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The Vice of the Interludes and the Mannerist Tradition: A Family Resemblance?[1]

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In this essay I will revisit the much discussed figure of the Vice of the Tudor interludes, his particular brand(s) of folly, and his dramatic progeny. My aim is not fundamentally to redefine the nature of the Vice, but more modestly to suggest an additional angle from which his stagecraft and dramatic function might be viewed. The familiar landmarks in the authoritative historiography of the Vice will thus remain important for the analysis. I shall discuss once more the Vice's relationship with the audience, his employment of the mode of playing associated with the *platea* which stands between the world-in-the-play of the dramatised narrative and the play-in-the world of the spectators,[2] his emotional volatility, and his energetic, often acrobatic performativity.[3] But, rather than seeing these things as completely idiosyncratic and unique to the Vice tradition, I will suggest possible parallels with aspects of representative techniques observable elsewhere, specifically in the visual arts of the sixteenth century. Again, the aim

1 I am very grateful to Professor John J. McGavin for his comments and suggestions on an early draft of this paper that helped to focus my ideas and removed many a slip.

2 For the terminology of *locus* and *platea*, "world-in-the-play" and "play-in-the-world", see Weimann, *Popular Tradition,* and Weimann, *Author's Pen*.

3 For key examples of the historiography of the Vice, see Spivack, Mares, Happé, "The Vice", Happé, ed., *Tudor Interludes*, Dessen, and Debax.

will not be to claim some unnoticed and revolutionary influence between the drama and the fine arts, whether in one direction or the other, but simply to note some suggestive similarities, and to ponder how they might inform and inflect the way we think about the Vice of the interludes and (briefly, by way of conclusion) his dramatic descendants in the works of Shakespeare. In so doing I hope both to offer a more nuanced account of features of the Vice tradition and Shakespeare's uses of it than has been hitherto suggested, and to engage with an important contribution to our understanding of the history of representation in the period.

Mannerism: Artifice, Impertinence, and Disorientation in Religious Art

In a rich and challenging study of the moral trajectories of Shakespeare's problem plays and the Mannerist tradition, Jean-Pierre Maquerlot draws attention to the disorienting effects achieved in a number of major Mannerist works of the sixteenth century through the deliberately non-naturalistic representation of human figures in pictorial space. He notes how, for example, in Bronzino's *An Allegory of Venus and Cupid* (ca. 1546), also known as *Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time*,[4]

> the positioning of Venus's legs is contradictory to the positioning of the rest of the body; the direction imparted to the arms is contradictory to that of the forearms, and they themselves are in conflict with the hands. It is as if Venus's body was carefully avoiding subordinating all its gestures to the accomplishment of one clear gestural intention, but tentatively and simultaneously exploring several possibilities of action. (Maquerlot, p. 22)[5]

The figure of Deceit in the same image is also, more strikingly (and more obviously appropriately for its subject) an amalgam of incompatibilities. Its left hand is attached to its right arm and vice-versa, while its body is half-human and half-reptile, embodying deceit and perversion in every aspect of its repre-

4 In the National Gallery, London; image online at <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/bronzino-an-allegory-with-venus-and-cupid> (accessed 10 February 2016).

5 In drawing on Maquerlot's excellent discussion of these Mannerist works, I am, of course, stressing only certain aspects of his analysis of the Mannerist mode, which in turn stresses only some aspects of the wider tradition. For a useful overview of the tradition as a whole, see Shearman. The drama I shall discuss shares Shearman's sense of Mannerist works as "virtuoso performances" (p. 81), but not that sense of effortless *sprezzatura* of execution and apparent enervation of content that many of the works discussed by Maquerlot also display.

sentation.[6] But Cupid, too, is presented in a strikingly unnatural manner, his body elongated and his posture contorted so that his buttocks are thrust out towards the viewer, his weight born by his left knee while the right is seemingly thrust painfully into Venus's thigh. The more one considers his figure, moreover, the stranger it becomes. His back is arched backwards and to the left, and his neck, which is concealed behind Venus's shoulder and her raised right arm, would have to be impossibly long and serpentinely flexible to twist up and round to allow him to deliver his kiss on his mother's chin. Similarly, his left arm, stretching all the way around his body to cradle the back of her head, must be considerably longer than his right, which reaches around her front to grasp her left nipple. From the viewpoint of conventional anatomy, the entire image is unbalanced, fragmented and implausible; unsettled in its own geometry and queasily unsettling to the viewer: a physical correlative of the unnatural desires seemingly embodied in the painting as a whole.

Other works in the same tradition confuse the viewer's eye in different ways, distracting it from the ostensible subject of the painting towards other, seemingly minor or irrelevant matters, or, as in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* (in the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican), disrupting vanishing lines and perspective to create non-realistic landscapes and disorienting the arrangements of figures in space (Maquerlot, p. 25). Maquerlot comments further:

> [The aim] … is to wrench the viewer from visual habits largely conditioned by the use of a single perspective. [The artist] … baffles commonsense expectations of a reassuring space in which each object looks the way it should with regard to the laws of maths. (Maquerlot, at plate IV [unpaginated])

Viewing Rosso Fiorentino's *The Deposition From the Cross* (Pinacoteca, Volterra),[7] Maquerlot suggests, "the eye comes to hover over certain details that unduly engross the attention" (Maquerlot, plate V). There is seemingly a gust of wind blowing from right to left in the picture, but it tugs at only some garments, not others, twisting some naturalistically, but shaping the cloak of the uppermost figure into a highly stylised canopy. The men who are starting to lower Christ's body are poised at odd angles to the ladders that notionally support them, and the figure to the right of the cross, who must be supporting most

