

THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE AS TRIBUTARY:  
MERCANTILISM, NATIONALISM, AND SOCIAL MOBILITY  
IN THREE POPULAR DRAMAS

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between social mobility, early mercantilism, and nationalism in three Elizabethan Popular Dramas: Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, and Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West, Part I*, and *The Four Prentices of London*. I attempt to answer why these plays respond favourably to social mobility despite the rigid hierarchical philosophies which condemn this practice. Popular Drama's representation of social mobility and audience wish-fulfillment is often thought of as celebratory of the middle-class; though this is partially true, I argue that these fatuous pieces of popular wish-fulfillment are also sophisticated structures designed to mould their audience's behaviour. Furthermore, the behaviour that these plays promote is intended to support the power and development of the nation-state, economically and socially. The ideologies which legitimize social mobility in these plays are always mercantilism and nationalism.

The first chapter of my thesis establishes the historical and theoretical apparatuses that inform my remaining three chapters. My reading of these plays is informed by the economic history of Elizabethan England, and my research on the subject is drawn from a combination of contemporary and historic sources. I provide a wide range of economic sources because discussion of the Elizabethan economic history is lacking in literary criticism. The subsequent three chapters are designed as case studies which examine each individual play according to the theoretical and historical model outlined in the first chapter.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between social mobility, early mercantilism, and nationalism by examining three Elizabethan Popular Dramas: Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599), and Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West, Part I* (1597), and *The Four Prentices of London* (1592). By situating these plays within their historic economic context, I will examine how social mobility is not only legitimized but celebrated, despite the prominence of hierarchical and divine-right philosophies which condemn it. These plays employ middle-class characters to examine potential justifications for social mobility. Furthermore, the plays are related by a pervasive mercantile ideology. In an effort to legitimize itself, mercantilism is often conflated with nationalism; through this process, the welfare of the state is equivocated with the success of mercantilism. The plays are oriented toward the middle-class, drawing upon their demographic context in order to mutually construct and ordain both mercantilism and nationalism. For example, the economic success of particular characters is predicated upon their service to national interests, and serving national interests legitimizes their economic success. The characters in these plays are permitted to ascend the social ladder only if they contribute to the economic well-being of the nation. Those characters who engage in social mobility simultaneously promote and facilitate nationalist and mercantile ideologies.

The first chapter will provide definitions of the concepts and potentially elusive terms that this thesis employs. Using the term middle-class to represent an Elizabethan demographic is an anachronism, and as such requires an explanation of who and what constitutes the middle-class in the period. It is also necessary to define Popular Drama: Popular Drama is a sub-genre of City Comedy, which is an Elizabethan and Jacobean genre broadly defined by its use of

London as its setting and the middle class for its characters. At this point in the thesis, I will spend a brief period troubling some common? assumptions about City Comedy as a genre, particularly how the genre supposedly treats the middle class. The subsequent section of this chapter outlines my working definitions of both nation and nationalism. I situate these definitions both theoretically and practically within an Elizabethan context. The following section on mercantilism encompasses the majority of the chapter. Because mercantilism is a relatively obscure topic within literary criticism, I provide an account of its theoretical arguments, historical developments, practical applications, and key Elizabethan supporters. The final section addresses social mobility's relationship to domestic issues, including marriage, family, and apprenticeship. Within these plays, marriage is often a site where anxiety about social mobility is established and resolved.

The following three chapters focus on *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, *The Fair Maid of the West*, and *The Four Prentices of London* respectively. These three chapters are substantially informed by the historical and theoretical contexts outlined in the first chapter. In the second chapter, the social mobility of Simon Eyre, the protagonist of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, is interpreted in light of mercantilist policies. Furthermore, the play's celebration of the middle class is shown to be a simultaneous promotion of national identity. The third chapter examines how *The Fair Maid of the West's* heroine, Bess, contributes to nationalism and mercantilism in order to sanction her cross-class marriage. The play uses Bess to provoke the audience's anxiety about female sexual power, and subsequently transposes this anxiety onto Mullisheg, an Islamic King. The displacement of this anxiety onto a foreign national serves to reinforce the normative gender roles that comprise English identity by demarcating their boundaries. Furthermore, Bess' activities both locally and abroad are assessed in terms of their collaboration with mercantile

practices. The imperial aspirations of early English mercantilism are investigated in the fourth and final chapter on *The Four Prentices of London*. The four apprentices are actually the sons of a deposed Earl who leave England to win the Crusades. The play's representation of the middle class is duplicitous: it simultaneously celebrates the success of London apprentices while having them not actually be London apprentices. Additionally, the play attempts to mitigate the contemporary strife caused by riotous London apprentices by demonstrating that apprenticeship is beneficial to the nation.

## Chapter One

### Working Terms and Historical Contexts

“People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.”  
Adam Smith *The Wealth of Nations* 80

#### 1.1. Working Definitions of Middle-Class and Popular Drama

The chapter will first provide a definition of who constitutes the Elizabethan middle-class, and what defines Popular Drama as a genre. For a definition of middle-class, I defer to Louis B. Wright's study of the subject:

Elizabethan society may be roughly separated into three major divisions. The highest class consisted of titled nobility, the landed gentry, and the more important members of the learned professions. The lowest class was composed of unskilled labourers, an illiterate peasantry, and those small artisans whose trades required little training and whose rewards were meagre. Between these extremes was a great class of merchants, tradesfolk, and skilled craftsmen, *a social group whose thoughts and interests centered in business profits...* But the lines of distinction, even in the stratified society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were not distinct and mutually exclusive. The highest caste was eternally being recruited from the ranks of the rich merchants, and the lowest was always being swelled by economic derelicts. (*Middle-class Culture in Elizabethan England* 2; emphasis added)

Though he does not designate it as such, Wright's description of the middle-class links it with the possibility of social mobility and entrepreneurship.

Popular Drama is a subgenre of City Comedy which is characterized by its celebration of

the middle class. City Comedies are Elizabethan and Jacobean plays broadly defined by their use of London citizens as characters. Typically, the characters in these plays are apprentices, merchants, labourers, and other middle-class citizens. Popular Dramas often express middle-class wish-fulfillment, something that later City Comedies often satirized.<sup>1</sup> Alexander Leggatt has similarly described these plays as “set in a predominantly middle-class social milieu,” while acknowledging a divide within the genre which pits satire against revelry (*Citizen Comedy* 3). As for their reception, Leggatt explains that in “the public playhouses, we may fairly speak of a 'popular' audience: popular in the sense that admission prices were low, the capacity of the playhouses was large, and it was here that one could expect to find a mixed general public” (*Jacobean Public Theatre* 28). The emergence of Popular Drama also coincides with an increase in the number of London's public playhouses, as well as the emerging middle class who frequented them. Although Popular Drama depicts the middle class, it is not necessarily in a favourable manner. In fact, all three plays discussed end by reaffirming hierarchical philosophy and the power of the monarchy.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 Defining Nationalism

Defining nation and nationalism proves to be a somewhat difficult task because the field

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- 1 Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* satirizes both *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Four Prentices of London*. In Beaumont's play, a Grocer and his wife attend a play which they proceed to interrupt and annex. They want to see a heroic adventure story involving a citizen. They send their apprentice, Rafe, on stage and direct him. Rafe is the same diminutive name used for Ralph in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Additionally, the title of play is a bawdy reference to the heraldic symbol on Rafe's shield. This is an explicit satire of *The Four Prentices of London*, in which four brothers attach the symbol of their respective trades onto their shields.
  - 2 Murray Rothbard labels the dominant English thought through the early sixteenth to early seventeenth century as “a form of simplistic and militant absolutist thought that has been called the 'correspondence theory' or the 'political theory of order'...the basic philosophical groundwork was the 'natural order' – the 'great chain of being'” (277). The argument by correspondence held that life on earth could be interpreted as a microcosm for the larger order of the universe: “Just as God was sovereign...the head must be sovereign over the body...the father is sovereign over his family. More specifically and pointedly in the political realm, the king, the father of his people, must be sovereign over the body politic” (277). The influence of this philosophy on economic thought cannot be understated. However, this paper employs the term hierarchy to refer to what Rothbard calls absolutism.

of study is relatively new and there exists a variety of conflicting opinions. In order to define nation and nationalism, I draw upon the work of Adrian Hastings, whose work combines the ideas of several academic approaches to the subject. Hastings's definition “represent[s] what has come to be known as the 'modernist' view, the principal current orthodoxy in nationalist studies” (2). As such, Hastings provides the working definition of nation employed by this thesis: “a nation is a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity. Formed from one or more ethnicities, and normally identified by a literature of its own, it possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people, together with the control of a specific territory” (3). The definition includes the presence of “an extensively used vernacular literature. a long struggle against an external threat,” and a group of people with a shared language (3). The utility of Hastings' argument is that it closely correlates to the sense of nationalism present in Elizabethan England. In fact, much of his argument relies on “England as prototype,” and often explicitly references sixteenth and seventeenth century English history. To corroborate his argument, Hastings points to the religious, geographical, and cultural seclusion of England: He identifies the celebration of Chaucer, the development of the Book of Common Prayer and the English Protestant community, and the threat of Spain and Catholicism as evidence of England's isolation. Hastings defines nationalism as “a movement which seeks to provide a state for a given 'nation' or further to advance the supposed interests of its own 'nation-state' regardless of other considerations” (4). For the nationalist, the imagined aspirations of the nation ought to be congruent with its political and economic policies.

Richard Helgerson further espouses these definitions in *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*, which proves valuable in situating the function of nationalism in a specifically Elizabethan cultural context. Helgerson's analysis of English nationalism is

similar to Hastings's: Helgerson identifies an envy and frustration amongst English writers, such as Edmund Spenser, who felt that England needed a “kingdom of their own language,” like the Greek and Roman empires (3). Helgerson, expounding on Spenser's energy, argues that “this pressure, this tension, this conflict of aspiration and insecurity, brings us close to the crisis from which both Elizabethan poetry and the larger project of English self-representation emerged” (3). Helgerson also expands upon Hastings' arguments, analyzing the external threats that instilled the English with a fear of cultural domination. Developing this idea, Helgerson interprets that Elizabethan writers desired “[t]o govern the very linguistic system, and perhaps more generally the whole cultural system, by which their own identity and their consciousness were constituted. To remake it, and presumably themselves, according to some ideal pattern” (3). The ambitions that Helgerson identifies coincide with the definitions of nationalism provided by Hastings because there is a desire in Elizabethan England to form a distinct national identity, using its own language and literature and based upon actions which benefit the nation.

Helgerson theorizes that what constitutes English identity cannot rely solely on any internal definition, asserting instead that “Meaning arises not from some central core of identity but rather at a margin of difference. Self-definition comes from the not-self, from the alien other” (22). To justify Helgerson's contention, it is important to explain that while the Elizabethans aspired to the heights of the Greek and Roman empires, they also desired to establish a distinctly English identity for themselves. They sought to distinguish and solidify who and what qualified as English, to characterize their essence, and to establish exalted status for England and its inhabitants. This aspiration resulted in a discourse about whom and what authorizes and contributes to English identity. *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, *The Fair Maid of the West*, and *The Four Prentices of London* are heavily engaged in this debate and represent others

who help to define, through their difference, what constitutes English identity.

As the dominant ideologies governing English identity become manifold, they assimilate all types of cultural expressions, be they religious, literary economic, or political. Helgerson explains this unifying principle:

Though the forms of nationhood imagined by [Renaissance] texts are many, the political issues that engage them can, in a gross and not quite exclusive way, be reduced to just two. One concerns the monarch and the monarchic power. The other involves the inclusion or exclusion of various social groups from privileged participation in the national community and its representations. (9)

One of the fundamental aims of Elizabethan nationalism is to contribute to a hierarchical social structure. Wealth rises along a chain of correspondence to the monarch, effectively subjecting individual economic endeavours to the benefit of the state.

### 1.3 Economic Discourse and a Brief Outline of Mercantilism

It is necessary to establish the boundaries of this discussion with a brief history and description of early mercantilism and its progenitor bullionism. First and foremost, attention should be drawn to a clarification about the term mercantilism made by Ernesto Screpanti and Stefano Zamagni:

We should immediately point out that a school of thought that defined itself as 'mercantilist' has never existed – even as a current of opinion aware of its own theoretical homogeneity. However, there is no doubt that Adam Smith was to a degree correct in placing in the category of 'trade or mercantile system' the group of economic ideas that dominated European political and commercial circles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (32)

Nevertheless, Screpanti and Zamagni indicate a “common theoretical core did exist...[and] gave a certain homogeneity to the various national economic policies” (32). The lack of self-proclaimed mercantilists causes some confusion about what specific economic factors constitute early mercantilism.

Much like nationalism, a strict definition of mercantilism is difficult to establish. This difficulty is the result of theoretical variances amongst the proponents of early English mercantilism, and a shortage of historical documentation surrounding its implementation. Nevertheless, I provide information regarding the common theoretical and practical applications of early mercantilism as they are typically represented. Additionally, I will demonstrate that mercantilism – regardless of the debates amongst its practitioners – is fundamentally rooted in nationalism. Historically, mercantilism is concerned with laws and policies of the nation-state. The “margin of difference” that Helgerson mentions as a characteristic of nationalism is correlative to the economic system of England; at its base function, mercantilism is a method of creating and sustaining nationalism because its economic policies claim to work in accordance with the goals of the nation.

The arrival of early mercantilism in Elizabethan England was preceded by bullionism, a doctrine widely criticized as trivial and misguided by its contemporaries and modern economists alike.<sup>4</sup> Bullionism was a reaction to the debasement of English currency in sixteenth century, and its proponents argued that fluctuations in the exchange rate were caused by the exportation of England's precious metals (bullion).<sup>5</sup> They sought to establish a favourable balance of trade with

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4 Rothbard, Robbins, Screpanti, and Zamagni all criticize both bullionism and mercantilism as fundamentally flawed. Their works also contain summaries of some Elizabethan critics of bullionism. Additionally, they indicate that nearly every economist since Adam Smith has been dismissive of mercantilism and bullionism.

5 Elizabeth demanded an investigation of the debasement of English currency, which resulted in the formulation of Gresham's Law. To increase state revenue, Henry VIII had begun to infuse gold and silver coins with cheaper metals like copper. People began circulating the mixed coins and saving the others, resulting in the depreciation of English currency. Rothbard provides a concise description of Gresham's Law in *A History of Money and*

other nations by strengthening their currency. They argued that this balance could be accomplished by accumulating precious metals and raw resources cheaply through import, and exporting only industrial and manufactured goods. English bullionists believed that the success of the Spanish economy stemmed from the enormous amount of precious metals it imported from the Americas.

Early mercantilism is actually quite similar to its predecessor, and the transition from bullionism signalled a desire for increased state involvement in the Elizabethan economy. Ernesto Screpanti and Stefano Zamagni provide a detailed account of mercantilism and bullionism's policies:

Commercial policy had to be protectionist. Export duties had to be abolished and import duties raised. Moreover, exports should be encouraged by incentives and imports hindered as far as possible and even forbidden in certain cases . . .

Mercantilist commercial policy also favoured national shipping; and many measures were taken aimed at reinforcing the merchant navy...The mercantilist industrial policy aimed at encouraging productive activity within the national territories by the concession of monopolistic privileges, State subsidies, and tax exemptions to national enterprise. (35)

Being aware of these policies is essential to an economic reading of Dekker and Heywood's plays. The protectionist policies are what allow Simon Eyre's social mobility in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Eyre takes advantage of a stranded Dutch merchant who cannot legally sell his goods in England. Purchasing the Dutchman's goods for below market value, Eyre is

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*Banking in the United States*: “[Gresham's Law] states that when government compulsorily overvalues one money and undervalues another, the undervalued money will leave the country or disappear into hoards, while the overvalued money will flood into circulation. Hence, the popular catchphrase of Gresham's Law: 'Bad money drives out good'” (47).

able to turn a profit and begin his rise to Lord Mayor. Furthermore, the favouring of national shipping and the focus on naval power is connected to the celebration of privateering in *The Fair Maid of the West*. These policies influenced the rise in colonial expansion, as Screpanti and Zamagni identify, and the subsequent concession of “privileges and monopoly rights to the great national commercial companies,” such as the Merchant Adventurers and eventually the British East India Company. *The Four Prentices of London* focuses on colonial and economic expansion, as four brothers join the Crusades to capture Jerusalem and, by proxy, the rest of the middle-east.

