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"Floute me, Ile floute thee; it is my profession"
Early Modern Improvisation as Resistance

PHD THESIS

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Preface

Improvisation is an inherent part of our life. It is a basic constituent of our everyday activities such as shopping, ordering in a restaurant, work or recreation. Also, it is an essential performative device in artistic activity, both in theatre and visual arts, as well as music and popular genres. Yet, although theatre and performance studies have recently occupied a great area within humanities, they have not been able to find an adequate definitional and explanatory background to the action of extemporisation. Improvisers are held to be unprompted entertainers who are not willing to follow rules, requests and orders. They cannot either be taken seriously as artists, since they – intentionally – do not serve the purpose of a highly authoritative agent such as a prewritten script, a writer or a director. They are interpreted as rebels and opposers.

In the 1999 Academy Awards, against all expectations, Jim Carrey was not nominated as Best Actor for his *The Truman Show*. The film (directed by Peter Weir), however, received nominations for its screenplay, its directing and Ed Harris was also stated as actor in a supporting role. Moreover, earlier in the same year, Carry, who is generally known as a comedian, received Golden Globe for "Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama". At the aforementioned Oscar ceremony, Carry presented the prize for Best Achievement in Film Editing as follows:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I'm here tonight to present the award for Best Achievement in Film editing. (*Pause.*) That's all I'm here to do. (*Pause.*) I have nothing else to worry about. I can just...show up and enjoy the parties. (*Starts to break down and cry.*) Um...I'm sorry... And um... I didn't expect that to happen... (*Pause.*) Um, winning the Oscar is not the most important thing in the world. It's an honor just to be nom-...Oh God! (*Breaks down and starts to bawl.*) It's my own fault. I screwed things up. (*Cries a bit.*) About a month ago, I would have thought that voting for myself was gonna make the difference. But ya know... (*Pause.*) You really gotta get out there and talk to people... (*He abruptly changes tact and is now happy and energetic.*) Anyway, who cares? I have been beaten by Roberto Benigni! He has jumped into my ocean! (*Laughing.*).[1]

Without intending to assess Carrey's performance in *The Truman Show* or judging the importance or the professional value judgement of the Academy Awards, I find this scene significant from the perspective of comic performance. Carrey, on the one hand, improvises on his own performer identity by reacting on his preterition in a humorous way. In *The Truman Show*, he plays a serious (dramatic) character, which was not acknowledged by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, so he uses his comic extempore skills to carry out a mocking protestation. His comic identity and his dramatic role are not generally reconcilable, so he finally decides to present his comic image to caricature the situation.

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[1] The transcript of the speech is available at http://www.jimcarreyworld.com/oscar-presentation-speech.php, accessed 10 September, 2010.
The video is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWjIxUUuAqQ, assessed 10 September, 2010.

On the other hand, his performance might represent an opposition or a resistance to the evaluation method (or ideological working) of the most powerful filmic institution in the USA, which seems to have a prejudice against comedians if they play in film dramas. Carrey does not only ridicule the situation itself, but he makes his own attitude relative as well, since even if he is ostensibly an outsider, he takes part at the ceremony, and viewers are aware that he is a partaker of the system that he criticises. However, if he was not an insider, he would not have the knowledge and the tools to his comical riposte.

Jim Carrey's Oscar speech roughly exhibits those characteristics of the comic player that I am willing to analyse in my PhD dissertation. I strongly believe that comic performance's gist is the permanent dissidence, resistance and opposition to the current and ever-changing social, ideological and cultural processes, and it does not even give a quarter to its close environment, for instance, in this case, the filmic institution. In other words, comic performative action, in my view, always targets the fluctuating social, cultural and ideological system, which maintains and nourishes it. Due to these fickle and ever changing conditions, comic performance requires adjustment and improvisatory skills, just as everyday life. So, in my thesis, what I am interested in is the palpable nature and content of this improvisatory resistance, which, I believe is already detectable in the early modern period as well.

1 Introduction and the Structure of the Thesis

There have been many attempts to describe the interrelation of theatricality and early modern culture. Numerous allusions in plays and secondary texts, certain examples of Renaissance iconography as well as the widespread use of the *theatrum mundi* topos represent the world as stage and human life as role-play, acting and performance. These references cannot only be detected in popular culture as references in plays, but also in court culture, or the puritan anti-theatrical writings of the age. Depending upon certain ideologies and viewpoints, role playing in the early modern has been described as natural or a dangerous, conscious or insensible activity of human beings.

Within this framework, the institutional theatre of the Renaissance occupied a central position. Putting the emphasis on its aesthetic, political, historical or ideological function, describing the stage as a "mirror up to nature", a place of subversion or "Satans synagogue", one thing seemed definite: theatre had a crucial role in early modern culture as well as in shaping the identities of all who got close to it, no matter they were actors or spectators. When we discuss the connection between the theatrical understanding of everyday activities and the stage performances of a certain

period, it is a crucial question which definition of theatre we find applicable.[2] Does it make sense to speak about theatre as a building or an institution separately, if the diverse interpretations are continuously merging and crossing each other?

Apart from theatre historical approaches, early modern stage has recently been discussed in light of the different aspects of performance.[3] However, the analysis of the work of the actor is either oversimplified or remains on the level of biographical and historical facts.[4] This especially pertains to comic actors, who are usually defined only in general terms of clownery or their fame. Comic performance is not even discussed in those works which intend to give a description and an interpretation of Renaissance acting styles.[5]

For this reason, my intention is to apply a comprehensive theoretical angle in my dissertation, wherein I hope to position the early modern (comic) performance. Beside theatre historical findings, I propose to rely on performance studies, which prefers to concentrate on the political and ideological implications and drives of human actions; and it intentionally ignores historical and 'literary' standpoints such as drama, character formation or stage acting. Although performance studies is not interested in

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[2] The best known definition is by Eric Bentley ("A performs B for C") and by Peter Brook ("I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage"). For the interpretations of these and other definitions, see Imre 2003, 13-27.

[3] Without striving for completeness, these include Ute Berns (2010), Henk Gras (1993), Andrew Gurr (1994), Michael Hattaway (1982), Nora Johnson (2003), Attila Kiss (2007), Meredith Anne Skura (1993), Peter Thomson (1997), Lesley Wade Soule (2000), Robert Weimann (1978, 2000) and David Wiles (1987). I should also mention Alan Dessen's *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer's Eye* (The University of North California Press, 1977), *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), and *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[4] See Nungezer 1929, Bradbrook 1962 or Wiles 1987. In these volumes, the reader receives valuable data concerning the players' biographies, their roles, and the contemporary social and theatrical context, but their acting style remains more or less unresolved.

[5] These thorough works and studies, which especially focus on the acting techniques of the Renaissance, are the following: Gurr (1966), Joseph (1951), Rosenberg (1968), Royce (2009), and also *The Players Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* by Joseph Roach (University

the diachronic view on acting – i.e., it prefers a synchronic perspective on contemporary theatrical phenomena – I think its statements, for instance, regarding the community of player and spectator or the performative nature of everyday practices are exploitable to my argumentation.

The fundamental aim of my dissertation is to introduce and to circumscribe early modern comic performance as a practice, which exemplifies constant resistance to current ideologies and power structures. I borrow the notion "resistance" from social studies in order to describe individuals' complex (recipient and opposing) behaviour towards the social sphere around them.[6] I will identify "improvisation" – or, with the early modern term, "extemporisation" – as resitance, since, in my understanding, comic players' activities were always carried out in opposition to certain systems, let those be 'official' theatre, textual authority, artistic decorum or decent social behaviour. In my understanding – although it is, to some extent, detectable in texts – comic performance might rather belong to the territory of oral culture, which is traditionally opposed to written literature or rigorous authorial intentions.[7] Improvisation – in contrast to script-centred personification/realistic acting – is also a routine by which one can describe the common practices of everyday life,[8] so I also see comedians as exemplars to their spectators, since by displaying their extempore manners, they might impart their creative skills to others. Accordingly, in my argumentation, I take the audience as a participant creator in the performative action.

In the first, theoretical part of my thesis (Chapter 2) I introduce those aspects with which players and performers are usually interpreted.

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of Delaware Press, 1985) and *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time: The Art of Stage Playing* by John H. Astington (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[6] I am going to elaborate on this in Chapters 4.4 and 4.5. For the summary of Pierre Bourdieu's and Michel de Certeau's notion of "resistance", see Kosnoski 2010.

[7] For the example of Ben Jonson, see Chapter 3.2.4.

Traditional theatre history – especially the one concerning early modern theatre – has been interpreting the actor as if he was an agent being subordinated to the playtext and to authorial intentions, and also relates his work to the stage and the theatre building. Compared to this, histories that intermingled their views with different approaches of social sciences realised that the concept of theatre cannot strictly be connected to a four-wall (or even round-shaped) building. At the same time, they started to look at the work of the actor from social, psychological and cultural historical points of view. Moreover, they also examined the social and cultural embeddedness of their activities. In this way, it became possible to develop a non-aesthetic view of acting and performance, which concentrates more on political and ideological concerns.

This interpretation of acting, however, accommodates not only professional players, but all other forms of performances. That is why performance studies could be a significant approach if we wanted to discuss performance, which affects all participants (players, spectators) of the event. In my argumentation – which claims that comic players' performance exemplifies the stimulation to gain control back over performance against strict social expectations – the notions of performance studies help to interpret performance as social activity or process which constructs (or adds up to) life strategies. Nevertheless, performances studies – somewhat similarly to Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning – explain performance as if it was a set of behavioural patterns which performers ought to follow and repeat continuously (Greenblatt 1980, 1-9).[9]

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[8] For the definition and the thorough discussion of everyday life and its practices in terms of social sciences, see Chapters 4.4 and 4.5.

[9] As Ágnes Matuska summarizes it in her article concerning performance as pretention/creation, there are two ways interpreting the nature of performance processes. According to Peggy Phelan (1993), performance is unrepeatable, and its uniqueness lies in its mutability and liveliness. However, as Elin Diamon (1996), Shannon Jackson (2004) or Marvin Carlson (2004) see it, performance is based on repetition and pre-constructed models

At the same time, the context of performance studies should be contrasted with the idea of theatricality (and with its different interpretations), since both deal with the interrelationships of theatre/performance and reality.[10] Concerning early modern culture, theatricality is a notion which is very often used to explain the behaviour of audiences and actors, the royal court or Renaissance individuals in general.[11] For this reason, I needed to compare and contrast performance/performativity and theatricality to see how these two explanatory frameworks discuss the concepts of performance, (theatrical) presence, audience and theatre.

My main concern in Chapter 3 is the early modern comic actor, whom I consider to be an archetypical player figure. Beside the various definitions and interpretations he has been approached with, I would especially like to concentrate on the histrionic abilities, with which he continuously "daunst [him] selfe out of the world", as Will Kemp, the famous Renaissance comedian put it (Kemp 1840 [1600], 1).[12] In Kemp's writing, this line refers to his nine-day long morris from London to Norwich, but in a broader context, it has more crucial bearings. Kemp's dance shows that the early modern comedian did not only profess text-based acting within the

(Matuska 2010). Schechner also explains performance as a practiced pattern, as 'restored behaviour' (Schechner 2002, 28).

[10] The terms 'theatricality' is generally used to define the understanding of all human actions as theatrical activity, i. e. performance. I will explain the term (and its linkage to 'performance') in Chapter 2.2.1.

[11] For further readings (with no claim of being exhaustive), see Laura Levine (1986), Attila Kiss (2007), Thomas Postlewait (2003), Tracy C. Davis (2003) Kent T. van Den Berg (1985).

[12] Although I highly appreciate the importance of early modern female performers and especially interested in their role of the formation of contemporary theatrical culture, in this thesis, I am following the mainstream interpretation of Renaissance players, which concentrates on men. This is because, on the one hand, the early modern English public theatre was all-male, on the other hand, because the well-known players being in the centre of my argumentation are male actors. Thus, whenever referring to actors, I am going to use the masculine personal pronoun, unless indicated otherwise. As for the places of women in the all-male Renaissance theatre, see *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* by Stephen Orgel (Cambridge University Press, 1996). For the Italian

walls of the theatre. Moreover, his declared eccentricity shows that it was part of his art to neglect the rules of the (social, moral, ideological) circumstances he existed in. This is also visible in the iconography of players, which characteristically seems to differentiate between serious actors and comedians.

I find it important to emphasize the performance attribute here, since to my argumentation, the clown's out-of-stage actions are even more important than his roles within plays, because I look at the context of drama and theatre as a set of regulations which intended to rectify the comic actor's behaviour in many respects. What I am planning to focus on is the apparent prejudice against the comic player and his art as well as his strategies to make use of the constant disdain targeting him (Chapter 3.2). I will argue that he was seen as a source of menace, because he embodied others' (spectators') potentials to restructure and change the frameworks and (performative) rules that seemingly – and particularly in the theatre – legitimised his activities and made his existence possible. I see him as a subject who disorganised (i.e., critically deconstructed) the system from the inside.

With regard to all this, it is possible to interpret the comedian as a performing and productively performative subject who often disregards the precepts of performance. As for the early modern context, this resulted that he was not only excluded from the academic discussions on theatre, but his work – as opposed to his 'tragic' fellow-actors' – obviously, was not even interpreted in terms of court behaviour (cf. Castiglione), the dignity of the Renaissance man (cf. Pico della Mirandola) or rhetoric (cf. Thomas Heywood) – none of the discourses that intended to give an explanation of the creative artistry of man (Chapter 3.3). Consequently, we do not find a single contemporary context in which the comic performer's modes can be described in a satisfactory way.

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cultural context, see *Women, Medicine and Theatre 1500-1750* by M. A. Katritzky (Ashgate,

In Chapter 4, thus, I attempt to give a thorough discussion of early modern comic performance. Another reason why I have chosen the comic player is that, because of the very nature of comic acting, in contrast to tragedians, it is possible to separate him easily from the dramatic role he might characterise. Nevertheless, we certainly attribute a "role" to him, however, it reminds us more of a civic "self" than of a fictional character. In other words, comedians are always in role, even if they do not play on a stage. For this reason, we easily identify the comic player with constant role-play, vulgar pretention and histrionics.

Thus, comic presence and performance can be interpreted without special aesthetic bearings. From this perspective, the purpose of comic performance is not the projection or the embodiment of a *dramatis persona*, but something else: perhaps the articulation of the attitude towards the world he lives in, his opinion about the given social circumstances, his conformity or his rebellion. In this way, the comic actor's activity might be a metaphor of our strategies to give reactions to his socially and ideologically embedded position. In this part of my thesis, I intend to elaborate on these issues by defining the limits of character and player, by describing the comic player's grotesque, unusual/non-aesthetic bodily presence, and by explaining what I mean by his extempore style. Improvisation, in my understanding, is a metaphor of self-realisation in early modern culture; the course of action with which comic players represent the deviation from the regular ways of performance and its rules. At the end of the chapter, I draw the social theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Michel de Certeau (1988) into the discussion so that I could connect improvisation and everyday practice/social activity – with special regard to early modern culture – in a more exact way.

In my last chapter (Chapter 5), in order to define comic performance, non-aesthetic bodily presence and improvisation in particular, I analyse early

2007).

modern textual examples, which are Richard Tarleton's (died 1588) *Jests* (1613), Will Kemp's (died 1603) *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600) and Robert Armin's (1563-1615) *Quips upon Questions* (1600). I introduce the comic *personas* created by these writings and prove that – as a crucial part of their image – they are multiple identities: their civic and players selves are inseparable. I show that although these players work with different comic styles and rely on the previous, mutable traditions of comic acting, they are similar in the sense that their performance functions as resistance to specific rules or accepted norms. Tarlton, for instance, continuously ridicules social habits at the court, in the city and the country. Kemp wrote his pamphlet against "lying Ballad-makers", and according to Armin, the comedian's task is to teach the beholder how to "floute" and "iest" at others. Even if these texts are not reliable as autobiographical writings, I strongly believe that they can provide a context from which the expectations of early modern spectators are detectable.

In my thesis, thus, I plan to examine how early modern comedians embody resistance and opposition via (social and theatrical) performance, and what the purport of these actions are. It is my conviction that comic players' extempore manners represent and illustrate the ironic (mocking), critical apprehension of the world around us. The content of these actions cannot always be described promptly, since it always targets those variable, inconstant, timely and current social restrictions that concern and engage the individual. I think that it is the opportunity of the spectators that, via witnessing these performances, they can acquire these improvisational abilities in order to learn, harden and change what they can.

2 Theoretical Approaches to the Performer

2.1 Theatre History

2.1.1 Documenting Players

It would be obvious to start the discussion of the early modern actor from a theatre historical perspective first. But even before that, it has to be pointed out that there are several possible ways to approach the question of acting in theatre history. If we look at the recent metahistory of theatre historiography, what we find is that apart from the fact that no theatre historian has denied the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches in theatre studies recently (at least when it comes to identifying it separately from drama studies), there are more than one major way of the inquiry.

In Thomas Postlewait's *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (2009) – which is probably the most recent methodological casebook – one of the two approaches is called the documentary way, in which the historian explores facts and intends to recover past events, like, for instance, performances at the Globe theatre. The other one is called cultural analysis, which discovers the context and the cultural significance of a certain event (Postlewait 2009b, 27, 60). Postlewait emphasises that these two approaches are never independent of each other: in historical study, we necessarily have cultural or aesthetic implications, while in exploring the "meanings" of a performance, we need to rely on trustworthy historical data, otherwise, we might end up in false conclusions. In relation to the latter one,

in his case study on Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, he convincingly shows that the "theatrical legend" of the scandal on the 1896 premiere – as a result of the opening word *merdre* – is in fact a myth that had been created by a series of miscalculations, which lack historical evidence (Ibid., 84-5).

The obvious fact that in theatre history we often lack concrete historical evidence is not taken as a drawback in my argumentation. With regard to the early modern actor and his improvisatory techniques, it is necessary that we have to take myth and legend (including audience response as well as the way players saw themselves) into consideration in order to reconstruct the cultural context, social expectations and stereotypes regarding the players. This is of crucial importance, because I hope to show that the extended term of extemporising – as a form of social behaviour – has several interconnections with the players' social existence and acquiescence. As I see it, comic players like Tarlton, Kemp and Armin acted not only against the norms of society, but also those of theatre and the rules of performance. With these attitudes, I reckon, they were the paragon of resistance in the eyes of their spectators.

So although I believe that there are several valid approaches to the history of theatre than the two ones mentioned in Postlewait's book, I would like to touch upon questions of documentary history here. Not only because even today, this is probably the most generally acknowledged approach of theatre and performance studies to early modern theatre, but also because I find relevance in Postlewait's warning that we should not degrade the importance of traditional theatre history. The reason why documentary history seems to be the most authentic viewpoint to early modern theatre might be that, unlike in the case of contemporary performance, discovering and analysing (i.e., reconstructing) the factual data is the first necessary component. Thus, for the theatre historian this remains the most important step, even if it is apparently acknowledged that pure reconstruction is not

possible even in the case of historical events. Still, there is a common belief that theatrical events of the past can be observed mostly or primarily from a historical perspective, while contemporary theatre deserves interpretation and analysis.[13] In my thesis, when exploring the work of the early modern actor, I intend to utilize some crucial findings that theatre historical research has made, otherwise the context in which I am interpreting the work of the Renaissance actor would be incomplete. However, as it will be explicit later, theatre history focuses mainly on those references, in which players are linked to the institutionalised theatre of the age, their work elsewhere remains marginally relevant.

When writing a documentary history of a certain theatrical event or period, the historian collects and selects certain documents including playtexts, iconography, costumes, audience response, etc., and tries to draw general consequences about the object of study – usually without the direct intention of cultural and aesthetic considerations. This bare "factualness" is also often labelled as a "scientific approach" (Vince 1989, 12). The emergence and the development of this method have a lot to do with the origin of theatre history as an individual academic field. Regarding theatre as a separate object of research from dramatic literature, mid-19th-century theatre historians started to write "chronicles" of theatres in order to distinguish their field from the aesthetically devoted literary studies (Ingram 2009, 4). Thus, the result was a huge amount of dry, objectified facts often only with the intention of collecting and listing, but not analysing them thoroughly.

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[13] It is my personal experience that in the Hungarian academic context of theatre studies, the focus is mostly on postmodern theatre and performance, even if one thinks about theatre history. Hungarian scholars of drama and theatre concentrate on the contemporary scene of international drama and theatre, but there are only a few instances of discussing the early modern or its related topics in the international theoretical context and terminology of theatre studies, as, for example, the chapter on Shakespeare's New Globe in Zoltán Imre's *Színház és teatralitás* (2003, 57-72).

Nevertheless, the majority of sources were textual, while images were discarded from the discussion.[14]

When the intention of some kind of interpretation emerges, the key word in the documentary method is *reconstruction* referring to the goal that the historian's task is to recover past theatrical events by drawing inductive or deductive consequences on the bases of the data collected. The idea of reconstruction often returns in theatre histories and historiographies even today (Simhandl 1998, Postlewait 2009b). I will return to the applicability and feasibility of the term and the intention behind later, but first I would like to sum up the usefulness of documentation regarding early modern theatre.

The lengthy volumes concerning the early English period also apply the documentary approach.[15] Postlewait's example is the *Records of Early English Drama* (REED), which is an extensive documentary project aiming at – in William Ingram's words – collecting "written evidence of drama, minstrelsy, and ceremonial activity, not to interpret it", despite the fact that "the nature of the material gathered here invites interpretation" (quoted in Postlewait Ibid., 93-4).