6 See Maquerlot, discussion at plate VIII (unpaginated).

7 See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deposition_from_the_Cross,_Volterra_(Rosso_Fiorentino)> (accessed 10 February 2016).

of the weight of the body, encircles it with an arm so relaxed and limp, the wrist dangling downwards rather than clutching onto Christ's side, that the arrangement makes no physical sense. At the centre of the scene, Christ himself seems to float in the air, a look of apparent rapture on his far-from-dead-looking face (Maquerlot, plate V). Everyone seems weightless, exquisitely posed, and preoccupied with anything but the arduous task ostensibly in hand. Where we expect to see a credible representation of the world and its physical laws, we see instead the defiance of such credibility, a world of mannered gestures and postures, a work of painterly artifice that draws attention to itself as artifice. The purpose of these "provocative" (Maquerlot, p. 20) displays of "disparity or dissonance" (p. 24), "the stylistic exploitation of incompatibilities" (p. 21), is, Maquerlot suggests, precisely to unsettle the viewer out of familiar habits of viewing and to implicate him or her unexpectedly in the subject matter of the image. Thus, in *The Deposition*,

> the personages are not meant to look lifelike, their function is not to make us become emotionally involved in their suffering in spite of the side-long glance cast at us by one of their number. Taking a scene familiar to the Christian conscience, Rosso introduces incongruities incompatible with traditional schemes of thought and sensibility, and thereby aims at creating a feeling of unease, a disturbance of the eyes and soul. (Maquerlot, plate V)

The Mannerist Vice

My aim here is not to suggest that the interlude playwrights knew of or were influenced by these images, or vice-versa; it is simply to observe how many of the features of Mannerist art identified by Maquerlot also apply to the Vices of the Tudor drama, and with broadly similar effects. The Vices too are flamboyantly, self-promotingly dissonant, standing at oblique angles to the drama's internal geometry, its ostensible grain and purpose. They are "impertinent" to it, in Robert Weimann's apt phrase (*Popular Tradition*, p. 119), both irreverently mocking of their own play-world, and fundamentally at odds with it. Like those Mannerist figures which Maquerlot notes are represented as seemingly too large for the architectural spaces within which the artist has contained them, the Vices too seem to "fling themselves out of the painted space towards us", threatening to "invade … our space and upsetting our normal relationship with painting"

(Maquerlot, pp. 23-24).[8] They famously thrust themselves out of the world-in-the-play into the spectators' world, addressing them directly, insulting, cajoling, or teasing them, asking them for help or demanding their connivance or approval, trying to make room for themselves in the space around the play as well as that within it. In so doing, they too force spectators to take a new position in relation to the material being presented to them, to look at it afresh and reconsider its implications for them.

It is not simply the fact that the Vices speak to the audience that makes them so disruptive to the habits of normative modern spectatorship: it is the way that they do so. Many characters in the interludes address spectators directly.[9] The protagonist and the virtuous Charity and Knowledge all do so in the anonymous early morality *The Interlude of Youth*, for example,[10] as do both the Vice, Nichol Newfangle, and Virtuous Living in Ulpian Fulwell's *Like Will to Like*, the latter with a nicely metatheatrical twist:

> As the end of virtue is honour and felicity,
> So mark well the end of wickedness and vice:
> Shame in this world and pain eternally.
> Wherefore, ye that are here, learn to be wise,
> And the end of the one with the other weigh
> By the time you have heard the end of this play. (ll. 586-91)

Neither Vices nor Virtues are committed to maintaining any notional "fourth wall" between themselves and the audience. But where the other characters address audiences collectively, and usually with the intention to inform or instruct, the Vices tend to single out individuals for special attention, and do so as if they already know them, with remarks that are often suggestive of knowledge about their secrets.

Nichol Newfangle, for example, addresses spectators by name (although presumably not using the real names of the spectators concerned): "What sayest thou to that, Joan with the long snout?" (Fulwell, l. 227); "How say you, little

8 Maquerlot is here discussing specifically Bronzino's *St John the Baptist* (Galleria Borghese, Rome) and Michelangelo's *Prophets* and *Sybils* in the Sistine Chapel.

9 See Spivack, pp. 178-79.

10 "Aback, fellows, and give me room," says Youth, entering the play, "Or I shall make you to avoid soon" (ll. 39-40). Charity observes, "Farewell my masters everyone, / I will come again anon / and tell you how I have done" (ll. 195-97; see also ll. 540-41), while Humility addresses the moral of the play directly to the audience at ll. 776-79.

