen, heard and smelled from a great distance, further suggesting that this kind of entertainment may have been designed to entertain a large crowd.

On his return to England, Sidney began to play a role organising tilts and courtly entertainments. He took a central role organising the Accession day tilt of 1577 and wrote entertainment *The Lady of May* for Elizabeth's 1578 visit to Wanstead. One of the chief characters, Rhombus, was played by comedic celebrity Richard Tarlton. Interestingly, Rombus acts as a kind of foil for Elizabeth. Thinking much of his own intelligence, the village schoolmaster weighs in with his opinion on which suitor should attain the hand of the Lady of May, although 'as a rhomboid lacks right angles Rombus

⁶⁵ Thomas Churchyard, *The epitaph of Sir Philip Sidney Knight, lately Lord Governour of Flosing* (London, 1586), sig. Aivr.

⁶⁶ Sidney, 'Sonnet 53', l. 3.

⁶⁷ Edmund Bunny, *A booke of Christian exercise appertaining to resolution* (London, 1584), sig. T5v.

⁶⁸ Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles* (London: 1587), p. 1316.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1318.

lacks rightness in his reasoning.⁷⁰ Rombus is rewarded with ‘many unlearned blows’, and Elizabeth is invited instead to cast her genuinely learned judgement. Apparently the entertainment misfired, however: Elizabeth was supposed to support man of action and impulse Therion the forester, but instead decided in favour of the rich Espilus the Shepherd, whose few virtues are made up for by his lack of faults.⁷¹ Where Rombus was intended to highlight the excellence of the Queen’s judgement with his own poor judgement, the Queen’s judgement has gone wrong according to the outline of the entertainment, exemplifying the hazards of live performance and perhaps that the Queen did not wish to be dictated to. The issue of judgement is fraught, and the position of judge is a source of considerable tension and role-swapping in the performance.

The Elizabethan court used multiple forms of dramatic performance, including theatre, dancing, and poetry-reading, both to entertain and jostle for patronage, but tilts were one of the more public opportunities for a courtier to be seen by spectators beyond the court itself. The courtly spectacles of tilt and tourney provide both the theatrical space and the opportunities for Sidney to perform in front of a diverse audience. As J R F Day has argued, ‘in 1586, it seems that the grief felt for Sidney was primarily for Sidney the courtier, the *preux chevalier* not only in battle but in breeding’, supporting the idea that courtly forms helped create and found Sidney’s celebrity persona.⁷²

Writing a generation after Sidney, playwright James Shirley used pageants as a mark of intense popularity, describing his character Sell-away in *The Gamester* (1633) as ‘More look’d at then the Pageants’.⁷³ This is an interesting confluence between personal celebrity and the celebrity of an event, both distinguished by the number of eyes on them. More contemporary popular interest in courtly spectacle is evidenced by a market for the printed texts of pageants including Henry Goldwel’s version of *Four Foster Children of Desire* (1581), which Holinshed’s account is largely lifted from. It was printed in the same year as the pageant took place, and the title page suggests a very quick turnaround from performance into print; ‘the most valiaunt and worthye Triumph,

⁷⁰ Robert Stillman, ‘Justice and the ‘Good Word’ in Sidney’s *The Lady of May*,’ *Studies in English Literature*, 24 (1984), 32.

⁷¹ Stephen Orgel first pointed out this discrepancy in the entertainment, ‘Sidney’s Experiment in Pastoral: *The Lady of May*,’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26 (1963), 198-203, (p. 202).

⁷² Day argues that ‘Mourning for Sidney was for the loss of the ideal aristocrat’. J. F. R. Day, ‘Death be very proud: Sidney, subversion, and Elizabethan heraldic funerals’, in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. by Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), pp. 179-203 (pp. 180, 181).

⁷³ James Shirley, *The gamester* (London, 1637), sig. E4v.

attempted and executed on the Munday and Tuesday in Whitson weeke last, Anno 1581'.⁷⁴ Participants in these entertainments, then, were aware of a double platform, printed and seen; viewed by those who could advance them greater political prestige, and those who could advance them greater popular prestige. The circulation of pageants in printed form, which included commentaries on the richness of the participants' dress, the size of their entourage, and their way of conducting themselves, made these spectacles crucial moments in building and maintaining public esteem.

This pageant – featuring Philip Sidney – shows 'four foster children of desire' attempting to take the Fortress of Perfect Beauty (represented by the Queen's gallery at one end of the tiltyard). After various jousts and chivalric stories, the foster children surrender to Perfect Beauty (Elizabeth).⁷⁵ The triumph may have been written in part or entirely by Sidney himself.⁷⁶ Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville each played one of the four foster children, the challengers of the tilt, while Elizabeth, the court, and the French Ambassadors looked on. It took place during the tense time of the negotiations for the Elizabeth-Alençon match after Sidney had written his famous letter making a case against the French marriage. The event has been interpreted as an allegory warning against the match: although Alençon may desire to, he will never attain Elizabeth.⁷⁷ Sidney himself used the pageant to broadcast a particular message, reported by Goldwel; his shield bore the motto *sic nos non nobis* or 'thus we labour, not for ourselves'.⁷⁸ This knight is apparently working for the good of country and commonwealth, a motto probably related to his well-known sentiments about the

⁷⁴ Henry Goldwel, *A briefe declaration of the shews, devices, speeches, and inventions, done and performed before the Queenes Majestie, & the French Ambassadors* (London, 1581), sig. A1r.

⁷⁵ In *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol II: 1567-1589*, ed. by Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, pp. 270-2.

⁷⁶ A. C. Hamilton, 'Problems in Reconstructing an Elizabethan Text: The Example of Sir Philip Sidney's "Triumph"', *English Literary Renaissance*, 26.3, 451-81 (p. 451).

⁷⁷ She did repeatedly put off the date of performance, potentially a bid to decrease the popular audience assembled for the pageant (this is pure speculation on my part). For this anti-Alençon reading, see Jean Wilson, 'Introduction', in *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, ed. by Jean Wilson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1980), pp. 61-2. However, Catherine Bates has argued that since some of the participants such as Lord Windsor were Catholic or at least had Catholic sympathies, 'it seems more likely that the show was designed to suppress faction, and to present a picture of Anglo-French concord by subsuming real differences under romantic battles'. *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; repr. 1995), pp. 71-2.

⁷⁸ Goldwel, *A briefe declaration*, sig. A7r.

French marriage. It may even have been designed to remind Elizabeth of the importance of popular opinion in maintaining her own position.⁷⁹

That Elizabethan public pageantry was attended by a more diverse audience than the court is partially attested to by Sonnet 41, almost certainly based on real-life pageant *The Four Foster Children of Desire*. Biography and fiction are difficult to disentangle across *Astrophil and Stella*, especially in sonnets like number 41, which give express biographical detail. Dirk Weidmann argues that it is important to read the texts biographical, asking ‘could the act of writing potentially serve as a compensation measure for Sidney after he had withdrawn from courtly affairs and, as a consequence, after he had abandoned the chance to directly shape society through his own political action and influence at court?’⁸⁰ As Neil L. Rudenstine argues, *Astrophil* critiques the Petrarchan mode as poet of the sonnet sequence.⁸¹ However, other sonnets are more abstract and exploratory, untied to any clear moment, and the sequence itself does not always present a sequential narrative.

I will therefore be referring to the poetic persona ‘Astrophil’ as expressing some of Sidney’s ideas, which may have stemmed from his own experience of celebrity. They form part of a fictionalisation of identity, Sidney’s mode of controlling the dialogue around his identity. The sonnet seems to refer to this tilt in particular, and implies a much larger audience than merely the English court and French ambassadors:

Having this day my horse, my hand, my launce
Guided so well, that I obtain’d the prize,
Both by the judgement of the English eyes,
And of some sent from that sweetemie *Fraunce*;
Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance;
Towne-folke my strength; a daintier judge applies
His praise to sleight, which from good use doth rise;

⁷⁹ In calling off the Alencon match, the Queen was in the end made to bow to this popular opinion.

⁸⁰ Dirk Weidmann, ‘Writing as socio-political commitment. Sir Philip Sidney’s alternative’, *Etudes Epistémè*, 21 (2012).

⁸¹ Neil L. Rudenstine, *Sidney’s Poetic Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 197.

Some luckie wits impute it but to chaunce;
Others, because of both sides I do take
My bloud from them, who did excell in this,
Thinke Nature me a man of arms did make.
How farre they shoote awrie! the true cause is,
Stella lookt on, and from her heavenly face
Sent forth the beames, which made so faire my race.⁸²

Multiple groups of spectators take an active interest in Astrophil's success in the tournament. A C Hamilton has suggested that the 'general audience... would demonstrate to everyone, and especially those "sent from that sweet enimie Fraunce," the unity of the body politic in England.'⁸³ Analysing the motives of his diverse audience in a similar manner to the prologue at a theatre, Astrophil is explicitly performing for this audience. In the sonnet, however, it is not the tilt's function as political propaganda that creates meaning, but the audience that broadcasts their own meanings onto Astrophil. The first two lines describe perfection of performance: all tools of body and horse have been guided superlatively by the performer. This is Astrophil's account of his own success. This success, however, is mediated by multiple eyes, both English and French. Astrophil may be confident of his prowess, but the prize is judged by others. Lines 5-11 show the multiplicity of perspectives within the collective 'eyes' of the joust's audience. Five groups of spectators see in Astrophil the five different qualities they most admire in themselves: horsemanship, strength, cunning, chance, or nature. Rather than that performer's more specific and inherent qualities, each spectator reads themselves – or perhaps more accurately an ideal version of themselves – within the knight. The audience, then, are placing the knight at the centre of their attention, while Astrophil claims that they have the centre wrong: for Astrophil, *Stella* is the centre, his attention focused on her.

This speaks to Stuart Hall's notion of 'decoding' media; propaganda can be categorised as effective when its audience decodes it as its creator(s) intended it to be understood.

⁸² Philip Sidney, 'Sonnet 41', in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), ll. 1-14.

⁸³ Hamilton, 'Problems in Reconstructing an Elizabethan Text', p. 452.

Hall refers to 'reciprocity' or 'achieved equivalence', i.e. the symmetrical way in which certain codes are constructed and deconstructed by producer and viewer.⁸⁴ Finding this reciprocal message, in which intention and reception are the same, makes for the most effective broadcasts. It is important for the performer to 'read' and respond to the crowd, just as the crowd attempts to read and interpret the performance. In the sonnets, Sidney explores audience gaze and fan engagement through a semi-fictional version of himself, unpicking the dialogic relationship inherent in the performance of celebrity and audience reception of that performance. Moments of tension emerge when the audience goes off-piste, interpreting media in a way entirely removed from Astrophil's intentions as he performs the spectacle before them.

Throughout the sequence, Sidney's narrator-protagonist Astrophil is cast as the focus of eyes and ears, the observed among observers. His actions are watched in Sonnet 23:

The curious wits, seeing dull pensiveness
Bewray it selfe in my long settled eyes,
Whence those same fumes of melancholy rise,
With idle paines, and missing ayme, do guesse.
Some that know how my spring I did addressse,
Deeme that my Muse some fruit of knowledge plies:
Others, because the Prince my service tries,
Thinke tat I thinke state errours to redresse.
But harder Judges judge ambition's rage,
Scourge of it selfe, still climing slipperie place,
Holds my young braine captiv'd in golden cage.
O fooles, or over-wise, alas the race
Of all my thoughts hath neither stop nor start,

⁸⁴ Stuart Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding', in *The cultural Studies Reader*, 2nd edn., ed. by Simon During (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 508-517 (p. 511).

But only *Stella's* eyes and *Stella's* hart.⁸⁵

Although they are all described under the label 'curious wits', different groups ascribe different motives to Astrophil's actions, the motive they choose potentially reflecting their own concerns. The interest in and interpretation of Astrophil's actions suggests a level of skill in their engagement; the curious wits seem to step beyond spectators into fans. However, like Sonnet 41, the wits' guesses miss their aim: they cannot see Astrophil's inner thoughts. Their ineffective guessing displays itself in the meter: the phrase 'Thinke that I thinke' is a mirror image of itself metrically, split between 'that' and 'I' so that both 'thinke' and 'thinke' are stressed. The thoughts of the curious watchers create a mirror image of themselves, rather than divining Astrophil's true feelings. Despite the futility of this task, they expend considerable effort in this guesswork: 'idle paines' are taken.

The events of *Astrophil and Stella*, then, take place in front of an audience highly interested in the narrator's life, rendering him the subject of speculative discourse even as he narrates his own experience. The sense of having to perform for an audience, impressing people beyond the Queen, runs through the sequence. Astrophil bitterly refers to this in Sonnet 27, reporting that:

Because I oft in dark abstracted guise,
Seem most alone in greatest companie,
With dearth of words, or answers quite awrie,
To them that would make speech of speech arise,
They deeme, and of their doome the rumour flies,
That poison foule of bubbling pride doth lie
So in my swelling breast that only I
Fawne on my self, and others to despise:
Yet pride I thinke doth not my soule possesse,
Which looks too oft in his unflattering glasse:

⁸⁵ Philip Sidney, 'Sonnet 23', in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), ll. 1-14.

But one worse fault, *Ambition*, I confesse,

That makes me oft my best friends overpasse,⁸⁶

The narrator is supremely aware of the necessity of performing speech. Even his preoccupation and alienation from social space is rendered performatively; the speaker is in a 'guise' or disguise' and 'seems' rather than 'is' alone. The problem of the performer's speech is that it does not match social expectations: 'answers quite awrie' imply that a question has preceded these answers, and the two statements do not match. Astrophil is failing to follow an acknowledged language pattern. Even the narrator's 'dearth of words' make him a problem in the kind of company that demands talk. This phrase 'make speech of speech arise' suggests a miraculous birth, nothing created from nothing, unpicking the hyperbole often associated with gossip. It is manufactured talk for talk's sake. Taking the repetition 'speech of speech', the following line distorts it to an almost-repetition; 'deeme, and of their doome', or 'judge, and of their judgement'. Whoever 'they' are, their judgement creates rumour, but there is the suggestion of a distorted truth, just as the word 'deeme' has been changed into 'doome' in the course of the line. However, although the Sonnet professes to disdain the 'speech of speech' taking place around the narrator, he feels the need to deny the story that has been created by observes to explain his actions: fawning 'on my self, and others to despise'. Justifying his abstraction, the narrator finally admits to ambition for the love of Stella.

Despite constant guessing at what is going on in Astrophil's mind, to display the secret of Stella would be disastrous, the reputation of a lady here mingling with Astrophil's own reputation. When this kind of private emotion is displayed too openly in the sonnet sequence, the slip engenders shame. While Astrophil is the observed of all observers, the poetic persona is also performing a version of itself. Returning to Sonnet 53, which narrates an incident during an unspecified tilt, Astrophil is distracted from combat by the sight of Stella;

One hand forgott to rule, th'other to fight.

Nor trumpets' sound I heard, nor friendly cries;

⁸⁶ Philip Sidney, 'Sonnet 27', in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), ll. 1-7.

My foe came on, and beat the aire for me,
Till that her blush taught me my shame to see.⁸⁷

Astrophil is often characterised as powerless before Cupid in the sequence, and Sonnet 53 is no exception. Cupid has directed Astrophil's gaze towards Stella, a deliberately incongruous action for one 'In *Marse's* liverie'.⁸⁸ Cupid, then, has shattered the unity of thought, gaze and action necessary for the performance of 'Martiall sports'.⁸⁹ It is Stella's blush, her consciousness of their surroundings, that returns Astrophil to the scene of the tilt, his eyes having been dazzled until that point by her light. Her blush is the physical mark of Astrophil's shame. Shame is a feeling engendered by the loss of reputation. It occurs in a social context: as Gail Kern Paster has argued, shame is intertwined with 'the dynamic agencies of theatre', dependant on the sense of an audience, even if the audience is not actually present.⁹⁰ Like sympathy or envy, shame is an inherently relational emotion. The spectators produce this effect of shame just as they produce acclaim and the pride the narrator feels as a result of highly praised performance in the tilt. Cupid embodies real emotion that distracts from martial performance, fracturing the ideal courtier persona that Astrophil was performing in this public display.

In Sonnet 21, fear for Astrophil's future, should he not live up to these great expectations, is imagined over a lifecycle:

For since mad March great promise made of me,
If now the May of my yeares much decline,
What can be hoped my harvest time will be?⁹¹

That Astrophil refers to popular opinion is apparent in the phrase 'great promise *made of me*' (emphasis mine). Astrophil's public identity has quite literally been made by others. The 'mad March' suggests a collective, and temporary, insanity, with Astrophil as a one-hit wonder. Now that this period is over and his actions have failed to live up to their expectations, those infected with March fever are soberly re-assessing their

⁸⁷ Philip Sidney, 'Sonnet 53', ll. 12-14.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 1.

⁹⁰ Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 18-20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 9-11.

judgement of him, leading to a declining reputation. When the physical proof of action, or ‘harvest’ is demanded to match the promise, or projected harvest, nothing will materialise. Dire consequences are predicted if audience expectations and action (Astrophil’s harvest) do not match.

In Sonnet 21, the narrator fears that this temporary disjunction may become permanent. Great expectations have been predicted for Astrophil, a promise his concerned friend fears may be wasted:

Your words my friend (right healthfull caustiks) blame
My young mind marde, whom *Love* doth windlas so,
That mine owne writings like bad servants show
My wits, quicke in vaine thoughts, in virtue lame:
That *Plato* I read for nought, but if he tame
Such coltish gyres, that to my birth I owe
Nobler desires, least else that friendly foe,
Great expectation, weare a traine of shame.⁹²

The sonnet frames Astrophil’s actions as common property. If action does not correspond to commonly-held expectations, the result will be ‘a traine of shame’, the destruction of reputation. Shame figured as a ‘traine’ alludes to its lingering effect, physically embodied as a garment. Whenever anyone sees the wearer, they will see this garment.

Lasting celebrity in the sonnets, then, relies on the performance of personality matching the version the celebrity’s audience has imagined. Not achieving this results in shame and the loss of reputation. A secret self, represented by Astrophil’s relationship with Stella, stands apart from the persona performed under the public eye. This reading of Sidney’s deliberate engagement with popularity, acclaim, and understanding of reputation as a way of amassing power challenges readings of Elizabethan pageantry and spectacle that see the entire performance as centred around the Queen, designed

⁹² Philip Sidney, ‘Sonnet 21’, in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), ll. 1-8.

to flatter Elizabeth and to influence her political decisions.⁹³ These were certainly important motivations, but the presence of the general public at the joust, and the importance of performing well, also suggests something more along the lines of Roman gladiatorial matches sponsored by politicians, designed to please the citizenry and cement their public popularity.

Astrophil and Stella, in its discussion of courtly behaviour and public performance, explores some of the tensions of life as performance, and being at the centre of speculation and attention.⁹⁴ The sonnet sequence's interest in these tensions suggests that the interaction between audience and public figure was an acknowledged source of friction, at least for Sidney. In *Astrophil and Stella*, it is not the tilt's function as political propaganda that creates meaning, but the audience that broadcasts their own meanings onto Astrophil, making him the centre of their attention. Each spectator reads themselves – or perhaps more accurately an ideal version of themselves – within the knight. Meanwhile this knight is a fictional version of Sidney's persona, Astrophil. After his death, this fictional version of a public self proliferated in elegies and a fannish cult of intense mourning, by that time no longer under Sidney's control, just as Tarlton's persona could be used by audiences in the *Jests* and other posthumous texts. The tension between audience expectations and the celebrity's authorial control, I will argue, disappear with the celebrity's death, meaning the persona is available for any – and anyone's – use.

A Celebrity Death

In 1586, Sidney died after being wounded during the Battle of Zutphen. The manner of his death quickly became the stuff of legend, while elegies and accounts of his extravagant funeral procession provide some of the best evidence both for audience interest and fan absorption in the life of Sidney-as-celebrity. The extent of literary production inspired by the death of Sidney is singular. Textual production on Sidney's life and death shows both a market of interested readers willing to pay money for news of Sidney. For authors who had very little personal connection to Sidney, the producers

⁹³ See in particular Frances Yates, *Astrea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

⁹⁴ Although I have focused on the tilt and instances of courtly spectacle, the sequence (particularly Sonnet 58) is also rich in references to oratory as a practice of performance and persuasion.

of text may also be classed in the position of 'fan'; a skilled audience demonstrating emotion in response to the celebrity's life.