These works have collected, selected and classified a huge amount of primary documents and data, and also sometimes tried to set up general models concerning playmaking in early modern England. A lot of them follow the "chronicle form" in the sense that they give a description of the documents of certain periods thematically, grouped around certain phenomena like the playhouses, companies, actors and others. A very recent collection, which basically follows this track is *The Oxford Handbook of*

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[14] Postlewait speaks about the distrust of visual representation in theatre history with regard to the Records of Early English Drama (Postlewait 2009a, 579). Peter Burke is also resenting the "visual illiteracy" of social historians (Burke 2001, 10).

[15] These are E. K. Chambers' *The Elizabethan Stage* (4 volumes, 1923), W. W. Greg's Dramatic *Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (2 volumes, 1931) or more recently,

Early Modern Theatre (2009) edited by Richard Dutton and introduced by William Ingram.

The structure of this volume recalls that of E. K. Chambers' *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923) in the sense that the chapters give a thematic overview of the theatre of the period.[16] However, the *Oxford Handbook* is more than a mere collection of data, as it contains studies on various aspects and by different authors of early modern theatre, moreover, it seems to open up its spectrum towards social and cultural studies/history with including a chapter on different social practices of the period. What I would like to consider here is the methodological introduction, in which Ingram puts the question whether theatre history is a form of social and cultural history at the same time. Apart from the answer being yes or no, he asks: "Do those disciplines have theoretical underpinnings that theatre history can use" (Ingram 2009, 1)? This question seems to be somewhat outworn, since a dozen of volumes published earlier regard it as a basic principle.[17] At the same time, it is also very characteristic that theatre historians today have been continuously trying to "map the field" of their discipline not only due to the growing popularity of performance studies as concurrency, but also because of the fact that "disciplinary frictions remap the borders between and beyond humanities fields" in general (Worthen 2003, 1). Besides, as the constant debate between theatre studies and performance studies show, classical theatre studies seem to have missed lots of opportunity to offer new and fresh viewpoints to discuss its subject matters.[18]

The Shakespearean Stage by Andrew Gurr (1992). The importance and influence of E. K. Chambers' work is summarised and reviewed thoroughly in Postlewait 2003, 90-95.

[16] The order of the chapters goes as follows: I. Theatre Companies, II. London Playhouses, III. Other Playing Spaces, IV. Social Practices, V. Evidence of Theatrical Practices. Acting, which is my preferred interest, belongs to Part V.

[17] As references to this, I could cite almost all the theatre histories that I use in this dissertation. The most crucial ones are Bradbrook 1962, Fischer-Lichte 2001, Gurr 2004 [1987], Postlewait 1989, Worthen 1984 and Zarrilli et. al. 2001.

[18] Dolan 2001, 70. I am going to deal with the relationship of theatre history/theatre studies and performance studies later in Chapter 2.3.2.

As we can see, the insistence on the notion of reconstruction and the documentary methods in theatre history has been very strong, even if, at the same time, the impossibility of the former one is also constantly emphasised. By insisting on reconstruction as well as on its unstableness, theatre history in fact eliminates its own aims and authenticity and narrows its own scientific latitude. This is one reason why reconstruction as a term and concept cannot stand its ground. On the other hand, if we accept that not even a filmic record is valid enough to "restore" a past performance, we can proclaim most assuredly that it is relevant to interpret early modern acting not only from a philological perspective, but also from a theatrical/performative one.[19] This is especially important if we want to examine the work of the early modern player, whom I would like to evaluate and analyise not only on the basis of his theatrical work, but especially regarding his out-of-theatre performance. I consider this as a crucial aspect, since offstage performance, where the aesthetical bearing is more unperceived, is closer to everyday behaviour than explicit theatricalised presence.

R. W. Vince in his 1989 essay – talking about the relationship between practical theatre and historical knowledge – also relativizes the role of reconstruction in theatre history. He states that in theatre, "we cannot reproduce original conditions of performance in toto" (Vince 1989, 11). We know several examples of performances which intended to reproduce "original" conditions of a certain theatre – like William Poel's historically

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[19] The situation is very similar in Hungarian theatre history as well. Both in Hungarian theatre histories and translations, what seems to be dominant is the positivist historical and documentary approach. As György Székely proposes, in his foreword to *Magyar színháztörténet 1790-1873* (Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), it is impossible both to anchor theatricality and to reconstruct theatrical performances entirely. This is why it would be fruitful to explore the general types of play [*színjátéktípus*] of different eras, which is the only way to get a picture of the universal development of theatre (Székely 1990, 8-9). This shows us very clearly that, on the one hand, the history of theatre is held to be a progress from less civilised to more sophisticated forms, on the other hand, the main aim of the examination is some kind of reproduction.

authentic productions of Shakespeare, or the reconstructed Globe's performances – but these, of course, as mentioned before, cannot give back the original intentions or circumstances of a performance. Entire reproduction is impossible in performance as well as in theatre historical research, so the aim of it seems to be false and misleading, or a self-defence/self-justification because the task is insoluble.

Even if we are able to uncover certain phenomena, these are always general assumptions, and they can only remain tentative attempts to describe a certain performance. As Postlewait also remarks it, the models merely based on and supported by historical data have often remained universal but exclusive. These approaches did not open towards a more diverse description of the events, and they could be used to describe the Renaissance theatre specifically. For the same reason, however, they are usually applicable to earlier and later theatre practices as well, just like Robert Weimann's idea of the *platea* and *locus* (Postlewait 2009b, 34). Subsequently, to release the tension created by the frustrating demand of theatre historical reconstruction, it is necessary to accept that – as has been admitted many times – "the whole field of Renaissance theatre is 90 percent speculation to 10 percent fact" (Ibid., 57). Then we can take one step further.

Interpreting the 10 per cent fact, however, is also an issue of making several decisions, as I have referred to this earlier. Taking my topic – the work of the comic actor – as an example, one might have to ponder if iconographic representations, for instance, have anything to say about acting and performance. In my opinion, they surely have, since the way comedians were represented in a picture can give us a hint how they were perceived in contemporary society.[20] Moreover, as I will show, the form and the supposed

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[20] The exploitation of iconographic and semiotic approach in theatre history has a significant tradition. See Footnotes 21 and 76. I am elaborating on the pictorial representation of players in Chapter 3.1.2.

purposes of making also provide lots of additional information concerning their public image.

2.1.2 Alternative Histories

From the perspective of early modern theatre, one of the most important issues in documentary history is the question of the document itself. Although still insisting on some kind of reconstruction, from my point of view, one of the most interesting re-interpretation of the theatrical document has been provided by the Italian theatre theoretician, Marco de Marinis. He has reshaped the notion of the document and documentary history arguing for the "contextual analysis of theatre events", with which he is basically explaining what Postlewait means by the cultural history of the theatrical events (de Marinis 1999, 50). By recommending the thorough examination of all related sources, he applies the method of theatre semiotics to historical observation and – relying on Febvre's, Block's, Zumthor's, Foucault's and Le Goff's criticism of documentation – claims that the document is an object, which is not discovered but created by the historian (Ibid.). In his view, every detectable source can be a document if the historian recognises the relevance of it. At the same time – as he points it out with regard to the *commedia dell'arte* – although the historian presumes that the available documents preserved what we suppose to be a general phenomenon, it is more probable that early modern sources recorded peculiar, special events (Ibid., 56.). That is why we necessarily have to subject the sources to careful examination before we intend to use them as undeniable documents. This is what de Marinis uses theatre semiotics for.[21]

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[21] Theatre semiotics, in general, is the study of signs and their formation and understanding within the context of a theatrical performance. For more readings on theatre semiotics, see, for instance, *Theatre As a Sign-System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance* by Elaine Aston and George Savona (Routledge, 1991), *The Semiotics of Theatre* by Erika Fischer-Lichte (Indiana University Press, 1992) and *Theatre Semiotics: Text and Staging in Modern*

A very similar statement is Richard Woodfield's caution of the "double danger" of iconographical investigation.

> The problem is that the visual evidence, in the form of prints and paintings etc. will only give evidence of what the artists found interesting or, indeed, depictable in a theatrical event (Woodfield 2002, 59).

To my topic, which has a lot to do with the history of the body as well as acting, it is also necessary to consider iconographic sources, or, as Peter Burke would like to call them, "traces"; with the awareness that it is not only their content, but also their form and the purpose of making, which might matter (Burke 2001, 13). Thus, in a forthcoming chapter, I am going to elaborate more on the pictorial representation of players and the way the visual documents contribute to their physical image. I intend to show that – similarly to textual documents – iconographical representations show some kind of prejudice against comic players beside the fact that they are often depicted while playing. At the same time, certain visual sources also delineate actors improvising: the best known example is the title page of Francis Kirkman's *The Wits, or Sport for Sport* (1662). Here Thomas Greene is alluded to in the role of Bubble, the clown, while doing his curtain aside ("Tu Quoque") (Figure 1). I will discuss this image and the phrase in more details later, however, it is important to note that such a theatrical document, even if it is 'motionless', might have significant bearings to the nature of extemporising.

Theatre by Fernando de Toro and Carole Hubbard (University of Toronto Press, 1994). For Hungarian references, see *Színház-szemiográfia. Az angol és olasz reneszánsz színház ikonográfiája és szemiotikája.* (Theatre Semiography. The Iconography and Semiotics of English and Italian Theatre.) edited by Katalin Demcsák and Attila Kiss (Ikonológia és műértelmezés 8., Szeged, JATEPress, 1999).

Hopefully, these presumptions of de Marinis and Woodfield above suggest convincingly that what we think about past theatrical events has more to do with our cultural knowledge and ideological embeddedness than with the lost performances themselves. One emblematic example of the unreliability of pure documentary theatre history is the rebuilding of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, which was reconstructed with the intention of recovering lost theatrical practices. The project was legitimised with the participation of professor Andrew Gurr who was supposed to guarantee the scientific authenticity of the work. As it has been analysed many times, Shakespeare's Globe, on the one hand, functions more as a tourists' attraction and not a theatre, and although the actors' purpose – with the "original" costumes and stage design – is to give back the "original" theatrical practices, in fact, theatremakers and audiences cannot do more than presenting *their* envisioning of early modern performance.[22] In this way, Shakespeare's new Globe is not only misleading in terms of (theatre) historical factualness and authenticity, but also over-generalising, simplifying, and probably very distant from the lively diversity of early modern performance.[23]

As these examples show, it has now been widely assumed that theatre, being not only a historically, but also a socially and culturally embedded phenomenon, can be approached from many different perspectives, even if we respect the findings of traditional theatre historiography. From this viewpoint, one can doubt whether we can talk about theatre history *per se*. This might be the reason why, in recent years,

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[22] Cf. Mulryne and Shrewing 1997, 159-76 and Imre 2003, 57-72.

[23] One telling example of this is my experience with Shakespeare's Globe when I saw Nell Leyshon's play *Bedlam* in the summer of 2010. Employees in charge of the audience literally instructed the spectators not to sit down on the floor, and they did not allow them to go in and out of the stage area. In my view, with this attitude, the whole atmosphere and nature of performance are controlled; at least as far as the audience is concerned.

theatre histories have started to define themselves in new, different and various forms.

As Philip Zarrilli proposes in the introduction to *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* (2006), theatre history, just like any other discipline can have many different focuses, which can of course result in the fact that other preferences remain marginal to the discourse. In this way, Zarilli's theatre histories – where the plural form refers to the multiplicity of methods, performances and cultures the volume focuses on – are intentionally questioning the hegemonic structure of the academic tradition, which has been focusing on Western European, drama based, institutionalised theatre practices (Zarrilli 2006, xvii). In this respect, the authors intentionally use the term "cultural performance" (which is also a crucial term in performance studies) with which they are trying to avoid misleading associations to Western institutional theatre, where drama is considered to be the script or the blue-print of performance (Ibid., xx-xxiii).[24] Jacky Bratton in her *New Readings in Theatre History* – which concentrates on 19th- century British theatre history with regard to questions of stardom, autobiographies and anecdotes – also argues that modern theatre historiography works in a hegemonic way in the sense that, for example, it insists on old binary oppositions like that of popular entertainment versus "theatre with enlightened goals" (Bratton 2003, 8-9).

So as we can see, these authors, although concerned with a historical view basically, are, at the same time, able to combine it with the critical approaches of ideology, multiculturalism or even gender studies. Both cultural performance as a term and the interdisciplinary approach are fruitful to my argumentation, since I am especially interested in early modern comic

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[24] Although the Preface of the volume does not use Milton Singer as a point of reference, it is for certain that Zarilli's concept of 'cultural performance' has to do with Milton Singer's idea. For more details of 'cultural performance' related to theatre/drama history, see Fischer-Lichte 2001, 11. For more information on the original concept, see Carlson 2004, 13-4.

players' "offstage" performances and the way they interact with everyday life. By understanding their cultural context and social positionality more deeply, it is easier to see how the creation of their identity is a process of combining the different roles (both the dramatic and the 'civic' ones) they are playing.[25]

William Ingram, however, in his introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* – which is supposed to be a crucial source to analyse early modern performance – seems to be nostalgic about older, more simple interpretations of theatre. As he says, it is hard to write an appropriate history today, which is partly because there is no general agreement on what 'proper' theatre history is (Ingram 2009, 12). What he means by this is that the preferred objects are different for all; the focus might be on buildings, companies, acting or plays performed, and "these different opinions haven't yet become starting points for a debate" (Ibid.).

As I see it, with the emerging interest in cultural and social studies, however, the discourse, the methods as well as the object of theatre history have been challenged continuously. It is possible that from the perspective of the traditional, documentary approach that *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* represents, certain authors would not fit in the category of theatre historian. However, the criteria of study, the theatre historical document as well as the objects that theatre history could or should concentrate on have been discussed many times. Maybe Ingram is right in the sense that our choice of focus influences the methods we apply to a great extent. As for discovering new facts and data, documentation seems to be a valid and relevant approach, however, if our interest is performance in any

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[25] One characteristic example is the issue of drunkenness, which I regard as part of the clown's image. Tarlton and Kemp, for instance, in conformity with their dramatic roles, were infamous of their devotion to alcohol, and the audience did not make a difference between reality and the attributed characteristics. For the players, it was not a drawback, since the assumed image of alcoholism strengthened their rebellious identity.

form, our theoretical and interpretative framework has to be a lot more flexible.

As R. W. Vince states in his 1989 study cited before, the boundaries of theatre history as a discipline are continuously expanding, and any attempt to limit this or define theatre in its fixed meanings would be arbitrary and self-defeating (Vince 1989, 14). Vince seems to put the emphasis on theatrical performance in theatre history, maybe this is why he is not questioning the premise that theatre is a socio-cultural phenomenon, and the study of it necessarily involves social approaches (Ibid.)

The most important problems that the documentary method has raised have been reflected on since the emergence of new trends against the positivist views on theatre history. To sum them up, one can say that on the one hand, documentary theatre historians have ignored those historiographical issues which were in the focus of modern scholarship. As a consequence, on the other hand, they have failed to explain the hows and whys of documentary research and missed to see theatre in relation to broader contexts such as culture and/or society. In other words, what they have done was presenting theatre as a museum, a collection of forgotten items, isolated objects and ghost stories. As their most tangible result, as has been mentioned above, the reconstructed Globe was opened in London, which has often been criticised, because of its vague mission to preserve or represent "Shakespearean acting style" as well as its being dismissed as a tourist attraction.

In this dissertation, I would like to use the basic perspective of a cultural-historical viewpoint, which also takes the findings of traditional/documentary theatre history into consideration. I strongly believe that, without the aim to reconstruct any performance, it is only with the help of certain historical details that we can provide a convincing picture of the early modern comic actor's acts. Adjusting the traditional separation of

documentary and cultural approaches is necessary because it is not enough to relate early modern comic acting to official/institutionalised forms of theatre, since the terrain where these theatrical practices met their audience was the street, the marketplace and the tavern as well. Also, the nature of their performance cannot be characterised by dramatic role-playing only. What is more, I am especially interested in their offstage, improvisatory activity with which, as I see it, they followed their own rules instead of external dramatic/performative or behavioural control.

2.1.3 The Work of the Player in Theatre History

As for the work of the actor, historical examination faces the same problems as the field in general. To put it simply, these anomalies – as almost all in question – concern the "object" (i.e., the topic researched) and the investigating "subject" (i.e., the historian) of theatre history. Regarding the first one, we may ask what theatre historians want to find in fact. As I wrote before, it is an often mentioned, but now outworn conception that the object of study in theatre history is invisible or does not exist, since the performances that one would like to examine have disappeared with time. This view shows that, on the one hand, theatre historians want to insist on their impossible objectivity, and on the other hand, they basically refuse the study of more elusive topics, like performance or the work of the actor. However, as I can hopefully demonstrate it, with the help of analysing the different modes of social existence on- and/or offstage, both of these phenomena can be feasible topics in theatre history.

Thus, what happens is that theatre histories often remain histories of buildings, tentative biographies of actors or playtexts, and the function of the actor's work in documentary histories remains limited. We could also say that it does not exist, just like it has been stated long about the ultimate object (i.e., the performance) of theatre historical research. If actors are

present at all, the discussion includes their biography or they are hidden in a more general context of a reconstructed performance. Although Postlewait, for instance, suggests a creative unity of the documentary and cultural historical approaches (Postlewait 2009b, 59), in both of his case studies – in which he emphasises the importance of historical as well as cultural analysis from the opposite perspectives – I still find it a major shortcoming in his methodology that the actor's work remains a marginal component.

When traditional theatre histories look at the actor and his/her work as the object of study, they consider real life facts, enlist their dramatic roles and collect pictorial documents of them. They probably use reviews and biographies as sources of information, however, these ones lack any definite reference to the actor's real work beside the mere facts. [26] This is mostly the case with early modern players too, since in the positivist histories of the early modern theatre – like that of Chambers' (1923), Greg's (1931) and Gurr's (1992) – what we find is a collection of historical data, but not any interpretation of the cultural, social or aesthetic context.

I do not intend to say, however, that contemporary (auto)biographies, gossips and mythmaking are without any use for analysing the actor's work. I agree with Postlewait when he says that until the Renaissance, performance did not warrant any personal attention because of the players' marginal social status (Postlewait 1989, 248). In the late 16th and 17th centuries, however, actors became acknowledged as well-known individuals: in the early modern age, mainly in form of anecdotes, ballads and in popular storytelling, from the 18th century on, in newspapers and journals. As Postlewait writes, this suggests that the contemporary public was definitely fascinated by the personal life of theatre professionalists, and that the actors'

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[26] A very characteristic example of this approach in Hungarian theatre historiography is Tamás Gajdó's methodology book entitled *A színháztörténetírás módszerei* (The Methods of Theatre Historiography) (Veszprémi Egyetemi Kiadó, 1997) in which he enlists those philological and pictorial sources that he finds crucial to get information about actors.

compound identity – i.e., the fusion of private selfhood and public behaviour – has been in the centre of interest since the pre-modern period (Ibid., 251).[27] We can also perceive this curiosity with regard to English Renaissance players – both tragedians and comedians – as their public image was partly created by non-theatrical rumours and legends supporting them. Moreover, they sometimes were subjects of fantastic narratives, such as Richard Tarlton in *Tarletons News Out of Purgatory* (1589), which was published after his death.[28]

Thus, analysing gossip and myths are especially useful for us when we intend to be able to reconstruct the cultural context (as well as the audience's expectations) in which we might interpret the work of the players. Postlewait, however, has the self-assurance of a historian when he says that, when researching theatrical myths, "it is possible for theatre historians to identify factual errors and unreliable anecdotes" (Ibid., 253). Autobiographies, for instance, definitely have a literary/fictional value, however, they are not less shaped by different ideologies than any other documents. Subsequently, just like historical sources in general, they require careful interpretation. What such documents can really make a contribution to is the comparison of the actors' face and work, presence and absence, life and part, public and private personality (Ibid., 259). I agree with Postlewait saying that, usually, these strict dualisms are taken too seriously, thus, "they split identity, documents and historical conditions in ways that are reductive" (Ibid.).

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[27] Both "pre-modern" and "early modern" are categories in Western scholarship, which intend to describe cultural, social, political and economic phenomena in vast periods of time, and they are also determined geographically. "Pre-modern" seems to be a wider concept, while "early modern" is somewhat synonymous to what we could call "Renaissance". Attila Kiss, in his book, *Protomodern – Posztmodern*, uses the terms "early modern" and "protomodern" synonymously, but prefers the latter to indicate how the early modern, in many ways, paves the way for the "project of modernity" (Kiss 2007, 81-104).

[28] Alexandra Halasz, in her article "'So beloved that men use his picture for their signs'" analyses how Richard Tarleton's public image was constructed by the legends circulating around him in his lifetime and after his death (Halasz 1995, 19-38).

In the case of early modern performance, it would be extraordinarily important to interpret these aspects inseparably, because contemporary society did not seem to make a difference between the acting and the non-acting self. This is one significant component of early modern theatricality, which concerned the individuals of Renaissance England. Especially the royalties were seen as if they were always playing a role in public, and it was a crucial aspect of their self-realisation that they displayed themselves as a unity of a civic and public identity.[29] But also, I believe that actors of the age were regarded the same way, both from a positive and a negative angle. This is especially explicit if one looks at the anti-theatrical literature of the age. Puritans did not make a distinction between female roles and boy actors, for instance. As for the comedians, the stereotypes like lewdness, drinking or pennilessness – recurrent features of comic roles – were attributed to the actors not only by the antitheatricalists, but also by the people, as it is proved by texts like *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder* (1612) or *Tarlton's Jests* (1611).[30]

In the theatre of the Renaissance, since what we have mostly is the playtexts as documents, it is very tempting to discuss the actor's work in a dramatic performance. My aim is, however, to talk about a type of acting which is independent of drama and text and also, to some extent, of theatre. Moreover, to my mind, comic performance represents rules which are somewhat contradictory to those of theatrical decorum. Theoretically, the player is a crucial and inherent component in early modern theatre studies. However, because of the uncertainties encompassing his work, he is pushed

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[29] For more details, see, for instance: *The Cult of Elizabeth* by Roy Strong (Random House UK, 1991) and *The Subject of Elizabeth. Authority, Gender and Representation* by Louis Montrose (University of Chicago Press, 2006). Also, an interesting example of public representation of James I and his wife, Queen Anne is their appearance in court masques. I am going to touch upon the performative aspects of this genre later.