Meg?" (l. 1183). Like Deceit, the only figure in Bronzino's *Allegory* to meet the viewer's gaze, and who does so with a slyly knowing look, Nichol seems to know what we are like, to anticipate our anxieties and predilections, and to be always one step ahead of our responses, aware, for example, that we (fallen creatures as we are) will not believe him or take his advice, even when it is in our best interests:

> See to your purses, my masters, and be ruled by me,
> For knaves are abroad; therefore beware;
> You are warned, and ye take not heed, I do not care. (ll. 605-7)

He seems simultaneously both a figure of mischief in the play and intellectually and morally superior to the spectators witnessing it, an agent both of sin and its correction.[11]

> Do you all hold your peace?
> Why then, good gentle boy, how likest thou this play?
> No more but say thy mind;
> I swear by this day, if thou wilt this assay,
> I will be to thee kind. (ll. 1175-79)

Like those painted figures whose gestures, posture, colouration, or scale signal an at-best awkward accommodation to the physical laws, space, and interpersonal relationships of a Mannerist work, the interlude Vices seem to exist permanently at a tangent to both the narrative imperatives of the world-in-the-play and the other characters within it. One conspicuous example of this is their tendency to deliver bravura set-piece speeches whose content and virtuosity are largely irrelevant to and in excess of the requirements of the plot, speeches which delay the progression of the narrative and remind spectators that this is indeed a piece of entertainment that they are witnessing, a work of art and craft rather than an attempt to reproduce real events in real time. Merry Report's list of the places he claims to have visited since he was last onstage in John Heywood's *The Play of the Weather* (ll. 197-213) is a good example, as is Avarice's listing of the gleanings he hopes to pick up from the eponymous protagonist's tottering state in Nicholas Udall's *Respublica* (ll. 35-46). Similarly, Haphazard's opening speech in "R. B."'s *Apius and Virginia* is an extended riff on, first, the possibilities of

11 See Spivack, pp. 135, 176-78.

what he himself might be (running from "a scholar or a schoolmaster, or else some youth" [l. 181], through "a louse or a louser, a leek or a lark; / A dreamer, a drommel [*dozer*], a fire or a spark" [ll. 185-86]), and then on those upon whom he preys ("A maid or a mussel-boat, a wife or a wild duck' [ll. 195ff.]). These speeches have no narrative function in the plays that contain them. Indeed, both their virtuosity and their implausibility as accounts of mimetic action make a nonsense of those narratives in real terms. How could Haphazard be mistaken for a leek or a spark? How might he prey upon a wild duck? The speech directs spectators' attention away from such pragmatic, mimetic questions and toward the non-representative pleasures available from a virtuoso performance of rhetoric, alliteration, rhythm, and rhyme.

Equally redundant in plot terms and metatheatrical in effect are those speeches of figures such as No-Lover-Nor-Loved, the Vice of Heywood's *A Play of Love*, which pick up on a word or phrase spoken by another character and make them the subject of an extended quibbling disquisition, no doubt accompanied by flamboyant movement and gestures. Thus, responding (but never quite replying) to Lover-Not-Loved's observation that he and Loved-Not-Loving had been in the acting area before him, the Vice delivers eight lines of comic commentary on the possible meanings of "before", as both "prior to" and "in front of", many of them potentially bawdy:

> Ye have been here before me before now,
> And now am I here before you,
> And now I am here behind ye,
> And now ye be here behind me,
> And now we be here even both together,
> And now be we welcome even both hither;
> Since now ye found me here, with court'sy I may
> Bid you welcome hither as I may say. (ll. 705-12)

Not satisfied with wringing out the implications of "before", he later makes a similar rhetorical and acrobatic mountain out of the suggestion that each of the characters might be "joined" to one of the others (in that each one either loves someone else or is loved by someone else) and "parted" from another (because half of them are also not loved, while the other half do not love anyone else):

> Loving not loved, loved not loving,
> Loved and loving, not loving nor loved,

> Will ye see these four parts well joined?
> Loving not loved, and loved not loving:
> These parts can join in no manner reckoning.
> Loving and loved, loved nor lover:
> These parts in joining in likewise differ.
> But in that ye love ye twain joined be,
> And being not loved ye join with me;
> And being no lover with me joineth she,
> And being beloved, with her join ye.
> Had I a joiner with me joined jointly,
> We joiners should join joint to joint quickly;
> For, first I would part these part in fleeces,
> And, once departed, these parted pieces
> Part and part with part I would so part-like part,
> That each part should part with quiet heart. (ll. 776-92)

A further step away from such bravura punning and whimsy are those speeches which are completely and self-avowedly nonsensical, such as Haphazard's lines, loosely prompted by the notion of hanging, in *Apius and Virginia*:

> I came from Caleco even the same hour,
> And hap was hired to Hackney in hempstrid;
> In hazard he was of riding on beamstrid.
> Then crow-crop on treetop hoist up a sail;
> Then groaned their necks, by the weight of their tail.
> Then did carnifex put these three together,
> Paid them their passport for Christening together. ("R. B.", ll. 862-68)

To this the bemused Apius can respond only, "Why, how, how, Haphazard, of what doest thou speak? / Methinks in mad sort thy talk thou dost break" (ll. 869-70).

Such moments are in only the loosest sense part of the dialogue of the world-in-the-play. Like Mark Antony's "delights" in Shakespeare's tragedy, they show their back, dolphin-like, above the element they live in,[12] drawing attention to their own theatricality, as do those moments of song and dance that the Vices occasionally indulge in, seemingly for their own sake, or simply to pass the time while no one else is "onstage". Thus Nichol Newfangle, left alone for a moment when the other actors exit, announces, "And now will I dance, now will I prance, / For why [*because*] I have none other work" (Fulwell, ll. 571-72).

12 See *Antony and Cleopatra*, V.ii.87-89, in *The Oxford Shakespeare*. All references to Shakespeare's plays are to this edition.

At such points in the performance spectators are indeed cued to adjust and reassess their relationship, not only to the character speaking and their current situation, but also more fundamentally to the dramatic process itself—to see the play not as mimetic, a "fourth wall" representation of a world complete in itself and separated from them in space and time, but as a work of art that is part of, and has implications for, their own world, and for their own conduct in it.