As previously mentioned, Elizabethan mercantilists disagreed about the implementation and enforcement of their policies.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, Lionel Robbins summarizes some of the common features that define mercantilism as: “merchants with an axe to grind, subsidies to be demanded, protective tariffs to be urged – always in the general interest, doubtless – and so on and so forth – the whole literature of what is sometimes called mercantilism” (36). Dekker's and Heywood's characters both implicitly and explicitly engage in mercantile practices. Additionally, some historians regard mercantilism “as being that body of thought which was concerned with nation-building” because of its contributions to national efforts (Robbins 48). Smith explains that mercantilist policies served to benefit the monarch, and therefore, the nation:

In England, indeed, a charter from the king was likewise necessary. But this prerogative of the crown seems to have been reserved rather for extorting money from the subject, than for the defence of the common liberty against such oppressive monopolies. Upon paying a fine to the king, the charter seems generally to have been readily granted; and when any particular class of artificers

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<sup>6</sup> Rothbard's chapter on English Mercantilism in *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith* provides an excellent summary of some of early mercantilism's key thinkers and their disagreements.

or traders thought proper to act as a corporation, without a charter, such adulterine guilds, as they were called, were not always disfranchised upon that account, but obliged to fine annually to the king, for permission to exercise their usurped privileges. (*Wealth of Nations* 77).

The plays' characters are also implicated in national concerns because of their involvement with early mercantilism; they are often securing charters or contributing to mercantilist efforts as a method of paying their “fine.” Wherever nationalism or mercantilism is discussed, even in separate fields of study – literature or economics, for example – it is clear that the appearance of one heralds the arrival of the other.

The implementation of proto-mercantile government policies occurred primarily in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Thomas Stuart Willan identifies that a change in the national organization of foreign trade coincided with a change in the behaviour of merchants: the shift from the traveling to the sedentary merchant (3). Whereas merchants previously traveled alongside their goods and sold them personally, during the sixteenth century there was a growth in sedentary merchants who hired “factors” to conduct trade on their behalf. The problem that sedentary merchants encountered was that their factors “were trading on their own accounts as well as for their employers” (6). The result of this private trading was petitions by merchants for monopolistic rights on their trades and products. An additional result was the formation of companies which saw the merchant industry shift toward a hierarchical business model:

in general [factors] were not allowed to trade either for themselves or for individual members of the company or for interloping merchants who were not members of the company. They were full-time servants of the company, and as such they differed in many respects from the factors employed by merchants who

traded in areas not subject to the monopolistic control of a joint stock company.

(Willan 11)

There are forms of petitions and factors occurring throughout all three plays. Eyre, at the end of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, requests an additional market day for his merchant company. Bess's trip to Morocco results in a boon for England merchants by way of tariff reductions. Similarly, the eponymous four prentices claim Jerusalem to pay tribute to their respective trades.

Belief in the radically hierarchical social structure of Elizabethan England was common amongst the early mercantilist theorists.<sup>7</sup> Although ideas on how to approach the macro side of economics was often contested, the early mercantilist views on the micro aspects of trade were quite similar. Thomas Smith the Elder, identified by Rothbard as the first mercantilist, believed that self-interest is “a natural fact of human life to be channelled by constructive policy rather than thwarted by repressive legislation” (Rothbard 281). The individual is always forfeit to the state in mercantilism; the growth of the national economy takes precedence over private ownership, and taxation, patents, and monopolies are the result. Rothbard summarizes this view on humanity: “self-interest is not to be left alone within a property rights framework. It is to be channelled and directed by government to a 'common goal' set by the state . . . In short, government should work in tandem with the powerful incentive provided by individual self-interest” (281). The plays discussed in this thesis engage in mercantile propaganda, which undermines the individual liberty of their characters and their audience.

It might be difficult to imagine Elizabethans participating in free trade, given the

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7 Rothbard explains that Sir Robert Filmer, Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke, John Hales, and Thomas Milles all varied slightly in their economic theories, but were all the early proponents of mercantilism and state involvement in economic affairs. John Hales, a Tudor official who instituted taxation of manufactured cloth, believed that human's inherent “self-love” ought to be redirected towards love of the church and state. Coke, on the other hand, held “That no Commodity can be banished, but by Act of Parliament” (qtd. in Rothbard 284). Although they agreed on a general fiscal policy, early mercantilists disagreed on whether control ought to be exercised by either the Monarch or Parliament.

stranglehold that mercantilism eventually placed on their economy, but the concept was known at the time. In fact, one might accuse this thesis of anachronism because of this difficulty. While these plays are criticized from a twenty-first century vantage point on economic history, I contend that this thesis is not engaging in “presentism” or some form of *nunc pro tunc* fallacy. Willan emphasizes that Elizabethans were aware of free trade, and even practiced a form of it, although it was dwindling during their time:

To the Elizabethans, free trade meant trade free from the restrictions imposed by monopolistic companies; those who supported such free trade were opponents of the trading companies which confined, or sought to confine, the trade of particular areas to the members of the company. The growth of these companies was a marked feature of the period. (34)

Additionally, debate between those in favour of private ownership and those in favour of collective or public ownership extends back to at least the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., and presumably further. Rothbard explains that “the Greek and Socratic ethical ideal for the individual was not an unfolding and flowering of inner possibilities, but rather a public/political creature moulded to conform to the demands of the *polis*” (8).<sup>8</sup> As for contemporaries, the School of Salamanca, a collection of sixteenth century Spanish theologians, paralleled the rise of early English mercantilists. Gonçalo L. Fonseca mentions that thinkers from the School of Salamanca believed in individual property rights, and that the value of goods was subjectively determined according to its perceived utility (“The Ancients and the Scholastics”).<sup>9</sup>

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8 Small Greek city-states.

9 Both of these beliefs are present in modern economics, and still prominent amongst free-market capitalist and libertarian economists. Notable proponents include Ludwig Von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray Rothbard, all of whom belong to the Austrian school. The idea of a subjectively ranked value system is not isolated to either the Austrian or Salamanca schools, however. For the purposes of this thesis, economics is seen as the study of the ways human beings preferentially assess objects according to an arbitrary system called pegging. The Austrians, free-market capitalists, classical liberals, and some others, marginalize this process of evaluation

It is germane to note that no substantial alteration in England's fiscal policy took place during Elizabeth's reign. Mercantilist policies would not begin in earnest until the late seventeenth century. By tracking various forms of state revenue, O'Brien and Hunt explain that "no enduring revolution or long-term enhancement in the fiscal capacity of the English state occurred until after the Civil War" (155). Much of the Tudor-Stuart period fiscal policy is described as much more decentralized than post-Restoration England (O'Brien and Hunt 156). Accurate records of taxation and Crown revenue are difficult to gauge accurately because of this decentralized model. After 1660, most funds were sent to the exchequer in London and then partitioned out to supply the needs of the state, whereas previously most state purchases were done by different levels of government and state representatives.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the centralization of the state fiscal policy in the late seventeenth century coincided with a shift towards indirect as opposed to direct taxes. Mercantilism stands to benefit from indirect taxation – which includes custom charges – more than it does direct taxation. Following the Glorious Revolution, "a base camp of fiscal capacity created by the reconstruction of administrative institutions for indirect taxes . . . [marked] the rapid ascent to an unimagined summit of possibilities for raising the ever-increasing amounts of revenue required to fund a state on its way to great power status and hegemony at sea" (O'Brien and Hunt 156).

Whether or not Elizabethan mercantilist projects were successful or not is irrelevant to this thesis. Instead, I am concerned with the theoretical values that allow these economic debates to take place. What are the structures – both philosophical and materialistic - that must be satisfied in order to allow debates on international economic trade to exist in the first place?

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into individual assessments. For others – including many modern countries – pegging refers to a fixed exchange rate determined by the state.

<sup>10</sup> See O'Brien and Hunt's appendices in "The Rise of a Fiscal State in England, 1485-1815" for a detailed but digestible explanation of how the centralized revenues of England is tabulated.

What sort of cultural milieu is associated with these debates? More specifically, I am concerned with how closely race, gender, and colonial desires are associated with an overall economic atmosphere in the period. Besides, the debates surrounding the East India Company reflect the growing interest in economic thought which admittedly comes after the initial performance or publication of the plays discussed here. However, I do feel that the plays discussed here reflect the initial interest in, and predict the intensity of, future national economic debates. O'Brien and Hunt describe the eventual development of the centralized fiscal state in England as "marked by increasingly long and costly dynastic and religious wars and by *mercantilist* conflicts for the spoils of empire in Asia and the Americas" (129; emphasis added). Although the fiscal policy of Elizabethan England did not historically materialize in ways early mercantilists desired, these play nevertheless reflect a desire for mercantilist development in England.

The fundamental principles behind bullionist and early mercantilist theories provide a gateway to address other cultural products and behaviours of the period. The questions raised above aim to reflect this point. As this thesis concerns itself with the function of nationalism within Popular Drama, it is best to begin with an explanation of how nationalism is rooted in economic history. The European expansion and "discoveries" of new land revolutionized how nation-states began to view wealth. Nations began to analyze their trade balance with one another, and subsequently adjusted their policies in order to accumulate more wealth. As Screpanti and Zamagni explain:

From the point of view of the birth of political economy, the identification of the interests of one particular social class, the merchant class, with those of collectivity, was extremely important. In this way, economics ceased to be 'domestic economy' and became 'political'...The entire nation was considered as a

great commercial company. Its net inflow of gold corresponded to the excess of its foreign sales over and above its foreign purchases. (35)

As mercantilism expanded, it began to view the state *and its subjects* as a single political entity. Merchants, and wealth in general, begin to carry national implications, in the same fashion as Protestantism and monarchy. The concerns of the merchant become the concerns of the state, and thus the concern of all citizens. On the physical level, this is an inevitable and rather obvious process: as merchants supply raw goods, the guild and apprenticeship systems benefit through producing materials out of these goods, and the state benefits through taxation. This is a simplification, and only one clarification is necessary: “although production, and therefore the transformation of the imported raw materials, played an important role in this way of thinking, it was still only the excess of sales over purchases which was seen as the source of profits, for the collectivity as well as for the individual” (Screpanti and Zamagni 35). What this means is that as long as the expenditures for raw goods or bullion are kept in balance – balance here means profitable – the nation will benefit through its sale of industrially produced goods abroad.

Concern about the role of the economy is at the heart of the plays discussed in this thesis. Because Dekker and Heywood attempt to foster national singularity amongst their fellow citizens, matters of individual economic importance become matters of political importance. For example, the financial success of Simon Eyre, the eventual Lord Mayor in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, is equated with national success. The same equation is true in both Heywood's plays despite their international setting. The interest expressed by each playwright in the role of wealth or status is inherently connected to the development of a nationalist attitude. There were certainly a variety of avenues available to Dekker and Heywood through which to discuss financial matters, but the focus on apprentices and merchant-class characters is indicative of this

social group's relevance to the nation-state's economy and stability. Apprentices and working-class citizens act as a lightning rod to promote nationalist discourse because they were so heavily involved with the economy of the state.

Bess, the protagonist for whom the title *Fair Maid of the West* is named, is identified by Heywood to celebrate a combination of English virtues, including her ability to gain wealth. Significantly, the subtitle for the play is *A Girl Worth Gold*. In some respects, she is a stand-in for Queen Elizabeth, but also a representative of England as a whole, particularly in her adventures abroad. Ostensibly, her quest throughout the play is to prove her honour and chastity. While Bess does indeed prove these qualities, she does so by means of gaining economic security, for herself as well as for England. The same is true of Simon Eyre, the hero of Dekker's play. His exploits are given an air of historical importance in order to legitimize and celebrate the monopoly of the tradesmen and apprentice system. He petitions the King, for example, to provide an additional trade-day for his apprentices, increasing his business's success, and ultimately benefiting the nation. He often celebrates the act of labour as a means unto itself, and placates his workers by hosting banquets and feasts in honour of them and their craft. Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London* is less explicit about finance, primarily because it is putatively based during the First Crusade. The play is unable to navigate its own theories at times, due in part to its muddled delivery and often confusing plot. It is difficult to follow characters' logic, and the play tends to rely on its audience's knowledge and acceptance of Romance tropes. The clumsy writing is to be expected, however, as the play is thought to be Heywood's first, and would have been written when he was between twenty one or twenty two years old. Nevertheless, the play adamantly celebrates apprentices and, most importantly, reflects the strong nationalist desire that remains a part of Heywood's later work. Like Bess, the

four apprentices leave England in order to gain or restore honour. Characters in Dekker's play often try to do the same as well, whether they leave England or not.

Logically, mercantilism eventually turned its gaze on the domestic labourer in addition to international and national merchants. The search for new forms of labour is an obvious step in the application of bullionist and mercantilist theory, as Screpanti and Zamagni explain:

“Mercantilist theories and policies were also worked out in regard to demography. The problem was how to ensure an abundant labour supply to satisfy the expansion needs of the emerging industries” (36). In the interest of national wealth, the state must create a system which ensures the increasing number of labourers will not exceed its own income. As a result, a mercantile wage theory is adopted which operates on a “subsistence wage-level,” which involves paying labourers the minimum wage necessary to survive. Screpanti and Zamagni sarcastically remark that “the most ingenious justification of this theory was given in terms of 'morals': workers were considered to be depraved people, attracted by vice and excess in eating and drinking: if they were paid more than subsistence wages, this would encourage depravity and laziness” (36). The justification for these wages is the logical result of the absolutist philosophy Rothbard identifies as fundamental to mercantilism. Self-interest must be directed and controlled by the state in order to save humanity from their own sin and greed. The greed of monopolized companies and the monarch is irrelevant because they represent the community and nation.

#### 1.4 Social Mobility and the Domestic

Thus far, this thesis consists of theoretical and historical outlines of nationalism and mercantilism. To explain how each of these ideologies operate within these plays requires an examination of how social mobility functions as a central anxiety. More specifically, the anxiety

surrounding it is related to its ability to grant individual power and success.<sup>11</sup> Domestic structures such as marriage, family, and apprenticeship are conflated into a nationalist and mercantilist discourse.<sup>12</sup> I demonstrate that marriage, family, and apprenticeship are employed to address anxieties about social mobility. The three plays attempt to diffuse individual power by permitting social mobility only if it contributes to nationalism or early mercantilism. The combination of the public and private spheres is an attempt on behalf of Dekker and Heywood to force individuals and, more broadly, citizens to engage with the nation. In depicting the interaction between the individual and the nation, the two playwrights attempt to demonstrate a moral philosophy that can guide an audience. They are attempting to instill within the audience the “ideal pattern” which Helgerson mentions is essential for the development of nationalism.

The rigid social hierarchy of Elizabethan England dictates that marriage ought to be between citizens within the same socio-economic class. As a result, there is a cultural anxiety about the relationship between marriage and social mobility. This anxiety also places the individual and the nation at odds. Marriage in these plays depicts the malleability of the boundaries between the public and the private sphere. While marriage is portrayed as a tool for social mobility and advancement, it is simultaneously represented as a more typical site of individual love, honour and virtue. Diana O'Hara explains the complex relationship between the community and the individual in *Marriage: Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England*:

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11 Anxiety about social mobility stems primarily from the radically hierarchical nature of Elizabethan England, which followed to its logical conclusion in various aspects of Elizabethan life: the husband was sovereign over his wife, the higher classes justifiably held authority over lower classes, the rich and poor were naturally designed for their positions, and this was all the will of God. The “Homily On Obedience,” which was read along with a variety of other homilies after church sermons, reflects Elizabethan hierarchy. Select passages from this particular homily are indexed due to their length. The passages reflect a large depth and conviction in correspondence theory. As for power-dynamics within marriage itself, the “Homily On Matrimony” is so fundamentally rooted in male-dominance that is impossible to select a single passage from it.

12 While I recognize that marriage, family, and apprenticeship do not fit into the rigid dichotomy of domestic and national, these three things concern the individual much more explicitly than nationalism or early mercantilism.

The study of courtship and marriage must inevitably concern itself with the demarcation of the social and moral community and the location of the individual within them. . . . Marriage formation was also influenced by collective values. . . . Even the lowliest of marriages involved the exchange of some property between families, again potentially disrupting or disturbing the local social structures and their concomitant power relations. (30)

As financial success versus individual love enters into an increasingly complex arena, the conflict between the two becomes more conflated and distressing the nation which fears losing control of its sources of labour. The disruption between the private and public spheres, due in part to an emergent middle class, is an anxiety that is reflected in these plays' representation of cross-class marriage.

Marriage is both an individual act and, through its institutionalization, rooted in the economic, political and religious state. Free from these agencies, marriage would likely fail to invoke such anxiety in Elizabethan playwrights. The problem, however, is that economic power vies for the attention of both the individual and the state<sup>13</sup> As a result, these playwrights often attempt to dictate the proper course of action with regard to marriage and money for individuals who find themselves in love. Anxiety concerning the "unchaste" woman using a man to gain financial success through marriage is prominent in both *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Fair Maid of the West*. In both plays, female characters "prove" themselves not only by virtue and

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13 The exchanging of gifts, tokens, and properties that accompanied weddings "could prove a costly business" (O'Hara 60). The gift exchange was important for a variety of reasons, and carried personal and legal implications, as O'Hara explains: "As well as being a personal and private exchange, it was also a public matter, morally and socially obligatory" (64). The particulars of a gift exchange were sometimes recorded within the church documents. O'Hara provides statistics of wedding gifts recorded in Kent from 1591-1600 (the decade in which all three of these plays were written). Broken into a percentage by category, money constitutes 41.2%, clothing 29.4%, and metals 13.7% (72). The remaining 15.7% is not listed, but presumably consists of items too varied to list. It is interesting that metals – although primarily in the form of jewellery – make up a notable portion of the list. The type of jewellery that O'Hara lists is made up of mostly gold and silver, metals that were certainly acquired abroad.

honour, but by contributing to nationalist sentiments. In *Fair Maid of the West*, Bess completes her marriage-quest while simultaneously securing a colony for England. Similarly, Bella Franca in *The Four Prentices of London* is married only once England has secured Jerusalem. And finally, the holiday that marks the end of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is designed to build national character and economic fortune, while simultaneously legitimizing the plays' marriages.