Sidney was mourned in Latin collections by Oxford and Cambridge Universities as well as one from Leiden by Georgius Benedicti. Other poets who publicly mourned Sidney in their work include Breton, Constable, Daniel, Drayton, Gorges, Jonson, Raleigh and, perhaps most prolifically Spenser, whose *Astrophel* (1595) was subtitled *A Pastorall Elegy upon the Death of the Most Noble and Valorous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney*. Some of these were friends of Sidney's, their connection social but potentially also para-social, imaginatively filling in elements of the relationship that did not exist. Others had met Sidney only briefly or never met him in person, suggesting that they were fans of his celebrity – a primarily para-social rather than a social connection. In his study of the elegies, Gavin Alexander highlights their emotional quality, describing them as 'copious, conventional, often tedious,' and tending 'to get stuck in a stricken impasse that has no obvious way out'.⁹⁵ So much was said about Sidney's death, in fact, that popular writer Thomas Churchyard wonders how he can possibly say something original, for 'our speeches attends but to one purpose: which is but to shewe the life and death of one onely Parragon and reowmed Knight of England.'⁹⁶ Sidney, Churchyard suggests, is so special that he is not only singular, but the 'one onely Parragon', i.e. the unique, unique, outstanding person. Renowned is also a popular appellation for Sidney, appearing in the title of Angel Day's eulogistic biography. It is closer to celebrity in meaning than 'paragon', but both convey Sidney's high social status and reputation, essential ingredients of celebrity.

As Gavin Alexander has pointed out, some of this evidence 'might still prompt the reader to ask: why all this fuss?'⁹⁷ He cites Sidney's servant Thomas Lant:

For his witt, learninge, and knowledge in divers languages he was muche admired, for his courtasie and affability towards all men no less beloved. and for all other his singuler parts of bounty, courag and liberaliti (bothe to strangers

⁹⁵ Gavin Alexander, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 59.

⁹⁶ Churchyard, *epitaph*, sig. Aiiiv.

⁹⁷ Alexander, pp. 57-8.

and his owne cuntry men) as greatly honored of all that harde his fame (which was spred about the worlde) as of those that knew him hear at home.⁹⁸

Sidney, it appears, is resplendent with sincere but rather vague virtues. There is no evidence of a specific moment or role in which he shone. His writing at this time was not widely known: 'Sidney was mourned as a patron and public figure.'⁹⁹ Drawings of his funeral procession were made by his servant Thomas Lant and engraved by Theodor de Brijj (sometimes Anglicised as 'Thomas de Bry'), forming a 35-foot long panorama called 'Lant's roll' that could be affixed to a tube and turned, creating the cinematic experience of attending the sumptuous funeral procession alongside famous mourners (and the not-famous ones; Lant estimates that there were around 700 official mourners). Lant's roll testifies to the numerous spectators of Sidney's extravagant funeral, recalling the scene in London:

He was carried from the Minorities (wch is without Aldgate) along the cheefe streets of the cytye unto the Cathedreall church of St Paules the which streets all along were so thronged with people that the mourners had scarcely rome to pass; the houses likewise weare as full as they might be, of wch great multitude there were fewe or none that shed not some tears as the corpse passed by them.¹⁰⁰

Not only are the streets and houses full of interested watchers, these watchers are personally mourning Sidney. The mourners having little room to pass suggests that the crowd may have been pressing close to the coffin, closer to the centre of attention. The experience is emotional enough for most to shed tears as the corpse passes them. Something about Sidney's death affects this huge number of people, most of whom cannot have known him personally, and the sight of the coffin provokes a sympathetic reaction.

Thomas Cadman imagines, 'the never dying vertues of the worthie once hopeful Gentleman of England Sir *Philip Sidney* Knight, a man so beloved of al, as oblivion feareth

⁹⁸ Thomas Lant and Theodor de Bry, *Sequitur celebrtas & pompa funeris quemadmodu* (London, 1588), p. 30.

⁹⁹ Alexander, p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Lant and Theodor de Bry, *Sequitur celebrtas & pompa funeris quemadmodu* (London, 1588), p. 30.

to perswade time any waies to impaire his immortall fame'.¹⁰¹ Not only is he famous, but 'beloved'; there is a personal, incredibly strong emotion connecting Sidney and fans like Cadman.¹⁰² Tarlton and earlier clown Will Somers were also described as beloved, a relationship between some celebrities and their fans. At least at the time of Sidney's death, when emotion about the celebrity was naturally at its highest, many spectators seem to have engaged in the type of emotional behaviour that would classify them as fans. Invoking an unspecified muse, scholar and rhetorician Angel Day asks 'Muse you to see, distressed how men plaine... Then turne your eyes, and view his covered hearse... And judge you then, how rightly men may say: / Their somme of joys, the *Fates* have reft away.'¹⁰³ Day seems to recount a sympathy concerning Sidney's life that suggests much of the audience witnessing Sidney's funeral could be described as fans of the knight's celebrity.

So affecting was Sidney's death that it proved difficult for some fans to process. Writing Sidney's 'Epitaph', Thomas Churchyard claims to:

... revive with hope and gladnes, when it shall call to remembraunce, the
generall love and affection of the people towards this rare Gentleman: whose
noble inclination and forme of life, is as well seene & heard by the common
report of the world, as though we saw him alive againe amongst us.¹⁰⁴

Indicating Sidney's general popularity, the phrase 'seene & heard by the common report of the world' is particularly interesting. The 'world' paying attention to Sidney hints at both the international nature of his fame and his death as a topic of universal conversation, regardless of the speakers' other interests. A general sympathy keeps his persona a subject of common report. Churchyard returns to the notion of an image several times in his epitaph, describing Sidney as 'A man made out of goodliest mould as shape in waxe were wrought, / Or picture stode in stampe of gold to please each

¹⁰¹ Thomas Cadman, 'To the right Honorable my especiall good Lord, Ambrose Earle of Warwicke', in George Whetstone, *Sir Philip Sidney, his honourable life, his valiant death, and true vertues* (London, 1587), sig. A4.

¹⁰² Churchyard also uses this term 'beloved', stating that Sidney was 'admired of the best' and 'beloved of the worst'. The feeling for Sidney apparently has the power to unite opposites. *epitaph*, sig. B3.

¹⁰³ Angel Day, *Upon the life and death of the most worthy, and thrise reowmed knight, Sir Phillip Sidney a commemoration of his worthiness* (London, 1586), sig. 3v.

¹⁰⁴ Churchyard, *epitaph*, sig. Aiii.

gazers thought.¹⁰⁵ Sidney, apparently, is a paragon regardless of the person gazing at him; his image is made to please the mind's eye of each gazer. Sidney's persona, therefore, is at least to some extent manufactured in the mind's eye.

Perhaps the most fanatical evidence of sympathy for Sidney comes from John Phillips, one of Sidney's less famous elegists, whose poem is written from the perspective of Sidney's ghost.¹⁰⁶ Like Lant, Phillips describes 'the remembraunce of his deserved fame, which, despite of death, shall live for ever, albeit his want in Court, Towne and country, be bewailed of Prince, nobilitie, Gentlemen, rich and poore.'¹⁰⁷ More explicitly than Lant, Phillips emphasises the range of social classes that feel personally affected by Sidney's untimely death; enough to bewail him. Phillips diverges from other biographies when he begins his verse account in Sidney's voice, recalling 'yet I know my peeres will thinke on me, / My guileles ghost shall never them forget'.¹⁰⁸ Sidney is apparently too beloved to be allowed to rest long in his grave: he must be resurrected, and his wisdom imparted. Recalling the funeral procession from Sidney's perspective, Phillips recalls:

First to the poore I clad in weedes of woe,
whose blubred eies did shew their inward griefe,
the yeomens looks their heavy cheare did show,
and of their care I was their causer chiefe,
the gentles all languish without reliefe,
they left their silks to thinke upon my wracke,
and wailfull wise were cloathed all in blacke.¹⁰⁹

So great is the mourning for Sidney that in this stanza Phillips pulls every possible synonym for 'sad' out of the bag; we have 'woe', 'blubred eies', 'griefe', 'heavy cheare',

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., sig. Aiv.

¹⁰⁶ This was a persona Phillips seems to have enjoyed inhabiting in his poetry about celebrity deaths, also writing from the perspective of worthies like Sir Christopher Hatton and Dame Helen Branch (the lord mayor of London's wife). Alexandra Walsham, 'Phillips [Phillip], John (d. 1594x1617), author.', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2004) <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22158>> [accessed 25 June 2019].

¹⁰⁷ John Phillips, *The life and death of Sir Philip Sidney* (London, 1587), sig. Ar.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., sig. Br.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

'care', 'languish' and 'wailfull'. The picture is of excessive sadness across all ranks of society, causing even the most gaudy courtiers to lay aside their colourful silk clothing and think on the pains of Sidney, as though meditating on the pains of a martyr. Phillips, effectively, is describing the entangling of subjectivities that characterises some intensely sympathetic fans. Thinking on the pain of Sidney produces a mirroring emotional response: very sincere fans can imagine his death and undergo his pain as an expression of their love. Whether this was the case for quite as many spectators as Phillips describes is, of course, questionable, but Phillips himself has written a whole poem from a perspective based on entangled subjectivity, conjuring images of mass mourning, suggesting at least that Phillips – in his skilled and sympathetic engagement with the life of Sidney – is an ardent fan of the knight's celebrity.

Strongly inclined to Puritanism himself, Phillips frames Sidney particularly as an upholder of God's (Protestant) truth. He has the knight pronounce:

An earnest love I to my countrie had,
The Commons weale I planted in my minde.
The noble peeres were of my company glad,
No breache of troath in me could any finde.¹¹⁰

Sidney, in effect, is all things to all people: country, commons and nobles. Even his ghostly word has great weight; 'what *Sidney* saies, the world will speake I know.'¹¹¹ In fact, he is truth embodied: no breach of troth/truth can be found in him. The relative importance of Sidney compared to most people is substantiated by George Whetstone, who writes that death cannot daunt Sidney, a man who '*Fame with name doth Crowne: / When shallow Graves the multitude do drowne.*'¹¹² Fame renders Sidney an individual, a body that Phillips is able to resurrect, whereas the multitude are obliterated after their deaths. The imaginative resurrection of the celebrity persona suggests that celebrity itself is an imaginative construct.¹¹³ Fan engagement with Sidney's public persona has the potential both to create entangled subjectivities, and for the persona to seem as

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, sig. A3r.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, sig. A2v.

¹¹² Whetstone, *Sir Phillip Sidney, his honorable life, his valiantdeath, and true vertues* (London, 1587), sig. B1v.

¹¹³ As we will see, other celebrities in this period were imaginatively resurrected or reconstructed, making it a common theme for engagement with the celebrity persona in this period.

alive in death as it was in life. Like Tarlton's persona, here Philips is using Sidney's persona to advance his own opinions, rather than searching for an accurate representation of the celebrity.

While Astrophil in *Astrophil and Stella* is conscious of trying to preserve and create his reputation in a way that meets audience expectations, Philips' literary version of Sidney no longer encounters this tension: the dead celebrity responds exactly as Philips desires. It is impossible for this Sidney not to meet his fan – Philips' – expectations, so avoiding the disillusionment and decline in popularity that Sidney foretold in his sonnet sequence. In much the same way, Fulke Greville's account is made to serve its own political ends, advocating the militant Protestantism he hoped Prince Henry would enact.¹¹⁴ After death any struggle for control of the persona vanishes, and anyone was free to use Sidney's persona as a sign for the ideal gentleman, enacting the agenda of the fan.

Philip Sidney, then, presents a study of the tensions between the celebrity themselves and their public persona. Created by public performance watched by courtiers and the low and middling estates of Elizabethan society, Sidney's sonnet sequence explores some of the problems of this kind of celebrity: what happens when audience expectations are not met by life? What happens when audiences infer inaccurate motivations onto the celebrity life? Once a persona has become public, controlling it can prove challenging. However, the outpouring of sympathy at Sidney's death shows not only that he was a beloved celebrity and provoked a high level of fan engagement with his life, but the tension between private person and public image seems to disappear only with the dissolution of the private person, memory available for public use.

¹¹⁴ Moll Cutpurse's street performances, performing onstage, and her part in writing *The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse* suggest a similar reclaiming on the part of the celebrity, exerting control over the versions of themselves publicly circulating.

Chapter Five: Identifying with Animal Celebrities

Philip Sidney's relationship with his own reputation suggests that celebrities, at least during their lives, could have some input into their celebrity persona, even as this was mediated by audience expectations. But was this the case for every celebrity? I would like to turn now to animal celebrities, who do not – other than being alive – have anything to do with cultivating their own celebrity, uninterested in generating their own fame. However, their actions were often transformed into a celebrity performance by owners, managers and audiences. And as audiences engaged with the spectacles of bear baits and cock fights, animal celebrity and human spectator identity could intertwine, close association with fighting cocks and bears coming to signify the valour of their fans. Using animals as emotional conduits, this chapter will argue that the persona of the animal celebrity could create meaning and/or status for the spectator's own identity. Being an imaginative construct, celebrity persona could transfer and intermingle with that other imaginative construct: spectator identity. Before thinking about fans, however, we will need to establish that early modern animals engaged in bloodsports were indeed accorded celebrity status.

'They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, / But, bear-like, I must fight the course.' So says Macbeth after the wood has advanced from Dunsinane and he prepares to make his last stand. The bear, for him, symbolises being unable to escape a fight, forced hopelessly into vicious fighting. Why does Shakespeare use the language of the bear bait for the last stand of a great warrior? Jason Scott-Warren categorises the bait as 'a low form of entertainment', differentiating it from the serious and 'high' work of drama.² As S. P Cerasano has observed of the Bear Garden (which became dual-purpose theatrical/bearbaiting venue the Hope Theatre in 1614):

Because so much of the research on the Bear Garden has been carried out by theatre historians, they have often chosen to characterize it not as an entity

¹ William Shakespeare, 'Macbeth', in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., ed. by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 969-842, 5.7.1-2.

² Jason Scott-Warren, 'When Theaters Were Bear-Gardens; Or, What's at Stake in the Comedy of Humors', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54.1, 63-82 (p. 79).

unto itself, but as a predecessor to a more important (i.e., theatrical) endeavour.³

He argues ‘that entrepreneurs with the shared expertise of Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn did not become involved with such a venture because it potentially gave them another building to rent to actors.’⁴ Similarly, ‘Beeston’s Cockpit theater had been an actual cock-fighting arena.’⁵ Terence Hawkes has theorised that critics have been reticent to discuss early modern bloodsports because: ‘One worrying conclusion must be that the two kinds of ‘play’, drama and bear-baiting, occupied the same frame of reference on the Bankside, with the Globe Theatre part of an ensemble of places of entertainment whose constituent parts are difficult, if not impossible, to unpick.’⁶ However, as the field of animal studies has expanded, this is being redressed. Andreas Höfele in particular has been instrumental in reassessing the relationship between bait and play, his monograph *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold* (2011) even arguing that this shared space infused Shakespeare’s character’s ‘with a degree of animality that a later anthropology, which could be labelled ‘modern’, or, more specifically, Cartesian, would categorically efface.’⁷ This seems a rather impossible connection to prove, but it does show the strong desire in recent scholarship to connect stage-space and the stage as a bloodsport arena in a theoretical way. Erica Fudge has argued for a different perspective in animal studies, suggesting that animals could be a ‘motive force’, the ‘understanding of the nature of animals’ changing ideas like ‘human status in religious, humanist, legal

³ S. P. Cerasano, ‘The Master of the Bears in Art and Enterprise’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 5 (1991), 195-209 (p. 195).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Adam Zucker, ‘The Social Stakes of Gambling in Early Modern London’, in *Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice*, ed. by Amanda Bailey and Roze Hentschell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 67-86 (p. 70).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁷ Animal studies scholars exploring baiting, including Höfele, have frequently (and understandably) looked at baiting from an emotionally postmodern perspective; as a form of ‘torture’. Andreas Höfele, *Stage, Stake and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 3. See also Erica Fudge, ‘Saying Nothing Concerning the Same: On Dominion, Purity, and Meat in Early Modern England’ in *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, pp. 70-86 (p. 81), and Rebecca Ann Bach, ‘Bearbaiting, Dominion, and Colonialism’, in *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), pp. 19-35 (p. 25). Stephen Dickey has offered an important corrective to this perspective, arguing from close analysis of the reception of baiting that, ‘to judge from the handful of contemporary eyewitness accounts of baiting matches, again and again the audience was pleased by what it saw, cheered it on, and laughed at it’. ‘Shakespeare’s Mastiff Comedy’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42.3, 255-274 (p. 259).

and political writings'.⁸ Animals are an integral part of human knowledge-making and society, Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert arguing that processes of interaction are so inter-networked that it is 'impossible to recognize a pure 'human' society.'⁹ Animals, then, can be an important component in the kinds of social relationships this thesis has been exploring.

Bloodsports became an important part of early modern culture and expression. Robert Crowley describes the intensity of the bearbaiting ring as mastiff and bear fight, 'Wyth terrible tearynge / a full ouglye sight.'¹⁰ He testifies to the size of the audience at just one arena as well as to the profit (vaile) made by the bearwards;¹¹

At the Paryse garden eche sondaye
a man shall not fayle,
To find two or thre hundreds
for the bearwardes vaile.¹²

It was an extraordinarily popular activity, and as such bloodsports run through the early modern literature and culture we continue to consume today, used as an analogy or reference point. Presbyterians are 'like *Dogs a Bear-baiting*',¹³ while Gabriel Harvey uses 'beare-baiting him' as synonymous with bothering and Elizabeth I uses 'cocking' as another word for fighting.¹⁴ Why does Macbeth couch his final stand in the language of the bait? Bear baiting, cock fighting, and their related entertainments had a profound impact on analogy and expression and, I would argue, inevitably on the speaker of these analogies' worldview.

But were the participants of these fights celebrities, and how were they regarded by their audiences? Some evidence is to be found in names. Bears and fighting cocks were

⁸ Erica Fudge, 'Introduction', in *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, ed. by Erica Fudge (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 1-17, p. 3.

⁹ Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, 'Animal Spaces, Bestly Places: An Introduction', in *Animal Spaces, Bestly Places: New Geographics of Human-Animal Relations*, ed. by Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-35, p. 16.

¹⁰ Robert Crowley, *One and thyrtie epigrammes* (London: 1550), sig. B3v.

¹¹ 'vail, n.1.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/221069> [accessed 10 July 2018].

¹² Crowley, sig. B3v.

¹³ Anon, *An Answer to Wild* (London: 1660).

¹⁴ Gabriel Harvey, *Four letters, and certaine sonnets especially touching Robert Greene* (London: 1592), sig. E2v.

given names by their owners and also potentially by their fans. For bears, these included Harry Hunkes, Sackerson, Blind Robin, Tom of Lincoln, Don Jon, Little Bess of Bromley, Ned Whiting and Ned of Canterbury.¹⁵ I have suggested that human celebrities' names could effectively stand as a signifier for the sign of their celebrity, 'Tarlton' generating a specific set of associations. Animals, it would seem, were no different. The name 'Tarlton' was after all given to a fighting cock, associating him with the famous clown's celebrity persona and practice of beating his drum.

Each name had a different set of associations: the name Sackerson may play on 'sack' (a popular type of white wine) or even 'saracen' (another spelling being Sacarson), evoking the knights of 's Faerie Queene (1590) and perhaps adding a taste of villainy to this bear's performance. Harry Hunkes, on the other hand, is a more classically English hero his audience can cheer for: 'Cry, 'God for Harry! England, and Saint George!'"¹⁶ His name testifies to the astonishing power of bears as celebrities and social influencers, having an effect on the English language for several hundred years. Hunkes may originally have related to its Frisian origin 'home in a game', relating bloodsports to sports that have a home-plate.¹⁷ Soon after 1600 in Britain, however, it came to mean 'A term of obloquy for a surly, crusty, cross-grained old person, a 'bear'.¹⁸ *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew* (1699) describes the term as 'a covetous Creature, a miserable Wretch.'¹⁹ Although one of the synonyms the OED gives for Hunkes is a 'bear', the dictionary writers have commented 'Origin unknown' for how this meaning actually came about, speculating that 'it has the appearance of a quasi-proper name or nickname'.²⁰ Harry Hunkes the bear was at the apex of his fighting fame in 1599, as the word began to take on this meaning, and all of the examples cited by the OED for the next thirty nine years almost certainly refer to the bear, before the word begins to change its meaning to become a more general epithet. The following examples are a sample of the most relevant:

¹⁵ Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 87.