The Vice's capacity to unsettle spectators and prompt an adjusted response to the performance in hand is thus fundamental to his nature as a dramatic character or role. For it is what the Vice *is*, or seems to be, as much as what he sometimes says or does, that makes him the distinctive and crucial element in the dramaturgy of the interlude. And central to that identity is his celebrated inconstancy, his disconcerting failure to be reliably either one thing or another. He is one moment laughing, the next weeping; one instant subservient or wheedling, the next proud and overbearing, capable of switching from downcast despondency to exultant triumph or vice-versa in the blink of an eye, and apparently without the slightest of provocations or consequences. Such a role has no secure or consistent grounding in plausible human psychology, and makes no sustained appeal to realistic emotional commitment from spectators, even though the Vice frequently invites us to sympathise with him or to recognise in him a reflection of our own desires, anxieties, and predilections. He is, as critics have frequently observed, protean and mercurial, both inside and outside the unfolding drama, irrelevant to the plot on one level, and yet central to it on all others. One moment he is seemingly part of the world of the *locus*, addressed familiarly by the other characters and interacting with them, seeming like them to experience real hunger or pain, real fear or desire, the next he is beyond the play-world, in the *platea*, confiding in spectators that such things do not really matter to him, and have no reality beyond the make-believe of performance.

But it would be limiting to understand this amphibiousness solely on the level of character, as simply a remarkable if generic feature of a particular kind of a dramatic role, or a reflection of the skills of a certain kind of actor. It is also a structural feature of the interlude drama, the key to the form of engagement required from spectators by this kind of performance.[13] To reach for another analogy from sixteenth-century art, the Vice, like the anamorphic skull in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, cues spectators through his distorting and disruptive effect

13 See Spivack, pp. 135, 176–77.

upon the normative relationship between the viewer and the viewed world of the performance to adopt a particular, oblique and self-reflexive viewpoint to the unfolding narrative—a viewpoint which takes in both the picture and the frame which presents it to them, and cues them to readjust and reassess their own position in relation to both. From the perspective of the *locus*, the Vice makes little or no consistent sense, so spectators must adjust their stance to accommodate his performance and to get him into focus. And once we do so, the whole narrative begins to look very different. Those figures that initially appeared to be "real" begin to look two-dimensional or merely symbolic, and the Vice who seemed artificial now appears boldly before us, the only significant figure on the stage, and one who is looking directly, challengingly solely at us, knowing our secrets and challenging us to acknowledge our affinity with him. The result is—or seems designed to be—to take the viewer unawares, suddenly turning the play from a narrative to be witnessed to a lesson to be learnt, with the Vice as the expositor of and intermediary between the action and each individual spectator, addressing them directly in the privacy of their own thoughts.

The Mercurial Vice

A classic example of the Vice's performative emotional volatility is the entrance speech of Nichol Newfangle in Fulwell's *Like Will to Like*. In the course of thirty lines he seems to move from aggressive provocation through crestfallen disappointment and self-pity, to a need for approval, then back to self-confidence, without any conventional acknowledgement of the transitions, or, once the moment has passed, any hint that the previous emotions have ever existed. Throwing a knave of clubs ostentatiously onto the ground and challenging a male spectator to pick it up (and so acknowledge his own knavery), the Vice enters the play laughing,

> Ha, ha ha, ha, now, like unto like, it will be none other,
> Stoop, gentle knave, and take up your brother.
> Why, is it so? And is it even so indeed?
> Why, then, may I say, God send us good speed.
> And is everyone here so greatly unkind,
> That I am no sooner out of sight but quite out of mind?
> Marry, this will make a man even weep for woe,
> That on such a sudden no man will let me know.

Sith men be so dangerous now at this day,
Yet are women kind worms, I dare well say.
How say you, woman—you that stand in the angle —
Were you never acquainted with Nichol Newfangle?
Then I see Nichol Newfangle is quite forgot.
Yet you will know me anon, I dare jeopard a groat.
Nichol Newfangle is my name, do you not know me now?
My whole education to you I shall show. . . . (ll. 37-52)

Know you me now? I thought that at last
All acquaintance from Nichol Newfangle is not past.
Nichol Newfangle was, and is, and ever shall be,
And there are few that are not acquainted with me. (ll. 65-68)

No naturalistic dramaturgy or plausible psychology would account for this emotional trajectory. It is pure performance, aimed at delighting spectators with its very unpredictability and challenging them to acknowledge their real acquaintance with him and all he represents ("Know you me now?"). A more condensed version of the same trope is offered by Ambidexter in Thomas Preston's *Cambises*, who enters apparently lamenting the murder of the virtuous Prince Smirdis, but quickly starts to laugh instead, cueing spectators to share in his self-delight:

Ah, good Lord; to think in him, how it doth me grieve.
I cannot forbear weeping, ye may me believe.
Oh my heart, how my pulses do beat,
With sorrowful lamentations I am in such heat!
Ah, my heart, how for him it doth sorrow!
Nay, I have done; in faith now, and God give ye good morrow.
Ha, ha! Weep? Nay, laugh; with both hands to play! (ll. 738-44)

In many interludes, Vices disorient other characters through these switches of apparent mood and action. Spivack notes the ways in which such mercurial behaviour is often a product of the plot, as when Envy in *Impatient Poverty* feigns solicitous concern for Conscience but, as soon as the latter has left the stage, reveals what seem to be his "true" feelings to the audience:

[*To Conscience.*] This is an heavy departing:
I can in no wise forbear weeping.
Yet, kiss me or [*ere*] ye go;
For sorrow my heart will break in two. [*Exit Conscience*.]
Is he gone? Then have at laughing!