The shifting economic strata of England are reflected not only in the depiction of marriage, but in the playhouses and their audiences. The rise of the apprentice and merchant-class citizens, referred to throughout this thesis as the middle-class or the middling-sort, marked a change in the style and delivery of plays, both in how they were written and how they were performed. The middle-class became an important consideration for playwrights who would profit from their attendance at public playhouses. In many respects, it is fair to credit the emerging middle-class with the development of the term Popular Drama. Carol Chillington Rutter, in her collection *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, provides insight into the importance of the apprentice and tradesmen with an anecdote involving Sir Edmund Tilney. At one point, Tilney was asked by his superiors to restrict the number of public playhouses in London. Because he was afforded a monopoly on the industry as far as permits were concerned, which he was compensated for granting, Tilney sent letters to the guild halls instead of his fellow officials asking for advice. Rutter describes the event:

the Merchant Tailors replied. If [the merchants] seem less worried about the players than their own purses it may be because the trade guilds had long-standing affiliations with the players: not only were plays performed at Guildhall – the Lord Mayor's Pageant rivalling in civic terms the Christmas revels at Court – but the guilds like the drapers and merchant tailors would have been linked to the

players professionally since costumes were by far the most important visual aspect of production, and guildsmen could expect to make part of their living dressing players for the stage. (56)

This story highlights a few facts that are highly relevant to this thesis. First, that the economy of the middle-class had a powerful influence on the decisions of those in positions of authority. Second, it reveals the importance of the Lord Mayor amongst the middle-class, a fact on which Dekker's play rests. The interplay between the individual labourer and public performance blurs the boundaries between private and public lives.

The playhouse is a powerful setting in which to form a national identity. Dekker and Heywood were both aware of the playhouse's ability reiterate cultural myths, and used its power to speak to the virtue and honour of the Monarch, the apprentice, the merchant, the privateer, the Lord Mayor, and all of England's citizens. The ideologies present in Dekker and Heywood's plays reverberates through the audience, whom in turn find themselves unwittingly reiterating the nationalist sentiments that accompany the play. This is not meant to be an alarmist approach, or to insinuate some sort of deliberate mediocre attempt at mind-control, but to stress the importance of performance and reception on a large audience. On the other hand, is possible that the plays themselves reflect the cultural make up of their audience. Whether the plays are reflections of eminent cultural ideologies or proponents of a new one is too difficult to prove; instead of advancing one cultural site as more relevant than the other, Helgerson attempts to unify the two, arguing that this duality is actually what encourages the development of nationalism:

At one pole in the reciprocal process by which England was written is the nation . . . the most obvious tension within that pole, the kingdom/nation. At another

pole, also fissured, is the text/form. The kingdom/nation authorizes – indeed, authors – the text/form. And the reverse is also true. . . . The discursive forms of nationhood and the nation's political forms were mutually self-constituting. Each made the other. (12)

The power of the playhouse is not solely the stage and its accompanying actors and playwrights, nor is it the individual citizens who make up the audience. The individual's position in the playhouse – as actor, writer or viewer – is a small constituent of the collective identity being forged.

In addition to their ideological function, the middle-class also serve a more explicit economic purpose; early mercantilism benefited from what Margaret Pelling calls the “forms of interdependency in society which bridged the gap between the family and 'the State'...the most important among such structures was apprenticeship” (33). The apprentices in Dekker and Heywood's plays are often dependent on their master for survival, often having little or no apparent familial connections. Pelling points out that historical documents “do not, on the whole, show apprentices as cut off from their families of origin. However, in their references to mothers, uncles, aunts, premium-paying grandparents, older brothers, and sisters, they emphasize the need to see the family of origin as itself fragmented” (41). All of the apprentice figures in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Fair Maid of the West* are removed from their familial bonds. Simon Eyre acts as the patriarch to all the apprentices in his shop, and eventually to all the shoemakers of London. It is never mentioned whether or not Simon Eyre and his wife had children; although it would be peculiar for what appears to be a long-married couple to be childless. Eyre and Margery more than likely had children, but their absence is a reflection of Elizabethan society; Pelling explains that even amongst labourers “the proportion of masters

who were related to their apprentices was apparently very low” (41). In *The Fair Maid of the West*, Bess's father was forced to enlist her as a tapstress due to his own poverty, and apart from this detail he is never present in the play nor mentioned again. Even in *The Four Prentices of London*, the brothers are separated by their descent into apprentice-life, and are unable to recognize one another when reunited on the path to Jerusalem. It is only at the peak of the chivalric quest – moments before the battle at Jerusalem – that the brothers begin to recognize one another. The brothers are able to remove themselves from their apprentice and state-run family by regaining their noble statuses. By portraying apprentice life as beneficent and communal, the plays help to reinforce the familial aspects of the apprentice system that ultimately serves mercantilist efforts.

Dekker and Heywood's plays lend themselves readily to a discussion of topics including nationalism, early mercantilism, and social mobility. These issues work in tandem to illustrate one another: while mercantilism is associated with nation-building, foreign characters are employed to secure new resources while simultaneously differentiating themselves from England, thereby strengthening national identity. Nationalism and mercantilism reciprocally benefit from each other's achievements. Social mobility acts in a similar fashion: a character's successful social mobility is marked by the advancement of nationalism and early mercantilism.

## Chapter Two

### The Appropriation of Local Labour in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*

*The Shoemaker's Holiday* documents the rise of shoemaker Simon Eyre to the position of Lord Mayor of London. There are also two lovers' plots involving Lacy and Rose, and Ralph and Jane. Ralph is one of Eyre's apprentices and Lacy is the son of the Earl of Lincoln. The play begins with a conscription that will send Lacy and Ralph to fight a war in France. While Ralph and Jane belong to the same class, Lacy is a nobleman and Rose is a commoner. As a result, Rose's father, Oatley, and Lacy's father, the Earl of Lincoln, disapprove of the young couple's relationship, and are content to see Lacy conscripted. In contrast, the shoemakers protest Ralph's conscription because it will take him away from his wife Jane. Nevertheless, Ralph is forced to join the war and is sent to France. Lacy, however, avoids conscription by disguising himself as Hans, a Dutch shoemaker, and becomes one of Eyre's apprentices. During Ralph and Lacy's absences, Hammon, a wealthy suitor, attempts and fails to court Rose. Hammon then attempts to court Jane, and is almost successful. Jane, believing that Ralph has been killed in France, agrees to marry Hammon. Ralph, now missing a leg, returns from the war in France to find Jane and Hammon engaged. Ralph and his fellow shoemakers confront Hammon, who attempts to purchase Jane from Ralph. Ralph refuses Hammon's offer and Jane chooses to return to her husband. Meanwhile, Lacy, disguised as Hans, contacts Rose and the two marry in secret. Lacy and Rose's marriage is nullified by the King at the end of the play, although he immediately remarries them after knighting Lacy and declaring Rose a lady. Throughout the play, the upward mobility of Simon Eyre parallels and interacts with the lovers' plots. The pivotal moment in Eyre's career is the purchase of a Dutch merchant's cargo, paid for with money lent to him by his new-found Dutch apprentice Hans. Eyre is able to purchase the cargo for significantly less than

its market value, due to England's economic protectionist policies, and uses this wealth to climb the social ladder. The play ends on Shrove Tuesday – the holiday to which the title refers – with Eyre using his political clout to establish Leadenhall Market, convince the King to legitimize Rose and Lacy's marriage, and successfully petition the King for a new shoemakers' patent.

The events in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* take place within a paradoxical world. Dekker's play concerns itself with national economic, religious and political turmoil. On the other hand, the play is light-hearted and filled with gregarious drunken apprentices, witty rakes, and a playful language that represents and pays homage to London's citizenry. The play is problematic in its presentation of the middle-class, however, because it simultaneously sympathizes with them and condemns them to their socially prescribed fates. The political realities of the play are starkly contrasted with the play's festivities. The liminal space of the play is made up of a balance between the holiday celebration and the wars with France. The play itself is a sort of holiday, a secondary world, where Dekker can explore the vagaries of social mobility within the framework of nationalist and mercantile concerns; the wars with France open and close the play, but the events leading up to and surrounding the holiday are a space where social and economic issues can be explored and reshaped.

This chapter is separated into five sections. The first reviews some of the critical approaches to this play. There is a tendency amongst critics to interpret the play as simply a mirthful celebration of middle-class life, leaving the ulterior motives of this celebration unexplored. The second section addresses the manner in which the play permits and defends social mobility. The third section focuses on the socio-economic implications of the two love triangles, particularly how the character of Hammon is vilified in order to foster solidarity amongst the shoemakers. This solidarity serves to strengthen the bonds of the apprentice-

system, thereby promoting an early form of mercantilism. The fourth section explains how mercantile policies contribute to Simon Eyre becoming the Lord Mayor of London. The fifth section explores the rationale behind the King's appearance and Eyre's appeal to him.

Specifically, I will address the importance of the patent that the King grants Eyre for an additional market day, and how it relates to historical mercantile practices.

## 2.1 Class Criticisms and Contemporary Perspectives

Of the three plays discussed in this thesis, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is the one most extensively performed and written about. Present-day performances of the play have generally interpreted Dekker as sympathetic towards the middle-class. Smallwood and Wells mention the 1964 production at the Mermaid theatre, which characterized “the upper-class lovers [Rose and Lacy] as 'posturing ninnies'” (51). Harris's edition also makes note of a significant production at Storm Theatre which heavily politicized Dekker's play (xxviii). The performance, according to Harris, was “shaped by opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq and the heavy burden of the working class soldiers sent to battle by well-heeled leaders who have avoided combat themselves” (xxviii). Literary critics are generally content to point out the play's celebration of middle-class and Protestant values.<sup>14</sup> For example, Michael Manheim interprets Dekker's treatment of the middle class as a sympathetic, conscious, and directed class struggle: “the attributes the play condemns are those associated with the court, and the attributes the play celebrates are those associated with the shop” (315). Marta Straznicky and Alison Chapman both interpret the play as a celebration of English Protestantism's victory over Catholicism. Julia Gasper argues that the play's portrayal of the Dutch reflects this Protestant fraternity. Intentionally or not, social

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Fleck's article is an exception. He argues that the play's use of the Dutch is a means of marking national identity through difference. This fits the working definition of nationalism outlined in the introduction of this thesis. Fleck also stresses the influence of mercantilism on the play, although he is not concerned with social mobility.

mobility, nationalism, mercantilism exist at the fringes of all these critics' arguments. As previously mentioned, the affirmation of Protestantism is central to the formation of English nationalism, and the middle class's increasingly large demographic is central to the growth of mercantilism.

Dekker was a religious pamphleteer as well as a playwright, and *The Shoemaker's Holiday* reflects the staunch Protestantism seen in his non-dramatic writing.<sup>15</sup> Chapman argues that the character of the Shoemaker in Elizabethan drama is itself a Protestant invention. Chapman notes that the changing and creation of holidays represents the shoemaker's and Protestant's "ability to mend bad soles (and thus also to repair souls 'marred' by Catholicism) [which] symbolically lent shoemakers the authority to 'reform' the Catholic calendar, the soul's experience of annual time" (1472). The play reinforces this idea by mentioning that Lacy studied the gentle craft in Wittenberg, home of the Reformation. Marriage in the play is linked to Protestant values as well. The secret marriage between Lacy and Rose is annulled by the King, although they are immediately remarried under his authority. Because divorce is an impossibility in Catholicism, the annulment reflects the association between the Monarch and Protestantism.

Amy Smith argues that the clandestine marriage is Dekker's attempt at examining class-structure and the institution of marriage. Smith identifies that "[e]ach performance of wooing and marriage *on the stage* is a reiteration of cultural performances *off the stage* and thus subject to those same conflicting interests," referring more generally to the practice of marriage in the period (334-35). She states that "while the marriage at the end may seem to ratify existing class structures and the necessity of community involvement, the conflicts over who has the right to choose a spouse and what choice should be based on are not so easily resolved" (335). Smith

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15 Julia Gasper thoroughly discusses the possible Dutch ancestry of Dekker, and the Protestant alliance between England and Holland.

maintains? that the play's gender construction is actually progressive in that it allows Rose to manoeuvre and choose her lover at her discretion. A problem with Smith's argument, however, is the assumption that Rose's choice is final. Ultimately, the King dispels her choice with a mere command, and must reiterate – and therefore authorize – her decision before it is complete. Admittedly, Rose's marriage conflict is a generic one, and the King's approval is a rubber stamp, but an important one because it panders to monarchic authority.

Both Smith and Chapman continually speak of the play as if it participates in social levelling. Chapman refers to the “general disruption of the social order” (1468) that the shoemakers cause, and Smith claims that the play encourages critical reflection on the institution of marriage. However, the social order is disrupted more by Lacy, Oatley and Hammon than anyone else. The shoemakers actually perform their normative duties: Ralph complies with conscription, Firk decides to work instead of firk,<sup>16</sup> while Eyre follows the standard path for a man becoming Lord Mayor. Chapman's argument fails to account for the manner in which the shoemakers contribute to nationalist and mercantile practices. The problem with Smith's argument is that it overlooks the ending of the play, which signifies the end of the local labourers' revelry, returning to the more important matters of wars. The play is not disruptive or rebellious, and is instead compelling and supportive of England's dominant mercantile ideology. Interpreting the “upper-class lovers [Rose and Lacy] as 'posturing ninnies'” is a form of erasure because it ignores Lacy's contribution to Eyre, and therefore labour. By virtue of assisting Eyre,

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16 Firk is another of Simon Eyre's apprentices. He is the play's clown and Vice figure. Smallwood and Wells describe the potential meaning of his name: “as a noun, *firk* could signify, for instance, a trick, dodge, or prank; as a verb, to cheat, to rob, to move quickly, to best, to trounce, and to copulate. Comic exploitation of the euphemistic pronunciation of *fuck*' (Partridge) seems to underlie most occurrences of the word in the play” (76). Smallwood and Wells note that Firk is “descendent of the amoral type-character of Vice, common in earlier English drama – although Dekker abandons the tradition” by making Firk work. Smallwood and Wells neglect to comment on the significance of this departure from tradition, other than to note his involvement in Eyre's community. Dekker's modification of the vice figure is a partial reflection of his early mercantilist beliefs. He implies that Firk's lecherous personality would take over should he be left idle, and that labour redeems him from vice. This idea is precisely the mercantilist justification for subsistence wages.

Lacy displays his solidarity with the middle-class and helps to instil a sense of unity amongst the citizens. Fleck correctly identifies that “trade interests were national interests, and merchants worked for the good of England” (360). By virtue of assisting Eyre, Lacy contributes to both nationalism and mercantilism. Critics and performers who interpret the play as a glorification of the middle-class fail to mention the powerful mercantile force that the play exerts.

## 2.2 Methods of Tempering Social Mobility

The liminal space in which this play manoeuvres has made it difficult for critics to politicize the play one way or another. I argue that the liminal space the play creates is intentionally designed to foster a discourse on social mobility because it uses the middle-class to explore possible justifications for social mobility. Although social mobility theoretically defies the rigid Elizabethan social hierarchy, the play is able to contain social mobility's disruptive force by redirecting its energy back towards the social order. Because English nationalism and mercantilism benefit the state, and therefore the monarch, Eyre's degree of social mobility is permissible. This type of redirection is what allows the play to discuss social mobility. The play raises issues that reflect cultural anxieties and then works to resolve these issues. These anxieties are resolved, however, by simply reiterating and reinscribing pre-existing cultural norms. The play's celebration of middle-class upward mobility is passive, and renders those characters who engage in it incapable of self-determination. Social mobility is acceptable only if it benefits the nation or monarch, thus reinforcing the hierarchical class-structure and philosophy of divine right prevalent in Elizabethan England.

The most important tactic the play uses to justify social mobility is to position itself within a nationalist and mercantile framework. The rise of Simon Eyre is acceptable because he abuses a foreign national, and by doing so reflects the larger concern amongst Elizabethan

audiences regarding an increasing foreign influence on the English economy. Andrew Fleck aptly describes the use of international figures in these types of plays:

Foreign figures in English city comedies function in many ways, but typically they come to the stage to be used, mocked, gulled, and ultimately expelled, often to the advantage of good, native Englishmen. In this way, city comedies participate in the process of developing an early modern national identity, as the values and interests of the English—signalled by linguistic, mercantile, and/or marital success—come out ahead of their foreign competitors. (365)

Fleck demonstrates that the crafting of national identity takes place even in instances of local disputes. The local economy of London contributes to English nationalism as much as, if not more than, the war abroad. The play safeguards the rise of Simon Eyre by relating his ascension to the overall success of England.