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, 'Henry V', in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., ed. by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 595-626, 3.1.34.

¹⁷ 'hunk, n.2 and adj.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/89502> [accessed 10 July 2018]. 'hunks, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/89508> [accessed 10 July 2018].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ B. E., *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew* (London, 1699), sig. G1v.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

a1627 T. MIDDLETON *No Wit* (1657) v. 109 Now is Mercury going into the second house near unto Ursa major, that great Huncks.

a1635 T. RANDOLPH *Muses Looking-glasse* II.iv.36 in *Poems* (1638) 'Twas to blind the eyes of the old Huncks.

1638 R. BRAITHWAIT *Barnadbees Journall* (new ed.) II.sig.L2 There the Beares were come to Town-a; Two rude Hunks, 'tis troth I tell ye.²¹

Indeed, John Jowett's edition of Middleton's *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (c.1611) identifies 'a particular bear at Paris Garden' with the above speech. Middleton himself cites 'horrible bear-baitings' before mentioning the constellation of Ursa Major with 'the sun near ent'ring into th' Dog', an astrological event which 'sets 'em all together by the ears', almost certainly a reference to the physical practice of bears cuffing dogs about their ears in the bait.²² In turn, mastiff dogs were trained to attack bears' heads, the most vulnerable part of their bodies, blinding them and ending their career as fighters. Once the bear could no longer fight, early modern audiences at the baits were entertained with a whipping of the blind bear, making sense of Randolph's reference to 'to blind the eyes of the old Huncks'.²³ It is amazing that the surliness of Huncks was particularly remarkable among the other bears treated similarly. This long influence on the language (the last instance the OED cites of 'Hunks' being used in this way is 1857) testifies to the power of bears as cultural influencers, linked to their position as celebrities. A name that is an understood byword for celebrity persona complies with the notion of celebrity 'well-knownness' and parallels Tarlton's position as a sign, connoting other meanings such as mirth or social dominance.

Names might be expected from the bear's humanoid shape, but the fact that cocks were also given names supports the idea of bloodsports as spectator events that in themselves created celebrities. Interestingly, however, cocks tend to have one name rather than the name-and-surname or name-and-location formula that generally

²¹ Ibid.

²² John Jowett, 'No Witt, no helpe like a Woman', in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor et al (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), pp. 779-832 (p. 828). Thomas Middleton, 'No Witt, no helpe like a Woman', in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by John Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 9.478, 478-9.

²³ Although the figurative sense is the primary one in this speech, the character Colax (or flattery) tricking the prodigal Asotus' miserly father Aneleutherus. Thomas Randolph, *Poems with the Muses looking-glasse: and Amyntas* (Oxford, 1638), p. 36.

characterises celebrity bears. Grissel and Noble are two examples. The qualities of a cock named Noble seem fairly self-explanatory, although even then there could be several potential meanings; a cock with fastidious tastes, perhaps, or one who was particularly gentlemanlike in his fighting style (rather a difficult feat when the main goal of each contender is to gouge his opponent's eyes out). Grissel is named after Patient Grissel, the popular medieval and early modern character who embodied the ideal feminine virtues of patience and submission, despite being constantly abused by her higher status husband. Does this refer to the cock's fighting style, waiting for his opponent to strike first and so wearing them down, the Muhammed Ali of fighting cocks?

The anthropocentrism of name-giving is an expression of ownership, but it is also the attribution of human qualities to the animal: it implies that a peer-to-peer relationship between human and animal is desired, and that the animal is able to reciprocate emotion within this relationship. Animals could also have a long-term impact on popular cultural understandings, as the case of Harry Hunkes demonstrates.

Feeling for sport

In his discussion of celebrity animals today, David C. Giles has suggested:

... individual animals indisputably have public appeal, suggesting that it is not necessary for audiences to work through the dilemmas of authenticity/contrivance and real/false in order for them to display continued interest in following a specific celebrity. It is therefore more likely that the appeal of animal celebrities derives solely from the affective power invested in them by audiences.²⁴

Animal celebrity, Giles argues, is self-evidently a human construct, created from the emotion they generate within their spectators. Erica Fudge in *Perceiving Animals* has come across the same problem in tracing early modern animals, arguing that, 'In historical terms the animal can never be studied in isolation, it is always a record by and of the human.'²⁵ Animals of the past are inevitably mediated through human discourse, and human ideologies. The notion of early modern celebrity bears and fighting cocks,

²⁴ 'Animal Celebrities', *Celebrity Studies*, 4:2 (2013), 115-128 (p. 117).

²⁵ Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 174.

therefore, raises the question that has been a theme through this thesis: to what extent is the celebrity in control of their own popular persona?

Giles' argument that the audience does not need a real/false dilemma in order to keep them interested in a celebrity is a direct counter to Chris Rojek's influential model of the 'veridical self' (itself modelled on George Herbert Mead's 'I' and 'Me'). This theory claims that an I (or 'veridical self') is always kept in reserve, separate from the 'Me (the self as seen by others)'.²⁶ According to Rojek, 'celebrity status always implies a split between a private self and a public self.' This does not imply that the public self is false, only that disjunction exists on some level between performed public and private selves. He argues that this disjunction creates a crisis of meaning for the celebrity. While this is not present for animal celebrities, there is a distinct split between the received celebrity animal and the animal's own experience. We can only really speculate on the latter, as an element of animal experience is always fundamentally cut off from the human. Chickens, for example, have panoramic vision of about 300 degrees. They can use binocular vision, like humans, but unlike us they can also see in monocular vision: looking at two separate images on either side of their head. This can fundamentally affect the way in which they perceive space, one study showing that chicks cannot perceive the centre of a space they have mentally mapped if the landmarks are removed.²⁷ Bears' primary sense is smell, a way of perceiving the world that is incomprehensible to most humans. If such a fundamental means of perception can be so different, there is a 'veridical self' inside every animal, however famous, that humans are unable to access, just as there is a self within celebrities that spectators/fans are more or less unable to access. Celebrity fighting cocks, as I will explore, could have this mystery of inner personhood magnified to something akin to the mystery of the saint, or the icon. The audience, working with the facts available to them, creates their own mystery, and manufactures celebrity in so doing.

Analysing animals today, including Dolly the cloned sheep, made famous by her role in scientific discovery, John Blewitt argues along similar lines: 'Animal celebrity is a human creation informing us about our socially constructed natural world. It is expressive of cultural proclivities, political power plays and the quotidian every day, as well as serious

²⁶ Rojek, p. 11.

²⁷ A. Della Chiesa et al., 'Multiple landmarks, the encoding of environmental geometry and the spatial logics of a dual brain', *Animal Cognition*, 9.4 (2006), 281-293.

philosophical reflections on the meaning of being human.²⁸ His framing of animal celebrities implies that they are created by a human social network. This kind of celebrity, he argues, ‘tells us something about the human socially constructed world’.²⁹ The ‘something’ that emerges from this discourse between human and animal celebrity selves can, Blewitt suggests, ‘bridge ostensibly great divides between human and non-human others, between nature and culture, the material and the semiotic and the organic and the technological.’³⁰ Writing in our time, as we are increasingly concerned with human exploitation of the natural world, Blewitt may be right. However, within an early modern context, I would argue that this divide is never bridged. Where fans and spectators speculate on the nature of the animal within, they do so in human terms. The mystery of the animal self within the celebrity is never penetrated. Early modern celebrity animals remain anthropomorphised, rather than forging enlightened, cross-species pathways. As Keith Thomas has argued, this is a context in which humans were at the top of the hierarchical tree, their right to rule incontestable.³¹ It is a ‘breathtakingly anthropocentric’ worldview in which humans are the masters and animals the servants.³² Animals as a form of entertainment is, therefore, an acceptable form of service rendered to their masters. Animal celebrity in the early modern period (and perhaps in our own) tells us more about human powers of imagination than it does about animal practices, or animal inner lives.

Animal celebrity as a human construct is neatly encapsulated in one of the more famous references to a celebrity animal in early modern literature. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), the cowardly Slender boasts to (he believes) potential conquest Anne Page that ‘I have seen Sackerson loose twenty times, and have taken him by the chain’.³³ For Slender this action is a display of his own courage, in contrast to women who shriek when they see the ‘ill-favoured, rough things’.³⁴ He is courageous both by association with this terror-inspiring being and as the temporary controller of such a being. Going

²⁸ John Blewitt, ‘What’s new pussycat? A genealogy of animal celebrity’, *Celebrity Studies*, 4:3 (2013), 325-338 (p. 325).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

³¹ *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 17-18.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 7. See also Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 4.

³³ William Shakespeare, ‘The Merry Wives of Windsor’, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., ed. by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 511-536, 1.1.274-6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.1.278-9.

into the enclosure before a bait is also evidence of a level of fan engagement with the celebrity animal. Spectators, in holding the chain, are as close to the bear as it is possible to be without engaging in a fight themselves. Even then, there are accounts of humans being accidentally killed when they got too close to their idols.³⁵ Terence Hawkes similarly has argued that these bears ‘ranked as genuine “stars” in the one arena as much as any of the actors in the other.’³⁶ This incident also testifies to the anthropocentric nature of early modern animal celebrities: Shallow uses Sackerson to display his own courage and to mediate a human relationship (between himself and a desired love interest). Sackerson himself is othered, as ‘ill-favored’ and ‘rough’.

This is not to argue that bloodsports are always consciously exploitative, or that early moderns were insensible to cruelty; Thomas Dekker reports of Harry Hunkes, ‘this whipping of the blind *Beare*, moved as much pitie in my breast toward him, as ye leading of poore starved wretches to the whipping posts in *London*’.³⁷ He even takes the bear’s part, reporting that ‘It was some sport to see Innocence triumph over Tyranny, by beholding those unnecessary tormentors go away with scratched hands, or torne legs from a poore Beast, arm’d onely by nature to defend himself against *Violence*’.³⁸ The text can be read as empathetic: Dekker feels the same emotion towards the persecuted of both species, in contrast to their tormentors who hypocritically have the ‘faces of christians’.³⁹ Many sources attest to the strong feelings of attachment keepers/owners could feel towards their animals, and the great (and bizarre) lengths to which owners would go to keep them alive. If Gervase Markham’s *Cheape and good husbandry for the well-ordering of all beasts* (1614) is to be believed, owners of fighting cocks could devote huge amounts of time and energy to caring for their animals. Fighting cocks, he writes, need specially made pens, the freshest spring water possible, and after sparring must eat a mixture of butter, rosemary and sugar candy, before being sweated in a basket.⁴⁰ Markham then advises that, ‘After four of the Clock in the Evening, you may take your Cock out of the stove, and licking his head and eyes all over with your tongue, put him into his penne’.⁴¹ This merging of identities in the exchange of bodily fluids and rituals of

³⁵ Whether these deaths were caused by celebrity-worship is of course impossible to say.

³⁶ Terence Hawkes, p. 87.

³⁷ Thomas Dekker, *Worke for armorours: or, The peace is broken* (London, 1609), sig. B2r.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Dekker, *Worke for armorours*, sig. B2r.

⁴⁰ Gervase Markham, *Country contentments* (London, 1656), sigs. M1v-M2r.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, M2r. Thomas A. Hamill has analysed these rituals in greater detail, reading the licking as a temporary subordination of the cock owner to his fighting cock ‘in the name of care.’ Karen Raber, conversely, has read the action as devouring; a ‘strange simulacrum of cooking and

care suggests an element of mute, and ritualised, social bonding: rubbing, licking, wrapping up; all are nurturing actions that we enact on and with other humans (the instinct to lick because human saliva contains an antiseptic). Even if this nurture is for the selfish cause of making the cock a better fighter, there is a one-way attempt to bond directed from the cock owner to their fighting cock; a para-social undertaking. Animals involved in bloodsports could, therefore, provoke empathetic reactions, going some way to explaining the extraordinarily affective power of this kind of entertainment on its audience.

This elision between spectator and animal, according to John Taylor, could occur during the bear bait. He writes that bearbaiting is ‘not for Boyes, or fooles effeminate, / For whoso'ere comes thither, most and least, / May see and learne some courage from a Beast’.⁴² The relationship between the bait and effeminacy perhaps goes some way to explaining Moll Cutpurse’s associations with bear baiting. The emotion of the fighting bear has an effect on spectators, inspiring them with courage through a kind of mimesis. Beyond this, however, it is a sport that should be attended only by masculine men, implying that the mettle of the spectator is a prerequisite for being inspired by courage. There is no point in the attendance of boys or ‘fooles effeminate’. Courage was, like the fighting cock, a distinct feature of the bear: Gascoigne personifies this quality, declaring, that bears:

... fight very valiantly in their own defence. Sometime they stand vpon their hinder feete... but being vpon all foure they fight bothe the more strongly and the moure stoutely: for then they declare that they will be reuenged, and flee no longer⁴³

Watching bears’ fighting style, Gascoigne has created a narrative to explain their actions that parallels a revenge tragedy, overlaying a story he is familiar with onto the animal, and filling the tale with drama and emotion.

Taylor reports that ‘showts’ alongside ‘Matives [Mastiff’s] mouthes do fill the sky’, and ‘rough behaviour’ can be expected among the crowd, perhaps jostling to better see the

eating’ which ‘reimagines meat eating as a process in which humans consume both self and other, mingled in such a fashion that identity cannot finally be established in one or the other creature.’ Hamill, ‘Cockfighting as Cultural Allegory in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39.2 (2009), 375-406 (p. 390). Raber, *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p.109.

⁴² Taylor, *Bull, beare, and horse*, sig. D7r.

⁴³ George Gascoigne, *The noble arte of venerie or hunting* (London, 1575), p. 218.

fight, disputing winners, or expending some of the energy built up in these raised emotional circumstances.⁴⁴ This kind of mimetic behaviour from the crowd, responding to the movement and emotions of the fight, is likely to create intense moments of identification with the celebrity fighter. It is interesting that Taylor refers to 'shouts', a sound made by people, and 'Matives mouthes', the part of the mastiff that makes the sound. Together, the mouth and the shout form a complete whole, from the creation to the outcome of the sound, eliding mastiff and spectator in the intensity of both fight and spectatorship, far from a passive activity. Persona has temporarily encompassed fans within the characteristics of its own identity, eliding fan and character/celebrity identities. Mastiffs may also have been celebrities, although there is less evidence for this: in either case Taylor's account is indicative in describing identification with the fighters in the arena.

Similarly, John Davies describes the sights and sounds one was likely to come across in a bear baiting ring; a student pays to sit 'amongst the Beares & dogges... were whilst he skipping cries To head, to head. / His Satten doublet & his velvet hose, / Are all with spittle from above be-spread.'⁴⁵ It is interesting that he frames the sitting position as 'amongst' the animals; the student wants to sit as close as possible to the action, within the fight without actually getting mauled by a bear or mastiff, and possibly close to where the dogs were unleashed from.⁴⁶ In return, the student is willing to face considerable discomfort, not seeming to notice the spit falling like rain from above, ruining the dandyish and expensive satin doublet. It is implied that under normal circumstances he takes great care over his appearance, but has become so involved in the fight that he has forgotten to care. The student's cry of 'To head, to head' may be directing the dogs to attack the bear's head. He expresses a simultaneous sense of ownership and identification, directing the dogs and empathetically imagining the most successful strategy in this life-or-death fight. 'Empathetic' might seem something of a mockery when applied to bloodsports, but it is just this faculty for empathy, I would argue, that makes the student entirely forget what is happening to him personally, feeling himself to be participating in the fight rather than the soggy reality of being drenched with spittle.

⁴⁴ John Taylor, *Bull, beare, and horse*, sigs. D5r, D7r.

⁴⁵ John Davies, *Epigrammes and elegies* (Middleborough, 1599), sig. D2r.

⁴⁶ Butchers were advised to keep dogs to bait animals before slaughter, believed to tenderise the meat. Mark S. R. Jenner, 'The Great Dog Massacre', ed. by William G. Naphy, Penny Roberts, *Fear in Early Modern Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 44-61, p. 52.

Barbara Ravelhofer has drawn attention to the performative nature of bearbaiting, and its parallels with theatrical practice. Citing perhaps the most-quoted passage on baiting (which actually recounts the baiting of three bears, one horse, and a bull), she argues that, ‘The organization of a decent match came close to stage-management.’⁴⁷ This particular spectacle was recorded by German traveller Lupoid von Wedel on his 1584 visit to London:

These dogs were made to fight singly with three bears, the second bear being larger than the first, and the third larger than the second. After this a horse was brought in and chased by the dogs, and at last a bull, who defended himself bravely. The next was, that a number of men and women came forward from a separate compartment, dancing, conversing and fighting with each other: also a man who threw some white bread among the crowd, that scrambled for it. Right over the middle of the place a rose was fixed, this rose being set on fire by a rocket: suddenly lots of apples and pears fell out of it down upon the people standing below. Whilst the people were scrambling for the apples, some rockets were made to fall down upon them out of the rose, which caused a great fright but amused the spectators. After this, rockets and other fireworks came flying out of all corners, and that was the end of the play.⁴⁸

The spectacle here is designed to cause sensory overload of every kind: the noise of shouts/music; the taste of fruit/bread; the visual effect and noise combined of baiting/fireworks. It resembles not the play so much as the clown’s jig. The ‘number of men and women... dancing, conversing and fighting with each other’ in fact sounds very like the spectacle of the jig, which involved all three elements, generally woven into a very short plot starring the stage clown. The successive animal baits are framed as the central point around which other entertainments are structured, positioning the bait, structurally, as the stage play in relation to the jig. The eagerness of the crowd’s scrambling for food as well as their immediate panic at the rockets can be construed both as a reflection of their energy and heightened emotional state, having watched but not participated in the violent spectacle of the fight. This is a kind of mimesis, inspired by the extraordinary movement of the baiting. This is not to discount, of course, the more obvious motive for movement: free food. It is interesting to compare this kind of

⁴⁷ Barbara Ravelhofer, ‘“Beasts of Recreation”: Henslowe’s White Bears’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 32.2 (Spring 2002), 287-323 (p. 289).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

sensory overload with court pageantry, and specifically the *Four Foster Children of Desire*. The pageant used music, scented canons, elaborate costumes, speeches and physical displays of fighting to create a lavish spectacle. Both entertainments, crucially, provide a frame for their star performers. The performance by the men and women alongside the dispersal of food and fireworks is a celebration of the bait. They are kinds of hype machinery, designed to associate the ‘stars’ of the baiting with excess, with emotional overload, and with sensory gratification.

The sense of spectacle, the event’s popularity and the emotional tenor of the activity intermingled and contributed to the celebrity culture that grew up around them, transforming fighting cocks and bears into lauded celebrities. In part the performative nature of cock fights and bear baits, sharing the space of the stage with early modern actors and comedians, transformed animals into celebrities in the same way that space/spectator dynamics could make celebrities out of ordinary people. However, this elision between animal/human categories questions both the nature of celebrity and the way in which we understand early modern animal/human binaries. How did relationships between human audiences and animal celebrities work in practice, and how were they framed? The next section will analyse perhaps the best source on both the practice of and the passionate engagement with early modern cockfighting in Britain: enthusiast and small-town vicar George Wilson’s *The commendation of cockes, and cock-fighting* (1607).

Fighting cocks: status and rites

The title page of Wilson’s *commendation* places us (the reader) at the level of spectator watching a cockfight. It shows two cocks the moment before their battle begins, poised like boxers assessing one another’s weaknesses. Their necks are extended, heads down, feathers raised to make themselves look bigger. Relative to size their spurs are enormous and look lethally sharp. Each cock seems to be the same image reflected. This contest, then, is evenly matched, only increasing our anticipation; the winner is entirely uncertain, and we must watch the imminent fight in order to discover the outcome.

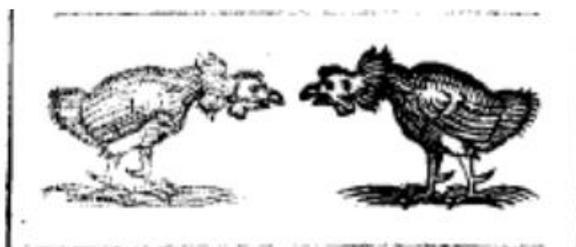


Fig 6 Commendation title page showing two fighting cocks.