[30] For instance, Tarlton's first jest is "How Tarlton plaid the drunkard before the Queene" reinforces the belief that drunkenness was a well-known and often used personal/performative tool of the comic actor. Kemp, on the first day of his morris, mockingly refuses to drink, since it "stands not with the congruity of [his] health". I will analyse these examples in more details later.

to the side. What follows now is an attempt to locate the actor within other fields such as performance studies and the concept of theatricality to see whether other approaches/contexts can make his presence more visible and sophisticated. Without claiming that the ultimate subject of theatre and performance studies is the actor's work only, my forthcoming assumption is that while the actor is neglected in theatre history for its unstable position, he is also paradoxically neglected in performance studies for its presupposed restriction to theatre. This would provide a broader framework to my specific topic, which is improvisation as a behavioural pattern. As I see it, early modern players can be interpreted as agents of (cultural) performance, i.e., (individual) performers, however, they seem to act against the accepted rules in many respects. But before exposing this in more detail, I am trying to outline how the overall notion of theatricality can be applied to my argumentation.

2.2 Theatricality

2.2.1 Definitions of Theatricality

In this section I am going to examine the concept of theatricality and its relationship with theatre historical approaches. Obviously, I do not regard theatricality as one, homogenous concept, but I have to include it here, since recently, theatricality has been centrally present in theoretical-philosophical discourses with several diverse meanings. In my argumentation, it is going to be used as an idea with which I can describe the fundamental mode of existence of the early modern player.[31] At the same time, since my thesis refers to how the players demonstrate non-conformist behaviour in the recipient community of the audience, I would like to refer to the spectators as participants (or perhaps performers) in a theatrical coexistence. My idea is that performers represent some kind of transgression that viewers might have felt as an encouragement to follow. In other words, I take the comic actor as the agent of omnipresent theatricality, who, at the same time, by his improvisatory techniques and non-conformist behaviour, challenges the rules which concern him.

When discussing theatricality, however, one has to be aware of the separate, still overlapping and interrelating interpretations of strict documentary history and performance-centred approaches. What I am going to propose is that when 'traditional' theatre studies highlight theatricality, it is because they want to express some reaction to the recent expansion of performance theories in theatre studies. Consequently, it is especially crucial

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[31] As I see it, theatricality is a concept which performance studies seizes with the term 'performativity', however, the former one seems to be a more conventional and localised. At the same time, early modern discourse might prefer to use 'theatricality' because of the widespread circulation of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor at the age, and because 'theatrical behaviour' (even in everyday life) was connected to stage plays to a great extent. For a more detailed comparison of theatricality and performance, see Magnat 2002, 147-66; Reinelt 2002, 201-15. For more reference, see Fogarasi 2010 and Markovska 2008.

to define what theoretical framework we consider when we use the term theatricality in opposition to or as an approximate synonym to performance.

Theatricality as a context appears in numerous contexts with widely different theoretical backgrounds and explanations. In general, we can find it in philosophical discourses, in social sciences and, of course, in theatre studies. Since here, I am mainly concerned with theatre's narrower and broader contexts – and because it is impossible to cover the widespread use of theatricality – I will not discuss the other disciplines' approaches in more detail, except when it is necessary.[32] In the meantime, I definitely believe that different interpretations can overlap to a great extent, and theatricality's best analysis is an interdisciplinary one. Whenever I refer to theatricality, on the one hand, I will consider it as a concept related to theatre as an institutional framework and a social activity, since an important component of my topic is the fusion of theatrical and social existence of players/performers. On the other hand, even within the context of theatre studies, I will not insist on a single definition, and will always keep the divergent views in mind.

As Tracy C. Davis writes, "theatricality" as a term originates from the 19th century, and it generally signifies a kind of behaviour, which is artificial and opposes the natural attitudes (Davis 2003, 128).[33] Although, as she

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[32] In Péter P. Müller's significant volume *Test és teatralitás* (Body and Theatricality), the division of chapters show clearly how the body has become a crucial notion in humanities recently. Before P. Müller starts to discuss the interconnections of bodily presence and theatre, he usefully summarises the interpretations of the body in philosophy (Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Butler) and in cultural history and ethnography/rituals (Turner, Goffmann, Elias, etc.) (P. Müller 2009, 23-119). So does the book review by Attila Kiss in the 2010 summer edition of *Apertúra* (http://apertura.hu/2010/nyar/kiss, accessed 11 November, 2012). The 2010 autumn edition of *Apertúra* also deals with the different approaches of theatricality in culture (http://apertura.hu/2010/osz/tartalom, accessed 11 November, 2012).

[33] In the context of theatre, the unnaturalness of theatrical acting is by no means pejorative in the sense that it might refer to the considerate work of the actor. As Denis Diderot writes in his *The Paradox of Acting*, excellent actors should learn and practice how to "render" the outward signs of feelings. "The broken voice, the half-uttered words, the stifled or prolonged notes of agony, the trembling limbs, the faintings, the bursts of fury – all this is pure mimicry, lessons carefully learned" (Diderot [1830] 1883, 16). So artificiality in this

proves, the term itself started to be used in the 1840s, one cannot deny that the social and theatrical phenomena described by the notion had existed before. In other words, although theatricality as a term was created in the 19th century, we can think of many events from past theatres that can be characterised by this. Medieval performances and pageants as well as Renaissance out-of-theatre performances can all be explained as theatre events, even if they are neither strictly connected to a theatrical space nor can they be considered as works of art. Nevertheless, it is also important to notice that contrary to actors, for whom theatricality is a crucial component of their job, for ordinary people, "theatricality" often equals posing, pretention and mannered behaviour. This was one of the major arguments in Renaissance anti-theatrical writings, where puritans blamed actors of teaching fake manners to their spectators. However, I think that in early modern comic actors' case, theatrical behaviour was not a part of their job, but an inherent activity by which they built up their own identities.

So what is important to emphasise is that theatricality, even when closely linked to the concept of "theatre", has several meanings. According to a thorough summary by Zoltán Imre, it can be interpreted, on the one hand, within the institutional boundaries of the stage and make it refer to the components of the theatrical performance. On the other hand, it is possible to see it as an interpretative framework which points beyond the stage. As Imre says, this latter view might be called "a mode of perception" or "an occasion of presence" (Imre 2003, 31). The former explanation goes back to the view of Elizabeth Burns, who saw theatricality as a way of expression or a perception interpreted by others and being determined by a particular viewpoint (Burns 1972, 13), while the other one refers to all dramatised

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sense is the necessary component of acting, and the illusion of reality is not on the side of the actor, but on the side of the audience: "[H]e [the actor] is not the person he represents; he plays it, and plays is so well that you think he is the person; the deception is all on your side; he knows well enough that he is not the person" (Ibid., 17).

social acts, which can be interpreted alongside the structure of dramatic forms. It seems that the two understandings Imre presents are not far from each other, since they basically represent the same phenomenon from a different perspective: from the side of the spectator and that of the performer. Also, this explanation shows "theatricality" very similar to certain uses of "performance". For instance, while in his book, Imre discusses a protest, a royal wedding ceremony and body imagery in popular magazines as theatre, these kinds of social events often appear as performances in performance studies.[34]

The arguments concerning the disparities/similarities of theatricality and performativity have more aspects and consequences. My aim, nonetheless, is not to emphasise the differences, but the characteristics that help to bring the two closer to each other in order to reconcile them in a fruitful connection. Since my aim is to define the early modern player at the cross-section of theatricality and performance to show that pre-modern comic players exemplified some kind of transgressive behaviour – inciting spectators not to entirely admit to social rules – it is indispensable to place actors into both a social and a theatrical context.

Accordingly, the reason why I have put this subchapter in the middle position within this chapter (between theatre studies and performance studies) is intentional, since I think theatricality might represent a liminal discourse between the two. It partly emphasises the connections to theatre history/theatre studies and institutionalised theatre in general (because, as I said before, it is strongly connected to the term "theatre"), but also, very similarly to performance studies, it tries to liberate the practice of acting

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[34] "Theatricality" as a concept cannot always be dissociated from the understandings of "performance". I agree with Janelle Reinelt saying that it is due to the diverse metaphorical use of "theatrical". Reinelt also argues that the two terms are rather synonymous, however, "theatricality" is used when one intends to emphasise the mimetic aspects of representation. Also, she sees a geographical division in applying these notions by saying that in European

from drama and theatre, because of which it seems to have close links to performance theory. The study of theatricality and performance studies as a discipline have lots of common characteristics, which I am going to particularise in the next subchapter. Here, I would rather deal with its connection to theatre studies and history in more general terms. Also, I would like to see the applicability of the term to describe social practices and acting, or both.

As far as theatre studies are concerned, it is often discussed in contrast to performance studies, just like the concept of theatricality is compared to performativity. Jill Dolan thoughtfully elaborates this (first) question in her book, *Geographies of Learning* (2001), where she deals with the question of the disappearing prestige and aesthetic superiority of theatre departments as opposed to performance departments. Performance studies and performativity are going to be discussed later. However, it is important to consider Dolan's view that the greatest deficiency of theatre studies – and theatre history – compared to performance is that it has been characterised by the "traditional insistence on privileging the humanist ideology of the aesthetic and by its ubiquitous theory/practice (even mind/body) split" (Dolan 2001, 66). According to Dolan, while theatre studies as a discipline has long been identified as the terrain of the normative and the conventional, its practice has been progressive and represented the non-normative, the "other" (Ibid.). The solution to the tension between theatre and performance studies would be if the former one, involving the accomplishments of practice, became conscious of its social and political mission (Ibid., 67). One attempt to carry this out, as I see it, is Zarrilli's *Theatre Histories*, which, as I mentioned before, intends to present the practice-centred, non-Western-centralised history of the theatre. *Theatre*

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discourses, "theatricality" is preferred, while in Anglo-American contexts, "performance" is in favour (Reinelt 2002, 205-6).

Histories is the history of theatre(s), however, it fruitfully applies the notions of theatricality and/or performance in order to widen its perspective.

As I intend to show, theatricality is one of the important notions not only within theatre studies, but also it is a central metaphor to describe the characteristics of the social sphere in the early modern period. The metadramatic allusions in Shakespeare's plays, royal ceremonies, public executions as well as Tudor masques in the 16-17th centuries can all be described with the notion of theatricality. The events and texts of early modern comic players – Tarlton's jests, Kemp's jig or Armin's quips – will all be viewed through this concept not only because these players were registered actors at the age, but also because I am interested in the wider social, cultural and ideological consequences of their acts. In my understanding (and with Dolan's words), they embody the "practice [that] has been progressive and represented the non-normative, the 'other'" (Ibid., 66).

The theatrical nature of early modern culture has been discussed in many different contexts from various angles. It is not my aim to dwell on all the meanings and interpretations. What I am especially interested in is the understanding of theatricality with which the interrelatedness of theatrical and social existence/activity can be explained in the pre-modern period. For this reason, I am aiming at finding the meeting points and overlaps of theatricality and performativity in order to establish a theoretical background, which is appropriate to analyse the work of the comic player. The adjustment of these two – often rivalling – fields seems to be also sensible, because the growing interest in theatricality might be a direct reaction to the widespread use of performativity and performance as critical terms (Postlewait 2003, 3).

In their 2003 volume *Theatricality*, the editors Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis try to give a broad definition to the notion of

theatricality. They say that the meanings of the concept are numerous, and they cannot be located in a single definition, period or practice (Ibid.). The concept is detectable in Dionysian rituals as well as the pre- and post-medieval *theatrum mundi* topos. The introduction to Postlewait's and Davis' book, in fact, gives a detailed overview of the history of the term and its effects on different academic fields such as theatre studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, or performance studies. Nevertheless, it is also claimed that although theatricality as an ever changing metaphor has been used to describe various activities, it is not identical with any of those (Ibid., 33).

The point in this permissive way of defining theatricality is that the editors actually do not tell what theatricality is, they only say what it is not.

> [...] as we have argued here, theatricality is distinct from yet related to mimesis, role playing, *theatrum mundi*, the carnivalesque, metatheatre, spectacle, ritual behaviour, and social ceremonies, performativity has likewise been confused and sometimes conflated with any and all of this terminology (Ibid.).

At the same time, the authors are "concerned with the relationship between the expansive meaning of theatricality and the particular cases of theatrical activity", and they "resist the apparent need to stipulate one meaning for theatricality" (Ibid., 3). All this seems to recall the "missing object" principle of theatre history as well as the comprehensive concept of "performance" in performance studies. Yet another question that comes up is that if theatre is such a broad category which can include everything, how we can use it to describe anything specifically; which is an argument that has often been raised against performance as well.

As I have referred to it before, the study of theatricality is under double pressure. In one respect, it has to formulate its relationship to theatre studies and theatre history in general. (I also take it as an unavoidable step, since the discussion of early modern theatricality has to rely on the findings of documentary theatre history, which I have discussed in the previous chapter.) Postlewait's attempt, being a theatre historian himself, is quite exact in this regard, since theatricality/theatre studies have to cope with the popularity of its co-field, performance studies. For this reason, what we often find in recent explorations of the topic is the elaboration of the possible connections between theatricality and performativity.[35]

Theatricality, however, has some distinctive features compared to (or within) theatre studies and performance studies. Firstly, the term is historically specified, that is its various manifestations throughout time (even when the term itself did not exist) are acknowledged. Secondly, it is especially interested in the question of representation and the relationship between reality and fiction, self and role. Thirdly, it struggles how to emancipate theatrical phenomena from artistic/aestheticised events and how to apply the term to non-theatrical events like social, political or sexual behaviour. As I will show it in relation to early modern theatricality, all these aspects are interlinked in many ways.

2.2.2 Early Modern Theatricality

In early modern culture, society was deeply theatrical. The importance of the spectacle was equally important in royal society as well as in the public. The royal processions, entries and events showed Queen Elizabeth's body as spectacle, she – adjusting to social expectations that she might have created –

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[35] In 2002, *SubStance* published a special issue on theatricality. A certain number of the articles is about the interrelation of theatricality and performance. For some examples, see

was presenting herself as a role. Stephen Greenblatt describes this phenomenon with the concept of self-fashioning (a term I am going to refer to in the following chapters), which is a set of constantly repeated, ideology-dependent behavioural patterns by which the individual displays himself (Greenblatt 1980, 1-9).

Later – as excellent occasions for self-fashioning – the masques in James' court gave royals the opportunity to take up roles and participate in events that we would regard as theatrical performance.[36] For everyday people, official theatre was only one place for publicity after 1567 when the first theatre building was opened. Before, the public audience could also find pleasure in public executions, feasts and other events that we would regard now as ritual (and sensational) experience. What differentiates royal amusement and public entertainment (including theatre) was, very importantly, that theatre was a commodity that had to thrive in the marketplace. However, both forms of spectacles had to defend themselves from continuous (and various) attacks. Puritan antitheatrical literature against popular theatre might be familiar, but royal presence as well as 'low-rank' characters (called anti-masquers) in court masques were also attacked.[37] This ideological field which contextualised and shaped early modern theatre will be analysed in more detail later.

Magnat 2002, 147-66; Reinelt 2002, 201-15. For more reference, see Fogarasi 2010 and Markovska 2008.

[36] The court masque, interestingly enough is hardly regarded as a theatrical performance. Theorists like Stephen Orgel and Graham Parry rather take it as a spectacle or a fine art composition without real theatrical value (Orgel 1965, 1975; Parry 1981). However, masques are worth considering, since on the one hand, they were mostly written by famous playwrights, on the other hand, they were one of the first genres where female performers (including the monarch herself) could appear on stage. In other words, in a strictly male-dominated theatrical space, the court was a secure place where women could display themselves. For further readings, see Oroszlán 2008, 269-79.

[37] The best known example of these attacks is that of William Prynne, who, in his *Histriomastix* (1633) attacks "Women-Actors, notorious whores", which was taken as an allusion to Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, who enjoyed taking part in spectacles. Prynne was fined, imprisoned, deprived off his academic degree and his ears were cut off (Orgel 1975, 44).

As for the first claim in the previous subchapter about the historical specificity of 'theatricality', it is often discussed with regard to historical periods from the ancient Greeks to the postmodern, both as an interpretive framework and as a metaphor describing certain aspects of human life and the social activities of the self. Even if the aim is to characterise certain social phenomena of our present, theatrical understanding is always viewed in terms of a development or a process from the ancient Greeks to the postmodern. As Elizabeth Burns argues in her book, her intention is to examine "the varieties of the theatrical convention that can be observed in the development of drama in the English theatre" (Burns 1972, 3). Burns does not only historicise her concept in this way, but she also aestheticises cultural processes by linking social action to the Western (dramatic) theatrical tradition. What she in fact proposes is that those codes or rules that players, playwrights and audiences had to conform to accumulate over social generations (Ibid., 4).[38]

From these examples, we can see that the discussion of theatricality, on the one hand, always involves social discussion, on the other hand, the basic premise is always some kind of an analogy, a comparison, a relationship between the real life/social territory and theatre/aesthetic domain. Before I go into a deeper analysis of this and come to the question of representation, I would like to touch upon the interpretation of theatricality in the history of early modern theatre.

The historicised concept of theatricality is linked to traditional theatre history in many ways. Davis' and Postlewait's volume, in its series of studies, does not only intend to give different interpretations of the notion, but it also places it in history. Thus, theatricality is located in the late middle

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[38] This is what Bruce W. Wilshire also does in his book *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor* (1982): he treats theatre and social life as analogies within a historical and social context, when he examines role-playing from the ancient Greek to Ionesco.

ages, in the English Renaissance, in 18th-19th-century theatre as well as in classical Chinese drama. The primary interest of the authors is not to oppose theatricality and performance, but to show that the concept has been present in theatrical (and theatre historical) discourses for long, even if it is always explained with different terminology.

In Postlewait's essay on the theatricality in Renaissance London, his starting point is the assumption that E. K. Chambers' theatre historical work *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923) – besides its historical commitment – suggests a more complex notion of Elizabethan theatricality (Postlewait 2003, 94). He does it in a way, though, that he sets up a binary opposition between theatricality and antitheatricality of the age – even if he does not use these certain terms. On the basis of this, Postlewait suggests that instead of describing Renaissance society in terms of its antitheatrical aspirations, emphasising a more comprehensive concept of theatricality would be more useful. He also recommends that the revision – a more careful interpretation – of the early modern antitheatrical literature is essential, because those were marginal to the attitude of contemporary theatregoers, and do not prove any evidence regarding Elizabethan society being antitheatrical in its attitude in general (Ibid., 108).

Postlewait's explanation of the term 'antitheatricality' shows that, in this context, the term and its counterpart 'theatricality' have often been interpreted as opposing terms. He also explains that early modern 'theatricality' also has contradictory explanations. The two extremes of the interpretations, as he says, are metadrama described as a Humanist invention and festivity being a crucial feature in popular culture (Ibid., 112). These opposing approaches have resulted in a categorisation of cultural events, which sets up a division between elitist and popular culture as well as dominant and subversive ones (Ibid., 113). However, one has to be careful with opposing high and low culture in the 16th-17th centuries, since – just

like I intended to suggest it with the example of the court masque – there is no clear division between the two. Still, we can relate this supposed distinction to the different understandings of the effect players can have on their audience: while serious actors' theatrical presence was held to be constructive and teaching, comic players' performance was dangerous and harmful, because spectators were supposed to follow bad examples. These diverse views guided by different ideologies – or the different understandings of theatricality as far as early modern performers are concerned – are going to be crucial parts of my argumentation later on.

Although Postlewait is right that it would be necessary to avoid any kind of artistic value judgement when approaching Renaissance culture, it cannot be denied that some hierarchies alongside with certain aesthetic ideologies existed in the age. In Philip Sidney's *The Defence of Poesie*, tragedy, for example is a highlighted, poetic genre, which is often ruined on stage by "mingling kings and clowns" (50).[39] Or, regardless of being an antitheatrical or a defender, clownery was often discussed in terms of bawdy speech, claptrap and sensation seeking, while tragedians were adored for their capability of characterisation and natural acting. I believe the reason why comic actors were degraded in contemporary critical/literary discourse was that they, with their improvisatory manners, embodied rebellion against the system and the cultural and theatrical conventions. Nevertheless, Postlewait considers antitheatricality only in the context of Puritanism, while, as it is also described by Jonas Barish, it was – more or less independently of religious views – detectable in theatres, too. Ben Jonson,

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[39] All the forthcoming references to Sidney's work are from the Albert S. Cook edition (1890). Parenthetical references refer to page numbers. Also, a very useful Introduction concerning the different editions of the *Defense* is available in the copy of the Sheffield Hallam University and Renascence Editions of the interactive EMLS database. This 1995 online edition is based on the 1595 Ponsonby text, was transcribed by Risa S. Bear and proofed by Risa S. Bear and Micah Bear
(http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/iemls/resour/mirrors/rbear/defence.html,
accessed 12 November, 2011).

for instance, was famous for his outcries against players and designers who 'spoil' his playtexts.[40]

As I see it, antitheatricality in the Renaissance – however we define it – was a way of interpretation and an integral part of theatricality, since both parties understood reality as some kind of theatrical activity. The major difference was in how they looked at the impacts it made on society. Still, of course, one needs to differentiate between the viewpoint of the attackers and the public. Also, it is an undeniable fact that despite the attacks, theatregoing and other various forms of performance were extremely popular. Eventually, even if he does not give a precise definition of it, Postlewait successfully links the concept of theatricality to early modern theatre history by connecting it to documentary historians (W. W. Greg, Muriel Bradbrook, Glynn Wickham, Andrew Gurr) of the early English stage as well as referring to the long history of theatricality and antitheatricality (Postlewait 2003, 91, 110).