The play's source material can also be used to defend its depiction of social mobility. *The Shoemaker's Holiday's* primary source material is Thomas Deloney's *The Gentle Craft* (ca. 1597), a prose account of the historical Simon Eyre.<sup>17</sup> Walsh argues that Dekker's version of the play creates tension between the local and the national: “Dekker broadcasts a historical sensibility that recognizes people of the middling sort who are enmeshed in local concerns as having an at least parallel place in history with kings and high nobles” (329). While Dekker does focus the play on the middle-class and local issues, he is simultaneously playing with the concept of the history play. Therefore, the depiction of social mobility can be defended as a historical record which is ostensibly free from contemporary Elizabethan politics.

Having stated that, national, international, and local interests are certainly involved in a

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17 See W.K. Chandler's “The Sources of the Characters in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.” Eyre was elected as sheriff in 1434 and the banquet he hosted as Lord Mayor took place on Shrove Tuesday, 1446 (175). This banquet is the titular holiday and marks the end of Dekker's play.

complex political relationship despite the play's historical context. Walsh argues that “the focus on the Londoner Eyre at the expense of any particular interest in the king gives a place to the *local* in the historical imagination” (328). I would like to add that the focus on Eyre is also a focus on the middle-class as a whole. Eyre's social position and zest for labour positions him as a representative of the citizenry. Additionally, the use of London street names and taverns serves to reinforce the localized nature of the play. Furthermore, Eyre's language – particularly with Margery – is representative of the domesticated and vernacular.<sup>18</sup> In some respects, the play is not an historical portrait of London at all, but rather an expression of its contemporary spirit that Eyre embodies with his madcap style.

The problem with aggrandizing the local is that it challenges the power dynamic of an divine monarchy. Walsh argues that Eyre “enters the play in opposition to the demands of an impending conflict between England and France and the martial, national imperatives it suggests” (328). The play does hint that if Eyre were in charge he would prevent Ralph from fighting in France. However, Walsh's argument is mistaken because Eyre only argues against Ralph's conscription and not explicitly against the war itself.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, it is a convenient turn of events for Eyre to avoid making the decision; in a showcase of convenient plotting, Lacy mentions early in the play that Oatley, Lord Mayor at the time, is to blame for the conscription: “Truly, my friends, it lies not in my power: / The Londoners are press'd paid, and set forth / By the lord mayor; I cannot change a man” (1.149-51). In having Lacy of ? this opinion Dekker coyly subverts any of the instances which *might* produce a criticism of royalty or national identity from Eyre.

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18 I provide here a brief compilation of only some of his unique phrasings: Cicely Bumtrinket, powder-beef queans, Madge Mumble-crust, pudding-broth, gallimaufry, Dame Clapper-dudgeon, soused conger. (These morsels should be surrounded by quotation marks. The exact definitions of the terms are available in most cases, but what is more important is the vernacular speak and feeling of London as a cultural hub.

19 Walsh is mistaken for economic reasons as well, which is addressed in the section on the King.

To safely situate the play, Eyre's reign occurs during a time where the local takes temporary precedence over the international. It must be specified that the local does not triumph over the national, however, as the local is directly related to the process of constructing the English national identity. Nation is still a primary concern due to the fear of foreign influence on local markets, however. The success of Eyre serves two functions on the nationalist front: it provides the citizenry and audience with reassurance and support, while simultaneously prescribing a moral system of behaviour for them. The play could easily be described as nationalist and mercantilist propaganda which attempts to instil nationalist pride in the audience by usurping and re-directing the local anxieties that Fleck mentions. The play is making a moral statement on how people ought to behave: characters succeed or fail based on their commitment to local labour and domestic affairs.

Smallwood and Wells argue that in addition to its political posturing the play is making a contemporary argument concerning “the proper use of wealth in society” (40). This concern is overtly related to the debate about social mobility and its justifications. The social mobility of Eyre is in opposition to Oatley: the former uses wealth to “overcome the obstacles of discord, isolation, disharmony, that are personified by [the latter]” (Smallwood and Wells 40). What the play is doing with these various issues is setting up a framework that allows for a particular discourse on social mobility. Smallwood and Wells argue that “[g]ain' put to social good, 'madness' justified by industry, wealth shared in mirth and good fellowship – the play is a celebration of these things” (40). Smallwood and Wells' interpretation reflects the communal appropriation of the economy, which subtly works to destroy social mobility for personal satisfaction. The previously mentioned framework is composed of a specifically early English mercantilism, and the discourse is concerned with socioeconomic status and the “moral”

expenditure of capital.

### 2.3 The Function of Hammon

*The Shoemaker's Holiday* makes an explicit connection between social mobility, class, and marriage. There are two cross-class love-triangles in the play which are affected by this anxiety: Rose and Lacy, and Ralph and Jane, with Hammon acting as the triangulating member of each relationship. Hammon embodies Elizabethan anxieties about marriage, particularly the emerging middle-class use of marriage as a means of social mobility. The shoemakers spend a significant portion of the play celebrating labour as inherently valuable, which in turn vilifies the chronically idle Hammon. Ralph and Eyre revel in their labour and are portrayed as heroes because of it, while Hammon abandons his leisurely hunts to attempt to win the affections of Rose. The shoemakers end the play with festivities as Eyre inaugurates the apprentices' feast, thus starting Shrove Tuesday as a London tradition. Hammon, on the other hand, departs the stage as a villainous interloper who suffered defeat in his attempts to court both Jane and Rose. The play uses Hammon as a foil, disparaging him in order to distinguish the shoemakers.<sup>20</sup>

Hammon's attempt to seduce Jane is reflective of the shoemakers' own anxieties about labour, wealth, and marriage. Hammon arrives at Jane's shop and attempts to court her with the help of his purse:

HAMMON: All cheap; how sell you then this hand?

JANE: My hands are not to be sold.

HAMMON: To be given then!

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20 The qualities associated with the shoemakers include the familial and communal sense of duty fostered by the apprentice system, and the xenophobic and militant attitude of nationalism and early mercantilist thinkers. Apart from their references to fellow shoemakers as brothers, there is no mention of the family or personal history amongst the shoemakers. In fact, Lacy's first appearance as Hans causes Firk to call out to Eyre that "yonder's a brother of the Gentle Craft!" (4.48-49). Conversely, Hammon's first appears in the play with his brother-in-law, Warner.

Nay, faith, I come to buy.

JANE: But none knows when.

HAMMON: Good sweet, leave work a little while; let's play.

JANE: I cannot live by keeping holiday.

HAMMON: I'll pay you for the time which shall be lost. (12.25-32)

The use of the word “cheap” here carries important implications for the play's characterization of Hammon: the first and most obvious is the commodification of Jane, and the second pertains to labour. Acquiring something cheaply also implies the use of little or trivial labour, which is fitting for Hammon's character (OED).<sup>21</sup> Hammon's role as a villain is directly linked to his lack of participation in labour. Moments before his attempted seduction of Jane, Hammon declares “how prettily she works, oh pretty hand! / Oh happy work!” (12.13-14). Ostensibly, Hammon's use of the word “work” refers specifically to Jane's embroidery, but there is also a sense of irony in his celebration of Jane's work because he is a man of leisure. Unlike Lacy and Ralph, who warrant their respective relationships by performing labour, Hammon unwittingly attempts to benefit from the absence of those characters that are off contributing to mercantile and nationalist efforts.

Hammon operates in contrast to what Smallwood and Wells identify as Eyre's association of mirth with labour. In fact, Eyre demands Jane work in order to safeguard her against the misery of losing Ralph to the war in France: “Let me see thy hand, Jane. This fine hand, this white hand, these pretty fingers must spin, must card, must work; work, you bombast-cotton-candle-quean; work for your living, with a pox to you” (1.217-20). If Hammon's earlier

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21 The potential irony of this may have been lost on Dekker: Eyre acquires his cargo ship cheaply and with little effort as well. If there is one important distinction to be made, however, it is that Eyre benefits because he fleeces a foreign captain, and because he exists within the apprentice community that led Lacy to help him. Hammon, on the other hand, fractures communal identity by attempting to purchase a wife.

transgressions were not enough, his attempt to purchase Jane for twenty pounds certainly paints him as the villain. Ralph, the citizen hero, responds indignantly to Hammon's offer: "Sirrah, Hammon, Hammon, dost thou think a shoemaker is so base to be a bawd to his own wife for commodity? Take thy gold, choke with it! Were I not lame, I would make thee eat thy words" (18.92-95). In response, Hammon gifts the twenty pounds to Ralph and Jane, apologizes, and departs praising the shoemakers:

Of that great wrong I offered thy Jane,  
To Jane and thee I give that twenty pound.  
Since I have failed of her, during my life  
I vow no woman else shall be my wife.  
Farewell, good fellows of the Gentle Trade.

Your morning's mirth my mourning day hath made. (18.98-104)

Ralph is rewarded for honouring his conscription, and expresses allegiance to his fellow shoemakers, which indirectly serves to praise the apprentice system. The exchange of wealth is both a penance for Hammon, and a sort of dowry for Ralph and Jane.

The strangest part about Hammon is that nothing he does is truly villainous.<sup>22</sup> Although Hammon is treated as a philandering charlatan he is actually more like a tragi-comic suitor. All of his exploits are innocuous, and his actual offenses are the result of his own ignorance. In Hammon's mind it is no real harm that he *offers* Jane a marriage which will benefit her economically since he thinks Ralph has died in France. If Hammon commits some sort of crime it is that his relationship with Jane threatens to unjustifiably improve her socio-economic status. As for his failure to court Rose, Hammon was encouraged by Rose's father, and believed Lacy to be in France. Furthermore, Hammon declines opportunities for bawdiness in which a character

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<sup>22</sup> Hammon must be an ineffective villain partly because of comedic conventions as well.

like Firk, one of Eyre's apprentices, would reveal. For example, Hammon's first encounter with Rose comes by chance while he is out hunting. He follows a deer into the garden at Oatley's manor, where Rose is being kept from Lacy. Upon noticing her, Hammon proclaims "A deer more dear is found within this place," and abandons his hunt (6.32). Although Hammon invades Rose's *hortus conclusus*, the potential sexual threat is not drawn out.

Hammon's vilification reveals more about the desires and attitudes prevalent amongst the shoemakers than it does about Hammon. The reason the shoemakers deride Hammon is to foster solidarity amongst the middle class. This practice follows Helgerson's argument that identity is formed by marking difference. Hammon is barred from courting Rose or Jane because it would result in undeserved upward mobility for both women.<sup>23</sup> Yet the play successfully reconciles Lacy and Rose's marriage, which sees the former knighted and the latter become a Lady. The reason their marriage is permissible and Hammon's is not is due to Lacy's contribution to the apprentice system, which is itself part of the mercantile system. The respective success and failure of Lacy and Hammon reveals the play's perspective on marriage and mobility: upward mobility through marriage is unacceptable unless one of the lovers assists the formation of national identity or contributes to early mercantilism.

#### 2.4 Eyre's Mobility and the Case of the Dutch.

Eyre's social mobility is possible due to Elizabethan mercantilist protectionist policies as well as nationalist and xenophobic sentiments. Eyre's rise on the social and political scale is made possible by the exploitation of a Dutch cargo ship. Understanding the historical implications of this event is essential to understanding how the play justifies his upward mobility. Anxiety about social mobility is often in conflict with, if not directly related to, emerging issues including economic development, an expanding merchant class, and

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23 Hammon's wealth and standing is actually what drives Oatley to suggest him as a suitor for Rose.

international influence. Hans and the Dutch skipper are representative of both a foreign mercantile and linguistic class, one that Fleck argues is destined to be bested by an English identity. To appease English nationalism, Lacy provides the money for Eyre to make the down-payment on the Dutch cargo ship. This action serves to placate English tension surrounding the presence of foreign economic interests in London. It would be impossible to justify Eyre's fortune if he were to fleece an English national; however, social mobility is an acceptable outcome because his purchase and subsequent political success is the result of besting a foreign national. The combination of Lacy and Eyre's efforts "works in subtle ways to evoke and expel a foreign presence in order to secure a more stable and solid English identity" (Fleck 365). Eyre's actions are never subversive to the nation; although he denies the wishes of Lincoln, an Earl, he does so only in the name of unification. He uses his newfound economic power to influence social cohesion and justify his social mobility in the process.

According to theory, Eyre's deal with the Dutchman is representative of England's benefit as well as his own. Fleck explains that a "series of laws had indeed grown up to protect native English workmen in the century before Dekker wrote his comedy. The Elizabethan 'Statute of Artificers' (1563), for example, had laid out strict rules governing the employment of anyone practicing 'the sciences craftes mysterys or arts'" (356). The hurried dealing of the Skipper, Fleck explains, is the result of this policy: "This foreigner must deal secretly because 'the merchant owner of the ship dares not show his head,' presumably because some official policy interdicts his trade. This protectionist policy has forced the merchant to be rid of his goods quickly, enabling Eyre to take advantage of the skipper" (357). Firk makes a possible reference to this law when he tells Lincoln to "Punish the journeyman villain, but not the journeyman shoemaker" (17.160). Smallwood and Wells argue that this passage is "obscure, but possibly

pointing to the Poor Law legislation . . . [it] may pun on 'journey-man villein,' meaning a wandering labourer” (184). Firk often makes himself at ease by mocking the Dutch which reflects the anxieties of local craftsmen: he wants Eyre to hire Hans so he can hear some “gibble-gabble” (4.51). Therefore, Eyre's acquisition of the Dutch cargo ship contributes to the international trade which mercantilism favours. This derision of the Dutchman reflects the contemporary anxieties felt by companies holding patents over the interlopers that Willan mentions. The play itself rests on a protectionist model similar to the economic regulations of the period; it makes a statement on the management of wealth by using foreign characters to serve nationalist purposes, much like mercantilism itself.

The reason Lacy helps Eyre acquire the Dutch cargo is never explicitly explained in the text. I argue that the purchase is Lacy's atonement for abandoning his military duties, and therefore betraying his nationalist loyalties. It is necessary to note that Lacy's time learning the gentle craft in Wittenberg follows the mercantile practice of importing goods and trade skills from abroad while discouraging their export.<sup>24</sup> Without his prior training – which coincidentally concurs with mercantilist theories – Lacy would be unable to assist Eyre at all. His trade skill is not enough, however, and Lacy must appease mercantilism by acquiring commodities from another nation. Interestingly, the play opens with the Earl of Lincoln, Lacy's father, criticizing Lacy for bankrupting himself while traveling on the continent. Not only does Lacy abandon his military responsibilities early in the play, but he opens the play having purchased foreign commodities with English currency, a practice anathema to early mercantilism, and is admonished for this action. As a result, Lacy brokers the trade between the Dutch Skipper and Eyre in order to redeem himself in terms of both nationalism and early mercantilist practices.

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<sup>24</sup> *The Gentle Craft* is the alternate title to *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, as well as the title of Dekker's source material, an account of Simon Eyre written by Thomas Deloney. The gentle craft refers to shoemaking.

Helping Eyre become Lord Mayor is a way for Lacy to contribute to England's economy. By securing the Dutch cargo, Lacy ensures his eventual reunion with his English identity via Eyre's support. Smith notes that in mercantilism domestic trade “was considered as subsidiary only to foreign trade. It neither brought money into the country, it was said, nor carried any of out if it” (*The Wealth of Nations* 251). In this light, Lacy contributes to the nation's international efforts and atones for forgoing his previous responsibilities abroad. Lacy engages in a form of repentance for abandoning his military conscription by supporting a local citizen hero.

Unlike Lacy, Eyre never wavers in his belief that the success of mercantilism is directly linked to the success of the nation. He uses his newfound social status to request that the King provide the shoemakers with extra trade days and to ratify their guild hall. Because the shoemakers – and in fact all the citizenry of London present at the feast – are presented as loyal conscripts their request is granted. Ultimately, Eyre uses the funds from the cargo deal to further nationalist unification efforts. Eyre gives the citizens a voice, but also directs that voice towards a common value system, and yokes the local with the national in doing so. Eyre is the quintessential figure who justifies social mobility: he is frugal with his wealth, takes economic power away from a foreign figure, supports national endeavours by virtue of unifying the citizens, and, most importantly, appeals to authority, which in this case is represented by the King.