We feel, from this image, some of the anticipation of the cockfight, indicating the potentially passionate power of a cockfight on its spectators. Beyond the charged conditions of performance, Wilson argues that fighting cocks deserve the high social status of celebrity by invoking the three pillars of monarchy, religion and classical authority, investing fighting cocks with every claim to high status and moral tone.

High status is an essential component of celebrity, the phenomenon accurately described as 'status on speed'.⁴⁹ Association the high-status factors of monarchy, classical authority and Christ closely connects the fighting cock to an elite social network, paralleling some of the elements of a star system. Wilson, I would suggest, devotes most of his pamphlet to explaining the gamecock's high-status position, in order to justify extreme emotional reactions to their celebrity, as well as to the sport in general (I will finish this chapter with a case-study of a particularly extreme reaction to the victories of one of Wilson's own fighting cocks, lipsey). The high-status associations of monarchy, classical authority and Christ are of course on top of fighting cocks' genetic superiority; Wilson asserts that they are aristocrats in their own way. It is only cocks of the game (i.e. fighting cocks), he claims, that remain the impression of God's original design; all other cocks are 'imperfect' and 'degenerate' thanks to 'grosse and irregular bréeding'.⁵⁰ It would be to invest the power associated with celebrity in a normal cock, but fighting cocks, in their intrinsic superiority, are to be revered and admired. This vigorous distinction between fighting and ordinary cocks may imply a difficulty in his project of raising fighting cocks to such extraordinarily high status that they are associated with Christ.

The association between fighting cocks and Christ seems particularly significant considering the intensity of debate that was to erupt later in the century, over whether animals had a soul.⁵¹ Wilson seems to be putting his hat in the ring early on the side of the spirituality of animals, recalling this extraordinary story:

⁴⁹ Kurzman et al, 'Celebrity Status', p. 347.

⁵⁰ George Wilson, *The commendation of cockes*, sig. D2v.

⁵¹ Erica Fudge argues that there is a defining break when Descartes comes on the scene; 'the idea of the equality of all humans clearly emerges out of Descartes's ideas.' If animals are a *bête machine*, as Descartes posits, they are a category clearly distinct from humans. This notion of the *bête machine* as a turning point in European-wide thinking about animals been an influential one in the field of animal studies. *Perceiving Animals*, p. 2. For a full exposition of these debates following Descartes' 'claim that animals are automata, that is, pure machines, without a spiritual, incorporeal soul', see Lloyd Strickland, 'God's creatures? Divine nature and the status of animals in the early modern beast-machine controversy', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 74.4 (2013), 291-309.

I remember that in my young time, I being in bed with an Uncle of mine a learned Minister and a zealous Professor of the word of God, how that after midnight, the Cocke crowed, whereat my Vncle awaked, and told me that the voice of the Cocke did put him in mind of the passion of our Saviour Christ, and then instantly hee fell to most earnest praying. Likewise a man of good worship credibly informed me, that hee knew a Gentleman, that had many good Cokes of the game which he loved maruailously well, and wherein he tooke great felicitie and delight all his life time; and at the last falling into a gréevous sicknesse, and lying upon his death-bed, he requested his kinred and friends which were about him, to place his Cokes with their Coopes so néere vnto his beds head as possibly they could doe, which being performed according to his request, he heard them crowe; whereat he sayd, now have I obtained that which I desired; for these delectable voices shalbe my swéete-sounding trumpets, to admonish and put me in minde of my immortal, and celestiall Judge, before whome all flesh must appeare, to receive recompence according to their demerits, whether they be good or evill.⁵²

Proximity to cocks can have religious significance, an element entirely imposed on the animal.⁵³ It is significant in the second anecdote that the cock crowing, as part of God's creation, can have celestial power, suggestive of a divine mystery within the animal that has a profound effect on humans and spirits. As the herald of dawn in *Hamlet* (1600-1), the cock's crow is of course associated with the banishing of ghosts and ungodly powers with the night.

Perhaps the most significant element of Wilson's justification for cocks' status is his association between cockfighting and classical authority, connecting classical militarism with the fighting cock. Among others, he cites Athenian General Themistocles, who allegedly used two fighting cocks as an example to his soldiers. Themistocles,

⁵² Wilson, *commendation*, sigs. C2v-C3r.

⁵³ Interestingly, according to Conrad Heresbach's book of animal husbandry, the cock's ability to crow loudly at dawn is one of the chief requirements to check before buying him; he advises that your prospective purchase should be 'specially good wakers, and crows: for it is a Byrd that well aporcioneth both the night and the day, and (as *Prudentius* witnesseth) exhorteth to repentance.' Heresbach, *Foure books of husbandry* (London, 1577), p. 158.

... when he besieged the famous and great Countrey *Dalmatia*, did vse Cocke-fighting: for at his beginning, and first entrance into that enterprize, before he gaue any assault, or made any offer of batterie against the countrey: he commanded that two Cockes of the kind, should bee brought unto him, and be set downe to fight before him, in the open view of all his valiant souldiers, whom he earnestly requested most seriously to behold and marke the battell, which was performed on both parts, with such stout courage, and magnanimitie, that all the spectators did admire, and wonder to behold the dreadfulnessse of their fight, the deepe indented woundes that each of them had, and in the end with what excéeding great resolution, both of them died⁵⁴

This leads Themistocles' soldiers to fight 'so fiercely with such unspeakable valour, that the bloody Massacre which they made amongst them, (whom they slaughtered in great abundance) was a sufficient witsse to warrant their couragious resolutions'.⁵⁵ Here, fighting cocks act as a kind of exemplum, having a direct, highly emotional (and highly effective) influence on the spectators of their fight. The cocks' bloody, mangled carcasses act, effectively, as emotional steroids to fuel Themistocles' soldiers. Here the cocks are assigned human emotions, and valued for their effect on the watching humans, as a mediation between Themistocles and his troops. Indeed, the cocks replace the emotional power of a stirring speech. The power to raise sympathetic reactions is what is important here, giving the example for how the soldiers are shortly to fight.

The final high-status association completing this triumvirate is monarchy. Wilson uses evidence from Pliny, who 'saith, that nature did crowne him [the cock] with a Diadem: and that his combe was given him (as indéede who can denie it) to be an ornament to him, and not (as some fooles thinke) to be a note of disgrace, and scandal to him.'⁵⁶ The fact that Henry VIII, another monarchical reference, 'did take such pleasure and wonderfull delight in the Cocks of the game, that he caused a most sumptuous, and stately Cock-pit to be erected in *West-minster*', again supports the status specifically of fighting cocks. Henry VIII's mystical and civil influence, according to Wilson, still permeates the game;

⁵⁴ Wilson, *commendation*, sigs. B1v-B2r.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. B3v.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. C1r.

... this is to be noted that in this pleasant exercise there is no collusion, deceit, fraude, or cozening tollerated, nor any vsed (as in most other games, and pastimes customarily there is,) neither is there any brawlings, or quarrels suffered in those places: but all men, must there use ciuile and good behaiour, what degré or calling soeuer he be of.⁵⁷

There is a way to act at a cockfight, and a shared emotional tenor amongst the spectators. Agreed-upon behaviour hints at an experience of the fight that is in part relational, responding to the behaviour of the other watchers as well as – like Themistocles’ soldiers – the actions of the fighting cocks.

While arguing for fighting cock’s high status, strands of Wilson’s argument mix themselves together;

Who would thinke that the crowing of a Cocke should make a Lion quake? and yet it doth so, which is a most strange & a miraculous thing, that he, which is the King of beasts, of whome it is said, that the roaring of his voice, will ingender feare in all the beasts in the Forrest, and make them tremble at the terrour of it, should himselfe tremble and be terrified (like a faint-hearted and a timorous-flying hare) with the sound of a silly Cockes voice, yet of a truth it is, for of all thinges in the world, he cannot abide to heare a Cocke crowe; whereey we may most apparantly perceiue, the omnipotent power of the Almighty, who by the smallest creatures, can curbe, and controule the greatest⁵⁸

The cock, here, is an agent of the Almighty as well as the only animal able to check the king of beasts. Wilson’s passage in particular is full of resonant consonance; ‘by the smallest creatures, can curbe, and controule...’, echoing the spoken form of the sermon that he was undoubtedly well-practiced in. Is his moral that the cock is better than the lion? Here, Wilson not only draws on spiritual authority, but on the hierarchy of beasts, the lion possessing ‘that princely power which beareth rule among foure footed-beasts’.⁵⁹

Mingling types of authority, but primarily classical, monarchical and religious authority, places fighting cocks at the very top of Jacobean hierarchy. Wilson summarises his argument: ‘in my opinion, they deserve, and merite more to be estéemed of all men,

⁵⁷ Ibid., sig. C3v.

⁵⁸ Ibid., sig. C4v.

⁵⁹ Edward Topsell, *The historie of foure-footed beastes*, 1607), sig. Rr1v.

then any other fowle doth'.⁶⁰ He is reprogramming the reader's brain so that when they hear 'fighting cock' they think 'high status'. If we think in semiotic terms, Wilson is unpicking the sign of the cock and reassembling it for his reader as multiple high-status signifiers. This means of viewing it explains the unstructured nature of the pamphlet: the sign of the cock obscures any one narrative. Wilson also plays on the sexual innuendo inherent in the word 'cock', with its dual meanings. Partly as a consequence of this word play, and building on Clifford Geertz's famous anthropological formulation of the Balinese fighting cock (with its equivalent double entendre in Balinese) as 'masculine symbols *par excellence*',⁶¹ Hamill has read Wilson's pamphlet as 'an idealized history of male subject-formation.'⁶² He reads the fighting cock as a means 'through which the enthusiast might assemble himself in terms of the cock's actions, now rendered metonymically and collectively as male behavior.'⁶³ Certainly, the only time women are mentioned is during the passage in which Wilson plays on sexual innuendo. While masculine identity formulation is one very plausible reading of the pamphlet, because of Wilson's fundamentally fragmented structure, many strands of his arguments do not fit into this reading. However, even the phallic associations of the fighting cock point to the animal's high status in Wilson's worldview. Wilson's often fragmentary analysis suggests that there is something almost indescribable about cocks that gives them this special status; that they are made in God's original image is one explanation, and this perfection of form, this magnetism, parallels Philip Sidney's ornamental quality, as the embodiment of an ideal.

This is overlaid by the reality of the cock's body. Wilson lingers especially on the bloody way in which cocks are beaten, their eyes gouged out, their spurs lost, and yet they keep fighting. Their courage, he continually belabours, is extraordinary. And it is this courage that tips an already high-status fighting cock into the realm of celebrity: how can such a frail body fight so impressively? According to Wilson, the mystery underlying these fragile bodies is valour. Wilson relates one valourous tale that has reached him from Norwich, the nearest city to his hometown of Wretton:

There was a cock about Shrove-tide last, which in the cocke-pit in the citie of Norwich, fought with a stronge, and a stout adversarie, until such time as both

⁶⁰ Wilson, *commendation*, sig. C1v.

⁶¹ Clifford Geertz, 'Deep Play: Notes of the Balinese Cockfight', *Daedalus*, 101.1, 1-37 (p. 5).

⁶² Hamill, p. 377.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

his eyes were beaten out, his head sore wounded, and shrewdly battered, and all his bodie most pitifully brused, and then with the sudden astonishment of a sound blow, which from a cruell adversarie he received, being beaten downe, and lying for dead, not stirring any whit, nor séeming otherwise (to the beholders) than to be starke dead, he suddenly started up... and closed with his adversarie, at whom he stroke most violent blowes, and never gave over, until (to the amazement of all the spectators) hee had most valiantly slaine him.⁶⁴

Like Themistocles' soldiers, we are supposed to be amazed and perhaps infected with the valour of this fighting cock, an animal so courageous it practically resurrects itself from the dead. Human emotions; 'stout' and 'cruell', are attributed to the cocks, the fight anthropomorphised to represent Herculean victory. Even after he has finished the story, Wilson cannot stop exclaiming: 'Oh strange action oh stout heart, and undaunted minde... such dreadlesse feare, scorning valour'.⁶⁵ Deliberately cast in the language of tragic lament, our hero has died a noble death. Spectators are so amazed by the courage of this cock that the story is repeated from mouth to mouth, deemed newsworthy. Carried by the force of relevance and interest, it has been circulated to Wretton from Norwich, stamped by approximate date and time: both key characteristics used to prove the truth of reported gossip.

lipsey, the fighting cock of fame

Up to this point in the pamphlet, Wilson has established that fighting cocks, in their high status position, possess many of the attributes of celebrity, but we have not yet come across a particular example of celebrity status and influence among fighting cocks to parallel Harry Hunkes the bear. After outlining and justifying the high-status position of the animal, Wilson turns to his own fighting cock, lipsey/Jipse, as a kind of case study. Although I have not found corroboration for lipsey's existence in other sources, it seems unlikely that a curate would have fabricated and then printed such an elaborate tale, which if fabricated, would have critically damaged his credit in the community. The account is printed under his own name, and besides his position as a curate he was well-known fighting cock owner and enthusiast.

Taking my cue from Wilson, I will turn to the extraordinary account of lipsey, exploring the emotional power of fighting cocks on their audience, and how passionately engaged

⁶⁴ Wilson, *commendation*, sig. D3r.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

spectators might manifest their emotion through the celebrity animal. The cock's name, 'lipsey', could be a pun on 'ipse', the Latin pronoun for 'himself'/'itself'/'oneself'.⁶⁶ This would be an interesting appellation; the cock is entirely self-sufficient in himself, making one singular, and proudly identifiable, identity. Shakespeare frequently plays on the proverbial phrase, 'you are ipse', or 'you are he', to mean so this could be word-play on audience identification with the cock.⁶⁷ However, it would not do to base too much of an argument on this interpretation, as it could just as easily have another meaning; 'Jipsey'/'Gipsy', which Shakespeare in 1616 spells similarly as 'Gipsies'.⁶⁸ Was this fighting cock of a particularly nomadic bent? The word 'gipsy' could have racial overtones at this time, and may also have referred to lipsey's plumage or looks.⁶⁹

In one match at St Edmundsbury in Suffolk, lipsey 'plaid his prize so excellently, and fought so couragiously, that after many admirable, and almost incredible acts atchieued by him, divers Gentlemen & my verie good friends, in commendation of him caused his picture to be drawn & painted upon a cloth.'⁷⁰ The acts of the fighting cock are almost unbelievable, a superhero for his time. He must be memorialised somehow, his valour translated into repeatable image. A picture, however, was not sufficient to memorialise the incredible victories of this fighting cock. Wilson's friends and lipsey's avid admirers also wrote a poem:

O noble *lipsey*, such a Cocke art thou,
As *Burie Towne*, did nere containe till now.
Wherefore to praise thy worth and spread thy fame,
We make this shewe in honour of thy name.⁷¹

'O' in poetry generally indicates the impossibility of adequately expressing emotion, leaving us only this verbal signifier to stand for lipsey's 'almost incredible' performance. The overflow of emotion and singularity of his nature – something '*Burie Towne, did nere containe till now*' – are characteristics of celebrity, alongside acts that are almost

⁶⁶ 'ipse, pron. and n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/99368> [accessed 13 June 2018].

⁶⁷ Morris Palmer Tilley, *Dictionary of the Proverbs in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), p. 188.

⁶⁸ 'gipsy | gypsy, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/78443> [accessed 13 June 2018].

⁶⁹ For more on the cultural and racial associations of gypsies in early modern England, see Carol Mejia LaPerle, 'An Unlawful Race: Shakespeare's Cleopatra and the Crimes of early modern Gypsies', *Shakespeare* (2017), 226-38.

⁷⁰ Wilson, *commendation*, sig. D3v.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

beyond belief. The stress on 'name' and 'fame' is also significant in terms of celebrity discourse. It is significant that 'fame' is used here rather than other terms such as 'credit' or 'reputation', as it associates lipsey's nobility, worth and honour with heroic fame, and all the positive associations of that word in the early modern period. In any other pamphlet I would imagine this poem as being entirely tongue-in-cheek, but Wilson has spent approximately 8,000 words telling us why fighting cocks are superior beings.

The celebration of noble lipsey's fame does not end there. After commissioning the banner and cloth,

... the cocke was put into a prettie fine cage, which two men carried betwixt them, the cloth being borne a good distance before them, and in this manner hauing the waights of the Towne with us, the trayned Souldiers, the Cocke-masters, and diuers others: we marched too and fro, throughout the whole towne: which being done, we returned to the Cocke-pit againe, where the Cocke was no sooner set downe, but all the Souldiers discharged their péeces ouer him⁷²

lipsey is raised up, a mark of his high status, in a 'prettie fine cage': not just any cage for this almost incredible fighting cock. Wilson does not seem to perceive a tension between this mark of simultaneous veneration and ownership. The fact that soldiers and 'waights' (people) of the town join in with this procession suggests that lipsey has brought fame not only to Wilson but to the whole town, following his fighting success at St Edmundsbury. Although it is not clear where the procession takes place, the fact that it is put on by Wilson's friends suggests Wretton. Winning in the next county over from Wretton (Suffolk as opposed to Norfolk), then, perhaps adds local patriotism to the motives for this victory procession. Other cock masters join in to celebrate lipsey: even enthusiasts of the sport acknowledge his superiority. Together with the soldiers, emblematic of authority, they contribute their status to lipsey's fame, while having theirs increased in turn through association. Those in the know add authority to the judgement of lipsey's 'noble' qualities. These local notables alongside Wilson's friends have made a judgement of lipsey that they are broadcasting to others, codified in the form of a poem and an image. In other words, they are working to publicise lipsey's

⁷² Ibid., sigs. D3v-D4r.

celebrity persona, but also deciding what this persona is in the process of crafting publicity around it.

The ritualistic form of this celebration, in the great tradition of creating ritual, borrows from other ritual traditions, linking lipsey to high-status signifiers. It of course has religious connotations (supported by Wilson's linking of cocks and religion earlier in the pamphlet). The banner is also a normal part of saints' day processions. If we read this procession according to the schema of Catholic processions, lipsey in his cage acts as icon of the saint, representing his own fame and bringing positive acclaim to the town. He embodies several contemporary senses of the word celebrity; 'Extolled, praised; renowned, esteemed', 'To perform publicly (a religious or formal ceremony, such as a marriage or funeral)', and 'To honour or praise publicly; to extol or spread the fame of.'⁷³ The procession transforms public acclaim into performance, extolling lipsey's virtues. Chris Rojek's seminal study *Celebrity* has described the effect of some celebrities as equivalent to religious, shamanic or magical power. Speaking of rock musicians, he argues that they produce 'excitement and mass hysteria rather than religious salvation. The ability to act as a conducting rod of mass desire, and to precipitate semi-orgiastic emotions in the crowd, are the most obvious features of shamanic power.'⁷⁴ Having an animal celebrity in this shaman position returns us to the question of agency: lipsey is not himself provoking the use of religious tropes with which to celebrate his own fame, but rather the human crowd is whipping themselves into this pitch of desire, an exercise that is more about the crowd than the cock.

The participation of the soldiers in this procession gives us another set of associations; that of military triumph. Again, 'triumph' applied to this particular ritual combines multiple senses of the word; that of abstract victory and concrete, victorious procession into Rome.⁷⁵ Roman triumphs combined the secular and the religious and, like lipsey's triumph, the victorious general was the central focus of the procession (raised on an exquisitely decorated chariot rather than a cage).⁷⁶ Bringing the fighter and his army into the city brings with it the thrill of danger, and proximity to violence for spectators.

⁷³ 'celebrate, adj.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/29411> [accessed 13 June 2018]. 'celebrate, v.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/29412> [accessed 13 June 2018].

⁷⁴ Rojek, p. 69.

⁷⁵ 'triumph, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/206492> [accessed 13 June 2018].

⁷⁶ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 223.

Triumphal scenes were generally 'pared down to the figure of the triumphing general, aloft on his chariot, accompanied by only his closest entourage, divine and human.'⁷⁷

This is not an entirely abstract concept for early moderns; as Mary Beard has put it:

Roman triumphs have provided a model for the celebration of military success for centuries. Through the last two millennia, there has been hardly a monarch, dynast, or autocrat in the West who has not looked back to Rome for a lesson in how to mark victory in war and to assert his own personal power. Renaissance princelings launched hundreds of triumphal celebrations.⁷⁸

James I's 1604 accession day pageant featured elaborately-constructed triumphal arches, and multiple classical illusions, including a lengthy comparison between James I and the Roman God of beginnings and archways, Janus, connecting James to the architecture of his accession celebrations.