There are other examples, which connect theatricality and early modern theatre in numerous ways, but Postlewait's essay seems the most conceptual one that I have found. Other studies – which I would not call theatre historical explorations – concentrate rather on the metaphorical use of the concept with less historical awareness, and their focus is on the question of representation. *Playhouse and Cosmos – Shakespearean Theatre as Metaphor* by Kent T. van den Berg (1985) is one of these, where the author examines the Shakespearean playhouse's emblematic meanings and

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[40] See, for example, the play *Volpone*, in which the main character is a negative instance of a fake identity, especially in Act II Scene 2, where, in order to seduce Celia, a married lady, he is disguised as Scoto of Mantua, the Italian juggler. This episode interprets (Italian) street performance as a tool of imposture, as a way of posing oneself as an untrue character. Another example is Jonson's debate with Inigo Jones, in which Jonson tries to defend the superiority of text as opposed to performance in case of court masques. He calls Jones "th'Italian", who makes his way in the world by miming (quoted in Barish 1981, 145). I am going to analyse antitheatricality within the theatre in more details later.

the Renaissance *theatrum mundi* metaphor in relation to the Roman and medieval antecedents.

Just like for the puritans, the symbolic bearings of theatricality were also in the focus of both humanist thinkers and theatre people. What we might call this approach is the theatre-as-metaphor view, in general terms, as it intends to define life/world as a theatre and vice versa. The metaphor has a long history, it is possibly the most popular approach when intending to describe theatre, culture and society in relation to each other. In many respects, it also bears similarities to the concept of performativity – as I am going to discuss it in the following – which has become more clearly defined these days.

The use of theatricality as a metaphor is especially favoured, because more or less it can be applied to describe almost all cultural periods and human activities. Even if the purpose is to show the "mere analogy" of theatre and social life in contemporary society (Burns 1972, 2), historical roots and the development of this metaphorical thinking can be traced clearly. In this context, instead of being a certain form of behaviour, it signifies a relationship between an actual/physical reality and a fictional space (Tronstad 2002, 218, 223).

As for the early modern theatre, theatricality as a metaphor can be used to express both positive and negative ideas of describing the relationship between playing and reality. There is a large number of references which represent theatrical activity as false counterfeiting and deceiving, as well as God-like, artistic creation. These interpretations, however, do not always remain within the context of institutional theatre, since the intellectual life of the era is characterised by the common belief what we call *theatrum mundi*.

The definitions and interpretations of *theatrum mundi* are far-reaching.[41] However, there are certain common elements in the diverse meanings of it. In his article, William N. West summarises that it always divides the world of appearances from an assumed reality while comparing the two, and privileging one part over the other (West 2008, 3-4). Apart from being a mode of understanding (a "site of knowing", as he says), West sees *theatrum mundi* as a performance, in which the participants are not only watching, but also acquiring knowledge in an active way (Ibid., 10). In other words, theatrical activity in the broad sense (or performance) is a tool of understanding human existence or a way of gaining experience.

Kent T. Van den Berg's book mentioned above favours this view as well, when referring to the early modern playhouses. As he writes it, the Shakespearean theatre is displayed as a heterocosm, an alternative reality, and its motto *Totus mundus agit histrionem* is an expression of professional pride, which represents theatremakers' God-like and performative control over the world (Van den Berg 1985, 35). Van den Berg's interpretation, thus, defines theatre as a building with cosmic meanings. He claims that the "globe", just like a map, reproduces the world itself, and the creative role of the players in this process is similar to that of Philip Sidney attributed to the poet in his *The Defense of Poesy* (Ibid., 59).[42]

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[41] For a thorough and extended discussion of the concept, see *Theatrum Mundi: The History of an Idea* by Lynda G. Christian (New York, 1987).

[42] As Sidney writes: "Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than the nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies and such like; so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so reach tapestry as divers poets have done […] Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficiency of nature; but rather give right honor to the Heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made Man to his own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature" (6-7).

As we can see, Van den Berg follows the logic of binary oppositions West also mentions, that is, he argues for the dichotomy of reality and fiction, world and theatre, player and role. In terms of the players, he says:

> The actor in character embodied the duality of inner self and public role; the shape and fictive setting illustrated the difference between reality and the symbols used to describe reality, and the playhouse itself offered an architectural emblem of the interlocking subjective and objective worlds within which everyone must play his or her part (Ibid., 40).

So, as for the player, Van den Berg separates the inward existence and the public manifestation of a role instead of handling the two in close alliance. However, I think that – at least in the case of comic actors – role/character and player are not clearly separable, especially if one talks about theatricaliy with reference to everyday life and social activities. In other words, the inner self does not exist without roles.

In his book, however, the author speaks less about the "duality of inner self and public role", he rather concentrates on metadramatic aspects, that is the interrelation of actor and role. He is not interested in the relationship between "civic" or social roles and theatrical representation and neither does he give any palpable definition of reality. Thus, his interpretation of theatricality remains within the realm of the theatre and roleplay, and being separable from the self, it is described in terms of theatrical acting. The "part" that everyone has to play in the "interlocking subjective and objective worlds" is not explained in greater details nor is the performative potential of the audience.

All in all, as I see it, theatricality has generally been defined as an overall conciliatory concept. As I see it, concerning the term, the recent aim

of the discourse is to surmount the dissension between theatre and performance studies. But since theatricality is shaded with the idea of aesthetic/classical/dramatic theatre – even if it is presumed to be explained in an "offstage" context – theatrical activity is often understood as verbatim role-playing, in which the part and the player is plainly separable. In this scheme, the role (or in literary terms, the character) is often a universal and a textual format, which might – as it was feared by antitheatricalists as well – overrule its medium too. Conclusively, while according to the world-as-theatre view of theatricality, we are trying to succeed with the help of our assumed roles, the idea of performativity takes it a more natural process that our everyday performances are parts of our nature and physical reality. In other words, theatricality perhaps emphasises the role, while performance puts stress on the performer. In the case of comic players that I want to deal with, it is also the subject who is remarkable, because in most of the cases, player and role are not even separable. As I want to show it, the comic identity of Tarlton, Kemp and Armin is "always there", thus, it is neither an evident nor a temporary part of their everyday being. That is why I do not intend to define their improvisation as a synonym of "playing" or "performance", but as the violation of certain social, cultural and behavioural regulations. Also, we cannot neglect the fact that comedians had to respond to the spectators' horizon of expectations.

3.2.3 The Player's Theatrical Body

In this subchapter, I would like to explore how contemporary audiences saw the actors, and what they believed to be in front of their eyes when they responded to them. Certainly, the concrete territory of the theatre was a place where theatricality was symbolically displayed, but the question for me is to what extent audiences realised the limits of the actors' different

identities: in other words, when they interfered, who exactly they reacted to. My idea is that although they might have realised the differences between the represented character (or "person") and the civic identity of the actor, they could have responded to the combination of the two.[43]

Andrew Gurr in his *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* ([1987] 2004) devotes a lengthy subchapter to the problem of defining and characterising playgoers in early modern England. As he says, the term "audience" refers to the auditive experience of the theatre and it is also a communal observation, while being a "spectator" is an individual presence, and it has to do with seeing (Gurr [1987] 2004, 102). According to the references found in the *OED*, up to the 19th century, the "audience" referred to an assembly of listeners or to give ear to something.[44] As opposed to this, "spectator" is someone who observes a spectacle.[45] Gurr himself emphasises the fact that even authors like Sidney or Shakespeare were aware of the differentiation between these two modes of interpretation.

Contrary to the common belief that early modern theatre was beheld rather by hearing, both antitheatrical thinkers and the learned minds of the age supported the view that sight was the primary source of getting knowledge.[46] Indeed, early modern performances were full of elements which targeted seeing: swordplays, fireworks, dances were intended to catch the eyes. At the same time, stage action, role-plays and characterisation was

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[43] Dawson uses the word 'person' in order to avoid the misinterpretations caused by the ideologically laden term 'body'. With this, he intends to emphasise that the embodied character on the early modern stage is not only a physical entity, but also a 'self' and the 'role' at the same time. In other words, even if, in the first place, the 'person' is something seen, it represents certain psychological characteristics as well (Dawson 2001, 14-15).

[44] "Audience, n.". *OED Online*. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13022?redirectedFrom=audience (accessed July 05, 2013).

[45] "Spectator, n.". *OED Online*. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13022?redirectedFrom=spectator (accessed July 05, 2013).

[46] Gurr lists Robert Burton, Edmund Spenser, George Puttenham, Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser to advertise the primacy of the eye. He also refers to the debate of Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson concerning sight and poetry in court masque; which, further on, I am also going to refer to (Gurr 1987 [2004], 102-16).

also more spectacular by watching than hearing only. The clown's appearance was especially eye-catching, and, as Nora Johnson quotes it with reference to Tarleton, it could immediately transform the theatrical environment (Johnson 2003, 19). With his presence, the comic actor could totally embody theatrical pleasure which resulted from watching not only because he used his physicality to attract the attention, but also because his bodily characteristics were often special and extraordinary. Evidences show that Tarlton, for example, was ugly and Kemp was enormously tall (Wiles 1987, 24). Comic actors' peculiar physical appearance could have been part of their non-conformist, "extempore" behaviour in the sense that it was always unexpected, strange, and represented otherness or difference. As I will show it more precisely in my chapter on the grotesque body as well as in the textual-analytical chapters (Chapters 4.2 and 5), they were often compared to animals and beasts not only because of their ugliness, but also, I think, because of their uncontrollability.

But who did spectators see when they watched an average theatrical performance? As for the illusory nature of early modern theatre, opinions differ. Scholars like Andrew Gurr, Alexander Leggatt or Peter Thomson argue that the conditions of the theatre were not appropriate for making the spectators forget about the real circumstances of playmaking, which means that spectators were fully aware of the real identity of the actors.[47] However, in Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* we find several instances of the illusion-making effects of plays. One example he mentions is a case in Cornwall, where players, with a realistic battle scene frightened away some Spaniards who had criminal intent (Heywood [1612] 1841, 58). With this, he might have wanted to exemplify both the authenticity and the practical use

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[47] Leggatt mentions "the clown's most frequently recurring routines" and his "noisy participation in the grief of the serious characters" (Leggatt 1992, 101). Thomson mentions that it could have been hard to identify with certain characters emotionally, since actors played more than one roles (Thomson 1997, 324). For further readings, see Gurr (1987) 2004, 14-57.

of theatrical plays. At the same time – as I will discuss later – Heywood's lines might also have been affected by the intention to promote the actor's and the theatre's profession by emphasising its real-life effects. I myself believe that stepping in and out of the play's fictional world – or, in Weimann's words, changing positions between *locus* and *platea* – could have been an important part of the game. Yet, by stating this, I do not deny that fact that there could have been moments when an early modern performance was enchanting and glamorous to the extent that spectators could forget about their reality for a while. But this does not mean that they interpreted fiction as reality.[48]

Beside the fact that the contemporary audience could have been enthusiastic about plays, which often used well known stories, histories and elements, early modern actors themselves were peculiarly popular. "Stardom" was not only supported by the regular appearance in plays, but also by other factors, as Alexandra Halasz analyses this social phenomenon in her article on Tarleton, referring to the fact that alehouses probably used the image of him to advertise themselves (Halasz 1995, 19). Halasz's arguments suggest that the general image of the early modern comic actor was not entirely identical with the characteristics suggested by the roles he played in theatre. Nevertheless, for instance, Tarlton's (and other comedians') drunkenness as a part of their supposed personality was, in my view, partly originated from gossips and partly from dramatic roles, since comic characters were often drunkards. I believe that the qualities of characters

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[48] Bertolt Brecht's alienation effect is often brought into connection with early modern theatre on the basis that "Brecht offered a creative fusion of the writer's and the actor's art" (Wiles 1987, 165). Also, as Brecht writes, Elizabethan theatre was among the first ones that applied *Verfremdungseffect*, which was its method to keep the attention of the audience active (Brecht 1997, 421). However, alienation does not exclude the opportunity of occasional emotional identification either with the story of the play or with the characters. For further readings on this intriguing approach to alienation – including actors' memories – see *A rendező Brecht. A Berliner Ensemble emlékezete* (Brecht, the Director. The Memory of Berliner Ensemble) by Claudio Meldolesi and Laura Olivi (translated by Katalin Demcsák and Györgyi Horváth, Budapest, 2003).

like Dogberry and Bottom (played by Kemp) or the drunken Caliban (played by Armin) could have been merged with what people thought of the actors in everyday life.

So players of the age were well-known in everyday life, thus, when they entered the stage, even if they played a role, they could have been recognised by the spectators as well. In this way, from the side of the viewers, it could have been a crucial part of theatrical pleasure to spot the differences between the players' different identities. Also, for actors, it certainly belonged to the game to play on these different 'selves'.

The main question for me is how we could describe an actor who is not in role at that particular moment, but who is exposed to the audience's sight. To describe this situation, the best concept would be Lesley Wade Soule's idea of the stage persona from her book *Actor As Anti-Character* (2000) where she focuses on the non-mimetic presence of players.

> When the performer's presence is registered, it is usually as a stage identity distinct from both his/her extratheatrical self and the character s/he is impersonating. This is a stage *persona* (from the Latin for "mask"), which is often consciously created by the actor and/or attributed to the actor by the audience. It is not fully mimetic, however, since it does not refer to an absent identity (i.e., from another place and/or time), but is stage referential: the persona identity exists only in the theatre. A persona may be an artificial, named identity (e.g., the Clown), or it may be the actor (perhaps in her/his own name) as public, performing personality (e.g., Laurence Olivier doing an aside or a curtain call) – but it is not the same as the performer's natural offstage identity. Because it is a stage identity, it is ultimately, unlike the character text, under the

joint control of the performer and the audience, not the playwright (Wade Soule 2000, 6).

In my understanding, early modern players, especially the comedians were quite often in the state of being a stage persona even if they were not definitely in a theatre building; and especially in those cases when they entertained the audience off-stage in non-dramatic pieces or with stage events which neglected narration and characterisation. Of course, they played some kind of roles in these situations as well. (In this context, the fact that, according to Wade Soule, persona exists "only in the theatre" could refer to a wider definition of the term "theatre"; a similar one which concepts of 'theatricality' are using.) Moreover, it is also a question whether in the case of comic actors, who intentionally mingled their stage persona and the character they played and used stage names, the real identity was available to the audiences at all.

In my view, comic actors have always existed by displaying their stage persona. It was their natural mode of existence when they addressed the audience directly while they were acting in a performance. They also used it when they did out-of-theatre performances in taverns, pubs or in the street. For me, these occasions differentiate them from tragic actors to the greatest extent; comedians never seem to quit their profession, and they also self-reflexively demonstrate their performative activities in their writings. In other words, they always thematise or carry out performance with their pure existence, which is, however, not controlled by outer rules. "Serious" acting, nonetheless, is regulated by artistic decorum and social norms to a great extent as I am going to elaborate it later on. For this reason, for people, comic actors – with their extempore style which I consider as a peculiar and meaningful metaphor of their activity – could have embodied the behaviour directed by free will and autonomy. So these players' presence was not only

theatricalised on the stage, but also in all occasions when they displayed themselves in front of the public. I think this is especially important because the state of constant "role-play" – and by role I do not mean a dramatic character – has always been a crucial part of clownery. We only have to think of the stand-up comedians and all their appearances in different situations where they always seem to "play" the same.

In the next chapter, I am going to outline some aspects of performance theory by which I hope to explain my ideas on comic acting and improvisation more profoundly. I intend to prove that it is possible to describe early comic acting with the terminology of performance studies, and, furthermore, this view can broaden the interpretation of Renaissance comedians. I will come to the conclusion that comic performance represented an encouragement for people to resist social and cultural behavioural expectations. In this way, they could also represent the overcoming of control in the early modern era when identity construction – just like in any other historical periods – was influenced by a set of social standards.

2.3 Performance

2.3.1 The Concept of Performance

A field that can strongly be connected to the concept of theatricality is performance studies, and a related concept: performativity. Actually, when talking about any performance-related topic recently, one is not able to avoid the category of performance and its necessary comparison to theatre. In this respect, performance and theatre are often contrasted as the two terrains of social and artistic activity, while performativity and theatricality are used to describe the participants' – both the audience's and the players' – behaviour.

The reasons why these two terminological backgrounds are opposed, in my opinion, are mostly ideological and political. This theoretical contrast has huge literature in philosophy and cultural studies. However, what I am concerned with is, in the first place, is the relevance of performance with regard to theatre, because although early modern acting is traditionally discussed within the realm of theatre studies, I believe that the application of performativity as an approach can be a fruitful. What follows in this chapter is the examination of the terms performance and performativity, as well as their interpretation in relation to theatricality and the performers/actors. As I see it, this is necessary, because my interest concerns early modern performers who are not strongly connected to institutional theatre or the text. For this reason, their in-depth discussion is not only neglected in theatre studies or histories, but also, it very often causes confusion in defining them in pre-modern culture. Renaissance comic players did not only appear on stages, but they made performances in various alternative scenes and occasions. Moreover, their private or civic self cannot clearly be separated from their player-identity, since very definitely, many of their performances are impossible to describe with the vocabulary of theatre. They

also seem to play roles in their everyday life as well, and their stardom and civic being superimpose each other. In the case of William Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder*, for instance, both the pamphlet and the act itself can be interpreted as a theatrical event (a performance), and these two constitute a larger-scale performance, the aim of which is, among others, the legitimisation of the self. Nonetheless, improvisation – as their crucial, provocative way of existence which might have provoked their spectators' behaviour too – cannot be understood without its ideological, moral, cultural, ritual and political bearings.

The emergence of performance studies as a discipline was significant and created an academic sensation in the intellectual and cultural history of humanities. It was preceded by the emergence of the term "performance" in a range of theories in humanities and social sciences from the 1970s. The idea that social, cultural and artistic practices can be defined by performance the most appropriately is often called the "performative turn" in the academia.[49] The widespread use of "performance" as a concept can also be

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[49] The roots of performance theories – just to mention the ones referred the most often – are the works of Erving Goffmann (*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1959), J. L. Austin (*How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, 1962) and John Searle (*Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, 1969) and Victor Turner (*Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, 1974). Later performance or performance-related scholarship includes Judith Butler (*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, 1988; *Gender Trouble*, 1990) defining gender as a "practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint"; and also Pierre Bordieu (*Outlines of a Theory of Practice*, 1972) with his concept of "regulated improvisation". Those approaches that discuss performance with more reference to theatre and theatricality, I am going to discuss in more details in the forthcoming chapters. For a more specified discussion of the "performative turn", see *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* by John McKenzie (Routledge, 2001); "Traces of the Performative Turn in Contemporary Theatre and Performance" (Paper presented at In Mediterranean Congress of Aesthetics: Imagination, Sensuality, Art, Portorož [Portorose, Slovenia], 20-23 September, 2006) by Tomaž Toporišič
(https://sites.google.com/site/ttoporisic/tracesoftheperformativeturn, accessed 7 July 2013); "Speech Act Theory and the Performative Turn in Cultural Sociology" (Paper presented at Konstanzer Meisterklasse 2008: Construction and Boundaries, 16-24 July) by Werner Binder (http://academia.edu/1674561/Speech_Act_Theory_and_the_Performative_Turn_in_Cultural_Sociology, accessed 7 July 2013) and "Time, Non-representational Theory and the 'Performative Turn' – Towards a New Methodology in Qualitative Social Research" by Peter Dirksmeier and Ilse Helbrecht

connected to another paradigm shift in humanities and social sciences, which is the (re)invention of the body towards the end of the 20th century. The emerging interest in corporeality did not only influence academic thinking, but also arts, popular culture and mass media.[50] Critical approaches concerning physicality can also be used efficiently in early modern studies, since, in the first place, theatre was considered as a spectacle.[51] Moreover, bodily presence was a crucial part of the comedian's work.

For theatre studies, the growing popularity of performance was an effective change, which motivated the field to reinvent its terminology, renew its perspectives and recuperate its prestige. Nevertheless, performance studies, from the beginning, positioned itself as a new discipline, which, with its powerful self-management, intended to take over university departments in the United States. One characteristic and well-known example of this provocative intention is the famous speech by Richard Schechner at the 1992 ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) Conference, where he proposed that theatre departments should be re-established as performance departments (Schechner 1992, 7-9).

As for this origin, performance studies as a discipline was mainly conceptualised by Richard Schechner, whose work, in an interdisciplinary manner, unifies anthropological developments and theatrical practice, and Schechner sees strong connections between ritual and performance. Anthropological references, for instance, include the work of Victor Turner (1969, 1974 and many more) and Dwight Conquerwood (1991) to whom I

(http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/385/839#gcit, accessed 7 July, 2013).