## 2.5 The Royal Seal of Approval and Mercantile Success

The appearance of the King alleviates the tension in the play by settling the lovers' plot, and affirming the other social upheavals in the play. The King's arrival is also a *deus ex machina* that signifies a return to reality. The world created by the play – where issues of social mobility can be explored – is brought to an end. The King performs two important functions at the close

of the play: the first is to authorize the actions of Eyre and the other citizens, and the second is to reinstate a sense of nationalist duty within the play and its audience. Having earned his redemption by contributing to nationalism, Lacy is reinstated by the King as a married gentleman who is once again fit to serve in the war. While Dekker's characters climb the *scalae natura*,<sup>25</sup> they do so only in submission to the higher power of nationalism represented by the King. The play is self-reflexive in its broader comments on the theatrical institution: it is a place of social intrigue and imaginings, but the audience must return to its normal function at the end of the performance:

Eyre, I will taste of thy banquet, and will say  
I have not met more pleasure on a day,  
Friends of the Gentle Craft, thanks to you all.  
Thanks, my friend Lady Mayoress, for our cheer.  
Come, lords, a while let's revel it at home.  
When all our sports and banquetings are done,  
Wars must right wrongs which Frenchman have  
Begun. (21.190-97)

The King's appearance vindicates the changes made in Dekker's imagined world, from the shifts in social hierarchy to the revelry of the citizens. The historicity to which Walsh points, the debate concerning the function of wealth, the vernacular speech, and, ultimately, the new social order are all codified. The King condones the domesticated attributes of the citizens, particularly Margery and her food stuffs; Margery is no longer Cicely Bumtrinket, Eyre's nickname for her, but rather the Lady Mayoress of London. The celebration at home in this play is ultimately suspended to address matters abroad. The King himself is vacationing within the local and

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25 The Great Chain of Being

domestic, but only to legitimate the behaviour of his citizens and to revitalize their nationalist pride.

Despite Eyre's gregarious behaviour, he becomes uncharacteristically passive in the presence of the King. He speaks of the King in a slightly more sombre tone than usual: "the king this day comes to dine with me, to see my new buildings; his majesty is welcome, he shall have good cheer, delicate cheer, princely cheer. This day, my fellow prentices of London come to dine with me too, they shall have fine cheer, gentlemanlike cheer" (17.43-47). While Eyre's general performance is that of a garrulous craftsman, he is also represented as a determined economic and political leader. One of the King's advisers assures him of Eyre's abilities:

In all [Eyre's] actions that concern his state,  
He is as serious, provident, and wise,  
As full of gravity amongst the grave,  
As any mayor hath been these many years. (19.6-9)

Eyre's diplomacy serves to simultaneously appease his workers and the King. In doing so, Eyre successfully merges the economic and political realms.

The end of the play is marked by a celebration of mercantilism by both the shoemakers and the King. Having founded Leadenhall, Eyre petitions the King to grant his company a patent:

EYRE. They are all beggars, my liege, all for themselves; and I for them all on both knees do entreat that for honour of poor Simon Eyre and the good of his brethren, these mad knaves, your Grace would vouchsafe some privilege to my new Leaden Hall, that it may be lawful for us to buy and sell leather there two days a week.

KING. Mad Sim, I grant your suit. You shall have patent

To hold two market days in Leaden Hall. (21.153-161)

This exchange is extremely important within a mercantile context.<sup>26</sup> In fact, it would seem strange that this is the play's final matter of business unless it is read in light of mercantile policies. Establishing and celebrating the patent indicates the play's mercantile disposition. Furthermore, the play marginalizes those independent shoemakers who are not involved with the company by excluding them from the trade days.

Walsh's assertion that the play places local and national history in contention by fixating on the domestic is incorrect; the play concerns itself with local history in order to celebrate mercantilism, which is itself a nationalist endeavour. Therefore, Eyre's acquisition of the Dutch cargo ship contributes to the international trade which mercantilism favours. Fleck identifies the pervasiveness of Elizabethan merchants attempting to associate the success of their companies with the welfare of the nation:

From a defense of one company's trade . . . [the argument moves] quickly through national trade interests and into the bodily security of the beloved monarch, the protection of the true church, and the very existence of the English nation. In this context, it may be important to protect England's fellow Protestants on the Continent but not at the expense of England's well-being. Trade and economic prosperity come before religious affiliation, and Wheeler concludes his tract on the importance of England's merchandise with a warning: amicable relations are important, but English trade interests should come first. (363)

Fleck uses John Wheeler's *A Treatise of Commerce* (1601) as source material. Wheeler was a

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<sup>26</sup> Recall Lionel Robbins's description that mercantilism can be broadly described as a system of "merchants with an axe to grind, subsidies to be demanded, [and] protective tariffs to be urged" (36).

secretary for the Merchant Adventurers and an ardent mercantilist. As mentioned in the introduction, there was no shortage of merchants vying for the attention and favour of government officials. His description of Wheeler's rhetoric applies almost universally to mercantilist thinkers. Gerard de Malynes<sup>27</sup> makes a similar rhetorical connection between mercantilism and the state in *A Treatise of the Canker of Englands Common Wealth* (1601):

no more can he be a right states-man, in seeking the increase of the Princes  
customs and revunues, to have the Princes coffers well furnished: unlesse he do  
studie the way of preservation & argumentation of the wealth of the Realme: for  
the welfare whereof, joyntly with the preservation of her Majesties royall person,  
the Author daily prayeth unto the Almighty, by whom al Princes do rule and  
states do subsist. (125)

*The Shoemaker's Holiday* follows the same logic that de Malynes uses: Eyre appeals to both the economy and the monarch. That the rhetorical justification for his practice is also the justification for Eyre's mobility is intentional. The play follows a similar logic, making an explicit connection between the success of companies and the success of the nation.

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27 Malynes was a merchant, economic theorist, and ambassador to the Spanish Netherlands.

## Chapter Three

### Displacing Anxiety in *The Fair Maid of the West*

The first half of *The Fair Maid of the West, or a Girl Worth Gold* was originally published in 1631, although it was first performed around three decades earlier, sometime between 1596 and 1603. There are two parts to the play, and this thesis deals strictly with Part I, an adventure-comedy with Bess Bridges, a virtuous woman of poor social ranking, as its protagonist. At the beginning of the play, Bess is working as a tapstress in Plymouth, and her love interest, a gentleman named Spencer, comes to visit. Spencer and Bess begin the play already in love, but remain uneasy about the difference in social status between them. Spencer mentions that he will soon depart to fight the Spanish in the Azores, and asks Bess to accompany him. Bess declines his offer by simultaneously lamenting and affirming the cultural anxiety preventing their cross-class relationship:

I had been born to equal you in fortune  
Or you so low to have been rank'd with me;  
I could have then presum'd boldly to say  
I love none but my Spencer. (1.2.80-83)

Spencer thanks Bess for her words, and the two sit and drink. Soon after, another gentleman named Carrol enters the tavern and joins Bess and Spencer's table. Carrol immediately criticizes Spencer's association with a tapstress, and Spencer responds by defending Bess's honour. There is a fight between the two men and Carrol is slain. Fearful for his safety, Spencer flees abroad to fight the Spanish, but not before entrusting his wealth and tavern in Foy to Bess. She inherits an improved socio-economic status, but loses Spencer in the process. Bess spends the rest of the play assisting nationalist and mercantile efforts in an attempt to legitimize her social mobility,

which has already occurred, and thus her marriage to Spencer, which has yet to occur. Initially, she travels to Foy and successfully manages Spencer's tavern. Acting on false reports of Spencer's demise, Bess purchases a ship that she christens the *Negro*, and becomes the captain of a crew of privateers. Although she begins her life at sea seeking vengeance on the Spanish for Spencer's death, Bess achieves fame and fortune along the Barbary Coast. However, Spencer is alive, but has been taken captive aboard a Spanish ship. Bess and her crew capture the ship on which Spencer is imprisoned, and take the now liberated prisoners with them to Mamorah. At this point, Bess and Spencer are incapable of recognizing one another: Spencer cannot discern Bess through her male costume, and Bess believes Spencer to be a ghost sent to haunt her. They dock in Mamorah, a port city of Fez in Morocco, where Mullisheg has recently been crowned King. Bess is summoned to Mullisheg's court, where she charms and impresses the Islamic King. Eventually, she and Spencer are reunited in Mullisheg's court, where they married with Mullisheg's blessing.

The play follows Bess' transformation into a socially acceptable wife for Spencer. Along the way, instances of English nationalism and early mercantilism parallel Bess' improved social status. Therefore, every increase in Bess's power and influence will create a sketch depicting the simultaneous growth of the English economy. As Bess takes on new responsibilities, her economic influence widens, and further reveals the mercantile nature of the play: first, she moves from tapstress to tavern owner, participating in and then supporting the local economy and apprenticeship system; secondly, she becomes a privateer, robbing foreign nationals of their cargo for the benefit of England; and finally, she becomes a diplomat and establishes trade relations in the name of English mercantilism.

Throughout the course of Bess's socio-economic transformation, she embodies cultural

tensions surrounding gender, sexuality, marriage, and labour. These tensions are generally caused by ambiguities surrounding Bess's current position. Jean Howard argues that “the play uses an exceptional woman, Bess Bridges, as a device for defining English values and for uniting men of different classes into a homosocial community of brothers, into a nation” (102).

Howard's argument is that the play alleviates Elizabethan anxiety about female sexuality by displacing it onto Mullisheg and his Kingdom, thus strengthening English identity. Howard's interpretation can be expanded to address the way Bess displaces other anxieties as well, such as the abuse of wealth and social mobility, although they are not always resolved by being paired with Mullisheg. Bess resolves these cultural tensions by simultaneously fostering a national identity and contributing to mercantilism. *The Fair Maid of the West* permits social mobility only because doing so glorifies England. Although Bess's transformation leads her to straddle conflicting identities, she is ultimately reborn, completely shedding the remnants of her former social class to fully embrace her new one.

The play makes an explicit association between labour and gender by representing labour as a masculine experience. Despite her actual sex, Bess is not an exception to this rule, as she dons masculine clothing and performs masculine duties for much of the play – duelling, fighting, and privateering. Her portrayal of masculinity is also a performance of national identity. The play's depiction of labour and gender help define the boundaries of a national identity. It suggests to its audience how and what kind of labour ought to be performed, as well as what kind of activities constitute masculinity. Discussing the relationship between gender and nationalism in the play, Howard asserts that:

in Tudor-Stuart England something I simply wish to call a discourse of national identity was emerging, which, despite many differences, shares with modern

nationalism a supposed fraternity of subjects within an imagined community defined in part by a bounded geographical essence and in part by cultural and racial *differences* from other such imagined communities. (102)

Howard's definition borrows heavily from Helgerson's theory that identity is constructed out of difference. Therefore, Howard's analysis of the play's construction of national identity is congruent with my own.

Bess also creates tension between social mobility and Elizabethan theories of natural order. The potentially disruptive elements of Bess's social mobility are stabilized by her participation in English mercantilism. Furthermore, her newly acquired wealth is safely redirected to contribute to more communal than individual efforts, something Elizabethan mercantilists, monarchists, and theologians could agree upon.<sup>28</sup> For example, Bess uses some of her profit from the tavern to patronize the town of Foy. Similarly, Bess's exploits as a privateer contribute to England's mercantile efforts. Although Bess originally heads to sea to take vengeance on the Spanish who she believes to have killed Spencer, the privateering she ultimately participates in has its roots in economic warfare. Similarly, Bess's layover in Fez results in her and Spencer's marriage, but only after she persuades Mullisheg to grant new trade routes to England.

In addition to its introduction, this chapter consists of four sections. The first is an analysis of how other characters – particularly Spencer – react to the anxieties that Bess evokes in them. The second is an interpretation of how Bess's economic success works on a local level, paying particular attention to how she satisfies the demands Spencer makes of her. Additionally, the domestic section discusses Bess's relationship with her apprentice, Clem. The third section

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28 Smith the Elder, who was mentioned along with other similar thinkers in the introduction, argued that human self-interest ought to be channelled by either government or religious incentives.

addresses the economic implications of Bess's adventures at sea, with a focus on privateering and its mercantile and imperial characteristics. The fourth and final section is an examination of Bess and Mullisheg's relationship, and more broadly an examination of England's trade relationship with Morocco.

### 3.1 The Anxieties Surrounding Bess

Apart from the brief first scene which establishes the preparation for military action abroad, *The Fair Maid of the West* begins with a discussion of wealth and class. Spencer and his friend Goodlack are deciding on which tavern to attend. Spencer, already in love at the play's opening, votes for The Castle, the tavern where Bess works. Unaware of Spencer's love interests, Goodlack inquires as to "Why, being a gentleman of fortunes, means, / And well revenu'd, will [he] adventure thus," hinting that the Castle is of a lower standard (1.2.4-5). After Spencer explains his true motives, Goodlack admonishes him for his interest in Bess:

Come, I must tell you, you forget yourself.  
One of your birth and breeding thus to dote  
Upon a tanner's daughter! Why, her father  
Sold hides in Somersetshire and being trade-fall'n  
Sent her to service. (1.2.16-20)

Goodlack is also being prophetic in this passage: just as her father was trade-fall'n, so will "fall" the new masculine figure in Bess' life, Spencer, thereby altering her performance of labour once again. This labour, however, is performed on a different stage: it participates in a cross-class love affair that is rerouted to concern itself with national discourse.

Bess implicates many of the play's cultural anxieties regarding sexuality, class, and marriage. Bess invokes these tensions because she straddles their boundaries. Howard addresses

the complexity of Bess's characterization:

To the extent that Bess *is* Elizabeth she embodies Englishness in the exemplary virgin body of the female monarch whose powers are at least in theory linearly derived and patriarchal in nature, whatever her own particular sex. To the extent, however, that Bess is a tanner's daughter who through her virtue and hard work enjoys a spectacular rise in her fortunes, her powers have another derivation – simple entrepreneurship. (108)

As a metaphor for the nation, the virgin body works to expand itself physically and theoretically: as Bess travels so does England, exporting its economic and gendered world-view. Those who encounter England are subject to its mercantile and masculine demands, and are unable to reciprocally penetrate her sexually, geographically or economically.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Bess's low-born social status and desire to marry undermine her ability to represent Elizabeth. Howard explains that Bess is aligned “with the values of the emergent middle classes who paid increasing attention to marriage as an affective, as well as an economic, institution” (108). Tensions regarding class and social structure are further highlighted by Bess's performance as a masculine heroine: “While Bess is a figure used to provide imaginary resolutions to actual social tensions, she is also a figure of crisis, whose centrality signals the very strains in the social fabric she is able, magically, to resolve and who continually evokes men’s fears of women’s power and sexuality” (Howard 109). Masculinity and mercantilism are not exclusive or separate entities in the play: they are reciprocal and fuelled by one another. How Bess acquires, maintains, and uses wealth is as much a concern to the play as her sexuality because wealth is explicitly related to power and nation.

At times, Spencer is more of an examiner of Bess than a lover. Spencer is self-conscious

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29 The inability to “penetrate” is partially a commemoration of Queen Elizabeth's defeat of the Spanish Armada.

of the inappropriateness of his love, often bemoaning the lowly birth of Bess. He even acknowledges the appropriateness of Goodlack's criticisms of the relationship:

Prithee speak no more;  
Thou tell'st me that which I would fain forget  
Or wish I had not known. If thou wilt humour me,  
Tell me she's fair and honest. (2.1.14-22)

Spencer laments the disparity in class between him and Bess: "Were her low birth but equal with her beauty, / Here would I fix my love" (1.2.53-5). Spencer's anxiety about Bess's low birth is shared by Carrol, a local gentleman, who insults Spencer for consorting with her: "[t]hough you may be companion with a drudge, / It is not fit she should have place by us" (1.2.128-9).

Spencer responds with violence, and in the ensuing scuffle he slays Carrol, forcing him to flee abroad. In some respects, Spencer's situation parallels Lacy's in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*; both of them betray the expectations associated with their social position to support a member of a lower class. Unlike Lacy, however, Spencer's purgatory is spent abroad, serving the military efforts of England.

Upon his departure from Plymouth, Spencer displaces his masculine, social, and economic roles onto Bess. He explains to Bess that he is a visitor from Foy, unable to secure local legal favour:

Of a most scandalous death doth force me hence.  
I am not near my country, and to stay  
For new supply from thence might deeply engage me  
To desperate hazard. (1.3.27-30)

The "country" to which Spencer is referring is not only his geographical position, but also his

nationalist identity. His fraternization with the lower-class and betrayal of his own opposes hierarchical philosophy which results in his alienation from the nation. He subsequently transfers his cultural responsibilities to Bess. In addition to his tavern in Foy, Spencer gifts her money, apparel, and a portrait of himself, but only on the condition that she satisfy a particular demand:

Thou art fair;  
Join to thy beauty virtue. Many suitors  
I know will tempt thee; beauty's a shrewd bait,  
But unto that if thou adds't chastity,  
Thou shalt o'ercome all scandal. (1.3.55-59)

Spencer's concept of virtue contains an expectation that Bess will take on masculine features and engage in successful economic pursuits. For example, Bess is portrayed as an economic patriarch by overseeing Clem, her journeyman and clown, and patronizing the town of Foy. Spencer's departure and subsequent capture by the Spanish breed a passivity that attenuates his presence in the play. This passivity allows Bess to take on his male role without actively diminishing his masculinity, thereby not threatening the gender dynamic of their future relationship.