Civic displays were also increasingly militarised under Elizabeth, cities like Bristol and Norwich demonstrating their military preparedness.⁷⁹ Ipsy's display, then, takes on the features of a larger-scale civic pageant, a mock-epic to glorify Ipsy's reputation. Whether a similar kind of celebration was repeated for other cocks or not, Ipsy was a local celebrity. His victory seems to have united local patriotism and a general appreciation for heroic performance within the cockpit, creating a new kind of entertainment based on other popular forms of display. As Richard Dutton points out, 'the civic pageants of the Tudor and Stuart period' are 'the one forms of drama which we know must have been familiar to all the citizens of London', and many outside the capital.⁸⁰ He argues that civic pageants, therefore, are 'an important key to our understanding of those times and of the place of dramatic spectacle in early modern notions of national, civic, and personal identity.'⁸¹ Pageants were moments in which personal and collective identity could be displayed. Ipsy's procession through Wretton, playing on cultural references of authority and tradition, re-enacts victory. Consciously performative, the spectacle is designed to corporealise the overwhelming victory of winning a fight.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 221.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁹ C. E. McGee, 'Mysteries, Musters, and Masque: The Import(s) of Elizabethan Civic Entertainments', *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 105-122.

⁸⁰ Richard Dutton, *Jacobean Civic Pageants* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 7.

⁸¹ Ibid.

The participants' marching 'too and fro, throughout the whole towne' is perhaps a clue as to its purpose: a way of ritualising this feeling of victory.⁸² All the energy of the win is harnessed into action (marching presumably accompanied by shouting/cheering/reciting the poem on the banner), and specifically action that publicises lipsey's 'noble' qualities. Marching is, in itself, ritualised movement: a way of harnessing pent-up energy.⁸³ In the cockfight itself, there is tension followed by the extreme catharsis of the win. This procession is a way of extending catharsis, indulging in feelings of relief and victory. lipsey's entourage, both supporting his reputation and temporarily sharing in his triumph, expand this triumph beyond the physical body of the cock. His celebrity persona temporarily has the magical effect of raising the status of all who come near him. Repeating and enlarging the image of the animal will, like a talisman, magnify the positive effect of lipsey's victorious celebrity persona onto the participants' own status. As the culmination of Wilson's account of the procession, lipsey is induced to perform valour once more, and proves equal to any soldier. When the soldiers fire their guns over him in a victory salute,

... which we thought would haue daunted & discouraged him for euer: yet notwithstanding all the noyse they made, he was nothing dismaide, but in the verie middle of the volley of shot, he clapped his wings and crowned, which was as much valour, as I, or I thinke any of the companie ever saw in a Cocke.⁸⁴

lipsey maintains the valorous persona he is being celebrated for. This performance of valour crowns the procession, quite literally; Wilson slips between 'crowned'/'crowed'.⁸⁵ His celebrity persona performs consistently, and all participants leave satisfied with their collective re-enactment of victory.

Perhaps analogous to lipsey's procession are modern sports parades. In the UK the winning team generally rides atop a double decker bus painted in their team colours. This raised position signifies their current status within our complex societal social hierarchy. The team, dressed in the same colour scheme, opens some champagne (a status signifier of its own), while waving and gesturing to the massed crowds lining their processional route. Crowds will try to get as close to the victors as possible. The

⁸² Wilson, *commendation*, sig. D4r.

⁸³ The practice of military drill in itself, it could be argued, partly is a way to stop an army growing bored and discontented when there is no fighting to occupy them.

⁸⁴ Wilson, *commendation*, sig. D4r.

⁸⁵ This could also be an error/idea inserted by the printer.

emotion of victory in the game is something spectators wish to share in, a positive communal experience they would like to be part of, and to ritualise. It is an act of collective memory-making that both celebrates the victor and extends the winning team's victory to encompass the crowd. Each mechanism for collective memory-making is of course very different, but there are some stable factors in this extended and commemorative experience of catharsis: there is the moving triumphal figure, the special vehicle that lifts the celebrity from the ground; and there is the entourage or crowd, the position and influence of each dependant on the circumstances and scale of the victory.

The idea of projection, victory extending to encompass the crowd, is supported by Wilson's sense of emotional connection between spectator and cock. He writes:

The cockes of the game are so called, because they carrie the credite away from all other Cockes in battell, which is the onely cause they are so highly estéemed, and so much valued as they be; for it is generally and commonly séene, that the most heroycall and noble hearted men, take greatest delight in those thinges which are of most courage, and greatest valour⁸⁶

The word 'battel' expands the cockfight to 'heroycall' proportions, international and mythological conflicts rather than mere country entertainments. For Wilson, a spectator's enjoyment of a cockfight implies that the spectator in question shares the quality of valour with the fighting cock, something John Taylor hints at with the bear bait. This analysis of the cockfight indicates its powerful association with spectator emotion and identity-formation: for Wilson, fans of the cockfight can live an emotional life through it, proving their inner heroism by their level of enjoyment and identification with the spectacle. Association with lipsey, celebrated even among fighting cocks for his valour, makes participants in the procession valorous themselves, at least for a time.

But how do these events tie into celebrity, and the taxonomy of celebrity, more generally? Why is it significant beyond localised anthropological study? I would like to suggest that the spectacle are attempting to explore and make tangible the aspects of persona that are intangible. Beyond the signifiers of celebrity, including the name lipsey, there are sympathies, interpersonal and personal meanings so multi-layered that ritual is necessary as a way of understanding and embodying it. lipsey's status has the magical

⁸⁶ Wilson, *commendation*, sig. D2r.

effect of changing any who come into contact with it, hence the banner and poem, tangible signs of contact. This tangible sign parallels Slender's leading Sackerson about by the chain. Elements of the celebrity persona, therefore, can be transferred to fans who take a particular interest in the celebrity, intertwining it with their own sense of self. Going beyond the para-social, celebrity has important social meanings for those who use it in their lives, those who become skilled in it: those who are fans.

Emotional entanglement between keen spectator and performer, then, took place between performing animals and their audiences. In the case of lipsey, this was translated into ritual, the relationship between celebrity and audience becoming a codified affair relating to traditional cultural forms of triumph and celebration. The fact that animals were indeed celebrities in the early modern period, assigned human qualities and a place in the social hierarchy by humans, also underlines the constructed nature of celebrity, created primarily by its audience, although the actions of the celebrity did have some influence. In the next chapter I would like to make this dialogic relationship between audience and celebrity more tangible, tracing these emotional interactions by following the money laid out on spectacles including the bear bait and cockfight.

Chapter Six: Following the Money

Throughout this thesis I have been looking at celebrities as case studies, focusing on their creation and maintenance as audience/fan acts of imaginative discourse. If, as I have argued, the celebrity is manufactured primarily by their audience, when we follow the money, it should primarily be this audience that assigns value to the celebrity, and is willing to pay to interact with them. Gambling – a practice associated with human and animal celebrities, and intimately connected to status relationships – is a way of monetising the value accorded by audiences to celebrity status. It is the abstract, social and para-social relationship made manifest, material investment standing for emotional connection to the celebrity in question. One way of measuring this is the money paid for entrance to bear baits, plays, and cockfights, but I will primarily explore a more variable income stream that celebrities could capitalise on: gambling. When the celebrity is monetised through gambling, social capital should convert to money spent. Tracing its workings in early modern culture is therefore useful as a way of understanding the celebrity phenomenon more generally.

First, it will be helpful to consider what gambling is, compared to another popular and closely associated early modern practice: gaming. Alessandro Arcangeli notes this frequent elision between gambling and gaming, choosing not to focus on gambling in his study of recreation in the Renaissance. He states that this ‘is worth mentioning, since in this orientation I depart from a significant number of writers, both early and late modern (that is, some of my sources as well as many recent scholars).’¹ He argues that ‘gambling *per se* can be recreational only in a loose sense of the word’ both ‘because if the reason of an activity is the (expected) gain, that means that it is performed for reasons other than relaxation and amusement’.² Partly because of this gain, gambling can become a person’s main occupation, removing it from the realms of play.³ Gambling often involved dicing or cards, and as Arcangeli points out, in the early modern period some writers elide the two terms. Playing at cards almost always involved gambling on that play, while ‘the Italian/Venetian word *giocare* or *zuogar* can mean both ‘play’ and

¹ Alessandro Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance: Attitudes Towards Leisure and Pastimes in European Culture, c. 1425-1675* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 3. For more on the history of gaming, see John Ashton, *The History of Gambling in England* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1898), and specifically in the English theatrical context, see: Gina Bloom, *Gaming the Stage: playable media and the rise of English commercial theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

‘gamble.’⁴ Gambling is literally playing with money, the root of the word being ‘game’, and ‘gaming’ or ‘gamer’.⁵ David Miers makes an important distinction, that ‘gaming has typically been understood as requiring the players’ participation in the game on whose outcome they have wagered.’⁶ While George Wilson and the inhabitants of Wretton, then, may have felt a great affinity for the actors in the spectacle of cock fighting, they were not participating in the act itself, and so their actions during the event consist of spectatorship and gambling, whatever action they may have taken in celebrating lipsey’s success after the event.

Attitudes towards financial risk more generally may have been undergoing a shift during the late sixteenth century. Ian MacInnes cites a ‘burgeoning insurance industry’ and the lengthy print debate between clergymen Thomas Gataker and James Balmford as ‘evidence that the entire epistemology of risk is altering at the turn of the century’.⁷ Balmford argues that lots should not ‘bee used in sport’ because ‘a Lot in the nature thereof doth... necessarily suppose the special providence and determining presence of God’.⁸ To sport with chance is to sport with the flow of Providence. Gataker on the other hand argues that ‘It is not the causalitie of an Event that maketh it a worke of Gods immediate Providence. For many things are casuall, which yet are not workes of Gods immediate providence, nor imply his speciall presence.’⁹ Are chance and providence the same, and what kinds of chancy behaviour are acceptable? Gaming came under fire by moralists as in Stubbs’ *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) or Northbrooke’s *A Treatise wherein Dicing, Dancing, Vaine plaies or Enterludes with other idle pastimes, &c. ... are reprovved* (1577). For Northbrooke, it is not just ‘diceplay’ that is in itself to blame, but ‘the manifold vaine and ydle wordes and communications that alwayes happeneth in this Diceplay’, alongside other features including ‘the manifolde corruptions and hurt

⁴ Jonathan Walker, ‘Gambling and Venetian Noblemen c. 1500-1700’, *Past and Present*, 162 (1999), (28-69), p. 29.

⁵ ‘gamble, v.’, in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2017) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/76447> [accessed 30 November 2017].

⁶ David Miers, *Regulating commercial gambling: past, present, and future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 18.

⁷ Ian MacInnes, “‘Ill Luck, Ill Luck?’: Risk and Hazard in *The Merchant of Venice*”, in *Global Traffic; Discourses and practices of trade in English literature and culture from 1550 to 1700*, ed. by Barbara Sebek, Stephen Deng (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 45, 46.

⁸ James Balmford, *A short and plaine dialogue concerning the unlawfulness of playing at cards or tables, or any other game consisting in chance* (London, 1593), sig. A5r.

⁹ Thomas Gataker, *Of the nature and use of lots* (London, 1619), p. 143.

of our neighbours'.¹⁰ Gaming, for Northbrooke, is destructive partly because of its negative interaction with what he sees as a clear, morally definite social fabric. Gaming and its attendant economic practice of gambling, however, also had its defenders: Holinshed recalls that under Henry VIII: 'commissions [were] awarded into everie shire... so that in all places, tables, dice, cards, and bouls were taken and burnt.'¹¹ The result was that some young men 'fell to drinking, some to feretting of other mens conies, some to stealing of deere in parks, and other unthriftiness.'¹² Gambling and the games surrounding its practice are, according to Holinshed, a necessary channel for young men's unthriftiness, and preferable to their alternative pastimes.

Adam Zucker has argued that gambling could be a productive area of cultural enquiry for early modern writers, who 'turned to the social stakes of gambling to examine a definitive and seductive cultural field in early modern London... productive of increasingly stylized modes of fashionable masculine urbanity.'¹³ Zucker highlights this confluence of 'stakes', the double meaning of the word itself highlighting gambling as a site of social and economic exchange. This double meaning was also present for early moderns; John Taylor writes in his grim satirical rhyme *The bear*: 'What ere is laid or paid, the Beare's at stake for't.'¹⁴ In Taylor's analysis, the bear's body is a kind of chip, with a monetary equivalent. Loss will be inscribed on the bear's body as well as the purses of those who have bet on it. The stake here stands for investment and payment of multiple kinds – economic, social, and physical – simultaneously.

Influential economic theorist Georg Simmel has argued that gambling is, in fact, primarily social, using as evidence the fact that 'even when the play turns about a money prize, it is not the prize, which indeed could be won in many other ways, which is the specific point of the play'.¹⁵ Instead, 'the attraction for the true sportsman lies in the dynamics and in the chances of that sociologically significant form of activity itself.'¹⁶ Gambling, he argues, is a 'play' version of the economy – structurally paralleling the 'real' economy but distinct thanks to its privileging of sociability. It is perhaps this

¹⁰ John Northbrooke, *Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra. A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine playes or enterluds with other idle pastimes [et]c. commonly used on the Sabboth day, are reprovod by the authorities of the word of God and auntient writers* (London, 1577), p. 102.

¹¹ Holinshed, p.893.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Zucker, 'The Social Stakes of Gambling', p. 69.

¹⁴ Taylor, *Bull, beare, and horse*, sig. D5v.

¹⁵ Georg Simmel, 'The Sociology of Sociability', trans. by Everett C. Hughes, *American Journal of Sociology*, 55.3 (1949), 254-61, (p. 258).

¹⁶ Ibid.

disjunction between the money prize and the actual point of play that makes gambling more difficult to model than other forms of spending. Economic behaviour is often analysed via planned consumer spending, whereas gambling challenges models ‘of consumer behaviour... based on the premise that self-interested and goal-oriented behaviour will result in consumption patterns that fulfil the best interests of the consumer.’¹⁷ The gambler may have rules and a system of their own; dedicated gamblers today talk seriously about the importance of ‘gut’ and ‘The Hunch’.¹⁸ Less serious gamblers in horseracing often bet according to the names of the participants, and on particular associative emotions. According to Philip Stubbs, this emotional way of assigning money was shared by participants of baiting (mastiff owners) during the early modern period, who ‘will not make anie bones of .xx.xl.C. pound. at once to hazard at a bait: with feight dog, feight beare (say they) the devill part all.’¹⁹ This recklessness implies that gambling of this type could become highly emotional, possibly because of the money at stake. There is always a level of belief and of emotion within gambling of this kind: unlike some card games, even the most experienced and successful gamblers on the outcome of a fight cannot entirely mathematise the fighter’s performance. The gambler can calculate their odds, but the flesh is fickle and unpredictable: there is always an element of belief that the outcome will turn out as expected, that aspect of irrationality that defies economists.

This makes spending patterns difficult to predict; ‘at least for problem or pathological gamblers, gambling patterns are often self-destructive, and the behaviour manifested is clearly irrational (illogical) in linking goals to expenditure patterns.’²⁰ However, even ‘for “normal” gamblers, over-indulgence in the form of losing more than initially planned at the gaming activities is not an unusual occurrence.’²¹ Some fear at this introduction of uncertainty is present in John Davies’ epigram *What a common Gamester is like* (1611). Davies compares the gamester to ivy, that creeps into the joints of a wall, ‘But when, unjoynted so, it’s like to fall, / The joynts together it doth (tottering) knit’.²² Like ivy, ‘A Gamster so, undoes a sound estate’, precariously upholding his fortune only through

¹⁷ William R. Eadington, ‘Economic perceptions of gambling behavior’, *Journal of Gambling Behavior*, 3.4 (1996), 264-73 (p. 270).

¹⁸ Anatoly Romanov, *Fight Gambling Secrets Exposed: Fight Gambler’s Bible* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2008; repr. 2010).

¹⁹ Philip Stubbs, *The anatomie of abuses*, (London, 1583), sig. P2v.

²⁰ Eadington, p. 270.

²¹ Ibid.

²² John Davies, *The scourge of folly consisting of satyricall epigramms, and others in honor of many noble and worthy persons of our land* (London, 1611), p. 83.

‘Tricks he learns in Game (which Truth doth hate)’.²³ Sound economic foundations of inherited wealth are rendered unstable, Davies’ epigram full of words like ‘unmoyning’, ‘unjoynted’, ‘tottering’, ‘undoes and ‘sincks’.²⁴ Gambling is at least perceived to have a particularly irrational quality, and the practice represents a threat to stable social order. The analogy of the house toppling is particularly significant, the household representing early modern hierarchy and ordered society more generally.

Whether it was more social than other kinds of spending for early moderns is, however, a matter of contention. As David Hawkes has succinctly argued of understanding early modern economic practices, attempting ‘to delineate a determinate object or area called the “economy” frequently leads to theoretical misunderstandings, as well as to critical misreadings.’²⁵ He cites Douglas Bruster’s taxonomy of the ‘reckoned’ and the ‘rash’ as an example of this. Dividing economic criticism into two distinct streams, Bruster argues that, ““Reckoned” criticism sees “the economic” as an object, “rash” criticism treats “the economic” as a metaphor’.²⁶ As Hawkes points out, terms like credit, debit or even money, ‘do not refer to objective things; they are figurative terms for relations between people. The idea that certain modes of human behavior can be isolated as “economic” was invented by the political economists of the eighteenth century’.²⁷ Tracing economic practices is a way of uncovering networks of sociability, and vice versa. Gambling is rooted in the social, then, but so are all economic practices. No spending is isolated from relations between people, standing for interactions of various kinds.

We see this blurring of social and economic throughout the *commendation*, where George Wilson frequently refers to the ‘credit’ of fighting cocks. This is opposed to other words synonymous with reputation, such as ‘fame’ (a word he does also use, though with less frequency). It is interesting that the French route of ‘credit’ (*crédit*) means ‘belief, faith, trust’ and only later came to mean ‘reputation, influence, esteem’ before in

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ David Hawkes, ‘Exchange Value and Empiricism in the Poetry of George Herbert’, in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism*, ed. by Linda Woodbridge (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 79-96 (p. 83).

²⁶ Douglas Bruster, ‘On a Certain Tendency in Economic Criticism of Shakespeare’, in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism*, ed. by Linda Woodbridge (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 67-77 (p. 69).

²⁷ David Hawkes, p. 83.

the sixteenth century coming to mean being trusted to repay money.²⁸ Belief is at the foundations of both gambling and giving credit to someone. Is giving credit, then, gambling on that person's reputation (and their ability to pay the advanced money back)? According to Craig Muldrew, credit was particularly entangled with trust and reputation from the 1560s onwards, when 'the English practice of basing most credit on oral agreements and reckonings meant that structural problems with trust became endemic as credit expanded'.²⁹ Muldrew defines credit as a way of expressing value: 'more than anything credit was a public means of social communication and circulating judgement about the value of other members of communities.'³⁰ So excellent credit meant a high value, and for early moderns reputation constituted a critical form of currency, valued at a given amount of stock/money others were willing to lend.³¹ The root of the word 'credit', indeed, is conflated with reputation, a good reputation necessary in order to obtain credit. Celebrity reputation similarly will obtain credit if we think of credit in terms of the bet: an amount is promised by the bettor following the outcome of the event. Bettors will pay more if the celebrity has a reputation for winning, and the more widely-known the celebrity is, the more bettors will be willing to place bets. If a gambler had won money on Grissel in a fight, they may have a certain type of trust in Grissel equating to consumer loyalty and continued investment, i.e. gamblers who had won once might continue to bet on him, even if the odds are stacked against him and he is very likely to lose the fight. In this way, animals enter a social network based on trust and belief. Their public 'credit' is related to their economic value. The process also involves a level of trust between bettor and bookkeeper, each trusting the other to be a good sport and pay up if they happen to be the loser.