[50] For further readings on the corporeal turn, see Kiss 2007, 81-104; *A test. Társadalmi fejlődés és kulturális teória* (The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory) by Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (translated by Pálma Erdei, Budapest, 1997); and the 2010 article by Roger Cooter entitled "The Turn of the Body: History and the Politics of the Corporeal" (*Arbor Ciencia, Pensamiento y culture* 186: 393-405).

[51] For a detailed semiotic analysis of early modern theatre, anatomy theatre and the presence of the body – alongside postmodern analogies – see Kiss 2007, 7-128.

am going to refer later.[52] Together with the academic written establishment
of the discipline, Schechner also found the practical aspect of performance
very important. As being the leader of *Performance Group* in the 1960s, he
has developed his theory hand in hand with his practical assumptions (1973,
1976, 1985, 1993, 1988, 2002).

The notion of performance often seems to be controversial and its
widespread use can be disturbing. On the one hand, it can refer to
performance art, which, in the 1960s-70s, came to existence as opposed to
the drama-based, text-centred official theatre. These works of art
intentionally kept a distance from story-telling as well as from the traditional
roles of actors and spectators and theatrical concepts. The location in these
cases is not the theatre or the stage anymore, but performance art is keen on
strange settings, open-air places or the street. Also, the central effect and
attraction is not the narrative or the character formation, but the actor's
body and the visual effects generated by it. Thus, in this interpretation,
performance is a genre or a form, which, being constructed as an objection to
it, has also a certain connection to theatre art.[53]

Although concerning early modern England, we cannot talk about
manifest performance art in the 20th-century sense, one has to handle it as a
fact that theatre activity was not restricted to the theatre building. In other
words, beside dramatized plays, there were extempore genres, street theatre
and popular market place entertainment which can be considered as
'alternative' routes of early modern theatre. So, one must not forget that
setting performances in unusual places or having amateur/unprofessional
"actors" appearing "on stage" is not a postmodern phenomenon.

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[52] I find it important to note here that the rethinking of ethnography can perfectly be
associated with the findings of performance studies. Dwight Conquerwood's in his 1991 and
2002 articles, for example, writes about the return of the body and the emerging of
performance practices in ethnographical research (Conquerwood 1991, 180; 2002, 150). It is
without doubt that performance studies (based on ethnographical research) had an
important role in renewing text-based, phychological-realistic views on theatre.

Furthermore, those theatrical forms – for instance, community theatre in the 20th-21st century – where the aim is to create a collective experience, to blur the distinction between player, character (if there is such a thing) and spectator, and to emphasise the cultural, political and social aspects over the aesthetic ones might, to some extent, partly have its roots in these early modern performative activities.[54] Of course, I do not intend to say that early modern performance art or community theatre really existed – postmodern performance often uses radical imagery or destructs the language, while community theatres are overtly and explicitly political – but it is noteworthy that theatrical forms after psychological realism seem to subsist in earlier dramatic practices.

Yet, performance studies as a discipline does not only include performance art. According to Richard Schechner's explanations, it is an interdisciplinary theory, which adopts and uses the findings of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, historiography and linguistics. At the same time, it is an empiric and experimental field, which draws its theoretical conclusions and observations from social practice. According to performance studies, it is the term 'performance' through which a series of everyday actions and occasions can be approached.

In the introductory chapter to *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002), Schechner defines performance as a "participant observation", that is a process, which is not only studied, but at the same time, also practised by the participants (Schechner 2002, 1-2). Moreover, he emphasises that every

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[53] For more details, see Szőke 2002, 7-12.

[54] Community theatre is a broad term. Generally, it refers to those forms of theatre where the aim of the play is to involve civic individuals as players in order to foreground social issues and problems. Community theatre groups visit communities in their own place, make their performances on a given topic there, and the professionals (actors, teachers, social workers) in the company work as tutors or facilitators to the participants. (A very similar initiation is TiE, or Theatre in Education.) The best-known model for community theatre is the one founded by Augusto Boal, Brazilian director known as the Theatre of the Oppressed. In Hungary, the latest projects by Krétakör or KÁVA Kulturális Műhely exemplify an analogous approach.

human action can be perceived as a performance. What he calls "restored behaviour" is the key term in describing all kinds of performances, with which all kinds of human attitude can be treated as performance. Schechner emphasizes that everyday activities as well as theatrical behaviour is a recombination of repetitive, previously repeated practices, so in this way, there is only a formal difference between artificial/artistic and real-life actions. Performances are more noticeable, because they are marked, stylistically framed, while people just "live life" (Ibid., 28). Following this logic, what one can see is that the notion of "player" or "actor" is becoming quite relative; anyone can be a player and everyone is an actor.[55] This presumption can tightly be related to the early modern idea of "all the world's a stage", which I have discussed in the previous chapter, and which I will use to show that the Renaissance player's civic and "stage identity" cannot clearly be separated.

This relativity is not only detectable when talking about the player, but also when involving the term "theatre" into the discussion. Although consistently arguing against the official stage, in his interpretative framework, Schechner creates his theoretical language from a mixture of social sciences and theatre studies. He does not only refer to anthropologists like Clifford Geertz, Erwing Goffmann or Victor Turner, but also to theatremakers such as Bertolt Brecht, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jerzy Grotowski and Antonin Artaud, whom he considers as the forefathers of performance studies (see Schechner 2002). This selection is more or less understandable, however, it is interesting to see that all the directors/practitioners mentioned have become part of the Western theatrical canon. In other words, what Schechner criticizes with the label of theatre, is, as we will see, is a collection

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[55] At this point, the difference between "player" and "actor" is not very crucial, since Schechner (or performance studies in general) does not refer to the agent of performance very precisely. However, in early modern discourse, the distinction between the two terms is quite relevant.

of phenomena selected quite arbitrarily, since the theatremakers mentioned above were all involved more or less with "literary" or "textual" theatre as well.

Nevertheless, with the rhetoric of comparing theatrical events to everyday behaviour i.e., theatricalising daily life, he follows the logic of his colleague and friend, Victor Turner, who, as one of Schechner's most important referential points, relates tribal rituals to theatrical performances.[56] Turner, in his book *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982) compares ritual behaviour to artistic events of the postindustrial societies, and defines the social and performative acts of individuals and communities as "social drama".[57] In this way, everyday behavioural patterns are strongly related to aesthetic performances, and a similar model is precisely applicable to both. Nonetheless in arts as well as in everyday rites, the focus is on the changing identity. That is why Arnold van Gennep's "rites of passage" is central to Turner's argumentation when he is talking about liminality being the stage of the self when the identity is in-between.[58] Liminality is a term which is often used when, for instance, talking about players who seek their way between their role and their civic identity, and also in the case of the transformational function of the theatre.[59]

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[56] Victor Turner, British anthropologist and ethnographer was a friend and colleague of Richard Schechner, and they worked collaboratively until Turner's death in 1983. They convened conferences together, and Turner wrote the foreword to Schechner's *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (cf. "The Victor Turner Connection" in Schechner 2002, 11-13).

[57] "Social drama" has four stages: the breach of a norm, the phase of cleavage, the operation of adjustive and redressive mechanisms, and finally the reintegration or the permanent cleavage (Turner 1982, 70-71).

[58] Schechner 2002, 57-62. For more details, see Turner 1982, 20-59. The Hungarian translation is available in *Határtalan áramlás. Színházelméleti távlatok Victor Turner kultúrantropológiai írásaiban.* (Borderless Flow. Theatre Theoretical Perspectives in Victor Turner's Cultural Anthropological Writings.) edited by Katalin Demcsák and György C. Kálmán (Budapest, 2003).

[59] For instance, in drama/theatre history, see Fischer-Lichte 2001, 7-14 or for the early modern stage, see *The Problem in the Middle: Liminal Space and the Court Masque* by Gregory A. Wilson (Clemson University Digital Press, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, the theoretical opposition between theatre studies and performance studies was sharpened in Schechner's keynote speech in 1992 at the ATHE conference, where he proposed that the new paradigm is performance, not theatre. In this speech, Schechner announced a paradigm shift from theatre studies to performance studies, which, as he says some years later, was a necessary step, an answer to the demands of the performative age (Ibid., 5-6). Schechner does not really regard performance as an aesthetic category, but rather a social and an ethical one, which should not only replace literature-centred theatre studies in its academic position, but should also promote and support cultural diversity. As he writes, drama literature and globalisation advertise cultural sameness, while in performance studies, "the marginal, the offbeat, the minoritarian, the subversive, the twisted, the queer, people of color, and the formerly colonised" are taken into consideration (Ibid., 4).[60]

Due to the all-inclusive nature of the category of performance, Schechner, among others, does not hesitate to assimilate theatre art in it as well. All this is summarised by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in Schechner's book in the following way.

> Performance studies starts from the premise that its objects of study are not to be divided up and parcelled out, medium by medium, to various other disciplines – music, dance, dramatic literature, art history. The prevailing division of the arts by medium is arbitrary, as is the creation of fields and departments devoted to each.[61]

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[60] This is basically the main point in Dwight Conquerwood's 2002 essay discussed earlier.

[61] Adapted by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett from 'Performance Studies' (1999), a report written for the Rockefeller Foundation, http://nyu.edu/classes/bkg/ps.htm (quoted in Schechner 2002, 3).

At the same time, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett also notes that, as opposed to performance, the "other disciplines" mentioned above (dance, music, art, theatre, literature, cinema) "focus on a single modality", while "performance studies is better equipped to deal with most of the world's artistic expression, which has always synthesized or otherwise integrated movement, sound, speech, narrative and objects" (Schechner 2002, 3). Also, she indicates the avant-garde and contemporary art as the source of performance, because they have "long questioned the boundaries between modalities and gone about blurring them, whether those boundaries mark off media, genres, or cultural traditions", and unambiguously separates performance from theatre, arguing that the former one "dematerializes the art object and approaches the condition of performance" (Ibid.)

It can be seen very clearly that performance is an ultimate and universal category, which on the one hand, includes all artistic modes and genres, and, on the other hand, possesses more effective tools to interpret cultural events and acts. These references above also demonstrate that performance studies does not regard theatre studies as a separate, individual discipline any more, nor does it reckon theatre as a substantive art form, since, as mentioned above, it "focus[es] on a single modality".

What is relevant to my argumentation from of these is that it might be perilous to stick to definitional issues when discussing the activity of the performing/acting agent. Nevertheless, it is equally crucial to see its artistic/aesthetic bearings as well as its political and ideological ones.

2.3.2 Performance and Theatre Studies

When reading performance theories, it becomes rather clear that performance theorists argue against contemporary theatre studies, saying that it is an outdated discipline, which focuses on the manifestation of

dramas (Schechner 2004, 71). As Elin Diamond puts it, performance studies are constructed as opposed to theatre structures and conventions (Diamond 1996, 3), while according to Schechner, theatre is "enacted by a specific group of performers", it is "what the performers actually do during the production" (Ibid.). In other words, performance studies often works with a very simplified definition of theatre – called the "black box model" by Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick (Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick 1995, 2) – which represents the Western realistic tradition.[62]

W. B. Worthen in his article, *Disciplines of Text, Sites of Performance* (1995) intends to rehabilitate theatre by proving that dramatic performance, just like performance, is constructed and determined by its cultural, institutional and ideological context, and not exclusively the authority of the text or the dramatist. At the same time, he emphasises the fact that performance studies treat theatre as if it was nothing more but the staging of dramas relying on the stressful presence of the author.[63]

> To understand 'performance studies' through a simple opposition between text and performance is to remain captive to the spectral disciplines of the past. Both texts and performances are materially unstable registers of signification, producing 'meaning' intertextually in ways that deconstruct notions of intention, fidelity, authority, present meaning. At the same time, texts and performances retain the gesture of such semiosis, and discussions of both text and performance

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[62] Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick actually write that in the last decades, theatre has started to embrace an alternative variety of performance practices such as film, photography, computer simulation, rituals, political demonstrations, etc., because it reimagined itself as a wider field of performance studies (Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick 1995, 2).

[63] As Worthen argues in 2004, performance studies reduce theatre to the „characteristic ideological apparatus of modern realism" and the „emblem of powerful yet coercive conventionality" (Worthen 2004, 8). In this book *Shakespeare and the Modern Force of*

remain haunted by a desire for authorization (Worthen 1995, 23).

As opposed to this – as he writes three years later – text in the theatre does not exist, since by the performative context at the theatre, scripts are transformed into an event or performance (Worthen 1998, 1100).

Worthen's 1995 article generated a very exciting dispute with Jill Dolan, Phillip Zarrilli and Joseph Roach (*TDR* 1995, vol. 32., pp. 18-44). From the replies he received, Jill Dolan's argument seems to be the most relevant, since it is urging some kind of compromise between the two fields, that is theatre and performance studies (Dolan 1995, 29). Her point – here and elsewhere – is that theatre studies has to reorient its work, because up to this day, it has not been able to provide a useful alternative to the emergence of performance.

Dolan in her *Geographies of Learning* (2001) says that theatre studies should be reconsidered "as part of the proliferation of the performative, rather than raided and discarded", because it "is hampered by theatre studies' traditional insistence on privileging the humanist ideology of the aesthetic and by its ubiquitous theory/practice (even mind/body) split" (Dolan 2001, 66).[64] Her aim is to press a fruitful exchange between theatre studies and other fields rather than dismissing theatre from performance studies. However, she finds it important that theatre studies should break with its academic marginality (Ibid., 68).

Performance, Worthen intends to rethink the function of dramatic writing in performative context with special regards to iconic authors like Shakespeare.

[64] At this point, it is worth considering how the emergence of performance studies and the significance of theatre practice in theoretical reckoning can be connected to the corporeal turn in humanities, as I mentioned earlier. Corporeality is essential in all aspects of performance theories. The "body" as a metaphor for performance was also used in early modern England by Ben Jonson in *Hymanei*, where he compared the written text to the everlasting "soul" and the spectacle to the ephemeral "body" of the court masque (Hymanei, 1-9). All references from *Hymanei* are from *Ben Jonson: Selected Masques* edited by Stephen Orgel (Yale University Press, 1970). The parenthetic numbers refer to the lines.

In fact, it is an argument often mentioned in defence of performance studies, that it is promoting cultural and social partialities (black, queer, non-western performance, etc.), while theatre has long been sticking to the more conventional norms and traditions (Shepherd and Wallis 2004, 105). Apart from the theatre history written by Phillip Zarrilli and his co-authors (*Theatre Histories*, 2002), it is very clear that this statement has relevance even if we look only at theatre history. As I discussed before, histories of the theatre are generally based on western dramatic tradition, while non-dramatic forms as well as players who are not connected strictly to the institutional theatre are left out. At the same time, it is cultural studies that have started to become interested in "low" cultural forms such as dramatic rituals, feasts and other forms of non-theatrical performance. As for my topic, which is early modern comic acting, I can also point at the fact that while Renaissance tragic actors were often in the centre of attention in theatre and drama history (often alongside with discussing tragedies and crucial tragic roles), comic players, especially their out-of-stage activities are dismissed. That is why I think that the approach of performance studies might be appropriate to broaden the focus of discussing pre-modern comedians.

Dolan sees the solution in strengthening the political and ideological awareness of performance studies, which, she thinks, would influence theatre studies in a powerful way. Nevertheless, as she says, it should also widen its scope to textual performances in the Western, Eurocentric canon (Dolan 2001, 78). Although from quite a different perspective, this view echoes Philip Auslander's standpoint, which claims that within the Western tradition, it is not possible to consider performance without thinking about theatre (Auslander 1997, 4).

The most evident way to discuss early modern theatre is via the close reading of the playtexts. However, since I am interested here in a broad

interpretation of extempore playing which concerns not only theatrical, but also cultural and social activity, the perspectives of performance are also expedient. Even if performance studies *per se* is not historically precise in the sense that it does not focus on past theatrical traditions (beside the fact that it often uses the well-known and fitting Shakespearean phrase "all the world's a stage"), its statements about the political and ideological nature of acting are considerable. I believe that early modern comedians were always playing, not only in the case of a theatrical performance. Also, their social identity and their theatrical parts were not separable clearly, so basically the image and the self of the comic player were constructed by his different roles and extempore activities. In the public memory, Richard Tarlton, for instance, was always in the act of performing whether he was in the street, at the court or the theatre.

Performance studies as a discipline – most explicitly in Schechner's work – as we have seen, intends to define itself as if it was a comprehensive discourse, which also includes theatrical practices. At the same time, however, it also apparently criticises those activities that have to do with playtexts and dramatic characters. To my argumentation, as I have just mentioned, what is important is the social, political, ideological and ritual aspects of the performance and the way that performance is shown to be an inherent part of the self. Nevertheless, I cannot exclude the theatrical perspective and dramatic performance entirely, since the early modern players I am going to discuss all had strong connections to the theatre of the age.

From the findings of theatre studies/the theories of theatricality, at the same time, I have to consider the historical concerns, because I want to look at non-theatrical performance practices as crucial components of premodern performative/theatrical culture. Also, Renaissance theatre has a rich documentary accomplishment, which, I believe, cannot be neglected.

But before I turn to the analytical part of my dissertation where I will have a thorough look at some non-theatrical texts and acts, I would like to summarise the views and theories concerning early modern acting and performance more specifically.

2.3.3 Spectators and/as Performers

According to performance studies, all human beings are performers, since one is continuously playing roles in his everyday life. Erika Fischer-Lichte quotes the notion of cultural performance by Milton Singer to explain that the most important component of both theatre's and non-theatrical performances' is the individual's seeking for (cultural) identity (Fischer-Lichte 2001, 11). This is a kind of self-reflexive activity. All this means that theatre could be interpreted as the place where the modification of the actor's identity is displayed again and again; and these processes make it possible for the audience to realise or to carry out the changes of *their* identity (Ibid., 13).[65]

In Richard Schechner's system, the changing identity is also a crucial point when he explains the common grounds between theatrical and anthropological thinking. The basis for comparison is "boundary crossing" in individuals' and/or in actors' lives, and he quotes Eugenio Barba and Victor Turner to show that theatre and ethnography uses the concept (and the practice) of performance to explore how people in different cultures experience their social existence (Schechner 1985, 27-30). The characteristic activity of these individuals is defined as "behaviour", which is "used in all kinds of performances from shamanism and exorcism to trance, from ritual

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[65] Erika Fisher-Lichte in her influential volume *Geschichte des Dramas* (1999) intends to write the history of European theatre as the history of identities. Just as Victor Turner, she uses Arnold van Gennep's notion the 'rite of passage' to demonstrate that theatre, as a special form of cultural performance, always thematises identity construction and formation. In my dissertation, I use the Hungarian translation by Gabriella Kiss (2001).

to aesthetic dance and theatre, from initiation rites to social dramas, from psychoanalysis to psychodrama and transactional analysis" (Ibid., 35). Restored behaviour is necessarily different from our everyday habits and also it is repetitive in the sense that it combines previous behavioural practices. It always depends on historical and social context, convention and tradition as well.[66] This rough definition does not really help us to understand performance, i.e., to comprehend what the activity is by which actors, for instance, could represent the changing shapes/borders of identity or the cultural self-consciousness or self-reflection.

According to another approach which also calls itself anthropological, the object of study is the actor's pre-excessive behaviour which serves as a basis for further techniques and performances. This approach condensed by Eugenio Barba pronouncedly emphasises the differences between everyday principles and performance practices.[67] I feel this approximation somewhat contrary to Schechner's ideas, since Barba emphasises that "Theatre Anthropology is not concerned with the application of the paradigms of cultural anthropology to theatre and dance" (Barba 2001, 21). It rather examines the actor's "pre-expressivity", which is dominated by its social existence, artistic intelligence and sensitivity as well as the social-cultural context in which it exists. In other words, pre-expressivity are those basic

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[66] Schechner repeats his thoughts on restoration behaviour almost word by word in his *Performance Studies – An Introduction* (2002). Here, he is also drawing anthropological examples to show the common grounds of (theatre) performance and cultural/social behaviour (Schechner 2002, 28-33). From my point of view, it is also important to note that repetition is also a key term in Jan Assman's "ritual coherence", which preserves cultural memory in oral cultures. Assmann emphasises that one of the typical characteristic features of rites is that they are repetitive (Assmann 1999, 90).

[67] I quote these views from the webpage of the Odin Teatret managed by Eugenio Barba (http://www.odinteatret.dk/research/ista/theatre-anthropology.aspx, accessed 12 October, 2012). Barba's concept on theatre anthropology is also elaborated in his *The Paper Canoe* (1995). In my dissertation, I am going to use the Hungarian translation by Katalin Demcsák (Budapest, 2001).

recurrent – and culturally determined – fundamentals that determine body-mind use in acting (Ibid.).[68]

The common ground of these anthropological (or quasi-anthropological) accesses to acting is that they all imagine the acting process in a way that it has to be carried out in close encounter with the audience. As I said before, according to Fischer-Lichte, the actor's changing identity urges the audience to detect the transformations of their own identities. Schechner uses the metaphor of drama (borrowed from Erving Goffmann and Victor Turner) to talk about performance as social interaction in which performers and spectators merge. Barba refers to the spectator as a crucial position which takes part in the meaning-making process of the theatre, moreover, he says that the success of the performance depends on the extent the performance takes part in the spectator's memory.[69]

These assumptions suppose that players of early modern performance – who took part in theatre events in close encounter together with the spectators – served as examples to the viewers. For antitheatricalists, this was a threatening relationship as they were continuously worrying that spectators could follow those immoral deeds that they saw at the theatre. According to Prynne,

> [A]s the style and subject of stage-plays is scurrilous and
> obscene, so likewise it is bloody and tyrannical, breathing out
> malice, fury, anger, murder, cruelty, tyranny, treachery,
> frenzy, treason, and revenge (the constant themes, and chief

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[68] Barba speaks about South Pole and North Pole actors, which, however, does not refer to geographical differentiation, but to stylistic and technical differences. As he says, South Pole actors cannot be connected to theatrical genres or stylistic patterns, while North Pole actors play according to different decorums (Barba 2001, 24-8). In my argumentation, early modern tragic actors could be described by the latter category, while comedians fit into the former one. I am going to elaborate this in Chapter 4.