The gendered double-standards of the play are overwhelming: Spencer's wealth and virtue is an acceptable reality, as he is a male born into it, yet Bess must prove she is a woman worth gold. Prior to his departure, Spencer sends Goodlack to check in on Bess, in order to ensure she is behaving as he requested:

Her legacy I give with this proviso:  
If at thy arrival where my Bess remains,

Thou find'st her well reported, free from scandal,  
My will stands firm; but if thou hear'st her branded  
For loose behavior or immodest life,  
What she would have I here bestow on thee,  
It is thine own. But as thou lov'st thy soul  
Deal faithfully betwixt my Bess and me. (2.2.81-88)

The demand made by Spencer – that she fastens virtue to her character – reflects the play's fear of “the duplicitous whore, the castrating crossdresser, the disruptive woman” (Howard 109). This anxiety clouds Spencer's judgment, and he mistakenly sends Goodlack to appraise Bess, yet sends no one to appraise Goodlack. Goodlack recognizes this double standard, and attempts to slander Bess for personal gain. Goodlack travels to Foy and convinces Bess that Spencer has passed away, and his final breaths were spent cursing her name. Heartbroken, Bess agrees to relinquish her inheritance, but before doing so requests Spencer's portrait so she can bid him farewell. Addressing the portrait, Bess reaffirms her vows of allegiance and constancy to Spencer. As a result, Goodlack realizes that Bess's virtue “cannot be dissembled,” and confesses his lies (3.4.53). Goodlack's accusation is the only moment in the play where Bess's chastity is so thoroughly interrogated. For the most part, the rest of the play investigates her ability to perform masculine and mercantile duties.

### 3.2 Bess's Domestic Triumphs

During her time in Foy, Bess satisfies Spencer's requests to add virtue and honour to her name. Bess's feminine performance is incapable of controlling the violence and sexual advances of Roughman, despite her improved status as mistress of a tavern. In order to command his respect, Bess must dress up as a man and best him in combat. Along with Spencer's monetary

gifts, she is provided masculine privilege that allows her to exercise the power associated with it. Bess is unable to disarm Roughman's threat as a woman, but is able to do so while dressed as a man. The ensuing celebration of Bess's virtue by Roughman corresponds to the increase in nationalist sentiment following the "test" of Queen Elizabeth's military prowess after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Bess's ability to perform masculine roles is another method Heywood uses to justify her social mobility; she is fit for power only because of her ability to shed her femininity.

Bess receives a charitable economic and social boon from Spencer, and expresses her gratitude through an economic acumen similar to Simon Eyre's. When Bess is first depicted managing the Mermaid, she asks Clem "What company" is inside (2.1.51). Clem unfavourably reports the presence of a few coarse sea captains, "little better than / spirats" (2.1.53-54).<sup>30</sup> Bess's response is one that disregards their character in favour of the profit they will provide: "No matter; we will take no note of them. Here they vent / many brave commodities by which some gain accrues. / Th'are my good customers, and still return me profit" (2.1.54-56). Like Eyre, Bess is a shrewd business-owner whose eye is constantly fixed on profit. The "profit" is larger than the shillings paid in bar tabs; as Bess is the paragon of many English virtues, Heywood uses her to celebrate the mercantile spirit of the play. The patrons of the tavern and the audience of the play alike are expected to recognize and appreciate her entrepreneurship.<sup>31</sup>

Similar to her entrepreneurial efforts, Bess's patronage of Foy contributes to the virtuosity and masculinity that Spencer demands. In preparing for her life at sea, Bess settles her domestic matters by constructing a will. The will is a testament to Bess's honour as well as her economic

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30 This is Clem's word for pirates

31 Entrepreneurship is also an essential part of mercantilism.

success.<sup>32</sup> The document, read aloud by the Mayor of Foy, is as follows:

To set up young beginners in their trade, a thousand pound. To every maid that's married out of Foy whose name's Elizabeth, ten pound. To relieve maimed soldiers, by the year ten pound. To Captain Goodlack, if he shall perform the business he's employed in, five hundred pound. The legacies for Spencer thus to stand; To number all the poorest of his kin and to bestow on them, Item to----

(4.2.31-40)

The first and largest sum of money contributes back to the working class from which Bess has risen. Her first decree establishes her generosity, but more importantly celebrates her beginnings. Just as she received money from the wealthy Spencer – whose position she now fills – she creates an opportunity for those of a similar history to benefit as she has. Through this will, Bess completes Spencer's request by joining virtue to her name, at least within the local sphere.

The problem with this act is that the romantic elements of the story are adorned in middle-class attire. The play reaffirms the normative class structure of the labourers by celebrating their current position. This is not to say that play-goers would realistically expect that wealth would fall so easily upon them or that they would engage in epic sea-battles, but that the celebration of apprentices and labourers is duplicitous. Interestingly, Bess stops the reading of the will once it begins to address family. The mention of Spencer's family conjures painful memories in Bess, whose father's destitution parallels Spencer's current situation. Nevertheless, Bess's servants are left to the Mayor's “discretions to dispose” (47). Ultimately, Bess's riches come from the labour of those around her, and she serves to benefit companies and tradesmen by

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<sup>32</sup> Her will is also an appeal to history. The document ensures evidence of Bess' virtue will be left to posterity. In fact, all three plays attempt to historically situate some of their middle-class characters.

keeping the apprentice system flourishing.

Like Dekker's play, there is an essence of nationalist and mercantilist propaganda in this play which works to inspire the workers to tolerate their plight in favour of the land and property owners. When Clem is gifted his years as an apprentice (a full eleven years worth!), he declines, rhetorically asking: "And shall I take time, when time is, and let my mistress slip away? No, it shall be seen that my teeth are as strong to grind biscuit as the best sailor among them all" (4.2.92-94). Clem rejects the freedom to practice his trade for profit in favour of *freely* serving Bess. Given Howard's point that Bess occasionally stands in for Elizabeth, this is an overtly nationalist sentiment. The claim is that the working class is willing to serve at the leisure of the nation; there is more at stake in the economic and social positions of citizens than merely wealth. Additionally, Clem would disrupt social order by accepting his years for free. Clem is able to safely abandon his apprenticeship in the bar, however, because of Bess's gift of a thousand pounds to produce new apprentices locally.

### 3.3 Gender and Economy Abroad

Profit in the play is not only a local act, however, and Bess's exploits reflect this. Upon the news of Spencer's death, Bess acquires a ship, which she christens the *Negro*, and sets out as a privateer with Clem, Forest, Roughman, and Goodlack in tow. Roughman and Goodlack both accompany Bess so that they may redeem themselves for their earlier faults. The former may well be a pirate to begin with, as Clem hints at earlier in the play, referring to him and fellow sailors as "spirats." Goodlack must accompany the new-found privateers to atone for his interference in Bess and Spencer's relationship. The function of privateers and pirates in the play is an important part of the bullionism and mercantilism. Both men have upset the balance of the nation by attempting to disrupt its economic flow. Roughman does so by threatening workers

and customers in the pub, and Goodlack does so by attempting social mobility without contributing to mercantile or nationalist efforts. By attempting to usurp Spencer's will, Goodlack has made profit *out* of the country instead of bringing profit *into* the country. Recall that bullionist and mercantile beliefs held that raw materials ought to be imported into the nation while finished goods are exported out. Goodlack and Roughman can assist the nation through privateering, thus restoring the balance they disrupted, by accompanying Bess.

Claire Jowitt identifies Heywood as “ambiguously sympathetic” (139) to the representation of pirates.<sup>33</sup> Jowitt explains that “[p]irates were figures used by Elizabethan writers to discuss the ideological co-ordinates of overseas adventure and the cultural construction of imperial ambitions” (111). This co-ordination fits within the overall ideological order of the play, and in fact each co-ordinate has a parallel: the local play-goer who fantasizes about said adventures, and the foreign figure which exists as the fuel that drives imperial ambitions. Leggatt addresses the local reception of Heywood specifically: “Visually, the Bess of the shipboard is a boy having the sort of adventures that would appeal to the apprentices in the audience” (143). On the other hand, the imperial design requires a figure and location to exploit and control. There is an ideological sleight-of-hand taking place in which the local's desires are fed in order to simultaneously justify the expansion of empire. The already-idealized adventure story is inextricably linked to the mercantile exploitation taking place on the Barbary coast, both historically and within the play. Jowitt explains this interconnection as follows: “Early modern drama repeatedly included the meme of the pirate because these figures and their activities addressed cultural dilemmas of the time, including ideas of an expanding world, and anxieties about England's position within it, and the changing models of Christian manhood required to

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33 Jowitt provides additional evidence by noting Heywood's inclusion of famed pirates in his collaborative tragicomedy with William Rowley entitled *Fortune by Land and Sea*.

undertake overseas adventure” (112). Furthermore, the mercantile theories prevalent in Heywood's time are fundamentally linked to privateers. The intentional dismissal of the term pirate in favour of a less antagonistic term associates itself well with English exceptionalism and nationalism. It is at this point in time that the focus of the play begins to shift toward interactions with other nation states in order to solidify its nationalist tendencies.

Although it is not specifically stated that Bess and company carry a letter of marque,<sup>34</sup> indicating their official status as privateers, their activities abroad are those of sanctioned privateers (or pirates). Similar to Jowitt, Barbara Fuchs has argued that Bess's expedition serves a dual purpose: “Bess's expedition reflects some of the ambiguities between piracy and privateering. She sets out on her private mission to recover Spencer's body but is easily distracted into fighting Spaniards [. . .] Her greatest success as a symbol of England lies in bringing these disparate motivations together.” (131-32). The major role that the Spanish serve in the play is to glorify the English. The Spanish are described as “degenerate” by Spencer, while the Spanish Captain cries out “These Englishmen! / Nothing can daunt them” (4.2.27-8). The representations of the Spanish reiterate the rivalry already present between the two nations. The more nefarious representation is that of the Moors, foreshadowed early on by the name of Bess's ship. Howard asserts that:

The management and control of this black ship signals in a striking fashion the English desire for mastery and command over these dark peoples...More broadly, the name given to the ship, the site where English national unity and national character are most fully displayed, suggests that the construction of Englishness depends on the simultaneous construction of what is non-English. (110)

The detour that leads the group of privateers to Mullisheg is a clever manoeuvre of plot by

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<sup>34</sup> An official government document which sanctioned privateering.

Heywood. While commanding the *Negro*, Bess rescues a ship of merchants who were taken prisoner by the Spanish. Spencer is aboard the merchant ship, but Bess believes him to be a ghost and exits the stage. Spencer does not recognize Bess, although he recalls “a face ere now like that young gentleman” (4.4.137). Bess has moved from her lowly position to that of “gentleman.” She has so successfully performed her role as virtuous masculine hero that Spencer cannot recognize her. Essentially, Bess reincarnates herself into a new member of a socio-economic class.<sup>35</sup> Bess's role as a successful privateer is not only important for her mercantile and nationalist endeavours, but for her performance of masculinity as well. Furthermore, the lack of interaction between the two lovers conveniently allows Heywood to include Mullisheg in the play.

### 3.4 Mullisheg and Moroccan Trade

The appearance of Mullisheg firmly establishes the two primary discourses that Helgerson insists are the chief concerns of Elizabethan writers: monarchic power and social inclusion and exclusion. Mullisheg's difference allows Bess to complete her social transformation and establish a firm English identity. Mullisheg's difference operates as a mirror for Bess so that she may strip away the duplicitous aspects of herself which cause the play's tensions. The representation of the Moors is not any more negative than that of the Spaniards.<sup>36</sup> However, Howard correctly argues that the Spanish take on a role of bitter rival, yet maintain a geographical and cultural bond with England: "Both nations, for example, are trying to exert control of the seas around the Azores; both are eager for booty and bullion; both claim to possess the true version of Christianity; and structurally, English actions in the play are often staged as a

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35 She explicitly draws attention to the concept of rebirth by referring to Queen Elizabeth as a phoenix. The significance, of course, is in the names.

36 Howard would vehemently disagree with this statement. However, I think the forthcoming discussion of Moroccan and English trade-relations indicates a level of communication between the two nations that was overlooked.

reactive and exemplary alternative to Spanish actions" (111). Disagreements between the English and the Spanish can be easily traced back to historically documented theological and geographical schisms, and the play's contemporary rivalries are marked by obvious economic and militaristic disputes. The Kingdom of Fez, however, is rooted in a different culture, which, until close to the time of the play, was economically and historically separate from England. Nevertheless, the play provides an intricate and honest interpretation of Elizabethan England's dealings with Morocco. Whereas Bess's encounters with the Spanish reflect her own behaviour, her encounters with the Moors help her establish the demarcation lines between her culture and theirs.

Upon taking the throne, Mullisheg immediately begins to "stablish laws, first for [the] Kingdom's safety, / The enriching of [the] public treasure, / And last [the] state and pleasure" (4.3.13-15). Mullisheg proceeds to make two decrees which place him at odds with England. The first of which is a tariff on all Christian merchants. Interestingly, Mullisheg's tariff is a reflection of the same protectionist laws practiced in England. Although the Dutch characters in Dekker's play are tolerated because of the Protestant fraternity between England and Holland, they remain subject to English trade laws. The difference, however, is that Mullisheg's tariffing specifically targets "Christians," and not other foreign merchants.

The second decree is a call for concubines to fill his palace, including among them the "fairest Christian damsels [one] can hire" (4.3.29). Mullisheg's justification for this decree serves to intensify the preexisting boundaries between himself and Christendom: "Why should we not make here terrestrial heaven? / We can, we will; our god shall be our pleasure, / For so our Meccan prophet warrants us" (4.3.38-40). The initial insult to the Christian audience is expanded to include anxiety about the promiscuous woman that Howard mentions. At this point

in the play, Howard identifies a “shifting of the focus of cultural anxiety from the body of the woman onto the body of the racial other” (102).<sup>37</sup> The potential marriage between Bess and Mullisheg amplifies the tension surrounding Bess's use of her body. Furthermore, the fear that Bess will yield to a foreign and masculine power can be associated with anxieties about marriage and femininity present throughout Elizabeth's reign. To sustain herself, and thus England, Bess must prove herself against foreign influence and power. It is not only a sexual anxiety that becomes displaced onto Mullisheg, but a political one as well. With an ever expanding map of the world, how England interacts with the new states, religions, and leaders it encounters becomes increasingly important. As a result, Bess's interactions with Mullisheg are also Heywood's prescriptions for how England ought to behave abroad. Following the logic of Elizabethan social hierarchy, Heywood represents the world as divinely ordered, with England holding the reins of other nations, thereby spiritually and economically directing them.

Bess agrees to meet the King only if he concedes to the following list of demands, which is read by her now loyal companion Goodlack:

First, liberty for her and hers to leave the land at her pleasure. Next, safe conduct to and from her ship at her own discretion. Thirdly, to be free from all violence either by the king or any of his people. Fourthly, to allow her mariners fresh victuals aboard. Fifthly, to offer no further violence to her person than what he seeks by kindly usage and free entreaty. (5.1.52-8)

These demands present the strongest case regarding Bess as a representation of England. Her diplomatic function is to expand the geographical and mercantile influence of England. In fact, Bess's desire to establish new trade relations is a historically accurate depiction of England's

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<sup>37</sup> Howard argues that the play's sexual anxieties are alleviated by displacing them onto Mullisheg, thus helping to form a national identity. Although Howard does not address social mobility explicitly, her argument provides a nationalist justification for Bess's upward mobility.

relationship with Morocco. As of 1554, the country was a unified and independent state. It was ruled by the Saadi Dynasty, who had successfully repelled Spanish, Ottoman, and Portuguese attacks. Having liberated ports in the northern part of the country from Spanish control, Morocco opened up trade with England (Willan 99). According to Willan, fighting between the Spanish and English along the Barbary Coast was a common occurrence, making Spencer's capture and Bess's layover in the Mamorah much more plausible. Furthermore, Bess's demand for freedom of movement in the country reflects the frustration felt by English merchants currently dealing in Morocco:

The merchants, either individually or in partnership, employed their resident factors in Morocco. . . . But Morocco was not western Europe; it was part of Islamic Africa, and the merchants and factors had already experienced the difficulties that arose in a country where royal monopolies existed and where trade had to be conducted through Jewish middlemen, themselves delicately poised between the paynim and the giaour. (Willan 106)

Mullisheg's royal decrees, then, are not necessarily meant to denigrate him, but instead to reflect the frustration of English merchants in Morocco. Ultimately, Mullisheg agrees to Bess's demands and retracts his decrees at Bess's whim.<sup>38</sup> The ironic *double entendre*, spoken by a Moor servant reporting Bess's arrival, now becomes available to us: "The captain of the *Negro* craves admittance" (5.1.17).