Money has a material effect on our lives: gambling, then, has a material effect on its participants. For many spectators, the fighting animal could represent money won or lost to them personally. Early modern betting could take place at any time. There was likely time to admire and judge each animal before the fight, placing bets at this point (perhaps when Slender has his opportunity to lead Sackerson about by the chain), but bets could also be laid at pivotal moments during the fight. George Wilson describes one

²⁸ 'credit, n.', in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/44113>. [accessed 29 August 2018].

²⁹ Muldrew, p. 174.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³¹ Its double meaning is an important theme in some of Thomas Middleton's city comedies, including *The Roaring Girl*. See Aaron Kitch, 'The Character of Credit and the Problem of Belief in Middleton's City Comedies', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 47.2 (2007), 403-426.

particularly gruesome episode in which a cock fought until near-death. Recovering, the cock continued fighting:

... contrary to all their expectations, (when there was offered twenty shillings, yea, twenty pounds to be layd to one, that there was no breath remaying in his bodie and closed with his aduersarie³²

Wilson uses the amount of money laid to emphasise how startling the outcome is. Even though the twenty pounds is probably fabricated, twenty shillings was a large sum, suggesting that spectators were willing to put their money where their mouths were. From this extract, we learn that betting continued through the fight, bets being laid on the likelihood of the cock being dead. His death is given incredibly short odds (i.e. he was much more likely to be dead than not). Wilson also gives a clue as to the way in which odds were advertised: rather than the 2:1 or 3:5 ratios we are now familiar with, the odds are calculated at twenty pounds to one. While this can easily be expressed as 20:1, money in Wilson's account is more literally tied into a system of odds and betting.

Gambling, therefore, is a way for celebrity, itself inherently concerned with social networks, to be re-formed into an economic practice. Yet a celebrity cannot literally sell themselves, their body, in a bet (at least not repeatedly).³³ And a celebrity famous for something other than fighting is unlikely to organise fighting contests in order to monetise their appeal. They need a medium that will transform their social capital, an inherently abstract quality, into a concrete form, i.e. a saleable commodity. In the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, Ben Jonson outlines mock articles of agreement, between himself (as the author of the play) and 'the Spectators or Hearers, at the Hope on the Bankeside, in the County of Surrey'.³⁴ These spectators, and hearers,

... do for themselves severally Covenant, and agree to remaine in the places, their money or friends have put them in, with patience, for the space of two hours and an halfe, and somewhat more. In which time the Author promiseth to present them by us, with a new sufficient Play called BARTHOLOMEW FAYRE, merry, and as full of noise, as sport³⁵

³² Wilson, sig. D3r.

³³ I am not alluding to sex work here, which could also create celebrity. See Duncan Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans: Prostitution, Literature, and Drama, 1500-1650* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 119-125.

³⁴ Jonson, *Bartholemew fayre*, sig. A5r.

³⁵ Ibid.

In exchange for money, audience members will inhabit part of the playhouse, and be presented with a merry play. Jonson's particular attention to place is noteworthy; it is the place that 'their money or friends have put them in', exchanging the right to stand or sit in a particular spot for money (or their friends' money).

However, it was not just the author benefitting from this exchange. Theatres, by enclosing actors' performative practices and charging audiences an admission, transformed actors' talents and charisma into a commodity. This could also take place in other spaces, but theatres are designed to help ensure that no one freely or incidentally enjoys a production. Title pages suggest that celebrity performers and their performances could sometimes be used as valuable advertisements for a stage play.³⁶ Thomas Dekker famously revels in this economic reading in *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), declaring that:

The *Theatre* is your poet's Royal-Exchange, upon which, their Muses (ye are now turned to merchants) meeting, barter away that light commodity of words for a lighter ware than words. *Plaudites* and the *Breath* of the great *Beast*, which (like the threatnings of two Cowards) vanish all into aire. *Plaiers* and their *Factors*, who put away the stuffe, and make the best of it they possibly can (as indeed tis their parts so to doe) your Gallant, your Courtier and your Capten, had wont to be the soundest paymaisters, and I thinke are still the surest chapmen... when your *Groundling*, and *Gallery Commoner* buyes his sport by the penny, and, like a *Hagler*, is glad to utter it againe by retailling.³⁷

Not only is the author's work a commercial enterprise, but the actors' job is to hawk said work, displaying the poet's words to best advantage. It is interesting that Dekker primarily characterises poets as exchanging their words for plaudits and breath, breath presumably meaning shouts of appreciation, suggesting that the audience's reaction to the play is all-important, securing its reputation. They are subject to the value assigned

³⁶ I cited Alleyn and Kemp in Chapter One, but John Cooke's *The Citie Gallant* quickly became known (and sold) as *Greene's Tu quoque*, clown Thomas Greene such a draw that he obscured the author's place in the production of the play. John Cooke, *Greenes Tu quoque, or, The cittie gallant* (London, 1614).

³⁷ Although this has been interpreted as 'actors are their factors', which gives an interesting reading of the text, I see no reason to make this change to the original – factors can refer to other members of the stage company who had supporting roles, e.g. stage keeper, prompter, so 'actors and their factors' makes sense. See Dekker, *The guls horne-booke*, p. 27.

to the play by their audience.³⁸ In turn, poorer members of the audience eke value from their money by retelling – or retailing – the play to others.

How, then, could actors transform themselves into something like a commercial product? We have evidence of Tarlton's picture being sold, and the pamphlets commemorating both Tarlton and Sidney's deaths transform their celebrity into a valuable economic product. But actors could use another type of performance to make money, participating in 'act-offs' or trials of wit.³⁹ The trials of wit involve a competition between public figures in front of an audience. These sometimes took place alongside plays, but could also be separate events, and involved at least two participants going head-to-head either in a display of acting skill or wit, the latter involving improvised skits on themes called out by their audience. We might look to rap battles as today's equivalent. Spectators could gamble on the likelihood of their favourite actor or comedian winning the competition. The crowd decided who was the best at their skillset (and therefore who was the biggest or best celebrity within that category), assigning the actor value in a way that strongly parallels their paying for a theatrical performance. How the contest was to be judged is not at clear; it is likely to have been through the applause of the spectators, which was equated with an economic value in itself (connected to the reputation of a play as alluded to by Dekker). Applause is used, for example, to sell Middleton's *The widow a comedie, as it was acted at the private house in Black-Fryers, with gret Applause*.⁴⁰

In the public scolding battles that took place between women – a similar type of event – 'the Rabble adjudg'd the Victory on their side, who manag'd the dispute with the greatest clamour, prosecuting the baffled Scold, that is the *modester*, with stones & hooting.'⁴¹ This form of judgement is particularly appropriate for celebrity, which is entirely based on perception. The fact that these contests were advertised, intertextually referenced in plays and other texts, and made into ballads themselves,

³⁸ Kathleen E. McLuskie has influentially used Dekker's statements to help overturn an aristocratic model of early modern patronage; 'Dekker's description suggests that, by the early years of the seventeenth century, the theatre and the market have become one: poets provide the commodity which is dealt in by the players and purchased by the audience: patronage has become a matter of commerce and the only patrons the paying audience.' 'The Poets' Royal Exchange: Patronage and Commerce in Early Modern Drama', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 21: Politics, Patronage and Literature in England 1558-1658 (1993), 53-62 (p. 53).

³⁹ Indeed, these contests could share the stage with a play, being performed before or after as an advertised entertainment.

⁴⁰ Thomas Middleton, *The widdow a comedie* (London, 1652).

⁴¹ Richard Leigh, *The Transposer Rehears'd* (Oxford, 1673), sig. C8r.

shows that these events had monetary potential, helping augment celebrity reputations while capitalising on them. The proliferation of contests between these different types of celebrity displays a desire to rank celebrities; who, objectively, is better? As Evelyn Tribble has argued, ‘the passages indicate that skill was seen as an independent quality that could be contested, enacted and evaluated.’⁴² These contests, as Richard Preiss points out, ‘determined the superior man not by appeal to rules of art but by popular acclaim, the victor simply whoever managed to perform with crowd-pleasing panache.’⁴³ Again, the contests parallels the economic drive of the theatre, and Jonson’s elision between commerce and applause.

Donald Hedrick’s view of these contests is that that early modern theatres, after reaching an intellectual peak, indulged in vulgar ‘sportification’ to keep audiences engaged.⁴⁴ Hedrick has argued that the ‘real’ gambling on act-offs kept audiences interested by contrasting against the ‘fictional’ playtext.⁴⁵ As Preiss has argued, however, this distinction between the two forms is problematic: plays themselves, as live performance, always contain an element of chance. He argues that by ‘framing its stakes in... absolute, win-or-lose terms’, the playgoer was ‘empowered... as umpire’, thus mitigating the risk of disappointment.⁴⁶ Audiences, then, participated in this type of contest, encouraged ‘to register their verdict with applause or hissing; first performances became known as the play’s “trial,” and playgoers paid double for the privilege of determining its success or failure’.⁴⁷ So the economic value of applause is twofold; applause for a play will enable the success of that play, but precisely this participatory element will encourage audiences to enter the theatre in the first place. The thrill of uncertainty lies behind the gamble and the first performance of a play. The connection between ‘player’ as ‘gambler’ and ‘actor’, then, is a fuzzy one, the actor potentially engaging in a type of gamble every time they go onstage.

⁴² Evelyn Tribble, *Early Modern Actors and Shakespeare’s Theatre: Thinking with the Body* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017), p. 134.

⁴³ He goes onto argue that ‘This locates the trial of wit among a host of other competitive performance genres in the period on whose outcome bets might ride, yet judged, unlike bearbaiting, cockfighting, and other blood sports, purely subjectively and according to no empirical standard.’ Richard Preiss, ‘John Taylor, William Fennor, and the “Trial of Wit”’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 43 (2015), 50-78 (p. 53).

⁴⁴ Donald Hedrick, ‘Real Entertainment: Sportification, Coercion, and Carceral Theater’, in *Thunder at a Playhouse: essaying Shakespeare and the early modern stage*, ed. by Peter Kanelos and Matt Kozusko (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), pp. 50-66.

⁴⁵ Hedrick, p. 64.

⁴⁶ Preiss, ‘John Taylor, William Fennor and the “Trial of Wit”’, p. 61.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

In *Jests to make you merie* (1607), Thomas Dekker and George Wilkins suggest that act-offs are the natural way of deciding who is the best actor. They open a jest with the premise, 'A Paire of Players growing into an emulous contention of one anothers worth, resolve to put themselves to a day of hearing (as any Players would have done) but stood onely upon their good parts.'⁴⁸ This sets up our jest, a parody of a contest in which the two actors cannot really be compared, refusing to act any but the parts they are thought best at:

Why saies the one, since thou wouldst same be take for so rare a peece report before all these (for they had a small audience about them you must note) what excellent parts thou hast discharged? Mary saies the other, I have so naturally playd the Puritane, that many tooke me to be one.⁴⁹

The 'small audience' is an important element of this anecdote for what, after all, is the point of these competitions if not to further one actor/clown's reputation? Although it is a jest and therefore hardly an accurate record of theatrical practice, this anecdote does illuminate another concern connected to celebrity: can an actor be so effective, so good an actor, that their personal identity is effaced? Is the celebrity solely the part they play in public, like this actor who was taken to be a Puritan? Either way, the fact that the players resort to a contest 'as any Players would have done' suggests the surprising frequency of this phenomenon.

There is an intriguing piece of evidence in the Alleyn Papers that Edward Alleyn, whose career included being an actor and bearward, may have engaged in contests of acting ability. Alongside Burbage, Alleyn was the most popular celebrity actor of his time. A letter to Alleyn from 'Yor friend to his power / W: P.' entices Alleyn to take part in a contest against other actors John Bentley and William Knell, both founding members of the Queen's Men:

Your answer the other night, so well pleased the Gentlemen, as I was satisfied therewth, though to the hazarde of ye wager; and yet my meaninge was not to prejudice Peeles credit; neither wolde it, though it pleased you so to excuse it, but beinge now growen farther into question, the partie affected to Bently,

⁴⁸ The word 'resolve' here is unclear within the printed text; Evelyn Tribble has read it as 'refus[e]d' which does make sense within the sentence, but does not explain why a contest between the two goes ahead anyway. Thomas Dekker and George Wilkins, *Jests to make you merie* (London, 1607), sig. B4r. Tribble, p. 133.

⁴⁹ Dekker and Wilkins, sigs. B4r-v.

(scornynge to wynne the wager by yor denial), hath now given you libertie to make choice of any one playe, that either Bently or Knell plaide, and least this advantage, agree not with yor minde, he is contented, both the plaie and the tyme, shalbe referred to the gentlemen here prsent. I see not, how you canne any waie hurte your credit by this acc'on; for if you excel them, you will then be famous, if equall them; you wynne both the wager and credit, yf short of them; we must and will saie Ned Allen still.⁵⁰

Bentley (and possibly Knell, as the writer does mention him, and repeatedly references 'them') are to go against Alleyn in a competition of acting talent, playing a part from a play already performed by either Bentley or Knell. Although this letter does not provide evidence that the 'act-off' took place, the fact that it is mooted is fascinating. Bentley's 'scornynge to win the wager' through Alleyn's declining to participate highlights the delicate balance of reputation against reputation of those in the public sphere: Bentley does not wish to lose face by competing in a challenge that Alleyn is not interested in, as this may harm his own reputation, rather than amplifying it, which a win would give him.

Beating the other celebrity actors will, W.P. suggests in his letter to Edward Alleyn, secure Alleyn's 'credit' and make him 'famous'. We might compare this to our terminology today, in which we place certain celebrities at the top of the 'A-list', while others are 'B-list'. The *vox populi*, in deciding the outcome of these contests, performs a similar act to the creation of celebrity in the first place: it decides who makes the cut as a celebrity, and who counts as an ordinary mortal. The ranking inherent in these competitions, I would argue, relates to the principle underlying celebrity: it is 'status on speed'.⁵¹ In Thomas Heywood's characterisation of Alleyn as the 'Attribute of peerless', he goes on to rank Alleyn;

The Attribute of peerless, being a man

Whom we may ranke with (doing no one wrong)

Proteus for shapes, and *Roseius* for tongue,

⁵⁰ Letter from W. P. to Edward Alleyn about a theatrical wager, with six lines of verse beginning 'Deny me not, sweete Nedd, the wager's downe', c. 1590, MSS 1, Article 6, Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project. <<http://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/images/MSS-1/Article-006/01r.html>> [accessed 6 September 2019].

⁵¹ Kurzman et al, 'Celebrity Status', p. 347.

So could he speake, so vary⁵²

Ranking the actor among mythological and classical figures proves his peerless status and positions him as outside of ordinary mortality; Alleyn ranks among the gods as a celebrity.

A ranking system enables us to identify outliers, as I argued earlier in this thesis. But it also facilitates the creation of celebrity. To understand this let us return for a moment to the concept of para-social relationships. We are all familiar with social relationships and have an internal hierarchy of relationships. This will reveal itself in what we are willing to do for someone, how much we are willing to listen to them, and what value we place on their talk. A celebrity, similarly, has value: what weight should we place on their talk? Do we want to imitate them? How far are we willing to go in this imitation? Assigning value becomes more complicated when a layer of para-social interaction interacts with the social system. Ranking celebrities through this type of contest or through a grading system, then, enables us to identify who truly is a celebrity by where they are on the hierarchy: who should be revered, who should be listened to, who should be reviled, and who should be merely tolerated.

The letter also provides evidence that Alleyn was aware of and discussed the wager. Again, the most appropriate word for public reputation in this context is 'credit', used three times in this short extract while 'famous' is used once. Economic and reputation-based advantages are related, then. W. P. more explicitly promises Alleyn an economic advantage should he choose to engage in this contest in the poem acting as postscript to the letter. He writes,

Deny me not sweete Nedd, the wager's downe
and twice as much, commaunde of me or myne:
And if you wyne, I sweare the half is thyne;
and for an overplus, an English Crowne.
Appoint the tyme, and stint it as you pleas,
Your labor's gaine, and that will prove it ease.⁵³

⁵² Thomas Heywood, 'The Prologue to the Stage, at the Cocke pit.', in *The Jew of Malta* (London, 1633), sig. A4v.

⁵³ Ibid.

Not only will Alleyn benefit economically should he engage in the 'act-off', his friend has already committed to the wager, such is his faith in this contest taking place. The letter is in an elaborate scribal hand, so 'W. P.' has at least already invested in paying for a scribe. He promises that Alleyn will engage in easy labour in exchange for a financial reward. The use of the word 'labour' is interesting here, positioning Alleyn's part in the contest as the commodity which produces profit.

However, the notion of labour is complicated by W. P.'s idea that 'if you excel them, you will then be famous, if equall them; you wyne both the wager and credit, yf short of them; we must and will saie Ned Allen still.'⁵⁴ Should Alleyn win the wager, he will accrue credit, or social capital. If he loses, his loyal fans like W. P. will still support him; their estimation of his credit will apparently not be affected. This emotional connection, ignoring the fact of there being a winner and loser in this type of competition, speaks to the emotional identification between fans and celebrities. Indeed, such seems to have been the power of Alleyn's celebrity that William Perkins, the successor to his role Barabas in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (1589/90) emphasises that he is not contesting Alleyn's status. Printed in 1633, the epilogue announces, 'He only aym'd to go, but not out goe. / Nor thinke that this day any prize was plaid; / Here were no betts at all, no wagers laid'.⁵⁵ Careful not to imply the circumstances of an act-off between the two performers, the epilogue invites no bets on the outcome of Perkins vs. Alleyn as Barabas.

Associated with Alleyn is a higher or lower estimation of credit, which the contest will materially affect. Alongside labour, Alleyn is committing a kind of stake: his reputation. So this kind of contest is reliant on the social capital a celebrity has already accrued (otherwise watching such a person would not be interesting). What the contest illustrates is the explicit value of social capital, celebrity a commodity that – in the right circumstances – can be deployed to generate profit. Celebrity as a commodity is an important idea in celebrity studies; theorising the economics that underlie celebrity, Robert van Krieken has argued that, 'the commodity being traded is not simply the persons who are celebrities themselves, their image or their persona, but something related to their position in the broader networks of economic, social and political action.'⁵⁶ He argues that 'celebrities are the real embodiment of a more abstract kind of

⁵⁴ Letter from W. P. to Edward Alleyn.

⁵⁵ Christopher Marlowe, *The famous tragedy of the rich Jew of Malta* (London, 1633), sig. A4v.

⁵⁶ Robert van Krieken, *Celebrity Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 54.

capital – attention.⁵⁷ The celebrity has no inherently superior talents, but is instead ‘primarily a matter of the accumulation and distribution of attention’.⁵⁸

Krieken uses the concept of celebrities as an embodiment of attention capital to modify Daniel Boorstin’s definition of celebrity. He argues, ‘It is not so much that celebrities are well known (simply) because of their well knownness, it is that being well known can generate greater well knownness’.⁵⁹ Attention capital can feed off itself, a celebrity with high levels of attention capital able to generate even greater attention capital. Like the act-offs and trials of wit, ‘risk taking can lead to massive windfalls which can then be converted with new projects into even more celebrity.’⁶⁰ Rather than being intrinsically peerless, attention forms a kind of feedback loop, enhancing reputation and creating the impression of superior talent (or outlying ability). Interacting with other celebrities who possess high attention capital may generate more attention capital for both participants in the interaction. Should one participant lose the contest, they may nonetheless have gained attention capital. David Wiles argues that ‘for a clown all publicity is good publicity.’⁶¹ I would suggest, however, that this depends on the persona of the clown; Tarlton’s persona in the jests certainly seems to have been based on always having the last word in contests of wit and physical prowess, at least when going up against male challengers. Act-offs, then, are not simply an objective contest to judge which actor has the greatest skill in their profession.

Olivier Driessens has in fact argued that we should redefine the term ‘celebrity’ entirely as capital, which can be converted into economic, social, political and symbolic capital (an example of symbolic capital being a medal).⁶² Capital, Driessens argues, is measured ‘as accumulated media visibility through recurrent media representations, or broadly as recognizability’, returning the concept of capital to the level of attention paid to the celebrity by the audience.⁶³ In usefully theorising the notion of celebrity as a type of attention capital, we are forced to return to the social: what is attention if it is not social? Audiences and fans provide the currency of their attention. Sir Thomas Overbury describes the workings of attention in his archetype of ‘An Excellent Actor’, telling us to

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 56.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Wiles, p. 26.

⁶² Olivier Driessens, ‘Celebrity capital: redefining celebrity using field theory’, *Theory and Society*, 42.5 (2013), 543-60 (p. 14).