> Ah, sir, is not this a jolly game,
> That Conscience doth not know my name? (*A new enterlude*, sig. Ci^v)

In this context, Spivack observes, the Vice's volatility has a homiletic function: "His rapid alternation between one mood and the other, and the no less rapid conversion of face and body to suit, as he oscillates between his victim and his audience, express in compact theatrical metaphor the homiletic duplicity that is at the heart of his role" (p. 182).

But it is not the case simply that the Vices are masterful actors in role, tricksters who exploit the gullibility of their fellow characters—although this is, of course, a part of their personae. Their protean changeability runs deeper than this, transcending mere plot functionality and entertainment value. Such volatility is an intrinsic part of their nature, and is as likely to get them into trouble with other characters as to win them their way out of it. Hence Newfangle cannot resist comic ad-libbing even when swearing the oath enjoined upon him by his "godfather" Lucifer:

> *Lucifer*. "All hail, oh noble Prince of Hell . . ."
> *Nichol*. All my dame's cow-tails fell down the well.
> *Lucifer*. "I will exalt thee above the clouds . . . "
> *Nichol*. I will salt thee and hang thee in the shrouds. (Fulwell, ll. 206-9)

But the sense of potential danger that such moments create is only fleeting. The Vices quickly forget any blows they receive as a result, as they are fundamentally disengaged from the world-in-the-play, in which such things as pain and even death have no real meaning for them. As Spivack eloquently puts it,

> The allegorical immunity of the Vice to any real curtailment of his universal and timeless existence inevitably subdues the effect of his capture and condemnation into a kind of dark-grained farce. His behavior in this situation is no more than a parody of the alarm and resistance of the human criminal confronting the same fate. . . . Impervious to his own destruction, the Vice is equally impervious to any emotion corresponding to the moral seriousness of the play or the very real jeopardy of his human victim. (pp. 196, 198)

Thus Haphazard goes to his own execution in *Apius and Virginia* with a flippant aside on his lips:

> Must I needs hang? By the gods, it doth spite me
> To think how crabbedly the silk lace will bite me.
> Then come, cousin Cutpurse, come run, haste and follow me;

Haphazard must hang; come follow the livery. ("R. B.", ll. 1003-6)

Courage in G. Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* offers a similarly indifferent response to the same situation (ll. 1724-28), and Iniquity in *Nice Wanton* assures his captors, "Yea, within this month, I may say to you, / I will be your servant, and your master too—yea, creep into your breast!" (*A preaty interlude*, sig. Biv[r]). Ill Report in Thomas Garter's *The Comedy of the Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna* is still more emphatic:

> Must Ill Report die?
> No, no, I trow,
> The world goes not so,
> Then all were awry,
> For neither of prince nor king,
> Nor of any other thing,
> But my tongue shall walk.
> The proudest of them all
> Shall not give me such a fall,
> Or shall let [*prevent*] me to talk. (Garter, sig. Eiv[v]; spelling modernised)[14]

Spivack helpfully points up the contrast between the role and that of the interludes' protagonists. The latter, he suggests,

> is a moral being in a moral universe … subject to death and damnation as well as to the sorrows that afflict humanity this side of the grave … [whereas the Vice] is fundamentally, beneath his human features and habiliments, a moral personification. … Free from human limitation, he is equally free from human passion and responsibility. … Professional and impersonal, he is immune to the gravity of his aggression—a gravity that exists everywhere in the play except in him. (p. 195)

14 See also Inclination's exit to prison in *The Trial of Treasure* ("Well, yet I will rebel, yea, and rebel again / And thou[gh] a thousand times you sholdest me restrain!" [*A new and mery enterlude*, sig. Eiv[r]; spelling modernised]), and Ill Will's in *Wealth and Health* ("Lock us up and keep us as fast as ye can, / Yet Ill Will and Shrewd Wit shall be with many a man" (*An enterlude of welth, and health*, sig. Diii[v]; spelling modernised). In their capacity to transcend pain and even death, the Vices are fundamentally different from those other creatures of the early modern *platea*, the Clowns, as for the latter hunger and beatings are represented as all too real. Hence their emotional trajectories carry greater plausibility. While the clown is victim of his own bodily and material needs, however basic and comic they may prove to be, the Vice is always fundamentally indifferent to his, seemingly undisturbed for long either by the events of the narrative or by the audience's neglect or approval.

Recalling Maquerlot's observation of those apparently weightless figures in Rosso Fiorentino's Mannerist *Deposition*, it is striking that Spivack is drawn to the ambidextrous word "gravity" here to describe the quality lacking in the Vices. For the latter do indeed seem to be immune alike to both the seriousness and the physical laws of the play-worlds that they so problematically inhabit. They laugh at misfortune—their own and others'—not simply because they are trivial-minded and amoral, but because suffering in the world-in-the-play has no meaning for them and comes to have less meaning for audiences as a consequence. Thus we are prompted to look for the "real" meaning in the interlude, not to the confrontations and resolutions offered within the world-in-the-play, but to the extra-theatrical confrontation between the Vice and us. Whereas the hitherto Vice-like Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* can unexpectedly command spectators' emotional affirmation and achieve a new dignity and solidity with the questions, "If you prick us do we not bleed? . . . If you poison us do we not die?" (III.i.59-61), the Vices of the interludes could never do the same, as for them the answer would always be "no". The physical laws of cause and effect, act and consequence, do not apply to them in the same way that they do to normal human beings, and so they cue us to respond to them differently. (But more about Shakespeare's characters and the Vice tradition in the final section of this essay.)