Despite his loyalties, Clem is tempted to try his own hand at social mobility during his time in Mullisheg's court. Clem decides to leverage his association with Bess to secure favours

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38 England was historically successful in establishing trade relations with Morocco as well. Much to the satisfaction of early English mercantilists, England was able to create a very favourable balance of trade with Morocco. The amount of exports shipped to Morocco in the first half of 1584 valued 1,022 pounds. Conversely, imports from Morocco within the 1574-1575 trade year were valued at 28,638 pounds and 13 shillings, with approximately 85 percent worth of those imports coming from sugar (Willan 112).

from Mullisheg. For example, Clem takes a bribe to repeal a hefty fine levelled against a French merchant:<sup>39</sup>

FRENCH MERCHANT. Sir, a French merchant run into relapse

And forfeit of the law. Here's for you, sir,

Forty good Barbary pieces to deliver

Your lady this petition, who, I hear,

Can all things with the king.

CLEM. Your gold doth bind me to you – [*Aside.*] You may see what it is to be a sudden courtier: I no sooner put my nose into the court, but my hand itches for a bribe already. (5.1.134-141)

Clem also accepts a bribe from an Italian merchant whose men are sentenced to galley work. Clem's appeals are a complete failure, and Mullisheg upholds the merchants' punishment. Bess immediately protests on Clem's behalf, however, and Mullisheg agrees to repeal his decisions. Clem's selfishness reinforces the charitable nature of Bess, who works to secure the merchants' freedom while Clem works to secure their gold. Clem cannot justify his attempt at social mobility and is punished as a result. Clem accepts an offer to become a courtier in Fez, unaware that he must become a eunuch to do so. Exiting the stage to “taste the razor” Clem returns moments later in horror, protesting the Moors' attempt to “rob a man of his best jewels” (5.2.103, 5.2.127). Clem's illegitimate desire for social mobility causes him to be humiliated. Clem's failures reinscribe the power of masculinity and its association with English labour. The play cautions its audience that it is better to be a worker in England than a castrated courtier in a foreign state.

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39 The Frenchman has been fined one-thousand ducats “for dealing in commodities forbid” (5.2.55). One of Mullisheg's first acts as King is to establish a form of protectionist trade policies. They are similar to England's laws in that they are protectionist, but are upheld for religious as opposed to economic reasons.

When Mullisheg first asks Bess for her name, she responds “Elizabeth,” marking the only occasion in the play she uses her full name (5.1.87). Mullisheg's response is no more than a nationalist sermon from Heywood:

There's virtue in that name.  
The virgin queen, so famous through the world,  
The mighty empress of the maiden isle,  
Whose predecessors have o'errun great France,  
Whose powerful hand doth still support the Dutch  
And keeps the potent King of Spain in awe,  
Is not she titled so? (5.1.88-93)

The implications present in this speech are that England's land is sanctified and the rest of the world's is not. Furthermore, there is an appeal to a specifically Christian history in which continental Europe participates at the will of England, but that the Barbary Coast does not. This appeal to the power of history takes place earlier in the play as well, in the form of the will and testament that Bess leaves to various parties in Foy. Additionally, Heywood diminishes the importance of Mullisheg's rule by situating his inauguration midway through the play.<sup>40</sup> Barbary is rendered a political non-entity by its removal from this list, and its fate – economically, politically, spiritually – is currently being decided. In an attempt to bolster his own name by associating it with England, Mullisheg invites Bess to sit “in state” with him so that she may “beautify [his] throne” (5.1.105-6). Ironically, it is Mullisheg's invitation that ennobles Bess, satisfying Spencer's request that she add virtue to her name both locally and abroad.

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40 Later in the play, Mullisheg's jealousy causes him to briefly prevent Bess and Spencer's marriage. Roughman successfully appeals to Mullisheg by tempting him with the power of history: “Let not intemperate love sway you 'bove pity, / That foreign nations that ne'er heard your name / May chronicle your virtues” (5.2.114-6). Mullisheg responds by approving the marriage, claiming that Roughman has “waken'd in [him] an heroic spirit”

Bess and Spencer can now justify their cross-class marriage. The tension caused by Bess's sexual potential is resolved by the marriage between her and Spencer. She proves her virtue by acting in England's favour economically, spiritually, and militarily: she proves herself financially at the tavern in Foy, allaying any fears that her upward mobility will undermine the social hierarchy; she saves fellow protestants from heretic Spaniards and ensures the safety of Christians in Fez; she establishes an outpost for English merchants abroad, positioning herself (and England) as a dominating force along the Barbary Coast. The play embodies mercantilist theories so thoroughly that it treats its characters as pieces of the nation's currency to be favourably balanced. In this respect, the play balances Bess's social mobility with the acquisition of new sources of wealth and labour for England.

## Chapter Four

### Foreign Military Campaigns and Identity Markers in *The Four Prentices of London*

Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London*, the last of the plays examined in this thesis, is putatively set during the first Crusade, and follows the adventures of the four sons of the Earl of Boloigne. From oldest to youngest they are: Godfrey, a mercer; Guy, a gold-smith; Charles, a haberdasher; and Eustace, a grocer. The Earl also has a daughter named Bella Franca, whose age is never mentioned nor placed in relation to her brothers. The play begins directly after the Earl is cast out of France while serving William the Conqueror, and he now resides in London. Having lost his lands and title, the Earl is forced by poverty to apprentice his four sons. Having relinquished control of his children, the Earl sets off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to see the tomb of his saviour before he dies. As the Earl departs, Robert, Duke of Normandy, sends out a call to arms to all those willing to participate in a Crusade to the Holy Land. The brothers follow the drums of war and set to sea, but are shipwrecked along the way. Fearful of being left alone with no one to protect her, Bella Franca follows in a separate transport. At this point, a Presenter appears on stage to describe each brother's path to Jerusalem in "dumbe shews, which were they writ at large, / Would aske a long and tedious circumstance" (257-8). After their shipwreck, the brothers wash ashore in separate locations: Godfrey to Boloigne, Guy to France, Charles to Italy and Eustace to Ireland. Their highly improbable separation is glossed by Mary Gaisor as "inexplicable except as a convention of romance tradition" (116). When Godfrey arrives in Boloigne, he discovers that a tyrannous man has taken his father's place as the Earl. He "stirres up th'oppressed Citty to revoult" (280), and frees the citizens from "base bondage" (281). Immediately following Guy's landing in France, he becomes acquainted with both the King and his daughter, who falls in love with Guy almost instantly. Following his royal encounter, he once

again sets off for Jerusalem, and the princess of France, disguised as a page, follows after him. The third brother, Charles, is found in Italy, where he takes control of a group of thieves after slaying their captain. Eustace's time in Ireland remains a mystery, and after acquiring transport to the continent he arrives on stage in Italy. For the remainder of the play, the brothers journey to Jerusalem separately, and though they occasionally encounter one another, as well as their father and sister, they are never able to recognize one another until they are reunited at the battle for Jerusalem.

*The Four Prentices of London* is the least coherent of the three plays discussed in this thesis, likely being Heywood's first play; the writing and character development are immature and the action is convoluted and confusing. Gaisor claims that Heywood, at the time of writing, was himself “an apprentice” (xlv). The play is composed of two major plots: one romantic and the other concerned with the Crusades. Gaisor correctly identifies that *The Four Prentices of London*'s dual plot as its weakness:

[The play] suffers here from a lack of interdependence between plot and sub-plot. Apparently Heywood found the story of the prentices' quest for glory incapable of being sustained for the length of his play, and so added the love intrigues. No integral relationship exists between the story of the conquest of Jerusalem and the love triumphs (the French Lady winning Guy, Tancred claiming Bella Franca).  
(xxxv)

Instead of its romantic intrigues,<sup>41</sup> I will focus on the play's combination of the local and the exotic in the form of the apprentice. Nearly all of the action takes place outside of England, yet the four brothers represent a specific population of London – the apprentice. The disjointed nature of the play pointed out above causes its ideological structures to become more apparent by

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41 This chapter generally disregards any discussion of marriage because the play's love stories are trifling.

virtue of their isolation from one another. Unlike the previous two plays, *The Four Prentices of London* does not draw any connections between marriage and social mobility, nationalism, or early mercantilism. Nevertheless, the play is well suited to my discussion because social mobility remains authorized by its contribution to nationalism and mercantilist desires. Although explicit references to mercantilism are sparse in the play, its instances of English nationalism are clearly associated with early mercantilism. Gaisor argues that the play contains a “marked preference for event rather than character” (xxxvi). The play's inclusion of apprentices in its depiction of the Crusade indicates mercantilism's participation in England's military efforts. The play's preference for event over character demands a broader cultural and historical interpretation of the relevance of the Crusade to English mercantilism. English military and paramilitary activities abroad are shown to contribute to, and rely upon, the success of mercantilism.<sup>42</sup>

This chapter is broken down into four sections. The first section will address criticisms of the play's stylistic elements. Although I generally agree with the criticisms levelled against the play, I argue that its faults aid in revealing its intentions. The second section discusses how the play subordinates individuality by associating identity with nation. In particular, I examine the ways in which the play punishes and subsequently absolves the four brothers for abandoning their apprenticeship. The third section focuses on the play's representation of other nations and cultures, particularly the nation of France and Islamic culture. The capture of Jerusalem has important nationalist and mercantilist implications in addition to its religious significance.<sup>43</sup> I will conclude this section by examining the effects of nationalism on the play's representation of French and Norman characters whose historical authority and cultural influence are undermined

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42 I use the term paramilitary here for two different reasons. The first is because the Crusades are a pan-European effort, although the play does depict England as this effort's leader. The second is because it relates this play to Bess' privateering in *The Fair Maid of the West*.

43 Similar to the play's love plots, its religious significance is tangential to my interpretation of the play.

by the strength of an anachronistic English identity. The fourth section focuses on the specific mercantilist and nationalist motivations for depicting apprentices in light of the play's historical context.

#### 4.1 Criticisms and their Alternatives

In this section I offer alternative interpretations of what are generally dismissed as the play's stylistic shortcomings. From an aesthetic standpoint, it is easier to appreciate *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Fair Maid of the West* than it is to appreciate the jarring structure of *The Four Prentices of London*. Demonstrating the dominant mercantilist and nationalist ideologies of the previous two plays demands patience; this is because *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Fair Maid of the West* are so successful at converging entertainment and politics. *The Four Prentices of London* fails to intermingle aesthetic value with cultural value in the same way. Additionally, *The Four Prentices of London* fails to create the dramatic anxiety caused by merging social mobility and marriage. The mercantilist and nationalist ideologies that the play advocates are largely transparent, granted one can manoeuvre through its confusing plot and lack of characterization. The isolation of the play's cultural values make them easier to identify: *The Four Prentices of London* provides a stark example of early mercantilism and nationalism's influence on the Elizabethan stage.

Lisa H. Cooper summarizes the generally negative reactions by critics of the play as follows:

The few critical studies that bother to mention the play have largely shared the Prologues' doubts about its dramatic viability, accepting [the Prologues'] consensus that the play is flawed by thematic and structural faults its audience would do best to ignore. *The Four Prentices'* ambiguities, multiplicities, and

awkward impossibilities...have led most scholars to dismiss it as unworthy of more than the occasional footnote. (160)

In addition to these problems is the play's historical inaccuracy, which is best exemplified by the anachronistic use of a formalized apprentice system in the eleventh century. Additionally, Laura Caroline Stevenson criticizes the play of classism for sending an Earl's sons on adventures "while the real apprentices stay in London" (187). Cooper counters this argument by asserting "that *both* earl's sons *and* real apprentices go to Jerusalem, that nobody is left behind, and that this is the play's essential point . . . the play proffers a kind of 'imagined community' in which class difference and professional strife are tentatively elided into...an emergent national spirit" (161). Cooper correctly argues that the play works to construct a national identity by unifying England in the name of the Crusade, but she incorrectly argues that there is a? form of social levelling taking place. *The Four Prentices of London* vilifies its eponymous characters for deserting their apprenticeships before providing their redemption at the battle for Jerusalem.

Gaisor criticizes the play's lack of characterization, and asserts that the brothers' "actions, their virtue, and their speeches are so similar as to be indistinguishable. Thus, as characters they remain indistinguishable and whatever dramatic impact [their scenes] might have had if presented singly is lost by repetition" (xxxiv-xxxv). Gaisor's criticism is correct, although I contend that the play's characterization is a sloppy but intentional attempt to celebrate the homogeneity that nationalism and mercantilism relies on. For example, upon the Crusaders' arrival at the walls of Jerusalem, Robert, Duke of Normandy, delivers a sort of eulogy to Jerusalem by praising its former glory and bemoaning its current degradation:

Now in that holy place, where GOD himselfe  
Was personally present, Pagans dwell.

False Gods are reard, each Temple Idols beares.

Of who can see this, and abstaine from teares? (1870-73).

Godfrey, Charles, and Tancred imitate Robert, and close their respective speeches with rhyming couplets ending in “teares”(1886, 1894, 1902). Gaisor concludes that this “repetition could be to good effect. Unfortunately, most instances of its employment in [the play] represent immature misuse” (xli). Gaisor feels as though the frequency of repetition in the play diminishes Heywood's ability to characterize and evoke emotion. Although Heywood's characterization is coarse and awkward, the reiterations made by the crusaders fix their identities to a common goal. The play works to cultivate a sense of unity amongst the crusaders, whose group significantly consists of London apprentices. The imagined goal of the community transcends class distinction, effectively pacifying the rebellious individuality of the apprentices. The creation of and adherence to an imagined goal is precisely the definition of nationalism outlined in this thesis.

Like Dekker, Heywood is very cautious with his representations of social mobility.

Burnett points out the potentially dissident elements of Heywood's material:

Heywood's apprentices are presented for our approbation as they deliver Syon and Jerusalem from the domination of a foreign power, restoring to them their cultural and religious importance. The contradictions appropriated by this literature are less easy to explain. It needs pointing out, first, that the material authors drew upon for their ideas was potentially dangerous and subversive. Plays in which apprentices performed valiantly could be read as incitements to riot; two of the uprisings, we shall recall, started in or near theatres. (37)

Heywood is aware that it would be risky to insinuate any apprentice could, or even should, aspire

to achieve the same fame and fortune as the brothers. Were Heywood to do so, it might be interpreted as support for social mobility or revolution without prejudice. When Bella Franca and Eustace encounter one another on the road to Jerusalem, and finally recognize one another, the former describes the latter in an aside:

But strip my brother from his Prentice cote,  
His cap, his common souldiers base disguise;  
Even such a Gallant as this seems to me  
Such would my brother, my Sweet Eustace be. (1816-19)

Bella Franca struggles to recognize Eustace because of his middle-class attire, which indicates an inherent quality about Eustace that signifies his nobility. That the brothers were originally part of the nobility is a stern reminder to the audience that social mobility ought to be legitimized by nationalism or mercantilism. The brothers were rightfully born into wealth and title so it stands to hierarchical reasoning that they should return there. Cooper summarizes the play's logic as follows:

It is difficult to know whether . . . the play's audiences would have seen English noblemen deigning to be apprentices or apprentices with fantasies of upward mobility taking the walls of Jerusalem. But it is precisely within that ambiguity that much of the play's significance lies. *The Four Prentices* works very hard to demonstrate both that gentility cannot be threatened by commerce and that commerce is a path to gentility, and in this respect it is exceptional within early modern poplar literature of its kind. (173)

The play attempts to diffuse any animosity between the two classes by creating a sense of unity between them. The result of this is uniformity amongst the implied audiences' values and, more

importantly, actions. The potential for individual disorder is pacified by an hierarchical philosophy which promotes communal ideologies.

#### 4.2 The Nation's Construction of Identity

The play begins with the brothers mourning the loss of their wealth and nobility, and thus their individuality and freedom. The brothers believe that battle and adventure will reinstate their honour and fortune. They follow the trumpets of war to the Crusade for personal gain, and not for religious or spiritual fulfillment. While the struggle for religious and cultural supremacy over Islam represents a significant part of the play's desire, it also indicates England's desire for economic involvement with the Islamic world. The brothers' motivation arises from individual desire which is in opposition to the play's communal and hierarchical ideologies. The play punishes them by dislocating their physical and psychological identities, and obstructing their path to Jerusalem. The brothers atone for their transgressions by honouring their respective trades and capturing Jerusalem from Muslim control.

The brothers are initially resentful about their newfound lives as apprentices. The Earl summons his four sons, and asks each of them individually “how thou lik'st thy trade?” (60). The brothers attempt to mask their resentment by praising apprenticeship to their father. Godfrey, working as a mercer, is the first to respond:

Bound must obey: since I have undertooke  
To serve my Maister truly for seven yeares,  
My duty shall both answeare that desire,  
.....  
I hold it no disparage to my birth,  
Though I be borne an Earle, to have the skill

And the full knowledge of the Mercers trade.  
And were I now to be create a new,  
It should not grieve me to have spent my time  
The secrets of so rich a trade to know,  
By which advantage and much profites grow. (63-79)

Godfrey's resentment is evident despite his flattery: he explains that *if* he were to be “create[d] a new” he could be content with his current position. The responses from each subsequent brother – from oldest to youngest – become more openly critical of their work and masters. In fact, Eustace's response lacks his brothers' pretence: “mee thinkes I could endure it for seven years, / did not my Maister keepe me in too much” (107-108). One of Eustace's complaints is that his master forbids him to play football in the street. Cooper argues that his complaint is intended to associate the brothers more fully with everyday apprentice life which creates sympathetic audience (161). Guy indicates that to abandon their bonds would be disobedience not only to fate and his father, but to God as well (91-92). The brothers associate apprenticeship with obedience, honour, and self-sufficiency, and state their allegiance to these qualities to appease their father. Although the brothers are being duplicitous, the play itself endorses these same qualities.