⁶³ Ibid., p. 16.

‘sit in a full theatre and you will think you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many ears, while the *actor* is the *centre*.’⁶⁴ The evidence of great acting is the degree of concentrated attention they can command from their audience, a skill the act-offs are designed to test and render into profit. By engaging in discourse, fans and audiences can increase the celebrity’s attention capital in a manner entirely removed from any action on the celebrity’s part. While I am referring to attention capital as under the umbrella of social capital more generally, contests seem to have been a way of monetising the attention capital accrued by celebrities like Alleyn. Of course, the actor being at the centre of attention strongly parallels Sidney’s characterisation as a ‘naturall Center’, but the use of attention capital is something that has characterised all the celebrities I have covered so far.⁶⁵ Tarlton peeping out his head in the middle of the play, for example, disrupts the action of that play because audience attention focuses on him, and the attention drawn by his face simultaneously ensure audiences pay to return to his performances.

For the trials of wit, entrance fees were also charged, a way beyond gambling of monetising the attention capital that celebrity comedians had accrued. There seem to have been different pay structures for participants. Exploring these, Richard Preiss suggests that ‘the participants... might choose to split the receipts evenly, or (hedging against poor attendance) one might take a hefty honorarium and cede the gate to the other; or... they might grant each other a minimal appearance fee and then compete for the rest, winner-take-all.’⁶⁶ This indicates another kind of reputation-based gamble, the comedians taking the chance either that their attention capital guaranteed a large and therefore profitable audience or that it did not. In laying down payment methods, the comedian is expected to measure money against their own attention capital, setting a value on their own social position. If the celebrity comedian believes their own attention capital is of high value, they might compete for the money, winner-takes-all. If the value of their attention capital was shaky or low, they might prefer to take the honorarium.

A contest particularly rich in evidence mainly because it never took place is the trial of wit between John Taylor and William Fennor. Fennor’s failing to show up led to a pamphlet war between the two would-be combatants, in which John Taylor claims that

⁶⁴ Thomas Overbury, *Sir Thomas Overburie his wife* (London, 1616), sig. M2r. It is interesting to compare this with Fulke Greville’s description of Philip Sidney, as a ‘naturall Center’. *The life*, p. 21.

⁶⁵ Greville, *The life*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ Preiss, ‘John Taylor, William Fennor and the “Trial of Wit”’, p. 52.

‘the said *Fennor* Received of me ten shillings in earnest of his coming to meet me’ at the Hope.⁶⁷ Taylor continues his complaint:

... whereupon I caused 1000 bills to be Printed, and divulg’d my name 1000 wayes and more, giving my Friends and divers of my acquaintance notice of this *Bear-garden* banquet of daintie Conceits, and when the day came that the Play should have been performed, the house being filld with a great Audience, who had all spent their moneyes extraordinarily: then this Companion for an Asses, Ran away & left me for a *Foole*, amongst thousands of crittical Censurers: where I was ill thought of by my friends, scorned by my foes... Besides the some of twenty pounds in money, I lost my Reputation amongst many, and gaind disgrace in stead of my better expectations.⁶⁸

In divulging his name, Taylor has risked his reputation, or the social capital that invoking his name as a celebrity commands. Using the attention capital of celebrity presents a risk to the accrued capital if the entertainment – like this one – is a failure. Taylor’s social capital, and therefore his future ability to attract an audience, has suffered a hit. It is amazing that he projects an audience big enough to fill the Hope, and although some hyperbole is to be expected in this case, Taylor does speak to the extreme popularity of this extra-theatrical celebrity appearance. Remembering another, similar contest, Fennor writes: ‘I set up Bills, the People throng’d apace... The house was full’.⁶⁹ Fennor’s successful advertising campaign – posting bills – has attracted a huge audience, filling the house. The bills, however, are reliant on Fennor and his unnamed opponent’s attention capital being highly-valued by audiences, willing both to make the trip to the playhouse and once there to pay for the privilege of seeing and judging the celebrities. Fans are willing to stake money on their favourite celebrity, as though by paying money they will be para-socially closer to the celebrity, but potentially they are also investing as a way of maintaining and adding value to their own social network, betting that this will be of equal or higher value to their entrance fee.

The fact that ‘the Rabble adjudg’d the Victory’ of this type of contest suggests that audiences were crucial in building or smashing reputations.⁷⁰ Similarly, William Fennor

⁶⁷ John Taylor, *Taylor’s Revenge: Or The Rymer William Fennor Firk, Ferrited, and finely fetcht over the Coales* (London, 1615), sig. A3r.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, sigs. A3r-v.

⁶⁹ William Fennor, *Fennors defence: or, I am your first man* (London, 1615), sigs. B3r-v.

⁷⁰ Leigh, sig. C8r.

writes that an audience for a trial of wit arrived to the playhouse ‘With full intention to disgrace, or grace’. This argues that the audience’s intention in attending is to decide who to laud and who to shame. They are arriving ready to rank both celebrities, participating in their social climb or fall. While the performer can attempt to steer audience reaction, they cannot predict what will happen to their reputation, entering a gamble in which money is the reward, but the punishment might be a material degradation of their celebrity value. John Taylor’s main complaint against Fennor for failing to turn up to their projected contest was that it seriously damaged Taylor’s reputation. Addressing Fennor, he laments:

I, like a *Beare* unto the stake was tide,
And what they said, or did, I must abide.
A pox upon him for a Rogue says one
And with that word he throwes at me a stone...
Such Motley, Medley, Linsey Woolsey speeches
Would sure have made thee vilifie thy breeches.
What I endur’d, upon that earthly hell
My tongue or pen cannot discribe it well.⁷¹

Again, animal/human positions are elided: Taylor has become a victim of his audience, which now seeks to punish the man they had arrived ready to applaud. It is significant that Taylor almost cannot describe the ‘earthly hell’ he endured alone onstage, testifying to the power of public censure or applause. Although the human celebrity does have some power over their self-representation, the force of public approval or disapproval can rest entirely outside of their control: Taylor, clearly, would have done almost anything to escape this particular moment of public reputation-smashing. However, unlike the bear tied to the stake, human contestants choose to play high stakes to commodify their celebrity.

In following the money, then, we find that audiences were willing to translate their interest in certain celebrities into a monetary value. If a celebrity could command enough attention capital, they could earn more in this translation process, winning pay

⁷¹ Taylor, *Taylor’s Revenge*, sig. B2v.

outs from gambling contests. Contests acted as a way of provoking discourse, potentially increasing extant attention capital and raising the value of participants. I will turn now to William Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder*, which cashes in on the celebrity clown's attention capital.

Competition in the Morris

The *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600) is the printed memorial of Kemp's 100-mile Morris dance between London and Norwich. Leaving London on the first Monday in Lent, 1600, Kemp danced his way through Whitechapel, Mile End, Stratford and Bow towards Norwich. He was accompanied as far as Bow (in his own probably hyperbolic estimation) by 'many thousand' of onlookers, who attempted him to get drunk and so abandon the project.⁷² Throughout his account, Kemp offers the reader testimony of this extraordinary journey as well as the power of his celebrity. During the course of the Morris he reports that 'I was much hindred, by the desire people had to see me... the dyvers voyces of the young men and Maydens, which I should meete at everie myles ende, thronging by twentie, and sometime fortie, yea hundredths in a companie'.⁷³ Every place Kemp goes, people flock to see him, either because he was famous in these communities through his playing, or because word has got out about this extraordinary enterprise, and the locals think it is well worth seeing. Perhaps some element of both, the novelty of the mode of performance serving to increase attention capital focused around Kemp. That he was aware of the transitory nature of his own fame, and the attendant opportunities for commodification, is very probable, evidenced by the word play in 'wonder'/'wander'. *Nine Daies Wonder* proverbially means 'an event or phenomenon that attracts enthusiastic interest for a short while, but is then ignored or forgotten', Kemp self-deprecatingly terming his own actions of only temporary interest to the public.⁷⁴

As David Wiles has pointed out, gambling is at the foundation of the *Wonder*, making Kemp's account explicitly a money-making exercise.⁷⁵ Demanding attention capital, Kemp took bets on whether he would make it the 100 miles – the bettors invited to bet that he would not make it. As he danced, Kemp exchanged pledges with onlookers, 'in order that if successful he could recoup his stake threefold as he journeyed

⁷² Ibid., sig. A3v.

⁷³ William Kemp, *Kemps nine daies wonder* (London, 1600), sig. C3r.

⁷⁴ "nine, adj. and n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2017. Web. 1 June 2017.

⁷⁵ Wiles, p. 25.

homewards.⁷⁶ Kemp even brought a notary, one ‘George Sprat, appointed for my overseer, that I should take no other ease but my prescribed order’, thus ensuring the fairness of the enterprise.⁷⁷ George Sprat takes the part of the bettors, protecting their interests *against* Kemp, and through his mostly-silent presence as an auditor, takes the part of onlookers/readers watching the Morris (and perhaps hoping for it to fail in order to win their money back).

Kemp warns readers, however, of pitting their reputation against his. Not all bettors had paid the sum promised to Kemp should he complete the Morris. The clown therefore threatened:

I will have patience, some few daies longer. At that end of which time, if any be behinde, I will draw a cattalogue of al their names I ventur’d with: those that have shewne themselves honest men, I will set before them this Character H. for honesty: before the other Bench-whistlers shal stand K. for Ketlers & keistrels⁷⁸

Kemp uses his celebrity to shine a negative or positive light on participants in the bet, assuming that this will have some influence. Kemp’s celebrity could, therefore, project infamy onto unworthy spectators should they compete against him; his reputation as a celebrity will temporarily rub off on any defaulters, akin to lipsey’s reputation during his triumphal procession. Kemp’s celebrity, in fact, is the commodity underwriting the commercial enterprise that is the *Nine Daies Wonder*.

His alleged aim in writing about the Morris was set the record straight after false pamphleteers ‘hath written *Kempsfarewell* to the tune of Kery, mery, Buffe: another his desperate daungers in his late traaille: the third his entertainment to New-Market; which towne I came never neere by the length of halfe the heath.⁷⁹ According to this version of history, opportunists have already cashed in on the selling power of Kemp’s brand, having seen a lucrative gap in the market, and Kemp is merely publishing the ‘official’ version, attempting to regain the profit produced by his own celebrity brand during the short time-frame in which public interest was still high. However, Kemp’s stated reason for publishing echoes many early modern authors who claimed that the false versions of

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Kemp, sig. A3r. David Wiles has argued for another profit motive here, although this fails to explain the mass-printing of a text clearly designed to entertain; ‘one reason for publishing must have been to certify his achievement in the hopes that more [creditors] would come forward and pay.’ Wiles, p. 25.

⁷⁸ Kemp, sig. D2r.

⁷⁹ Ibid., sig. A2r.

their texts needed to be publicly corrected, so excusing the degrading act of publishing, and there is the secondary profit motive of hounding his creditors. David Wiles has argued that Kemp was sensitive to perceived attacks, thanks 'to the ambiguous status of his exploit', combining the persona of lord of the Morris with collecting money for personal profit and dancing during Lent (as Wiles points out, 'in traditional England the morris never started before Lent was out').⁸⁰ However, profit from gambling does not seem to be a source of embarrassment; while Kemp may demur at overt publication of the *Wonder* as a text, he is not at all embarrassed to have organised a wager on this scale.

But why did people pay for a dance that they mostly were not present to witness? The Morris was a vigorous, muscular dance involving much jumping and leaping. The 'morris step itself is a springing on alternate feet, the dancer swinging the feet forward and keeping the knees straight', and this spring should be as high as possible.⁸¹ Maintaining this vigorous style is no mean feat considering, as David Wiles points out, 'the condition of the roads in February... To be a morris dancer was to be a species of athlete.'⁸² Kemp's dance was a supreme feat of physical strength and endurance, although even he had to break for rest days. In overseeing the event, George Sprat is proving that Kemp's body really was extraordinary, effectively guaranteeing the investment of bettors so that they are not duped into paying out money for an ordinary body, and a spectacle that anyone could have arranged. Kemp is insistent on stressing this throughout his text, and the continual challengers of his strength consistently prove that Kemp's body is extraordinary and, by implication, worth paying money for. He also maintains a first person narrator, referring to 'I' and 'You'. Readers can either set themselves in competition with Kemp as 'You', or inhabit the victorious 'I' persona.

The novelty of Kemp's journey and performative qualities suggest that the Morris was designed to be publicised and recorded from its inception, the value of spectacle both enhanced by and enhancing the value of Kemp's celebrity brand. In his analysis of Ben Jonson's 1618 walk from London to Edinburgh (a publicity stunt partially influenced by Kemp's earlier adventure), James Loxley has argued that Jonson is 'a conscious and willing participant in the accumulation of attention capital achieved by its spectacular

⁸⁰ Wiles, p. 28.

⁸¹ Alan Brissenden, 'Shakespeare and the Morris', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 30.117 (1979), 1-11 (p. 3).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

journey.⁸³ The *Wonder* can be read as a cashing-in of the accumulated attention capital generated by a similarly spectacular journey. Looking at Jonson as a literary celebrity, Loxley argues that he consciously courted attention, adopting ‘particular performative strategies or moves while at the centre of the popular gaze’.⁸⁴ John Forest argues that in 1603, ‘the dance and Kemp were the talk of the nation, and remained so for many years.’⁸⁵ As a performer known for his dancing, Kemp’s performative strategies in the *Wonder* are perhaps more explicit, and the resultant text shows him consistently not only performing but overgoing what is expected of him. His celebrity persona, I will suggest, is dependent on triumphing over any would-be competitors.

Richard Preiss has seen audience involvement as ‘relentless, invasive participation’.⁸⁶ Preiss very accurately reads the project in economic terms, as a ‘publicity stunt’ to make money after Kemp stopped performing on the London stage.⁸⁷ While acknowledging the *Wonder* as displaying ‘the value and vitality of the capital he was withdrawing from the commercial theatres’, has seen the text as evidence of ‘the breakdown of his [Kemp’s] economic coherence as an entertainer.’⁸⁸ Audience attempts to touch Kemp or join in the dance disrupted Kemp’s project because they muddled the clear line between producer and consumer of entertainment. Kemp, in rebelling against theatrical codification of the spontaneous clown’s part, ‘unwittingly endowed his resistance with something that did just that – a script.’⁸⁹ Kemp finally rejects the audience and other figures necessary for the fabric of his performance. Like Preiss, I will look at the scripted nature of performance, but while Preiss reads every audience interaction as (from Kemp’s perspective) an imposition on the dance, I would like to suggest that Kemp structures the text as sequential moments of triumph. In the pamphlet, he deliberately sets up moments of competition to keep his position at the centre of the text. Like Overbury’s actor at the centre of all ears, if audience attention could be drawn in lines leading to a centre, Kemp is at the centre of audience gaze. Kemp’s maintaining attention capital through these moments of contest and victory echoes the social dominance displayed through moments of contest, conflict and victory by Sidney,

⁸³ James Loxley, pp. 569-70.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 572.

⁸⁵ John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing, 1458-1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 241.

⁸⁶ Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 142.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

Tarlton and lipsey, supporting the idea that celebrity involves a continual process of ranking. Again, the celebrity here is exerting control over his persona, but it is in a way that Kemp believes audiences will enjoy and – most importantly – invest in. Audiences are looking for their expectations about the celebrity’s outlying position to be met, but to retain attention capital this performance must be repeated, or celebrities risk falling out of the ranking process entirely. Even after death, the author of *Tarltons Jestes* is re-performing Tarlton’s winning the ranking process.

Kemp’s superlative physicality, proved against his ordinary challengers in the Morris, is also a source of awe, expressing extreme control over his bodily movements and the potential power within them. It was so memorable that the city of Norwich commemorated his stay by affixing his shoe to the height of an astonishing leap over a churchyard wall, a testament to the seeming impossibility of this physical feat that is still commemorated by a plaque today.⁹⁰ Commemorating the height of Kemp’s leap suggests that he was perceived as pushing the limits of the human body. There is a strong religious parallel with the way in which, while Kemp rested at Romford, ‘Londoners... came hourelly thither in great numbers to visite me’, as though he were a martyr on his deathbed and they would receive benediction through a touch of his body.⁹¹ The crowds following his movements across the country act as though touching him will imbibe them with his exceptional athleticism. By touching Kemp, audiences are also touching the centre of attention: as their hands intersect with the focus of ears and eyes, they themselves may vicariously stand in the centre. Moments of physical contact are important as evidence of fan activity. However, the account suggests that the level of fan engagement with Kemp’s celebrity during the Morris was unsustainable. They are so frenzied in their desire to be close to Kemp that this desire approaches violence. At Chelmsford, it took Kemp an hour to get through the throng of people to reach the inn gate, having once inside his chamber to lock himself in his room and speak to fans from the window, or be quite literally crushed by the crowd.⁹² When he finally gets to Norwich, he has to ride a horse and finally leap over a wall to escape the crowds. Kemp accidentally treads on a woman’s skirt, leading it to fall down, and she is unable to recover it, so great is the press of people.⁹³ While making his way through the city streets, officers appointed by the mayor had to help him ‘through the throng of people,

⁹⁰ Wiles, p. 24.

⁹¹ Kemp, sig. A4v.

⁹² Ibid., sig. B1v.

⁹³ Ibid., sig. D1r.

which prest so mightily upon me'.⁹⁴ Seeing Kemp is not enough; audiences themselves desire to be at this centre.

Kemp's athleticism does seem to have been extraordinary, even for a celebrity clown of the day, shown by the commemoration of his leap. Trained in the tradition of the court jester, before reaching the London stage Kemp had already toured the continent, where he had been paid to give demonstrations of his impressive leaping.⁹⁵ The exuberant physicality of the clown is comparable to the medieval Vice or Lord of Misrule.⁹⁶ In fact, Jonson may be referring obliquely to Kemp in *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), mocking his comedy as outdated through the character Iniquity, an old-fashioned vice deemed too unsophisticated to keep up with London's urbane sins. Iniquity boasts:

... I will fetch thee a leape

From the top of *Pauls*-steeple, to the Standard in *Cheape*:
And lead thee a dance, through the streets without faile,
Like a needle of *Spaine*, with a thred at my taile.⁹⁷

Leaping was strongly associated with Kemp, whether to show off in front of the townspeople, to perform a tumbling trick for his master, or simply to get over ditches his companions had to wade muddily through.⁹⁸ In contemporary texts, 'Spanish needle' was most associated with tales of chivalry; a razor-sharp blade used to vanquish one's enemies, yet Jonson makes its presence into a farce – the sword has become a sewing-needle.⁹⁹ This may suggest that Kemp's reputation was intertwined with leaping: by mocking this action, Jonson mocks the heart of Kemp's now-faded celebrity.

In his heyday, however, Kemp's leaping was clearly extraordinary, and the extraordinariness of his body is something the pamphlet seeks to prove through competition, introducing its own ranking system to showcase Kemp's bodily superiority. *The Nine Daies Wonder* seems to purposefully echo elements of a chivalric hero

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Wiles, p. 33.

⁹⁶ David Wiles in particular has made important links between Kemp's practices and the Lord of Misrule, suggesting that Kemp inhabited an ambiguous status, between this traditional, lordly identity, and his familiar stage persona of 'plain man'. p. 26.

⁹⁷ Ben Jonson, *The divell is an asse* (London, 1641), sig. B1v.

⁹⁸ Martin Butler, 'Kemp, William (d. in or after 1610?)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2011) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15334>> [accessed 29 March 2017]. Wiles, p. 24.

⁹⁹ 'Spanish needle' could also be a euphemism, as in Dekker's *Match mee in London*, Thomas Dekker (London, 1631).

narrative. The journey is marked, like that of a knight errant, by various challengers. A ‘lusty tall fellow’, promising to be a good competitor, gives up after only half a mile, ‘protesting, that if he might get a 100. pound, he would not hold out with me; for indeed my pace in dauncing is not ordinary.’¹⁰⁰ Kemp’s body has far surpassed the capabilities of this impressive human specimen. Kemp even terms himself ‘*Cavealiero Kemp*’, a pastiche of the knight who defeats all comers through skill in swordsmanship (although the word could also mean ‘a roistering swaggering fellow’).¹⁰¹ Similarly, ‘two pretty plaine youthes’ come dancing after Kemp, only to get stuck in the mud.¹⁰² As the clown gambols off, ‘they faintly bad God speed me, saying if I daunst that durtie way this seaven yeares againe, they would never daunce after me.’¹⁰³ Following a greater or lesser struggle, each challenger falls by the wayside, leaving Kemp to dance on victorious, becoming both the hero and mocking critic of his own story. One ‘Mayde not passing fourteen yeares of age’ impressed Kemp by dancing with him for ‘A whole houre... but then being ready to lye down I left her off: but thus much in her praise, I would have challenged the strongest man in Chelmsford, and amongst many I thinke few would have done so much.’¹⁰⁴ The implication here is of course that Kemp far surpasses the strongest man in Chelmsford, being able to keep up the frenetic pace of the dance for days rather than just hours. His body, through comparison, is defined: in surpassing the strongest man in a rural village, we as readers are able to form some estimation of Kemp’s strength.