Like Cupid in Bronzino's *Allegory*, then, the Vices of the interludes remain puzzlingly, teasingly, anamorphic in the world-in-the-play around them, their apparent emotional states and the life experiences they claim for themselves always a twist and turn beyond the plausible capacities of a naturalist human anatomy, a tantalising step or two away from making full, rational sense. A striking final example of this might be found in No-Lover-Nor-Loved in *A Play of Love*. Although in many respects he is quite unlike the Vices of the later mid-century interludes (he is not especially amoral, for example, nor does he attempt to lure the other characters into sin), he exhibits very clearly their characteristic capacity to play fast and loose with his own apparent emotions—claiming to the audience that he feels one thing, while his actions and asides effectively render such claims unreliable. His most substantial contribution to the play is a lengthy monologue, the stated intention of which is to show how indifferent he is to the snares of love, whether as a lover himself or as the object of another's love. The monologue concerns his relationship with an unnamed woman whom he set out to mock, he claims, by pretending to fall in love with her, but who ulti-

mately mocked him instead. The story of flirtation, fulfilment and betrayal is itself a predictable misogynistic fabliau, but the more closely one looks at it, the more unconvincing and uncertain in its implications it becomes.

The story has two ostensibly distinct levels of implication. The surface meaning is provided by No-Lover's stated version of events, in which he assures the audience that he entered into the relationship purely to mock the young woman and play with her affections:

> Ye shall understand that I with this mistress
> Fell late acquainted, and for love no whit,
> But for my pleasure to approve my wit. (Heywood, *A Play of Love*, ll. 480-82)

But running alongside and beneath this story is the ironic subtext—one that for the most part No-Lover seems intent upon denying—which reveals him to have always been the victim of the young woman's pragmatic attitude towards "love" as a means to make money. Only at the end does he accept that this was indeed the real "moral" of the story: "If she had not wit to set wise men to school, / Then shall my tale prove me a stark fool" (ll. 477-78). And yet neither narrative dominates the story clearly or consistently for long enough to claim the status as master narrative. Throughout the monologue the rival trajectory and rival "moral" is always at least partially showing through beneath the dominant one, threatening to muddy and subvert it, and No-Lover himself remains, dolphin-like, both within and above the story. And this is presented in theatrical terms analogous to the gestures of Mannerism which at once make the gesture and strain its credibility.

He begins with the bold assertion, "I did determine / To mock or be mocked of this mocking vermin" (l. 492), but the first evidence he cites to show that "though fair flattering behaviours … [he] Seemed anon so deep in her favour" (l. 498) is that she would not allow him to leave her company until her had given her the "best jewel I there had" (l. 504) and promised to return the next day. The following day, however, he feigns sadness ("So must I show, for lovers be in rate, / Sometimes merry, but most times passionate" [ll. 523-24]), provoking a scene of burlesque melancholy between the two of them:

> We set us down, an heavy couple in sight,
> And therewithal I set a sigh, such one
> As made the form shake which we both sat on,

Whereupon she, without more words spoken,
Fell in weeping, as her heart should have broken,
And I in secret laughing so heartily,
That from mine eyes came water plenteously. (ll. 526-32)

Is the woman genuinely distressed? Is No-Lover "really" laughing or crying? The overtly performed nature of the emotions on display by both parties prevents spectators from being entirely certain. And, within a dozen lines of revealing that it is his doubts about her honesty that have made him sad, the two are performing equally excessive (and represented as excessive) displays of affection:

"Sweetheart", quoth I, "after stormy cold smarts,
Warm words in warm lovers bring lovers warm hearts.
And so have your words warmed my heart even now,
That dreadless and doubtless now must I love you."
Anon there was, "I love you", and, "I love you"
(Lovely we lovers love each other.)
"I love you", and, "I for love love you,
My lovely, loving loved brother."
Love me, love thee, love we, love he, love she,
Deeper love apparent in no twain can be.
Quite over the ears in love, and felt no ground;
Had not swimming holp, in love I had been drowned. (ll. 577-88)

Here again the Vice's knowing performance of his own emotions, coupled with the cynicism implicit in the final line, keeps the emotions on display firmly in the realm of the burlesque, and the direction of any authentic emotional charge hard to determine.

The couple continue in loving vein for a month, we are told, the woman becoming increasingly jealous of any hint of infidelity on the part of No-Lover (from which he assumes "she loved me perfectly" [l. 598]), while he allegedly simply led her on for his own amusement:

By this and other like things then in hand,
I gave her mocks, methought above a thousand;
Whereby I though her own tale like a burr,
Stuck to her own back, *moccum moccabitur*. (ll. 601-4)

And yet, when he finally decides to deliver the mocker's coup-de-grâce and leave her, he cannot do it: "my heart misgave me" and "pity so wrought me / That to return anon I bethought me" (ll. 609, 612-13).