[69] Cf. Shepherd and Wallis 2004, 129. On Barba's views, see Eugenio Barba, "Négy néző" (*Four Spectators*), translated by Zoltán Imre

> ingredients, of all our tragedies) which efferate and enrage the
> hearts and minds of actors and spectators; yea, oft times
> animate and excite them to anger, malice, duels, murders,
> revenge, and more than barbarous cruelty, to the great
> disturbance of public peace (Prynne, quoted in Pollard 2004,
> 288).

In another paragraph, he says that "amorous pastorals" and "obscene lascivious love-songs" on stage "enflame the outrageous lusts of lewd spectators" (Ibid., 293). In other words, what puritans feared was that spectators, via watching a performance, become performers themselves "to the great disturbance of public peace". A satirical example of this is Thomas Dekker's London gallant in his *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609). In Chapter VI "How a Gallant Should Behave Himselfe In A Play-House", he is described as if the aim of going to the theatre was not the play itself, but also, more importantly, to show off. Dekker, for instance, enlists the advantages of sitting on the stage lengthily: the gallant has the opportunity to reveal his perfect clothing, to get a mistress, to judge the play and to draw the audience's or the players' attention.[70] The next place in Dekker's pamphlet that the gallant visits is the tavern, which might emphasise the theatre and the tavern being common grounds for performance and for showing off.

The negative impact of players is what Thomas Heywood seems to deny when he, in his *An Apology for Actors* (1612) remains silent about audiences, or does not emphasise the performance aspect, only the sight. Also, as for the audience, Thomas Overbury's extract on the excellent actor focuses on the "sitting" and "seeing" (quoted in Wickham et. al. 2000, 181).

(http://www.literatura.hu/szinhaz/barba_negy_nezo.html, accessed 12 October, 2012).

[70] All the references from *The Gull's Hornbook* are from Pollard 2004, 206-12. A modern spelling edition by R. B. McKerrow is available online at Big Wind Press (http://leehrsn.stormloader.com/dek/, accessed 23 October, 2012).

However, as we know from analyses of the early modern audience, it is rather hard to believe that the audience behaved passively. It was especially the presence of the comedians which could elicit harsh reactions and laughter.

As I see it, the released and rebellious behaviour of comic actors encouraged people to disregard and forget about social norms, just as it was written about early modern theatre in anti-theatrical tracts in general. One effective tool for this was generating laughter in unexpected situations.[71] This might be one reason why anti-theatrical criticism was against theatrical entertainment, especially as far as comedians are concerned. Also, this is the view on theatre, which was propagated and celebrated by certain dramatists as well, when they attacked the spontaneity and the improvising skills of players however, it is obvious, that dramatists needed the clown in order to entertain the audience.

Comedians, however, did not need a theatre building to perform. They were there in the street and in the taverns to exemplify non-conformist behaviour, which was in contradiction to the socially codified behavioural patterns presented by the royal court, censorship or artistic decorum. As I would like to show it, comic players with their extempore attitude represent the intention to (re)possess control over playing. In the following chapter, I will summarize and compare the different terminologies of the actor/player in order to come up with my definition of the comic actor and his improvisational ability.

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[71] I am going to give numerous examples of the effects of performers on spectators in Chapter 5.

3 Contemporary Understandings of the Early Modern Player

3.1 "Creature had the art born with him"

3.1.1 The "Excellent Actor" and the "Common Player"

The next issue I intend to scrutinise is the identity of the Renaissance comic performer. Generally, he was designated by two terms in the early modern discourse: actor and player. As Robert Weimann states, the usage of these notions overlapped up to circa 1642 (Weimann 2000, 133). There is an early reference to both in Philip Sidney's *The Defense of Poesy*, where he talks about the divine capability of imitating nature:

> There is no art delivered unto mankind that hath not the works of nature for his principal object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend, as they become actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth (7).[72]

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[72] In this extract, Sidney refers to human beings who, following God, carry out creation via the imitation of nature. Imitation, thus, becomes a synonym of artistic (and human) creativity, and imagination, which is the basic principle of God, is defined as a divine characteristic. It is very intriguing that in this context, the verbs "act" and "play" (derived from "actors" and "players") also refer to the act of imitation, and this is detectable in several further theories of acting. I am going to elaborate on this more in Chapter 3.4.

This suggests that the two were synonyms, or at least there was no great difference between them. However, two well-known extracts in 1615 prove that the two notions drifted apart by that time, which is contrary to Weimann's statement cited above.

The one describing the character of the "Common Player" written by John Cocke was published in John Stephens' collection, *Satyrical Essayes Characters and Others*. It says,

> The statute hath done wisely to acknowledge him *a rouge errant*, for his chief essence is a *daily counterfeit.* [...] he professes himself (being unknown) to be an apparent gentleman. But his thin felt, and his silk stockings, or his foul linen, and fair doublet, do (in him) bodily reveal the broker: So being not suitable, *he proves a motley.* [...] He doth conjecture somewhat strongly, but dares not commend a play's goodness, till he hath either spoken, or heard the epilogue: neither dares he entitle good things *good*, unless he be heartened on by the multitude: till then he saith faintly what he thinks, *with a willing purpose to recant or persist*: so however he pretends to have a royal master or mistress, his wages and dependence prove him to be *the servant of the people.* When he doth hold conference upon the stage, and should look directly in his fellow's face, he turns about his voice into the assembly for applause's sake, like a trumpeter in the fields, that shifts places to get an echo. The cautions of his judging humour (if he dares undertake it) be a certain number of saucy rude jests against the common lawyer; handsome conceits against the fine courtiers; delicate quirks against the rich cuckold a citizen; shadowed glances for good innocent ladies and gentlewomen

[...] (quoted in Wickham et. al. 2000, 179-80, emphases mine).[73]

The italicised sections as well as the whole text show that Cocke's rhetoric bears similarities to antitheatrical treatises in style and in word use. The author does not only emphasise the social and moral instability of the player, but also his rebellious attitude against rules and textual authority. The player, for Cocke, is an outcast of low social rank who pretends to be someone more. Moreover, he is desirous of the audience's attention instead of replying to the fellow actors' dialogue on stage. He is proud and shameless as well, since "he dares laugh in the midst of a serious conference, without blushing" (Ibid., 180).

All in all, it is very clear that Cocke – sometimes in a very cynical, snobbish and scornful manner – enumerates all those commonplaces and well-known phrases that we can find in puritans' remonstrance against theatre, including the obscurity referring to the players' sexual identity: "If he [the player] marries, he mistakes the woman for the boy in woman's attire, by not respecting a difference in the mischief: but so long as he lives unmarried, he mistakes the boy, or a whore for the woman". By the "common player", he especially meant those "base and artless appendants" who often go touring as "rustical wanderers" (Ibid.).

As Andrew Gurr remarks, Cocke had to back down later, since his writing contained explicit references to the King's (James') and Queen's (Anne's) companies by saying that he criticised only common players (Gurr

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[73] John Stephens was a lawyer at Lincoln's Inn, and John Cocke was a young lawyer friend of him. There is a debate whether the author of this characterisation above was Stephens or Cocke, and there is also a suggestion that John Cocke is a pseudonym. It is M. C. Bradbrook who attributed the description of the common player rather to Cocke than to Stephens. Also, it is assumed that John Webster took offence of this extract, and he replied Stephens with his portray of "an Excellent Actor", which I am going to cite later. For further readings, see Footnote 33 on p. 546 in *Skull Beneath the Skin. The Achievement of John Webster* by Charles R. Forker (Southern Illinois University Press, 1986).

1980, 81). This withdrawal might also have happened as a consequence of the counter-text entitled "Of an Excellent Actor", which was published in Sir Thomas Overbury's *New and choice characters*, and was attributed to John Webster.

This passage, similarly to Heywood's *An Apology for Actors*, definitely stands up for the actor while referring to the art of rhetoric.

> [sigs. M5v-6v] *Whatsoever is commendable in the grave orator is most exclusively perfect in him*; for by a full and significant action of body *he charms our attention*: sit in a full theatre and you will think you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many ears, whiles the *actor* is in the *centre*. [...] By his action *he fortifies moral precepts with example*; for what we see him personate, we think truly done before us: a man of a deep thought might apprehend the ghosts of our ancient heroes walked again, and take him (at several times) for many of them... *He adds grace to the poet's labours...* [...] He entertains us in the best leisure of our life... [...] I observe, of all men living, *a worthy actor in one kind is the strongest motive of affection that can be*: for when he dies, we cannot be persuaded any man can do his parts like him. Therefore the imitating characterist [sic!] was extreme idle in calling them rouges. [...] For I would let his malicious ignorance understand that rouges are not to be employed as *main ornaments* to His Majesty's revels (quoted in Wickham et. al. 2000, 181, emphases mine).

The sections in italics demonstrate that, on the one hand, the passage intends to legitimate the actor's profession by comparing it to eloquence, so it

emphasises its supposedly artistic values. On the other hand, it represents acting as if it was a service to different forms of power: the monarchy, the poet and textual authority in general. All the argumentation is very similar to that of Thomas Heywood, when he calls the actor and plays the "ornaments to the citty" [*sic!*] (Heywood [1612] 1841, 52). The "Excellent Actor", at the same time, advertises a theatre of a didactic kind; a stage which favours moral teaching and "taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories" (Ibid.).

So while the player was defined as an inferior, but free lawbreaker whose lifestyle neglects social rules, the actor is described as an elevated representative of high art. This binary opposition might suggest that the term "actor" signified a person who embodied or personified the given character, while "playing" referred to body-oriented performance practices aimed at entertainment (Weimann 2000, 133). Nevertheless, I agree with Weimann saying that no matter which "style" was vindicated explicitly at the age, there is no use preferring one style or type of playing to the other. By the turn of the 17th century, even if "personation" was highly praised and respected, there was probably a diversity of practices that characterised early modern performance, which included dramatic characterisation and amusement as well. Not to mention the fact that the majority of the well-known and highly favoured dramatists made use of both rhetorical and comical values, and they also combined the two in one certain character.[74]

Still, what I can detect in this discourse above is that – at least in "theoretical" terms – there was a hierarchic differentiation between the different agents of the same occupation. Both categories were burdened with prejudices and stereotypical features. While the common player's motley and low social status suggest that he was an entertainer, the actor, described with the ability of impersonation, was rather qualified for his noble and artistic

behaviour. In my opinion, this distinction was due to different ideologies which concerned the adaptation and/or the restriction to social rules and norms.

In the next subchapter, I am going to justify my ideas with some iconographical evidence which show that not only textual, but also pictorial documents represent the different estimation of players/actors. Then in the following chapter, I am going to analyse how this biased labelling can be perceived both in 16-17th-century sources and present-day theories on the profession. Along this line, I would like to explore how early modern discourses, both defending and attacking the Renaissance player, are ostracizing the comedian.[75]

3.1.2 The Iconography of Actors and Players

As for the interrelationship of iconography and theatre, critical discussion from Dieter Mehl to Peter Daly has shown thoroughly how the Renaissance stage worked as a complex image.[76] However, the analysis of the early modern emblematic theatre concentrated on the "speaking (or spoken) pictures" in playtexts, which were commonly and traditionally understood by playgoers. All this suggested that in theatre, image and text existed in

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[74] The example Weimann elaborates to the greatest extent is *Hamlet* (Weimann 2000, 151-179).

[75] I do not intend to suggest – and certainly it would also be problematic to prove it persuasively – direct historical continuity in the different types of prejudices against players and actors in culture. However, as I see it, the bias, which appears in the different designations, concerns comic actors to a greater extent. The Hungarian term "csepűrágó" (~ clown, buffoon, literally "tow-chewer"), for instance, refers to travelling players, who were using false beard made of hemp. It was used pejoratively. See "Csepűrágó", *Tudományos és Köznyelvi szavak Magyar Értelmező Szótára* (http://meszotar.hu/keres-csep%C5%B1r%C3%A1g%C3%B3, accessed July 05, 2013).

[76] For further readings, see Mehl 1969, 39-57 and Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* (Second Edition) by Peter M. Daly (University of Toronto Press, 1998). As for Hungarian references to the topic, it is inevitable to mention the series of the Institute of English and American Studies at the University of Szeged, Ikonológia és Műértelmezés (*Iconography and Interpretation*) which, from 1986 on, have been examining the connection of iconography and literature.

harmonious entity. Emblematic approaches usually treat the actor only as one single component of the performance's pictorial unity, which also means that he is not perceived as an autonomous artist who can transform the picture or step out of it, but rather as a standstill figure. Dieter Mehl, for instance, when categorising the uses of the emblem in English Renaissance drama, does not interpret the actor/character as the embodiment of an image, but he, relying on textual evidence, concentrates on how an image can characterise a certain situation or an individual speaker (Mehl 1969, 45). This viewpoint is very similar to that of Ben Jonson, who also regarded actors as parts of the spectacle (for more details, see Chapter 3.2.4).

Here, what I would like to do is to compare the iconographical resources of Renaissance players with the written assumptions about acting styles.[77] As I discussed it earlier, in my view, early modern discourses differentiated apparently between respectful and artistic serious acting and bawdy comic entertainment for different reasons, and this is also detectable in the iconography of the actors and players. What encourages me to use non-theatrical images is the principle of Marco de Marinis referred above: everything we are able to draw into the discourse of our studies can be regarded as a historical document (de Marinis 1999, 50-56).

The use of iconography in theatre studies is a crucial and still debated issue. Postlewait, when writing about the obscurity concerning pictorial sources in theatre history, calls it the "distrust of visual representation", and remarks that concerning early modern theatres, the verbal evidence overwhelms the visual (Postlewait 2009a, 576–7). Also, he criticises the partial blindness of scholars, with which they handle pictorial evidence casually and irresponsibly and blur the original pieces and the reproduction

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[77] Some aspects of this topic have already been discussed in my article, "The Iconography of Renaissance Playing – Rules and Violators", in Anna Kérchy – Attila Kiss – György E. Szőnyi eds. *The Iconography of Law and Order (Legal and Cosmic)*, Szeged: JATEPress, 2012, 105-15.

(Ibid., 580–1). Nevertheless, as for an earlier reference, Tadeusz Kowzan, while attempting to categorise "iconographic documents" for the theatre, assumes that theatre iconography can take a multiplicity of forms starting from the simplest pictorial representations to photography. The only criteria are that its referent has to be "a phenomenon belonging to theatrical reality [i.e., a performance]" and it has to be united to its referent by bonds of resemblance (Kowzan 1985, 61). If we follow this argumentation, from his examples of Greek, Roman, and Romantic theatre, it becomes clear that he considers images as tools with which – depending on the degree of resemblance and the accuracy of identification – it is possible to revitalise past performances, or, as he says, "to prolong the length of the theatrical phenomenon, to immortalise it in a certain sense" (Ibid., 53). Yet, in M. A. Katritzky's classification, those pictorial sources that cannot be linked to any specific performance can also be used as theatre documents (Katritzky 1999, 84).

Nevertheless, images that depict theatrical topics or players, on the one hand, might be mediated through the conventions adopted by their makers. On the other hand – as De Marinis also emphasises it –, it is also possible that they only give evidence of what the visual artist found interesting, important or detectable in a theatre event (Woodfield 2002, 59-63). Additionally, they are characterised by a "double representationality", that is they might display actors who act out roles (Ibid., 54), such as Robert Armin on the 1609 title page of his *Two Maids of More-Clacke* or perhaps Edward Alleyn playing *Doctor Faustus* on the title page of the 1616 B text quarto. Some of my examples fit into this category, others, however, cannot be related to any specific theatrical event, like the drawing of Tarlton on the cover of *Tarlton's Jests* (1613) or the Dulwich portrays of Richard Burbage and Nathan Field.

What we find about the prominent artists (i.e., tragic actors) of the age is portraits that show them out of performance. The Dulwich paintings of Burbage, Alleyn and Field represent these highly respected actors of the age as noble civics (Figures 2, 3, 4). Their posture is as if they were sitting for an artist. Two of these three, Alleyn and Field hold their hands on their chest, which might refer to learnedness, oratorical skills – the motion might help to expand the lungs to give out a strong voice, just like in case of opera singers – and nobility.[78] Pointing at the heart also represents credibility; as if the person suggested that we can trust and believe him. The only visual representation of Alleyn in role is the well-known title page of Marlowe's *Faustus* (Figure 6). However, opinions differ whether it shows Alleyn while acting, or only the character of Faustus.

These paintings mentioned are said to be contemporary representations from the 17th century. What is really characteristic of each is the aristocratic posture of the models, the straight look and the elegant outfit. The images do not really represent their subjects as actors, but as noblemen emphasising their social status and respect. This impression can be paralleled with the verbal accounts on the artistic views on contemporary acting: e. g. the celebration of Alleyn by Ben Jonson or the description by Sir Thomas Overbury in the description of the "Excellent Actor".[79]

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[78] As for nobility, see El Greco' painting *The Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest* (1580-82) (Figure 5).

[79] "If Rome so great, and in her wisest age,
Fear'd not to boast the glories of her stage,
As skilful Roscius, and grave Æsope, men,
Yet crown'd with honors, as with riches, then ;
Who had no lesse a trumpet of their name,
Than Cicero, whose every breath was fame :
How can so great example dye in me,
That Allen, I should pause to publish thee?
Who both their graces in thy selfe hast more
Out-stript, than they did all that went before :
And present worth in all dost so contract,
As others speak, but only thou dost act.
Weare this renowne. 'Tis just, that who did give

However, comedians have a completely different pictorial representation. We can mostly find drawings and engravings following the ancient – Greek and Roman – tradition of showing players in performance. Richard Tarleton appears on the cover of his posthumously published jests (*Tarlton's Jests*, 1613) (Figure 7). He wears the typical clothing of a rustic clown: leather shoes, purse and cap. He carries a tabor and a pipe such as Thomas Slye, the accompanist of Will Kemp on the title page of Kemp's *Nine Days Wonder* (Figure 8). Here, Kemp is wearing the characteristic morris costume decorated with ribbons and flowers. Meanwhile, he is depicted while dancing like his early Greek and contemporary Italian equivalents.

Robert Armin also appears in role on the title page of his The *History of the Two Maids of More-Clacke* (1609), which shows him in the fool's costume – a flat cap, a coat and an inkhorn – representing the play's main character, John, the natural fool (Figure 9).[80] Although all the three clowns are shown in motion/dance, Armin's gestures seem to be calmer and slower than his predecessors'. This might also emphasise that he was a wise-type of fool, and not a stage clown or buffoon. To some extent, in his long motley, he might remind us of Will Sommers, Henry VIII's jester (Figure 10).[81]

Beside the fact that motley was a costume which John Cocke characterised the "common player" with, David Wiles, in his chapter on Armin emphasises that the special long coat both Sommers and Armin were wearing places them in the tradition of "artificial" fools, that is the class of jesters, court entertainers and players (Wiles 1987, 147-50). It is very interesting that Wiles also brings Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblems* (1586) into his discussion, in which there are representations of natural and artificial foolery. The natural fool is shown as a court jester in a "motley

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So many *Poets* life, by one should live." (Ben Jonson, *To Edward Allen*, quoted in Collier 1841, 6).

[80] For further reading on Armin's motley, see Wiles 1987, 182-91.

[81] For more on Will Sommer's outfit, see Astington 2011, 69-78.

coate", while the natural fool is a freakish, grotesque creature with webbed feet climbing up a tree (Wiles 1987, 149). His deformed body can connect him to Bakhtin's idea of the physicality of carnivalesque, and also to the non-aesthetic appearance of comic performers who were often identified with freaks and animals.

So Armin acting the natural fool in the role of John provides, in fact, a double presence: the "artificial" fool pretends to be a "natural" one. This playfulness adds up a lot to Armin's player-image, as I am going to discuss it in more detail later. What I would like to emphasise is that, contrary to tragic actors who are honoured with painted portraits, comedians appear as illustrations to different texts, and they are usually shown in costumes and in (often improvisational) performances of different kinds. The way they are represented relates them to popular tradition as they are often characterised as dancers, jesters, jugglers and other street entertainers. However, perhaps the best-known pictorial source of improvisation depicts a stage scene. The title page of Francis Kirkman's *The Wits, or Sport for Sport* (1662) shows Bubble, the stage clown who performs his "Tu Quoque" aside (Figure 1).[82] The actor shown in the role of Bubble is probably Thomas Greene, since his was the leading clown in John Cooke's *The City Gallant* performed in 1611 at Red Bull.[83] The Latinism attributed to Bubble is a commonly known logical fallacy – meaning "you, too" or "you, also" – which refers to a way of self-defence of the guilty one by blaming the opposing part with the same

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[82] Kirkman's *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport* is a collection of drolls published in 1662. Drolls are comical sketches which were adapted from well-known Renaissance plays and were acted out (sometimes illegally) during the Commonwealth, when theatres were closed. The title-page is a famous for its assumed depiction of the inside of Red Bull Theatre. The characters represented are not all included in the drolls published in the volume. For further details, see Holland 2000, 107-126, especially 114-115.