The brothers' resentment manifests in the speeches – which are presumably asides – that follow their initial response: Godfrey hints that he “shall behold that Sunne breake through this cloud” (142); Guy reveals that his “spirits aime, / To have [his] hand catch at the Crowne of Fame” (145-46); Charles, more explicitly, states that “[w]arre is the walke which I desire to tread” (152); and finally, Eustace claims that he would rather see “[a] faire Guilt sword hung in a velvet sheath, / Then the best Barbary sugar in the world; / Were it a freight of price inestimable

(154-56). The brothers become emblematic of disruptive apprentices who interfere with the production of goods and wealth. Eustace explicitly rejects mercantilism by denying his desire for involvement with trade in Barbary Coast, which is something that Bess is celebrated for establishing in *The Fair Maid of the West*.<sup>44</sup> Upon the Earl's departure, the brothers express their desire to vacate their apprenticeships:

GODFREY. So let us please our Maisters by our care,

That we our ruin'd fortunes may repaire.

GUY. Brother, if I knew where to go to warre,

I would not stay in London one houre longer.

CHARLES. An houre! By heaven I would not stay a minute.

EUSTACE. A minute! Not a moment. (174-79)

The brothers' decision to go to war is not meant to be heroic, and by their own admission they are disobeying God's will. The brothers betray the mercantilist ideologies of the play by abandoning their apprenticeships, and the subsequent shipwreck can be seen retribution for their disobedience.

The brothers' rejection of their apprenticeship is simultaneously a rejection of their national identities because the play explicitly links apprenticeship with the nation. To this effect, Helgerson argues that “the denial of nationhood is experienced as a denial of integrated selfhood” (22). On the path to Jerusalem, the brothers and their sister are reunited, although unable to recognize one another because of their denial of selfhood. As a result, the threat of incest appears, and the brothers unwittingly vie for the attention of their sister Bella Franca. Cooper argues that the play is also criticizing the individuality that is typical of chivalric

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<sup>44</sup> Given that sugar accounted for approximately twenty-five thousand pounds worth of income from the Barbary Coast (Willan 112), his rejection of potential mercantile success is shocking.

romances: “[a]s they continue to bicker, chivalric mores, which emphasize the honor of the individual over the well-being of the community, are increasingly revealed as insufficient to the maintenance of internal peace and, perhaps more importantly, to the accumulation of communal profit” (171). Their individualities become seditious to their community, nation, family, and morality. Robert continually separates the quarrelling brothers, and implores them to remember their duty: “Princes and Lords, let our united bands / Winne back Judea from the Pagans hands” (1128-29). Guy and Eustace continue fighting one another, and Robert decrees their “everlasting banishment / From out the Christian Army” (1415-16). Their rejection of apprenticeship results in their explicit expulsion from the nation, signified by the unified army, which ultimately results in the loss of their identity.

Guy and Eustace attempt to regain their identity by affirming their loyalty to their former trades. Cooper notes that Guy and Eustace's “desire for glory and fame [morphs] into an almost nostalgic longing for *collective identity*” (172; emphasis added). Guy decides that he “will beare a shield, / In it engraven the Trade [he] did professe, / When once [he] was a Gold-smith” (1430-32). Eustace decides to craft a shield as well, and passionately celebrates the trade he abandoned:

Upon this shield I beare the Grocers Armes  
Unto which Trade I was enrold and bound:  
And like a strange Knight, I will aid the Christians,  
Thou Trade which didst sustaine my poverty,  
Didst helpesse, helpe me; though I left thee then,  
Yet that the world shall see I am not ingrate,  
Or scorning that, which gave my fortunes breath. (1694-1700)

Eustace and Bella Franca recognize one another in their subsequent encounter, and the rest of the family follows suit. Significantly, the return of their identities coincides with the reunification of their family and their arrival at Jerusalem. Upon their arrival, it is mentioned in the stage directions that Charles' shield displays the Haberdashers' Armes and Godfrey's depicts “a Maidenhead with a Crowne on it” (83). The family is reunited under the banner of nationalism and mercantilism, symbolized by the Virgin Queen on Godfrey's shield and the trade-guild's coat of arms on Eustace's, Charles's and Guy's shields, and ready to battle at Jerusalem.

#### 4.3 Islamic Physical Confrontations and Norman Cultural Confrontations

Both the cultural and spatial make-up of Islamic Jerusalem is simply imagined into a convenient and exploitative existence in the play: there is no verisimilitude. Soldan and Sophie are imagined solely for the purpose of fighting a fixed match that ensures England's victory, but more importantly underscores the successes of England's mercantilist and nationalist system. The battle of Jerusalem also pits the English monarchy against an Islamic collective. The nation of England, and to a larger extent Christian Europe, is rallied around the singular figure of Robert, who is characterized as a dignified and persistent Christian leader. The Soldan, Sophie, and a host of other Kings representing different Islamic nations appear to rule simultaneously but without direction: the stage directions indicate that the “four brethren each . . . kill a Pagan King, [and] take off their Crownes” to capture the city (2375-76). Successful in their siege, the brothers are rewarded by Robert, who has coincidentally just been pronounced King of England. Robert offers the crown of Jerusalem to Godfrey, who refuses, although he presumably remains Earl of Boloigne, and opts for a crown of thorns as a religious oath in honour of his father. Robert blesses the marriage between Bella Franca and Tancred, an Italian Prince and County Palatine, and declares Guy the King of Jerusalem, Charles the King of Cyprus, and Eustace the

King of Italy. Robert's role as the politico-economic and religious administrator of other nations reflects early English mercantilism and nationalism's imperialist inclinations.<sup>45</sup>

The battle scene contains an explicitly mercantile event which requires further examination; after capturing Jerusalem, the four brothers mount their heraldic shields on walls of the city. The significance of this demonstration of mercantilist power is underscored by the play's repetitive speeches and meaningless wanderings. Cooper explains that the “purchase of coats of arms [by merchant-guilds], the heraldic insignia that had once been an exclusively aristocratic sign system,” signifies the increasing power and influence wielded by merchants and trade companies within the Elizabethan political economy (163). The shields also stake claims for their respective companies to trade within the city. Smith explains that the practice of identifying the presence of trade companies in this fashion was common: “[i]t connects individuals who might never otherwise be known to one another, and gives every man of the trade a direction where to find every other man of it” (*Wealth of Nations* 80). The placement of the shields serves to reinforce the brothers' association with early English mercantilism and in the process reinforce their own sense of identity. The mounting of the shields identifies the brothers and Jerusalem as supporters of early mercantilism, but also indicates the powerful influence of mercantilism in foreign affairs.

The previously mentioned implications of mounting the heraldic shields on the city walls are indicative of the mercantilist justifications for war which are implicitly supported by *The Four Prentices of London*. Smith explains that mercantilism relies on foreign trade for its survival: “[t]he national coin receives its movement and direction from the commodities circulated within the precincts of each particular country; the money in the mercantile republic, from those circulated between different countries” (257). It is not surprising, then, that English

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45 The association between my thesis and the study of colonialism and imperialism is addressed in the conclusion.

mercantilism seeks to establish its presence in foreign nations regardless of an invitation. Smith argues that mercantilism is a facilitator of war because merchants and traders benefit from the export of manufactured goods and provisions that an army and occupying force requires. Smith explains that mercantilism also works to decrease a nation's apprehension to war by creating an exportable surplus of goods: “a country whose industry produces a great annual surplus of such manufactures, which are usually exported to foreign countries, may carry on for many years a very expensive foreign war, without either exporting any considerable quantity of gold and silver” (257). A broad and large dispersion of mercantile trade-routes and activities abroad eases the burden of a nation's military efforts.

The play engages in a cultural war as well as a physical one. The play attempts to consolidate England's cultural identity by co-opting and rewriting the nation's history. Cooper's most salient argument about the play is that its significance is located in its ambiguities. It is important to note that the brothers are represented as English despite their French ancestry, and are specifically intended to represent London apprentices. Nevertheless, there are some interesting historical assessments to be made regarding the Earl's allegiance to William the Conqueror, and the brothers' allegiance to Robert, Duke of Normandy.<sup>46</sup> There is a significant element of the play to be discovered in Heywood's decision to celebrate England and its apprentices by using Norman characters. Many historians believe that England's sense of nationhood was repressed by William's Norman Conquest, although Hastings notes that this belief is contested:

For many commentators, Norman rule is held to have wiped out whatever there was of nationhood existent in the preceding age. The wholesale substitution of a new ruling class, the replacement of the English language by French among the

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46 Also known as Robert Curthouse.

rulers, and, eventually, for the law; the near disappearance of English literary writing; the fact that England was ruled by people whose political interests lay equally in France; the imposition of feudalism – all this may seem more than enough to demonstrate the absurdity of claiming any sort of nationhood for the England of the post-Conquest period. . . . Yet one of the most interesting things in recent medieval historiography has been the increasing emphatic rejection of such a conclusion. (43)

Heywood's use of French characters to represent London apprentices is an attempt to reverse the historical power dynamic between the English and Normans. Reversing this power dynamic helps Heywood instill a sense of historic pride within his English audience. As both Hastings and Helgerson note, England's marginalization encouraged English people to write their own identity, forging an "ideal pattern" for themselves (Helgerson 3). Heywood's historical revision celebrates early English mercantilism and nationalism more than it celebrates William or Robert. The success of Robert and the four apprentices is made possible by the unified English identity that the Normans historically fractured. Robert also praises the "faire virgine" (2478), obviously Queen Elizabeth: "Were [she] here, I would renowne / Her glorious beauty with the English Crowne" (2478-79). And finally, the Crusaders' success at Jerusalem is directed back toward England in order to assist early mercantilist trade efforts. Hastings explains that whatever resistance was mounted by English nationhood, the "Norman infusion into English identity does, however, seem permanently to have modified it in one quite serious way. . . . [the Normans] were really good at conquering people" (44-45). Heywood transmutes this physical ability to conquer into a cultural ability to conquer by rewriting the history of Norman influence on English culture,

and *vice versa*.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4.4 The Impetus for the Imitation of Apprentices

There are historical and mercantilist reasons for Heywood's attempt to foster a sense of pride and communal identity amongst London apprentices. Burnett argues that during the 1590s London was struggling to keep its apprentices from revolting. He notes that many playwrights took a reactionary approach to this behaviour: “[w]hile expressing worry about the consequences of civil unrest in what has been termed the 'crisis' of the 1590s, authors also rallied apprentices to defend causes of national importance” (29). Burnett admits that while it was “not uncommon for apprentices to enlist or to be impressed to fight in foreign wars...and the rousing stories in which they appeared might have held a specific interest,” (26), the more probable explanation is that the increase in apprentice figures on the stage was a reaction to the rebellions throughout London (34). Additionally, Burnett argues that “[t]hemes of adventure... served to direct aggression into realms of heroic fantasy: pamphleteers, with one eye on the censors and the other on apprentices who clamoured for new publications, played down economic questions while they resituated contemporary grievances in an exotic environment” (37). Heywood's play cleverly attenuates the antagonistic potential of apprentices by redirecting their energies toward pursuits which favour the nation and its economy.

The representation of London apprentices as a community also serves to reinforce the familial bond in the master-apprentice relationship. Pelling argues that the apprentice system “contained within it a 'moral economy' involving not just male heads of household, but children, families, kin, servants, neighbours, and the more accessible sources of local authority” (33).

Burnett figures that “at least half of all apprentices in this period of rising poverty failed to serve

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<sup>47</sup> Arguably, the play does the exact same thing with the schism between Protestantism and Catholicism: the Pope is obviously and intentionally excluded from the play. The same can also be said of the play's representation of Islam and the Crusades, although in this case England is depicted as physically as well as culturally victorious.

for seven years; the response of didactic writers was to seek to persuade them that the successful completion of their training was a moral necessity” (37). This “moral economy” is not only based on royal hierarchy and patriarchy, as Pelling and Burnett indicate, but also on what Screpanti and Zamagni identify as mercantilism's view of labour, which is fundamentally demographic and requires an increase in labourers working for subsistence wages (37).<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the intention of apprenticeship is “to restrain the competition to a much smaller number than might otherwise be disposed to enter the trade” (*Wealth of Nations* 74).

Most of the ambiguities that the play creates are resolved by manifestations of early mercantilism and nationalism. Similarly, Cooper concludes that once these ambiguities dissipate at the play's finale an essence of nationalism remains:

[The] audience is perhaps encouraged by the play's end to bring the lesson of the play back from eleventh-century Jerusalem to sixteenth-century London...[the play] is indeed a fantasy – one derived from a remembered and co-opted history that is, with the play's audience, apprenticed for a brief time to the trade of nation-building. (175)

The play is one in which England's economy and identity are secured by the efforts of middle-class representatives in the name of a Norman ruler. *The Four Prentices of London* vilifies its eponymous characters for deserting their apprenticeships before providing their redemption at the battle for Jerusalem. The end of the play follows the formula of legitimizing upward mobility that is established in the previous two plays. The play attempts to prescribe middle-class behaviour by chastising disobedience and rewarding individual sacrifice in the name of the

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48 Outlined in the introduction, the underlying justification behind subsistence wages was that labourers were naturally inclined to behave immorally, and as a result ought to be paid only enough to survive, lest they fall into sin. Mercantilism's wage theories are described as demographic because they target a specific population, and encourage that population to increase.

nation. Heywood simultaneously homogenizes and performs the middle-class in order to promote an overtly mercantilist and nationalist community.

## Conclusion

Initially, my research focused on critics, generally from a literary background, who explored the issues of gender, race, monarchy, colonialism, and empire within these plays. Although social mobility is often associated with these issues it cannot be wholly explained by them; at best, they are tangential ideas that can contribute to understanding a few minor intricacies of social mobility. For example, an examination of the gender roles in these plays might determine that marriage is often a site of social mobility, but fail to reveal any consistent explanation for the authorization of social mobility that occurs without marriage. Instead, the argument would devolve into conjecture about the possible justification of a single character's individual mobility. Furthermore, this examination would neglect to explain how, in a culture so bombarded with monarchic thought, these plays could justify social mobility. As far as these plays are concerned, understanding the processes of social mobility lies in understanding its relationship with mercantilism. An analysis of individual mobility in these plays is meaningless without an examination of that individual's contribution to mercantilism. At the same time, it is important to remember that mercantilism is inherently a nationalist system. The case studies presented in this thesis demonstrate the indivisible relationship between social mobility and mercantilism.

This thesis contributes to literary criticism both peripherally and centrally. The influence of mercantilism did not end with the Renaissance, and because of this there remains a plethora of texts which could be expanded upon with a mercantilist approach.<sup>49</sup> The critical theory that

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<sup>49</sup> Heywood was truly an ardent mercantilist. The second half of Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* uses Sir Thomas Gresham as its protagonist: Heywood was clearly a fan. Gresham was a member of the Merchant Adventurers, and one of the country's biggest and most successful proponents of monopoly rights and

could benefit most from this thesis is post-colonialism because mercantilism is a fundamental supporter of colonial efforts. Thoroughly deconstructing the impact of colonialism requires at least a passing knowledge of mercantilism's influence on colonial motivations. After all, Smith indicates some nations dedicated the “whole commerce of their colonies to an exclusive [merchant] company” (351).

These plays reflect the emergence of a massively influential political economy which encompassed a variety of Elizabethan issues; mercantilism involved itself with the growing playhouse industry, the institutionalization of marriage, and the exploration and exploitation of foreign lands. Mercantilism outlasted the majority of its contemporary Elizabethan philosophies and social institutions, however. That a character's contribution to mercantilism can justify his or her social mobility reveals the growing disparity of the power dynamic between mercantilism and hierarchical philosophies of social order in Elizabethan England. Though mercantilism's practitioners stood to profit by maintaining or increasing the labour demographic, they also had the capacity to recognize the exceptions to their rules and capitalize on them. Divine monarchy's failure to acknowledge these exceptions might partially explain its demise.

Though the strict social hierarchy of the Renaissance is extinct, mercantilism remains an influential and powerful force in the modern world. In fact, theorists within the Austrian School describe contemporary North American economics as being “neo-mercantilist.” Economic trade policy and copyright law in the twenty-first century are not much different than their Elizabethan ancestors in practice or principle. Elizabethan merchants who petitioned the crown for patents are scarcely different than the contemporary lobbyists vying for government favours and contracts. The most disconcerting thought about the comparison between past and present

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tariffs on foreign imports. The play documents Gresham's construction of the Royal Exchange, and his attempt to secure a patent for sugar from the King of Morocco.

economic agents is not located in the similarities, but in the differences; modern mercantilists have an ability to reproduce and disseminate cultural values and information which is unrivalled by their economic ancestors.

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