On returning to the woman's lodging, however, he discovers her in bed with another man:

> And there looking in, by God's blessed mother,
> I saw her naked abed with another,
> And with her bed-fellow laughed me to scorn
> As merrily as ever she laughed beforn. (ll. 627-30)

When he confronts her through the window to declare that he had never really loved her anyway, she jumps up, and with a clear echo of Alison in Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale*, merrily "shut[s] the window to" (l. 661),[15] leaving No-Lover to look on in the humiliating position of the impotent clerk Absolon in the fabliau. At which point he is prepared to admit that it was indeed he who was out-mocked and played for a fool:

> Which done, I had no more to say or do,
> But think myself or any man else a fool
> In mocks or wiles to set women to school. (ll. 662-64)

The experience, he claims, has been salutary, confirming him in the wisdom of rejecting all forms of love ("yet doth this tale approve / That I am well seen in the art of love" [ll. 667-68]), love being only "a drink meet / To give babies for worms, for it drinketh bittersweet (ll. 678-79).

On one level the moral of the story also seems to echo that of *The Miller's Tale*—namely, that provided a man gets what he wants from his partner, he should not enquire who else is sharing her company (a husband should not be inquisitive "Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf" [Chaucer, l. 3164]), or he risks disillusionment, humiliation and grief. But this story is undercut by the fact that No-Lover has been taken for a fool throughout. There never was any true love, certainly on the woman's side, as she is revealed at the end to be a prostitute (her lodgings, it seems, are a brothel run by a madam, "an ancient wise woman, who was never / From this said sweeting, but about her ever" [ll. 617-18]). Thus it was only no-Lover who was ever emotionally involved—if he ever was. He is thus

15 Cf. Chaucer: "'Tehee!', quod she, and clapte the wyndow to" (l. 3740).

ostensibly the victim of his own story, and it is only his status as the victim that allows him to emerge from events a sadder and a wiser man. And yet the way in which he distances himself from the emotions generated and described, both within the narrative (imperfectly, through denying any emotional investment) and in its narration (more confidently, by burlesquing, parodying, and self-ironising any emotion displayed by either character), cues the spectator also to experience a fundamentally ambivalent relationship to the story and the Vice's involvement in it.

At no point does the monologue strike an authentic emotional tone, regarding either the experience of being in love, or the wisdom (or even the possibility) of shielding oneself from such emotions, leaving the viewer to observe the unfolding narrative with a slightly queasy sense of detached amusement, watching what from one angle appears to be a set exercise in ringing the changes on the term "*moccum moccabitur*", lacking any objective correlative in felt emotional experience. The only authentic element in the story is thus the presence of the actor who narrates and orchestrates it, and though he repeatedly challenges us to respond to it emotionally and intellectually, he never allows us to do so from a secure sense of its import and implications. Like the later Vices in the tradition discussed above, he ensures that audiences do not know how to handle him, offering them, not a consistent set of behaviours, but a having-it-all-ways-at-once reminiscent of the Mannerist Venus of Bronzino's *Allegory*. Because he seems ultimately indifferent to the emotions he describes—which are ostensibly the subject of his monologue—he cannot act as an authoritative didactic figure. He warns us of how important it is to resist the lures of love, and uses himself as his moral exemplum, but the burlesque nature of the story serves only to problematise messenger and message alike. He looks out from the play at an oblique angle, causing us to reassess its ostensible verities, and our own relationship to them.

The Vice of the Tudor interludes is thus in many ways Mannerist in the senses described by Maquerlot: protean and playful, but also fundamentally and unsettling inconsistent and impertinent, both emotionally and behaviourally. He is a performative creature who draws attention to his own performativity, thrusting himself out beyond the frame of the world-in-the-play, immune to its fundamental laws, alien to and disruptive of its geometries, confronting and provoking the spectator to engage with its action disruptively, the catalyst for our own work in and with the narrative. Challenged directly to share or reject

the Vice's malicious delight in his mischief, his lack of moral scruple, or concern for the fate of his (non-existent) soul, each spectator has to address in real time the accuracy of the Vice's apparent measure of their shared culpability ("Know ye me now?"). He cues a fully-engaged spectatorial response that is in part an emotional one, prompted by the affective nature of the events presented, but which is also separated from such an emotional engagement by the acknowledgement of the artificial, created nature of the theatrical event that the Vice's role insists upon. Thus, while the narrative of the world-in-the-play engages spectators as affective beings, seeking to draw us into the story, to take its emotions and relationships seriously, the Vice engages with spectators as spectators, as customers, and social and moral agents. He seeks to provoke us, both subliminally and at times directly, to reflect upon our own involvement with the events represented and their meaning in the world, both in the "then" of the narrative and the "now" of the performance. The Vice's importance to the interlude drama is, as many critics have observed, fundamental to such plays' nature and success, and, despite some appearances to the contrary, its lifespan as a fully functioning dramatic figure was also limited to that of the form that gave it life, as a brief look ahead to the plays of Shakespeare will suggest.