[83] Thomas Greene, actor in Queen Anne's Men company was probably the successor of Will Kemp. His most famous role is Bubble, which was apparently his usual stage persona as well. For his detailed biography, see Berry 2004.

mischief.[84] It is repeated throughout Cooke's play many times, and was considered as one of the major sources of laughter for the audience. In theatrical and comical terms, the phrase might refer to the hypocritical behaviour of the audience and the common fate of players and spectators. On the one hand, the audience laughs at the misfortunes of the characters (including Bubble), however, the same calamities might be illustrative of their own lives too. On the other hand, in a broader sense, hypocrisy may refer to the counterfeiting nature of men, that is to people's impulse to make a profit of other people's bad luck. In the play, Bubble wins money by fortune and his previous master becomes his servant. By the end of the story, the situation reverses.

On the title page of *The Wits*, thus, the drawing of Bubble has a rich contextual background. The player Greene in the role of Bubble is represented as peeping from behind the curtain, pointing at the audience telling "you, also". In my view, it is possible to interpret this scene as a form of comic improvisation, by which the player is able to point at the mistakes and frailty of people and society. Thus, this act does not only exemplify the unity of theatre/society or players/spectators, but also the comic actor's evaluative, critical role. At the same time, if we compare this representation of Bubble with the 1614 title page of *The City Gallant*, we can see that the cover of Cooke's play represents a gentlemen-like figure, who might be Greene himself, given the fact that the other title of the play is *Greene's Tu Quoque*. If we look at the two pictures and consider the metadramatic allusion in the play when Bubble refers to Greene, we might find that the actor identity and the character merge. When Geraldine offers that she and Bubble should go to the Red Bull to watch a play, because "Green's a good clown", Bubble replies that "Green's an ass". When he is asked why, he says

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[84] For further readings, see the online reference of *Fallacy Files*. "Tu Quoque," *Fallacy Files*, http://www.fallacyfiles.org/tuquoque.html, accessed 23 July, 2013.

"Indeed I ha' no reason: for they say, hee is as like mee as ever he can looke".[85] For the audience, this could have been a hilarious moment.[86]

In conclusion, I intend to emphasise that rhetorical discourse did not only elevate or ennoble the textual remarks on acting, but also the iconography of it. Actors that are reported to follow the decorum in contemporary sources are portrayed as artists. Others are considered to be entertainers who illustrate or vitalise the performance, but never play a character. This is apparent even if we cannot avoid the fact that – as Katritzky also remarks – in the case of theatre iconography, sources and materials might have copied, or at least influenced each other to a great extent (Katritzky 1999, 75). This tendency of differentiating between "real" actors and comedians is detectable throughout the history of acting, and it is also imbued with some kind of sympathy towards the tragic actor. However, for the audience, it was probably the comic player with whom it was easier or more genuine to identify with.

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[85] Quoted in Herbert Berry's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

3.2 Attacks on the Early Modern Players

3.2.1 The General Context

The historical analysis of the Renaissance player relies on anti-theatrical attacks to a great extent. As Thomas Postlewait claims it, the term 'antitheatricality' has even extensively influenced the Renaissance idea of theatricality, since it was positioned as its opposite (Postlewait 2003, 94-110). Obviously, the different strands of contemporary criticisms have occupied various ideological starting points, however, one common feature is characteristic of each: they look at players and their work as potential sources of danger. Either presenting them as the corrupters of the human soul and values or describing their activity as the violation of the dramaturgical rules, they were basically defined as "devil-worshippers" and the agents of perpetual opposition to the system (Gras 1993, 187).

In this chapter, I intend to show that the real target of antitheatrical hostility was the extempore (or rule-breaking) nature of players. Besides, the attacks targeted the players for many different reasons. One ideological background was the puritan worldview which saw the theatre as the "chappel of Satan" (sic!) and the actors as evildoers who substitute their God-given self with a fictional one (Gurr [1987] 2004, 66). Another issue which was considered to endanger respectable people's moral was the players' status in society. Theatre, on the one hand, blurred the distinction between men and women and described actors as "sexually variable". On the other hand, they were often associated with subordinate social groups such as beggars, beasts, madmen, fools, jugglers or children (Worthen 1984, 24). Moreover, as an intriguing phenomenon in contemporary antitheatricality, we can also detect offence against performance within the walls of the theatre: certain

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[86] There is also reference for the fact that Greene once played a baboon on stage (Bradbrook 1962, 124).

self-conscious authors, like Ben Jonson, felt that the theatre event threatens their poetry and authorial-textual autonomy.[87]

What seems to be common in all these arguments against theatre is the emphasis on the jeopardy of the sight. Michael O'Connell in his intriguing book, *The Idolatrous Eye* (2000), is trying to explore the connection between antitheatricality and religious iconophobia from the Middle Ages on. As he writes, iconoclasts have always been attacking the reconstruction of the living body in visual form, which was also the major thing to criticise for the attackers of theatre. Also, he traces anti-theatrical discourse back to the crisis in the relationship of image and word, which, as he says, caused a deep disjunction in religious experience (O'Connell 2000, 9-11). Accordingly, he draws a parallel between the religious/sacred roots of theatre and Christian antipathy against spectacles.

I certainly agree with the idea that there is some representational relationship between visual arts and theatre. The substantial difference is, however, not that the staged body substitutes for someone else's (the character's) physicality, while the picture "stands for itself". As I see it, the main reason why a performance cannot be considered purely as a still image is that theatre scenes are eventful; and this fact has many unavoidable

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[87] As Richard Dutton claims, Jonson's career exemplifies what Michel Foucault called the emergence of the notion of the actor (Dutton 1996, 3). The extensive volume on authorship *Authority Matters* also considers Renaissance literati as the first who "began to gain new authority during the seventeenth century – legally, economically, and symbolically" (Dobranski 2008, 24). Both Dutton and Dobranski refer to Jonson as a conscious literary agent, who – especially in his epistles to his plays and masques and in his *Timber; or Discoveries* – emphasises the importance of his own superiority and controlling power (Dutton 1996, 21-32; Dobranski 2008, 34-35), which, when it was opposed to theatre-makers, lead to antitheatrical judgements. (I will elaborate on antitheatricality within the theatre later on.) Nevertheless, in my view, antitheatricality is a still existing phenomenon in the sense, for example, that in Hungary, in the 21st century, certain political sides would insist on the literary interpretation of classical plays and they expect to have a didactic aim of performances. Also, they are continuously criticising the supposedly explicit sexually or vulgarity while aiming at protecting the assumed authority of the author and the text.

consequences.[88] In the case of interpreting actors, the "unstill image" might have a great influence on how it is understood by its viewers. With its physical and verbal behaviour, it can manipulate those who watch it. Moreover, physicality is connected to comic attitudes to a great extent, thus, concerning improvisation (if we think about it in terms of erratic non-conformist behaviour), bodily presence cannot be neglected.

All in all, for me, there is not any entirely reassuring argumentation concerning theatre in the relationship of text and image, especially with regard to the actor and his body. Even in W. J. T. Mitchell's significant study, *Picture Theory* (1994), the issue is not clarified. As he writes,

> The image-text relation in film and theater is not a merely technical question, but a site of conflict, a nexus where political, institutional, and social antagonisms play themselves out in the materiality of representation. [...] The real question to ask when confronted with these kinds of image-text relations is not 'what is the difference (or similarity) between the words and the images?' "but" 'what difference do the differences (or the similarities) make?' That is, why does it matter how words and images are juxtaposed, blended, or separated (Mitchell 1994, 90).

As we can see, he defines theatre and film as mixed media or "imagetext", with which he calls the attention to the simultaneous presence of verbal and

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[88] Defining theatrical performance as an event comprehends the assumption that it is a creative and co-operative work of the author, the actor and the audience. This "collaborative action" on stage is emphasised by several theorists of both early modern and modern theatrical practices, and this is a point where the resembling features of Renaissance and 20th-century theatre are often recognised. See David Wiles on Brecht and Shakespeare (Wiles 1987, 165). Furthermore, as Timothy J. Wiles defines it, "theatre event" is the "creative interaction of literary text, actor's art, and spectator's participation" (Wiles 1980, 3).

pictorial elements. Although in his book, he argues against the hierarchy of the two representational modes, he still insists on the binary opposition of the two. However, he does not put the emphasis on the differences, but on the political-social-ideological-cultural implication of their use.

However, in Mitchell's system, we do not have an answer for whether the actor's speaking and moving body belongs to the territory of the text or of the image; or, if, in pictorial terms, we have to make a difference between the scenery and the spectacular physical entities on stage. Also, dance theatre might be an interesting point to elaborate on, since they hardly ever follow a text or a structured written narrative in the traditional sense. Are they images, then?

Thus, although I accept to some extent that iconophobia and antitheatricality can have common grounds, and that it was the visual experience in theatre that puritans were mainly anxious about, I handle the similarity of antitheatricality and iconoclasm with reservation. The main reason for this is the unstable position of the actor's body in this discourse. I believe that – at least, from my point of view – the most important target of antitheatricalists was the players' ability (and their intention) to form and to shape the world view of the spectators, to have an impact on their acts and to advertise anti-system demeanour.

In the following chapters, I am going to deal with the different aspects of early modern antitheatricality. Firstly, I briefly look at the puritan/religious background of it with the actor in the centre, who is always shown to be an untrue identity. Secondly, I am considering the social existence of players and the metaphors attached to this public image. Finally, I am dealing with antitheatricality within the theatre.

3.2.2 Hypocrisy and counterfeiting

Puritan anti-theatricalists in early modern England relied to a great extent on Tertullian's *De spectaculis* and they elaborate on many of his thoughts in their writings. One of these issues is the perception of evil deeds, which, as they say, results in committing them as well (Barish 1981, 46). As we will see, the idea that spectacle encourages imitation is a key concept in, for instance, Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* too, but he, obviously extends the same principle in the reverse direction when saying that stage plays move people to noble behaviour (Heywood [1612] 1841, 53).[89]

Another concept of Tertullian inherited by the puritans is the absoluteness of the God-given self, which is not allowed to be spoilt by any form of alternation. As Jonas Barish quotes, Tertullian, for instance, condemns the shaving of the beard because "it is a lie against our own faces, and an impious attempt to improve the works of the Creator" (quoted in Barish 1981, 49). Also, he condemns the use of costumes, cosmetics and jewellery, especially when it comes to women, since all are inventions of the devil (Ibid., 50).

In England, theatregoing was considered as sinful as gambling, as it distracts the good Christian from business or family duties. As Barish explains, anti-theatrical literature of the age flourished between 1575 until 1642 (the closing of the theatres), and despite its attributed ideological characteristics, not all writers against the stage were puritans. At the same time, the tracts available are quite repetitive and give a scornful, anecdotic description of playhouse events and the manners of actors (Ibid., 88). Their

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[89] As I am going to show in the following subchapter, one of the most significant arguments in defence of acting was that it can teach controlled body use and noble behaviour. Thus, supporters of acting – like Thomas Heywood or John Webster/Sir Thomas Overbury – suggest that the actor is not only graceful and exemplary, but also disciplined and refined. Moreover, his attitudes can be compared to that of a courtier. These ideas serve as a basis to discuss Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* – translated into English in 1561 by Sir Thomas Hoby – as reliable reference to the work of the early modern actor.

topics range from the effects of plays on the audiences to the harmful influence of the role on the person who is playing it.

However, since my main concern is acting, I am going to elaborate on the antitheatricalists' idea of the player, whose image is identified with that of a hypocrite. Hypocrisy in the age was not only meant in religious terms, but it also referred to the insincerity and the corruption of the self in mundane contexts. Perhaps the best known example is when William Prynne in his *Histriomastix: The Player's Scourge* (1633) restates the historically acquainted claim that acting is based on hypocrisy.

> What else is an hypocrite, in his true etimologie, but a Stage-player, or one who acts anothers part: as sundry Authors and Gramarians teach. [...] And hence is it, that not onely divers moderne English and Latine Writers, but likewise sundry Fathers here quoted in the Margent, stile Stage-players hypocrites; Hypocrites, Stage-players, as being one and the same in substance (quoted in Barish 1981, 91-2).

Similarly, other puritan authors rely on the assumption that God has provided us not only soul, but a body as well, so any alternation is an offence against his creature. Players are evil because they intend to substitute their own, God-given self for a fictional one, and so are performances, since they are "notorious lying fables" (Ibid., 93).

The two most frequent metaphors of the actor to represent hypocrisy is the chameleon and the figure of Proteus. Both of them acquire the same essence: changeability and unreliability. The former one, in Christian iconography, is the representation of the Satan/Lucifer, who deceives people in different disguises (Pál and Újvári 2001, 243). Or, as Alciato's depiction to Emblem 53 says, the chameleon "changes its appearance, takes on diverse

colours, except for red or white", likewise the flatterer, who "feeds on an air of popularity" (Figure 11).[90] As I am going to scrutinize it elsewhere later, according to both defenders and attackers of theatre, seeking reputation was a common peculiarity of early comic actors.

As for Proteus, who is the embodiment of the ability to self-transformation, he is also associated with deceit and counterfeiting. However, at the same time, in Neo-Platonic interpretations, he is the symbol of the self-accomplishment of man, or the creative power Pico della Mirandola or Sir Philip Sidney describes (Ibid., 400). For this reason, the puritan anxiety can also be interpreted as a fear which concerns man's likeness to God, which is often associated with the same creative force that God acquires. In other words, "stage acting directly challenges God's established order in the person of the individual actor, and implies a demonic attempt both to efface the image of the Creator and to usurp his role in the cosmos". In this way, as Worthen concludes, we can claim that "the Puritan perspective on the actor's imitation is decisively Platonic in attitude, if not in spirit" (Worthen 1984, 19, 21).[91]

Also, since theatre targets the senses, especially "the eye" (cf. Gosson), the actor's performance has an effect on the spectator's sensibility, which also means that, from the transcendent spirit, their attention is directed to flesh-and-blood body. Theatre, via the display of physicality, represents mutability and changeability, which is characteristic of Satan's operation in the world. To analyse this context further, we might say that acting/bodily presence is the synonym of the corruption of God's established order and the true Christian's sincere behaviour. As Prynne writes,

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[90] All references to Alciato's *Book of Emblems* is from the Latin-English online edition of the Memorial University of Newfoundland (http://www.mun.ca/alciato/, accessed 10 November, 2011). For further description of the chameleon's iconography, see Barish 1981, 103-4.

[91] As I am going to show it in the second part of my dissertation, human creativity in social theory is often associated with the ability of improvisation. For further readings, see Sawyer 2000 and Bertinetto 2012.

> For God, who is truth in selfe, in whom there is no
> variablenesse, no shadow of change no feining, no hypocrisie;
> as he hath given a uniforme distinct and proper being to every
> creature, the bounds of which may not be exceeded: so he
> requires that the actions of every creature should be honest
> and sincere, devoyde of all hypocrisie, as all his actions, and
> their natures are (quoted in Barish 1984, 92).

Associating the body with the instability of meanings, however, is not only characteristic of the Puritan attacks on the stage, since, as I am going to expose it later, it was the illustrative metaphor of Ben Jonson in his debate on court masques with Inigo Jones, where Jonson relates theatrical spectacle to the ephemeral nature of the body.[92] So the variable and hypocritical behaviour of actors as well as the exorbitant function of the body can be explained with the term "improvisation" in the sense that – at least according to the antitheatrical discourse – actors transgress God's ultimate law and they urge people to act similarly.

However, in the Christian interpreting framework, which was not explicitly concerned with dramaturgical issues, another aspect (or consequence) of physicality was lust, effeminacy and lewdness. Laura Levine in her article *Men in Women's Clothing* (1986) is analysing the effeminizing power of theatre and is proving that behind the Puritan idea of the seemingly coherent identity, there are many contradictions concerning the understanding of the self. On the one hand, attackers describe the self as a God-given, stable identity, on the other hand, they constantly give utterance to their fear that it transformed under the influence of stage-plays (Levine 1986, 121). Both actors and spectators are turned into beasts, monsters, what

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[92] I am going to elaborate this in Chapter 3.2.4.

is more, male actors who wear women's clothing could literally metamorphose into a female. As Prynne writes,

> May we not daily see our players metamorphosed into women on the stage, not only by putting on the female robes, but likewise the effeminate gestures, speeches, pace, behaviour, attire, delicacy, passions, manners, arts and wiles of the female sex, yea, of the most petulant, unchaste, insinuating strumpets that either Italy or the world affords? What wantonness, what effeminacy parallel to that which our men-women actors, in all their feminine (yea, sometime in their masculine parts) express upon the theater? (Prynne, quoted in Pollard 2004, 290).

Although, as for the erotic pleasure related to acting, Worthen only mentions Ben Jonson's *Volpone* when seducing Celia,[93] the bawdy jokes and ribaldry of comic players cannot be omitted. The sexuality involved in clowning and jesting could definitely add to the interpretation of the physical aspects of early modern theatricality as well as the rule-breaking, vexing manners of contemporary comic actors who intentionally acted against social norms. At the same time, interpreting acting as hypocrisy definitely has moral and ethical consequences, especially because, as anti-theatricalists see it, actors on stage set bad example to the spectators, i.e., they encourage them to immoral behaviour. Understanding this within the context of the *theatrum mundi*, it suggests that if theatre is the metaphor of

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[93] Ben Jonson's *Volpone* does not only exemplify the lecherous eroticism of acting, but also Jonson's prejudice against Italian theatre. The scene in the play, on the one hand, is the corrupt Venice, which provides field for the manipulative actions of Volpone and his company. On the other hand, in Act II Scene 2, Volpone is disguised as Scoto of Mantua, an Italian mountebank in order to fulfil his aims. Here, and also in the debate with Inigo Jones in his debate on the court masque, Jonson's bias against Italian "mimics" becomes explicit.

life, it is not only stage representation, which is hypocritical, but also the social reality of the spectators. If we contrast this with the contemporary defence of acting, we can see that it was especially the comic actors who epitomise the ability of improvisation and rebel, even if in anti-theatrical tracts comedians and tragic actors were not clearly differentiated.[94]

3.2.3 Players in Society

In certain antitheatrical tracts, players are remarkably characterised as social identities, especially with regard to their social status and their disrespectful gestures to the law. For my argumentation, this is noticeable, since breaking social rules in general might also be understood as a certain form on improvisation, and also, I believe that players, with their (social and artistic) acts set an example to people in early modern society. Jean E. Howard, in her intriguing book, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (1994) is dealing with the political-ideological implications of theatrical practices, and as such, she is also examining the representation of non-elite social groups in the theatre (Howard 1994, 12). Contrary to Stephen Greenblatt's major argument that theatre represents the dominant political power relations, Howard claims that theatre, as a social phenomenon, juxtaposes the diverse discourses and the exposition of different ideological positions at the same time (Ibid., 13).[95]

This can be confirmed, on the one hand, with the fact that plays and actors represented various acting traditions, both highbrow and lowbrow. On the other hand, as Andrew Gurr and many others have stated, public theatres were built mainly in the area of the suburbs, which was a marginal

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[94] For further readins, see Matuska 2008, 45-59.
[95] For more readings on this idea of Greenblatt, see Greenblatt 1996, 355-72.

zone and an off-beat territory beyond social control.[96] For these reasons, the major anxiety of anti-theatricals concerning the status of participants involved in theatre was that they can lose or corrupt their social identity. In other words, players who cannot be defined in terms of social ranks at all might contaminate spectators with the disease of idleness.

At this point, we can see that the transformative power of theatre and players was not only feared to affect the spectators' private identity and moral values, but also their social position. Puritan worries in this respect echo the rhetoric related to the Great Chain of Being, in which, as Howard says, "the hierarchical social order was determined by God, and was, properly speaking, immutable" (Ibid., 35).

Although it seems to be a defendable argument that all the aspects of early modern antitheatricality can be traced back to the Christian-Puritan worldview, and the focus is to point at the danger of the transformational power of theatre, I have decided to discuss the social aspect for different reasons. Firstly, my main concern is comic acting, and even if Kemp was, for instance, a shareholder of the Globe, and Armin was also a highly appreciated player of his time, comedians were rather associated with rustic roots and humble rank. Especially Tarlton and Kemp can be characterised with a vernacular style, both in acting and speaking. Both the jest and the ballad as genres, which are interconnected with their names, are typically popular forms of entertainment.

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[96] The interconnection between the location of theatres/acting areas and the (socially and aesthetically) marginal position of players is a very exciting topic and is worth more attention. The restrictions concerning players' life and the space provided for them in their profession certainly have common bearings. This concerns comic players in particular, since their territory was often not the official stage, but the street and the market place; untended areas that were more in lack of social control. Thus, the players' existence on the limen could have different meanings: their position cannot be located either physically or socially. All this is largely characteristic of Italian players, who did not even possess permanent playhouses (Demcsák 2011, 36-42).

Moreover, I strongly believe that early modern comedians played upon low social status as a part of their image.[97] David Wiles argues, for instance, that before the 1590s, both 'clown' and 'fool', although they were quite clearly separated in theatrical vocabulary, referred to a man of ignoble birth. However, by the turn of the 17th century, "the equivalence of 'clown' as comedian and 'clown' as low-status rustic broke down" and "the binary view of society was no longer an acceptable convention" (Wiles 1987, 100). Still, although Kemp played a knight (i.e., a well-born character, Falstaff) in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays, in his other roles and his public image, he consciously insisted on his reputation as a "plain man" contrary to a gentleman (Ibid.).[98] Also, even if Armin was a licensed fool and a jester, his dramatic roles (Touchstone, Carlo Buffone, Feste, Lavatch, Thersites, Passarello and the Fool in King *Lear*) suggest that he was also associated with the identity of a servant.[99] The insistence that these actors wanted to present themselves as 'everyday people' might be explained with the fact that this was their preferred audience to play for, this is where their improvisatory routines worked the best.