The only other person to come close to equalling his bodily power is also a woman, who becomes something like his partner in the jig. At this point in the narrative, Kemp continues to pastiche the cavalier, overturning the notion of the romantic hero winning the fair maiden, finding ‘a lusty Country lass’ to become ‘*Marrian in his Morrice daunce*’.¹⁰⁵ If Kemp is an unexpected and atypical hero, his Maid Marian is no dainty maiden in need of rescue: she has ‘mirth in her eies... boldness in her words’, alongside ‘thicke short legs’ and ‘shooke her fat sides as she danced’.¹⁰⁶ This is the most extensive physical

¹⁰⁰ Kemp, sigs. B3r-v.

¹⁰¹ Kemp, sig. A2r. "cavalier, n. and adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, July 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/29229. Accessed 17 September 2018.

¹⁰² Kemp, sig. B2v.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, sig. B3r.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, sig. B2r.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. B4r, B3v.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

description of any of the characters Kemp met along his way, and she made enough of an impression for 'a good fellow my friend' to immortalise her in verse;

A Country Lasse browne as a berry...

Cheeks well fed and sides well larded,

*Every bone with fat flesh guarded*¹⁰⁷

Her exceptional physicality is a match for Kemp's, becoming partners in their extraordinary pace and length of dancing. She has so impressed, in fact, that she has created attention capital of her own, offering a comic parallel with the poem written to celebrate lipsey's series of victories. However, according to Thomas Elyot's defence of dancing in *The Boke named the Governour* (1531), the man and the woman engaged in the dance are not equal partners; the man is 'more vehement' than the woman, 'preceding' her.¹⁰⁸ This Maid Marian, then, is not competition for Kemp's virile performance of the Morris.

If she is Maid Marian, Kemp, as her dance partner, is Robin Hood, aligning himself with this paragon of English folk heroism.¹⁰⁹ Although the Morris dance and popular Robin Hood pageants were often associated, in this self-identification Kemp combines the figure of the patriotic hero, who drives the plot, and the antic dancer who disrupts it.¹¹⁰ This removes the structure that had developed onstage where two leading players, one comic and one heroic, worked to attract spectators and advertise the play. As Richard Preiss has argued, in claiming both roles for himself, Kemp is the uncontested star of the *Wonder*, not needing to share stage or title page space with celebrity actors like Edward Alleyn (as he did in *A Knack to Know a Knave*).¹¹¹ He remains the highest-ranking figure within this impromptu performance.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., sig. B4r.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named the Governour* (London, 1531), fols. 82v-83r. For more on the relationship between men and women in early modern dance practices, see Skiles Howard, 'Discourses of Dancing in Early Modern England', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 36.1 (1996), 31-56.

¹⁰⁹ As Robert Weimann has argued of the Mummings' Play, 'Taking the place of the traditional hero in the ceremonial combat, Robin achieved a status similar to that of St George', p. 27.

¹¹⁰ In *A new ballad of old Robin Hood*, Morris dancers who 'look'd madly,' arrive with other mad, drunken celebrants to celebrate Robin Hood's marriage in (London, 1695). Barbara Lowe also draws attention to the associations between Robin Hood/Maid Marian and the Morris. See Barbara Lowe, 'Early Records of the Morris in England', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 8.2 (1957), 61-82, p. 64.

¹¹¹ Although I doubt that this was Kemp's intention, this type of star structure also reverts to a time when there was only one leading player, who took the part of the Vice, 'occupying the

The fact that only women come close to matching Kemp's stamina is significant: his physical prowess is never threatened by a sexual competitor, just as Tarlton's wordplay is never bested in the *Jests*. The inherent sexuality of the Morris, which could 'mimicke venerean action', led some commentators to denounce it.¹¹² The costume perhaps reflected a pagan fertility tradition, including as it did 'a special shirt decorated with flowers to symbolize the coming spring'.¹¹³ Writing in 1583, polemical pamphleteer Philip Stubbs' denunciation of early modern festive culture is particularly virulent on the subject of this costume. He complains of Morris dancers wearing,

... gréen, yellow or some other light wanton colour. And as though that were not (baudie) gaudie enough I should say, they bedecke them selves with scarfs, ribons & laces hanged all over w^t golde rings, precious stones & other jewels: this donne, they tye about either leg xx. or xl. bels, with rich handkerchiefs in their hands, and sometimes laid a crosse over their shoulders & necks¹¹⁴

This overabundance of rich fabrics and possessions is highly distasteful to Stubbs, the dancers then 'swinging their handkerchiefs over their heds, in the Church, like devils incarnate w^t such a confuse noise'.¹¹⁵ There is a disruptive appropriation of space, the boundaries of church and pagan festivity uncomfortably transgressed. The connection to pagan festivity and devils echoes the Vice figure, and aligns Kemp with an apparently primitive, chaotic and sexually-charged past.¹¹⁶ Kemp's speciality onstage and in the jig seems to have been adultery, as his appearance in *The travailes of the three English brothers* (1607) testifies, wishing to 'make a man a Cuckold', and turning the husband-Harlequin's utterances to sexual innuendo, the English trickster character beating the continental one.¹¹⁷

center of attention and manipulating the action.' David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 80-83.

¹¹² C. R. Baskervill, *The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1929), p. 112.

¹¹³ Wiles, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Stubbs, *Anatomie of Abuses*, sig. M2r.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Associated with inexorable new life, there is much reference to famous clowns' epigraphs in general to loss of vitality, as in this mournful couplet produced following the death of the celebrated Thomas Greene: 'How fast bleake Autumne changeth Floraes dye, / What yesterday was (Greene) now's seare & dry'. Heywood, Thomas 'To the Reader', in *Greenes Tu quoque, or, The cittie gallant* (London, 1614), sig. A2r. W. R. 'Upon the death of Thomas Greene.', in *Greenes Tu quoque, or, The cittie gallant* (London, 1614), sig. A2v.

¹¹⁷ John Day (London, 1607), sigs. E4v; Fr.

Within the text created by Kemp – the *Nine Daies Wonder* – no threats to his sexual virility even have a hope of winning the competition against him. In ‘winning’ the competition of virility, Kemp’s readers can choose to imagine themselves as this paragon of highly-sexed masculinity (or perhaps, depending on sexual preferences, as overwhelmed by this same paragon). Kemp’s celebrity, then, like any other, can be viewed as a locus of fantasies. It is this fantasy of bodily triumph and a social status that endures continual attack from other strong competitors that renders Kemp’s body worth paying over the odds for. George Sprat attests to this extraordinariness of stamina. Money laid on a bet is the material evidence of his status position, which only maintains its social status in relation to others: a cycle of competition and triumph must be enacted.

I have alluded throughout this thesis to the ‘value’ inherent in celebrity, ascribed by fans and spectators. Gambling on the celebrity, in events like the act-offs or the *Nine Daies Wonder*, makes this value explicit. By narrating the successful series of competitions within his commercial enterprise, Kemp, like actors participating in ‘act-offs’, has proven that his celebrity is supreme, and that it is worth the money bettors have laid out and potentially lost in wagering on it. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, gambling enables fans to buy into a celebrity, a way both of expressing celebrity value and gaining a privileged, close position in relation to the celebrity, furthering the para-social connection between celebrity performer and audience member. In a sense, it is the ephemeral emotional tie to the celebrity materialised. Celebrity, inherently concerned with social networks, can be re-formed into an economic practice.

Conclusion

This thesis has suggested that celebrities are created and circulated through different media as discourse, and that audiences can use the celebrity persona in a social context to perform particular functions. This is connected to the idea of ranking; deciding who is in the top tier of celebrity may be food for discussion, and it will certainly say something about the person who is doing the ranking, whether they are enforcing their own status through association with the celebrity, or the opposite. Combat and competition is something that has characterised almost every celebrity in this thesis, from act-offs, to Philip Sidney proving himself at tilt, to Tarlton's having the last word, and Moll Cutpurse winning sword fights against the gallant Laxton, who would impinge on her reputation. Jennifer Feather has argued that a 'modern model' of combat was emerging in the sixteenth century, 'that sees combat as an agonistic struggle in which the victor gains agency at the expense of objectifying the vanquished.'¹ Combat helps to define the identity of the victor, and clearly defines the place of each combatant on a shifting, potentially confusing social hierarchy. Watching ritualised forms of combat such as the cock fight had an effect, like gossiping about a celebrity, on the social status of the watcher.

The type of combat deemed an appropriate way to rank celebrity is to an extent decided by space. Streets, taverns, playhouses, the countryside, markets, and the Court are some of the spaces in which celebrities not only performed, but in which they were discussed. The type of space a celebrity entered decided to an extent audience expectations of celebrity performance within that space. The media used to disseminate celebrity such as plays and pamphlets could themselves also refer back to other spaces; states that the comedies of London, 'employ spaces under, behind, or above the stage to reflect upon and reconfigure their city.'² Importantly, they 'locate the audience in relation to the action onstage', imagining it as a crowd in a public place, as confidants, or more abstractly as Sir Alexander Wengrave does in *The Roaring Girl*, seeing the audience as pictures hung in a gallery. Discussing celebrity news, the place an event happened is referenced as evidence of the authenticity of the account (Tarlton in Greenwich, for example). The spaces in which people moved could also be gendered, and inform

¹ Jennifer Feather, *Writing Combat and the Self in Early Modern English Literature: The Pen and the Sword* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 1.

² Kelly J. Stage, *Producing Early Modern London: A Comedy of Urban Space, 1598-1616* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), p. 5.

audiences of the character of the celebrity – Moll Cutpurse’s enthusiasm for the bait, for example, may have said something about her gender identity to audiences watching her watch the bears.³ In turn, watching the performance could say something about the gender of audiences, masculinity associated with the celebration of the cockfight.

Being a celebrity is in part to be the best actor, the best at tilt, the best comedian, the most vigorous dancer. As I have argued, a celebrity occupies an outlying status position, which brings them into contact with one another, literally and imaginatively. Some celebrities have a magnetic quality: they are a ‘natural Center’ or the centre of eyes and ears, as Overbury frames it in his description of an excellent actor. To come into common discourse in the first place, an individual must be unusual. Maintaining their status as a celebrity depends on this unusual position: Kemp’s hundred-mile Morris is manufacturing unusualness through the novelty of what is effectively a publicity stunt. In *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione recommends that courtiers do not allow themselves to be too frequently seen in public: they will lose their special status, partly dependent on lack of familiarity and therefore novelty. He writes, ‘there is nothing so perfect in the world that the ignorant do not tire of it and despise it when they see it often.’⁴ Maintaining an unusual appearance while mingling with people in their day-to-day lives is very difficult. Stunts like the Morris, tilt, act-off or jest create an unusual scenario in which the celebrity can perform their persona, separate from their audience’s day-to-day life.

The apparatus of the spectacle around fighting cock lipsey both prolonged his outlying status as an extraordinary chicken, and temporarily bathed participants in the spectacle with lipsey’s triumph. Using animals as emotional conduits, the persona of the animal celebrity could create meaning and/or status for the spectator’s own identity. Being an imaginative construct, celebrity persona could transfer and intermingle with spectator identity. While celebrities were imaginatively connected as wonders of their time and sharing particular status positions, fans engaging with the celebrity persona could also associate their own subjectivity with the celebrity’s, and even entangle the two, as seems to have been the case with lipsey and perhaps the writers inhabiting the voices of

³ For more on the relationship between gender and space, see Amanda Floyd, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007).

⁴ Castiglione, p. 120

Sidney, Tarlton, and aspects of Moll's biography, although who wrote which parts is not clear.

Writers inhabiting the voices of Sidney or Tarlton have engaged with another important idea in the creation of celebrity: names. We have seen how different writers and speakers create their own distinctive version of the celebrity which, while they may use common signifiers such as Tarlton's slops or Kemp's jiggling, do not paint one version of the celebrity that can be pinned down as the truth of their personality. But names themselves could also act as signs, evoking the signifiers of celebrity. 'Tarltonizing' could be an adjective, while writers could refer to someone being 'Sidneian' as a form of flattery, or call on their own 'Sydneian Muse', giving Sidney power over language and the status of a classical deity.⁵ Invoking the celebrities' names in this way, writers assume that their readers knew exactly which characteristics these names conjured. Celebrity, and celebrity names, then, stand for something more than the celebrity, and in some cases come to stand for cultural ideals. Robert Armin recounted that Tarlton's name remained a feature of the early modern discourse, even after his physical body could no longer be found. Names encompassed the signifiers of celebrity reputation, and could stand for reputation. Writer Charles Gibbon in his *The praise of a good name* (1594) argues that, 'Every one by nature is desirous of a Name, and so desirous, that many rather then they will have it buried in oblivion, will pretermitt no practises be they never so impious to procure it.'⁶ Here, name is equal almost to celebrity; having a 'name' is to be known beyond one's lifetime.

Names, able at times to stand for the celebrity, often said something *about* the celebrity. Moll Cutpurse's appellation 'Cutpurse' stood for her criminal connections but also connoted that she was known for her gender identity, while animal celebrities' names often seem to have highlighted a characteristic about the animal. Names are doubly referent, then, both connoting the celebrity's characteristics, and able to broadcast information about the celebrity within the word itself. In his essay 'Of Glory', Montaigne speaks to the separation between thing and reputation, and the relationship with name. He claims that,

⁵ Sir John Finet, *Finetti Philoxenis: som choice observations of Sr. John Finett knight* (London, 1656), sig. A5r. Sir John Harington, *Epigrams both pleasant and serious* (London, 1615), sig. A2r. Thomas Moffet, *The silkwormes, and their flies* (London, 1599), sig. Br.

⁶ Charles Gibbon, *The praise of a good name The reproch of an ill name* (London, 1594), sig. B2r.

There is both name, and the thing: the name, is a voyce which noteth, and signifieth the thing: the name, is neither part of thing nor of substance: it is a stranger-piece joynd to the thing, and from it.⁷

Names, then, have a strange relationship with substance, and can be almost entirely removed from it. In calling name ‘a voyce which noteth’, Montaigne associates name with the popular voice that creates reputation and suggests that this name in a sense belongs to the popular voice, being created by it.

Before and after: potential directions

Celebrity culture, like celebrity, expresses a shared network of ideas, circulating as discourse. This idea may usefully be applied beyond the early modern period, as it provides scope for ways of thinking about audience/fan engagement with celebrity beyond passivity or top-down manipulation. In the final part of this thesis, I would like to suggest some directions for extending this model beyond the period 1580-1621. What social functions might celebrity perform for its audiences in other contexts, and what further avenues of research does the study of celebrity in the early modern period suggest?

The early moderns, as I have already stated, often associated celebrity actors with the Roman actors Quintus Roscius Gallus or Clodius Aesopus, themselves reading a genealogy of celebrity into famous actors across classical and early modern periods. Names like Jane Shore (one of Edward IV’s mistresses) and Will Somers were incredibly well-known during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. A King’s mistress like Shore provides a particularly fruitful avenue of thought for the study of celebrity, being in many respects a self-made woman, negotiating popular, courtly and royal opinion. Also paralleling Tarlton, few figures are more products of posthumous construction than Jane Shore, the name ‘Jane’ being invented by Thomas Heywood after her real first name (Elizabeth) had been forgotten.⁸

I have also chosen to stop this study at 1621 partly because the textual apparatus around celebrity changes. News became more regular, democratised and formal (by this I mean

⁷ Montaigne, *Essays*, sig. Hhr.

⁸ Rosemary Horrox, ‘Shore [née Lambert], Elizabeth [Jane] (d. 1526/7?)’, royal mistress’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press (2004) <www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-25451> [accessed 27 June 2019].

one person wrote/edited news-sheets, rather than anyone published a pamphlet or ballad when they felt like it) during the seventeenth century, although to say that there is a decisive break would be fallacious, especially due to huge regional variation. Self-publicity through print also became more widely available. Using print, figures like Margaret Cavendish, Ben Jonson and John Taylor were able to enhance their own reputations. Taylor is notable because of his use of the publicity stunt to promote his own celebrity. Capitalising on cheap print, Taylor manufactured stunts like rowing down the Thames in a boat made of paper, with oars made of dried fish. He immortalised these in pamphlet form. His celebrity was remarkably long-lived for someone who was essentially famous as a self-publicist, his fame extending from around 1612 to well after his death during the Interregnum in 1653. Once a celebrity himself, Taylor sought out other celebrities to write about, amplifying his fame with their novelty value, not just reporting on these celebrities, but inserting his own presence as narrator. Taylor's pamphlet *The great eater, of Kent* (1630), narrates a meeting between Taylor and an extraordinarily hungry 'Paunchmonger', Nicholas Wood, known for his huge capacity for food.⁹ Taylor seems to have been attracted to his subject by a certain level of local fame, speaking of Wood's 'reputation' and the fact that in Kent 'he hath long been e famous'.¹⁰ In printing the encounter, Taylor performs a kind of celebrity interview, taking great care to stress the authentic nature of this encounter. Similarly, Taylor's pamphlet *The Olde, Old, Very Olde Man* cashed in on the talk about another celebrity, 152-year-old Thomas Parr. The deliberately amplificatory effect of Taylor-as-celebrity publicising Nicholas Wood and Old Parr hints at a shared celebrity culture, and newly-emerging forms of mutual publicity.

A full analysis of Taylor's methods of publicity and self-publicity would be another PhD-length study entirely, but his oeuvre is certainly worthy of consideration as part of an imaginative space of celebrity, suggesting self-aware crafting of persona and deliberate amplification of celebrity through association with other in-vogue celebrities, using extant audience interests and expectations of in-vogue celebrities. He is important in bridging the vast scholarship on Restoration celebrity with earlier forms. And in some ways, Taylor mirrors Jonson's stage-keeper or Robert Wilson's character Simplicity, using the reputation of celebrities to increase their own social status. Examining the connections between celebrity and everyday life is an area opened up by fan studies,

⁹ John Taylor, *The Great eater, of Kent* (London, 1630), sig. A2r.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, sig. C3r.

but there is huge scope to explore the functions celebrity is made to perform by fans. The concept of a celebrity persona that enacts social work for its fans and audiences among their social networks seems to be a useful one that can at least be extended into later parts of the seventeenth century.

It is this version of celebrity, incorporated into audiences' everyday lives, that presents a challenge to models of celebrity which see audiences as manipulated by a celebrity or culture industry. Celebrity status – attributed by fans and audiences – could be deployed by an audience member to enhance their own social status or associate them with meanings that the celebrity evoked. And these meanings were by no means always virtuous or worthy; Philip Sidney is today remembered for great deeds, when during his life he made an impressive and charismatic show during public spectacles rather than being politically or militarily epoch-defining. While there is work to be done on celebrity prior to the eighteenth century, I hope to have established that celebrity – and a connected celebrity culture – did exist during the early modern period.

At the beginning of this thesis, I also claimed that audiences shape the celebrity persona perhaps more than the celebrity themselves once this persona enters public discourse. The fact that there were animal celebrities during the early modern period supports this, audiences projecting their own emotions onto the celebrity animal. Gambling on celebrity humans and animals further enabled audiences to invest in the celebrity persona, their social and para-social relationship made manifest. When the celebrity is monetised through gambling, social capital directly converts to economic capital, proving the existence of social capital and strong social and para-social connections between early modern fans and celebrities. As in the case of Richard Tarlton, the celebrity persona could be appropriated into an audience member's own life, performing social work to create feelings of joy, connection or status, entirely removed from the control of the celebrity or any co-ordinated culture industry. Celebrity was understood to be an important and complex aspect of early modern social life, produced by the 'good thoughts' of an audience.

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