Shakespeare's Peculiar Vices

Shakespeare's borrowings from the Vice tradition in figures such as Richard III, Aaron the Moor, Falstaff, Iago and Edmund are well known, and are signalled as borrowings by Shakespeare himself. But it is instructive to note how different these figures actually are to their precursors in the interludes, despite their surface similarities; for Shakespeare incorporates them into his own dramaturgy in ways that are fundamentally un-Mannerist in Maquerlot's sense. Unlike the Tudor Vices themselves, such figures as Aaron and Richard do not end their plays in the audience-facing zone of the *platea*, the play-in-the-world.[16] All of these Shakespearean "villains" are ultimately absorbed within, and claimed by, the world-in-the-play of the *locus*, endowed with authentic emotional lives within their respective narratives and diminished in metatheatrical terms as a result. All die "in character", and most are even allowed moments of pathos that give their deaths additional affective richness. Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* is shown to love and

16 For a slightly different view, see Spivack, pp. 198, 228-29 and 311-12.

care for his newborn son, and to suffer as a result; Edmund recalls with evident satisfaction that he was "beloved" (*The Tragedy of King Lear*, V.iii.215), even if only by the murderous Goneril and Regan, and seeks to do a noble deed, "[d]espite of [his] own nature" (220), before he dies; the Hostess says of Falstaff, "The King has killed his heart" (*H5*, II.i.84). Such moments make sense emotionally only if the deaths concerned are understood to have substance in the context of the play. Falstaff might playfully resurrect himself in *1 Henry IV*, but in *Henry V* he dies (offstage) for real. Similarly, Richard III and Iago are drawn from the *platea* into the *locus* of their plays and end their lives defeated by the more limited characters for whom the world-in-the-play is their only reality. The contrast with Haphazard and Ill Report going glibly to the gallows, winking knowingly to the audience as we all understand that death has no meaning for them, is clear.

Maquerlot's analysis of Mannerism is thus highly suggestive of the degree to which the drama of the sixteenth century, and of Shakespeare in particular, shared key features with the art of the period. But I would draw from it a slightly different conclusion. For Maquerlot, the Mannerism of Shakespeare's Problem Plays suggests the playwright's attempt in a particular period of his career to distinguish himself from the drama and narrative of his forebears. Thus the plays from *Hamlet* to *Measure for Measure* foreground the artistic control and skill of the playwright and disorient the spectator morally, presenting characters as complex, multivalent entities, neither wholly virtuous nor wholly vicious, challenging audiences to respond to them in equally sophisticated, self-conscious ways. For Maquerlot, this suggests a novel deployment of a Mannerist sensibility to address a particular aesthetic challenge associated with an anxiety of influence. This is a persuasive account of these morally and generically troubling plays of Shakespeare's "middle period". But I would suggest that the playwright's employment of techniques which Maquerlot associates with Mannerism was rather more widespread, and drew directly upon his dramatic inheritence. From the evidence of plays from *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard III* onwards, Shakespeare had always been aware of, and prepared to use, the dramatic potential of this kind of representation, having witnessed it manifested in the dismorphic, anamorphic and disruptive presentation of the Vice of the interludes. Such techniques were not absorbed into English dramatic culture through Italian Mannerism, despite the suggestive similarities between the two forms, but were already present in the drama of the long Tudor century. Shakespeare deployed them in plays ranging from the tragic to the historical as a means of engaging spectators

in a particularly personal, culturally powerful way for specific effects. And the result was more specific and controlled than the more pervasive and fundamental impact claimed by Maquerlot for the Problem Plays.

From the beginning of his career, Shakespeare used Mannerist aspects of the Vice's role and function in his plays, but always in the wider interests of an essentially mimetic narrative. Falstaff, Aaron, and Richard, Iago and Edmund, for all their cynicism and moments of apparent metatheatrical insight, are not fundamentally sceptical of their own performative context or of the immersive emotional enterprise of the theatre more generally in the way that the Vices are. This is probably at least in part because Shakespeare's aim was not to cue in his spectators a self-reflexive attitude for primarily moral or theological ends. When his plays cue self-reflexion, and they frequently do, it is as just one of the theatrical pleasures that he offers his audiences, an added level of enjoyment and knowing engagement to augment their dramatic experience. Hence, while he was evidently ready to asset-strip the Vice of a number of the role's most striking performative features, and willing to tease audiences with the likeness of some of his characters to the principal role of the interlude tradition, his dramaturgy did not require them to remain sceptical of the authenticity of the play-world's relationships and emotions much beyond the momentary ironic effect. Having offered spectators a moment of metatheatrical alienation with the suggestion that we all know that this is all just artifice, he quickly draws them back into emotional, kinaesthetic engagement with the plot and its characters. The result is a set of characters who are more consistent, more psychologically plausible, and richer in their affective power, but who are as a consequence less fundamentally unsettling to the dramatic frame that presents them to the world. For the interlude writers, the self-awareness and self-reflexion of the Vices were more fundamental to their dramatic intentions, and their works were more fundamentally Mannerist in effect as a result. Play-world and real world, world-in-the-play and play-in-the-world, had to be kept in tension throughout the interlude if it was to deliver the full range of its intended challenging, homiletic effects, and the Vice was the engine which generated that tension.[17] Such moments of

17 Interestingly, the only play in which Shakespeare seems to have aimed for a fundamentally "divided" spectatorial experience throughout, in which it is important to the full impact of the play for spectators to be both emotionally engaged with the narrative and also simultaneously alert to the means by which that engagement was generated and sceptical of them, is *Henry V*. And there the playwright reached not for the Vice but for another traditionally liminal figure, both inside and outside the play, the Chorus, as the device that would cue that response, producing

self-conscious performativity prompted spectators in turn to be all-too-aware of their own roles as spectators at a performance,[18] and so to engage with the Vice on rather different terms than with the other characters in the play. As with the skull in Holbein's *Ambassadors*, once the Vice has caught our full attention and we have realised its true nature, we can never look at the play in quite the same way again.

a play that was both about English history and about the ways "history" is created from the ambivalent, unstructured events of the past.

18 See Jones and Johnson.

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