Low social position invokes other marginal identities, such as immigrants, women or mentally disabled people. William Prynne, for instance, compares the theatre to a lunatic asylum and the players to madmen and children.

> Yea, what else is the whole action of Playes, but well personated vanity, artificial folly, or a lesse Bedlam frenzie? He who shall seriously survay the ridiculous, childish,

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[97] I think low social status – as well as drunkenness – is still a valid component of the clownery image, we should only think of Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin's tramp persona.
[98] Martin Butler disagrees with the assumption that Kemp might have played Falstaff, since the role is much better developed than Kemp's other roles, and it has characteristics which are alien from Kemp's abilities and skills (Butler 2004b).
[99] As for Armin's parts, I am quoting the list of David Wiles here (Wiles 1987, 145).

inconsiderate, yea, mad a beastly actions, gestures, speeches,
habits, prankes and fooleries of Actors on the Stage, (if he be
not childish, foolish, or frentique himself) must needs deeme
all Stage-players children, fools, or Bedlams, since they act
such parts, such prankes yea, use such gestures, speeches,
raiment, complements, and behaviour in Iest, which none but
children, fooles, or mad-men do act, or Vse inearnest (Prynne,
quoted in Worthen 1984, 89).[100]

Prynne's conclusion suggests that those who enjoy theatrical performances –
either acting or watching – are incompetent, childish or mad. If not yet, they
are going to become one soon. The same issue is also articulated by Ben
Jonson in his *Timber; or Discoveries* (1640):

Every man, forgetfull of himself, is in travaile with expressions
of another. Nay, wee too insist in imitating others, as wee
cannot (when it is necessary) returne to ourselves: like
Children, that imitate the vices of Stammerers so long, till at
last they become such (Jonson [1640] 1947, 597).

Performance, thus, lacks the control of the individual in terms of his social
status and behaviour, so those involved in theatrical activity are
characterised with untrue nature and fake identity. The anxiety of the
deficiency of social control can also be attributed to supposedly inferior
social groups such as vagrants, beggars, vagabonds, street jugglers and the

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[100] The title page of Shakespeare's *King Lear*'s 1608 quarto (Quarto 1) also suggests that the madman is associated with the comic actor. As it writes, the play presents the history of Lear and his daughters "[w]ith the unfortunate life of Edgar, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his fullen and assumed of TOM of Bedlam". "*King Lear*, Quarto 1 (Halliwell-Phillipps)," last modified 3 February, 2011,

like. These "mobile, masterless men and the discontented poor were both perceived as potential threats to political security and stability in Elizabethan England" (Keenan 2002, 7).

In anti-theatrical tracts, players are often compared to layabouts. In an act in 1572, nevertheless, it was specified that players who travel without "belonging to any Baron of this Realme or towards any other honourable Personage of greater Degree" [...] shalbee taken and adjudged and deemed Rouges Vagaboundes and Sturdy Beggars".[101] Still, this did not prevent antitheatricalists like Philip Stubbes, for instance, to equate travelling players with rouges and vagabonds (Ibid.) Because of the same reference, it is also not unusual to liken players to servants, since it was quite natural to accommodate to the patron's needs in many respects. This is exemplified by many episodes in contemporary stage plays, like the artisans' scene in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The beggar was also a common metaphor for early modern players, since the way the company is awaiting applause at the end of the play is similar to the beggars' plea for pennies – just like in the case of Puck's epilogue. As Meredith Anne Skura also elaborates in her discussion of the player-images of the premodern theatre, the adventures of the drunken sleeper in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* recall stories of contemporary street beggars (Skura 1993, 95-106). As the Lord says, "O monstrous beast! how like a swine he lies! / Grim death, how foule and loathsome is thine image!" (I. 1. 34-35).[102] Also, although in the eye of the public, panhandlers had more comic

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http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/facsimile/comparator/22/11/23/, accessed 13 August, 2012.

[101] Quoted in Keenan 2002, 4-5. This was basically an extension of Queen Elizabeth's 1559-proclamation in which she forbade "all maner interludes to be played either openly or privately, except the same be notified beforehand, and licensed within any city or towne corporate by the mayor or other chief officers of the same, and within any shire by such as shall be lieutenants for the Queen's majesty in the same shire, or by two of the justices of peace inhabiting within that part of the shire where any shall be played" (Ibid., 2).

[102] All the forthcoming references by Shakespeare's plays are from *Shakespeare: Complete Works* edited by W. J Craig (Oxford University Press, 1966).

characteristics, Skura calls the attention to the fact that the relationship between the king and the beggar in plays is special, since in the carnivalesque setting of the theatre, their position is interchangeable, as it is alluded to, in many cases in plays.[103]

The parallel between comedians and the people of the street seems even more obvious, since it goes without saying that, for instance, both Tarleton and Kemp made use of both the language and the gestures of market entertainment. Additionally, as we can see in *Tarlton's Jests*, his scenes of performance included not only the official theatre, but open spaces of both the country and the city. At the same time, Will Kemp, with his most famous street performance, the morris dance from London to Norwich, made himself connected with the "minions of the moon",[104] since "moon men", that is the gypsies were compared to morris dancers on the basis of their clothing and rambling lifestyle (Salgado 1992, 157-59).[105] Furthermore, by antitheatricalists, morris dance – as I am going to analyse it later in more details – similarly to theatre performance, was held to be the devil's insanity.[106]

So what we can see, conclusively, is that the images of the early modern player in relation to his status are interconnected with groups of low

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[103] Skura mentions Richard III when kneeling down to Lady Anne and the references to "The Ballad of the King and the Beggar" in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Skura 1993, 99).

[104] Also, in *Henry IV, Part 1*, Falstaff says: "let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon; and let men say, we be men of good government, being governed as the sea is, by our noble and chaste mistress, the moon, under whose countenance we steal" (I. 2. 28-33).

[105] As Gamini Salgado argues, the "minions of the moon" were gypsies, who were thought to be the descendants of the ancient Egyptians at the age. They were known to live on the road, thus, identified with rouges living upon palmistry and other kinds of street amusement (Salgado 1997, 149-64).

[106] As Philip Stubbes says in his *The Anatomie of Abuses*: "Thus all things set in order, then have their Hobby horses, their Dragons and other Antiques, togither with their baudie Pipes, and thundering Drummers, to strike up the Deuils Daunce withal Then: marche these heathen company towards the Church and Church-yarde, their Pipers pipeing, their Drummers thundring, their stumps dauncing, their bels iyngling, their handkerchefs swinging about their heds like madde men, their Hobbie horses and other monsters skirmishing amongst the route" (P2).

social rank. At the same time, in the arguments against stage-plays and actors, one of the most significant worries was that theatre has the force to change social and economic relations in society: it can empower certain communities and down-grade others. When we read antitheatrical literature of the age from a social and political point of view, it is perceivable that even aesthetic considerations bear the impact of ideology. In the next subchapter, I am going to concentrate on the dramaturgical reflections on the threat of performance.

3.2.4 Theatre Against Theatre

As for the manifestation of antitheatricality within the theatre, Barish, in his significant study, analyses Ben Jonson's ambiguous relationship to spectacle. He calls him Shakespeare's "phychological antithesis" when saying that he had a deep suspicion towards theatricality as a form of behaviour (Barish 1981, 133). Although Jonson certainly had a negative attitude against performance, as I will show, it was not only him who had a particular dislike for comedians. Hamlet's famous lines, for instance, when he instructs the travelling players, might refer to Will Kemp:[107]

> And let those
> that play your clowns speak no more than is
> set down for them; for there be of them that
> will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of
> barren spectators to laugh too, though in the
> mean time some necessary question of the play
> be then to be considered; that's villainous, and shows

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[107] This is affirmed by David Mann (Mann 1991, 66), Meredith Anne Skura (Skura 1993, 57) and Robert Weimann (Weimann 2000, 101) as well.

a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it (III. 2. 42-
50).[108]

Opinions differ why it was necessary to write roles for clowns, if they were disturbingly ruining the written text and the narrative with their improvisation. László Kéry claims that Shakespeare as an author actually defends the comic actor by giving him a role in his plays (Kéry 1964, 65). In my opinion, however, a role written for a clown was rather a stage convention – although this is refused by Kéry (Ibid., 357) – that is Shakespeare might have taken the audience's demand into consideration. With this, the aim was not really the calculated effect, I think, but rather a signal for the fact that the dramatist took the audience as an important factor in theatre production. Spectators might have needed the clown for different reasons; in my view, they saw him as a subject who resisted social norms and expected behaviour.

In Barish's conclusion, the reason for Jonson's aversion for performance was his fear of mutability and change, which was basically the most important objection against clownery as well. For Jonson, clowns, just like actors in general are not willing to keep either any dramaturgical rules or the stage etiquette, consequently, in Hamlet's words, they distract the audience's attention when "necessary questions of the play" are considered.

For Jonson, the crucial issues of the play are destroyed by stage representations universally. Because of this, he never misses the opportunity to separate the written form and the acted one. On the 1600 title page of *Every Man Out of his Humor*, he informs the readers that it was "first

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[108] Certainly, this is only one possible interpretation of Hamlet's lines, especially when one considers the differences between the Q1, Q2 and the Folio versions. In Q1, Hamlet's monologue on clownery is longer, and it is quite clear that while he is criticising and mocking extempore manners, at the same time, he is acting the same way. For further references (and for and for a thorough comparison of this scene in the three texts), see Pikli 2013, 119-140, especially 129-132.

composed by the author" and contains "more then hath been publickely spoken or acte[d]". Barish points out that with this, Jonson squares up to the existing tradition of printed title pages, which usually named the company, which performed the play. He, however, emphasises the superiority of the written form and his own authorial mastery (Barish 1981, 136-7).[109]

This high level of control does not only concern Jonson's popular plays, but also his court masques, which is very perceivably manifested in his debate with Inigo Jones. Although Jonson, in the introduction to one of his early pieces, The *Masque of Blackness* (1605) admits that "the honour and splendour of these spectacles was such in the performance", he makes the tension between text and spectacles clear later, in *Hymanei* (1606).[110]

> It is noble and just advantage that the things subjected to understanding have of those which are objected to sense that the one sort are but momentary and merely taking, the other impressing and lasting. Else the glory of all these solemnities had perished like a blaze and gone out in the beholders's eyes. So short lived are the bodies of all things on comparison of their souls. And, though bodies ofttimes have the ill luck to be sensually preferred, they find afterwards the good fortune, when souls live, to be utterly forgotten (*Hymanei*, 1-9).

Here, the bodily part, which is the metaphor of spectacle and performance, is mutable, short living, and "sensually preferred", whereas the soul of the masque is lasting and "subjected to understanding". Jonson's rhetoric here echoes puritan antitheatrical writers' iconoclasm – an issue I have discussed

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[109] See Footnote 87.

[110] All references to *The Masque of Blackness* are from *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments* edited by David Lindley (Oxford University Press, 1995); while the passages quoted from *Hymanei* are from *Ben Jonson: Selected Masques* edited by Stephen Orgel (Yale University Press, 1970). The parenthetic numbers refer to the lines.

earlier – by saying that sight has an impact on emotions, which might lead to uncontrolled behaviour of the individuals. As he also writes in his *Timber; or Discoveries*:

> Poetry, and Picture, are the Arts of a like nature; and both are busie about imitation. It was excellently said of Plutarch, Poetry was a speaking Picture, and Picture a mute Poesie. For they both invent, faine, and devise many things, and accommodate all they invent to the use, and service of nature. Yet of the two, the Pen is more noble than the Pencill. For that can speake to the Understanding; the other, but to the Sense (Jonson [1640] 1947, 609-10).

This argument shows also that, although he uses the theatre as a tool to popularise his plays to the public, Jonson's main purpose is to preserve his plays and poems from mutability and fading. To do this, he sees guarantee in editorial work as well as in intellectual reception ("understanding"), which is more preferable than the visual interpretation. In his outburst against spectacles, he does not only compound the notion of the physical part of the performance with the person of the designer (Inigo Jones), but also, he associates the assumed histrionic activity with Italy. In his epigram *On The Townes Honest Man*, he calls Jones "th' Italian", who makes his way in the world by miming (quoted in Barish 1981, 145).[111]

Apart from the obvious Neo-Platonic interpretation, the symbolism, which parallels body and soul with performance and text is especially intriguing from a theatrical perspective. We can see that authors like Jonson were anxious about their authority as dramatists. However, while "serious" actors such as Burbage and Alleyn were praised for being able to act

properly, comedians were condemned for diverting the audience's attention in an incorrect way. All this is especially interesting in light of the fact that we know that many characters in Shakespeare's plays were bearing both tragic and funny attributes, and also, that Richard Burbage played comic roles, just like *Volpone* in Jonson's play. So it is crucial to point out that while the references suggest bias and distinction between high art and entertainment, it might have worked differently in theatrical practice, which was "mingling kings and clowns".

3.3 The Defence of the Profession

3.3.1 The Divinity of Players

Those who argued in defence of the actors used a symbolism similar to those who attacked them. However, in the case of Proteus, for instance, they emphasised the Neo-Platonic interpretation, which featured the imaginative potential of man (Barish 1981, 106). In this view, the player, just like poets and other artists, resembles God in his capacity to create new worlds. So the power of self-transformation into other shapes and characters is described as an act of free choice, an exclusively positive attribute. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1485) praises man for his ability to choose the form and value his life can acquire, and at the same time, he vests him with the responsibility to make all the correct decisions.[112]

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[111] For more details on the Jonson-Jones debate, see Parry 1981, 176-80, or Oroszlán 2008, 269-280.

[112] The praise of man as the inventor of arts and crafts was not a new concept in the 15th and 16th centuries, but it was also common in ancient literature. Similarly, the human being was glorified for his position close to God in the Bible, especially in Genesis. Early Christianity emphasised the salvation of mankind and the embodiment of Christ. Some of the Church Fathers developed this idea, and combined it further with pagan conceptions. In the Renaissance, the dignity of man was a common topic in works of certain humanist authors such as Giannozzo Manetti and Marsilio Ficino (Cassirer et. al. 1948, 225).

The key concept here is the human being's liberty and free will to choose his own route.

Following the same Neo-Platonic route, Philip Sidney also acknowledges the human being's capacity of divine creation, as he defines poetry as an act that "did imitate of the inconceivable excellencies of God" (9). As he claims, beside imitating the perfection of nature, through imaginary literature the poet can demonstrate moral truth with which he teaches and delights (10).

In both Mirandola's and Sidney's text, man is invested with the full power of becoming similar to God, which is partly his merit, partly God's intention to raise his favourite creature on his – God's – level. In other words, the ability for artistic invention is the success of God's grace and man's privileged position compared to all the other beings.

The only surviving printed defence of actors, Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* (1612) follows a similar rhetoric concerning the quality of actors. The treatise is divided to three sections: the antique history of acting, the dignity of actors, and the true use of the profession. Heywood, just like Sidney, starts from the presumption that art (i.e. acting) is imitation, "the glasse of custome, and the image of truth" (Heywood [1612] 1841, 49). Thus, with the help of plays, both actors and spectators can perceive good examples and gain moral benefit. Imitating noble characters can result in virtuous deeds, while "comedies make men see and shame their faults" (Ibid., 53-55).[113]

Heywood's work does not contain many definitive facts about real acting methods, but he rather takes over well-known ideas and concepts of antitheatrical literature. Anyone, who wants to find essential proof of

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[113] Heywood's argument bears similarities to that of Thomas Lodge, who, in his *A Reply to Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse, in Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays* (1579) – supporting his argument with classical examples as well – writes that theatre is able to educate spectators, so it cannot be exclusively interpreted as a form of idleness (quoted in Pollard 2004, 37-61).

Renaissance acting will be mistaken, since – as I have elaborated on it earlier – he, similarly to Hamlet, uses the language of rhetoric to explain "how to fit his [the actor's] phrases to his action, and his action to his phrase, and his pronuntiation [*sic!*] to them both" (Ibid., 29).

As for the praise of the excellent actors, Heywood glorifies Alleyn to the greatest extent, and he mentions comedians only in terms of their popularity and fame.[114] It is no wonder, since it seems that the humanistic defence of theatre cannot be carried out without the exclusion of lower forms of entertainment. Heywood only mentions these performances once, when he remarks that "I speake not in the defence of any lascivious shewes, scurrelous jests, or scandalous invectives. If there be any such I banish them from my patronage" (Ibid., 54).

From this, it becomes clear that Heywood only intends to speak about 'serious' actors in extolment; about those, who, as "excellent actor[s]" or "ornament[s] to the citty" fit into his apologetic rhetoric. He describes them as men of dignity, which, just like Mirandola's and Sidney's image of the individual, very much fits into the humanist interpretation of the self. The "Excellent Actor" does not only possess moral values, but perfect physical characteristics as well, that is how he can impersonate noble characters lively and gracefully, while being in the centre of the audience's attention even in – let us just think of Webster's description – a "full theatre" mentioned earlier.[115]

The humanist idea of the self might remind us of several of texts and images, which represent the bodily perfection and the true self of man. Leonardo da Vinci's image of the Vitruvian man is a famous example, but

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[114] "Here I must remember Tarleton, in his gratious with the queene, his soveraigne, and in the people's generall applause, whom succeeded Wil. Kemp, as wel in the favour of her majesty, as in the opinion and good thoughts of the general audience" (Heywood [1612] 1841, 43).

Leon Battista Alberti, in his treatise *On Painting* (1435-36) also suggests that human figures on display transmit important ethical values. These ideas can all be related to the understanding of creation as imitation, because as the first human was made in God's image, it must have been perfect in all aspects (Gent and Llewellyn 1995, 3). As Alberti emphasises, the key term in visual arts is the *istoria* – or, a narrative represented by human figures in certain postures – which aims at representing moral truths (Ibid.). The idea of *istoria*, in this way, can be related to theatricality, which underpins not only the performative nature of early modern culture, but also the connection of visual arts and theatre.

So if we interpret these ideas above with regard to theatre and performance, it becomes clear that the favoured picture of the Renaissance body is not that of comic players. The discourses which canonise the physical and moral dignity of men (or more specifically, actors) have expelled imperfect bodies and beings. And since the faultless physique is the synonym of the true self, it is not a surprise that marginalised subjects cannot be defined either in terms of human perfection or as "excellent actors". And what imperfect physicality involves is irregular and erratic body language, gestures and speech, in other words, improvisation.

3.3.2 Self-fashioning at Court

Another context which shaped the body image of the Renaissance subject was court literature and the idealistic image of the courtier. Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528) was a widely acknowledged courtesy book, and its English translation by Thomas Hoby (1561) had a great impact on conceptualising the English gentleman as the paragon of virtue. Its effect has

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[115] See Footnote 73. As I wrote before, according to Webster, the actor, just like the most excellent orators, attracts the attention of the full theatre and „fortifies moral precepts with example" (quoted in Wickham et. al. 2000, 181).

also been analysed in some Shakespearean plays, such as *Much Ado About Nothing*. Here, for instance, the witty rhetoric of Benedick, Don Pedro and Claudio is defined in terms of court behaviour, the aim of which is to maintain the effortless and light appearance of social existence masking the self-control and discipline.[116] Hamlet's lines about the nature of man, beside the Neo-Platonic interpretation, might also be interpreted as the description of the perfect courtier. "In form, in moving how express and admirable" (II. 2. 329-330) and his nobility in reason may refer to the Renaissance individual's morally supported demeanour, i.e., social performance.

The basis for the ideal courtier's behaviour is the awareness that he is always perceived, just like an actor on stage. For this reason, self-possession and the control of gestures belong to his physical toolbar in order to strengthen the confident, masculine, patriarchal image of the decent statesman.[117] This, alongside with the refined speech reminds us of contemporary descriptions of the excellent orators and actors: "[...] the courtier must accompany his actions, his gestures, his habits, in short, his every movement, with grace" (Castiglione [1561] 2002, 30).

In this context, nevertheless, the ability of feigning gains positive judgement. On the one hand, counterfeiting might be related to *spezzatura*

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[116] For further readings, see Philip D. Collington, "'Stuffed with all honourable virtues': *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Book of the Courtier*", *Studies in Philology* Vol. 103, No. 3, Summer (2006), 281-312.

[117] This intention can be perfectly detected in the behaviour of Malvolio, the steward in Shakespeare's *Twelfth-Night*. Malvolio is a vain and conceited "gentleman" (V. 1. 287) without means, thus, he embodies a mocked noble identity and a servant at the same time. He longs to be "Count Malvolio" by marrying his mistress, and his plans are: "I will be proud, I will read politic / authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off / gross acquaintance, I will be point-devise the / very man. I will not fool myself, to let / imagination jade me, for ever reason excites to / this, that my lady loves me. She did commend / my yellow stockings of late, she did praise my / leg being cross-gartered; and in this she mani-/fests herself to my love, and, with a kind of / injunction drives me to these habits of her / liking. I thank my stars I am happy. I will / be strange, stout, in yellow stockings, and cross-/gartered, even with the swiftness of putting on (II. 5. 176-189). At the same time, his dislike for Feste ("I marvel your ladyship takes delight in / such a barren rascal" – I. 5. 88-89) shows that he is very much against extempore manners, since he says clowns are "gagged" without occasion and laughter provided by the audience (I. 5. 92-93).

(non-chalance), which is the art to "make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it" (Ibid., 32). In Harry Berger's explanation, this is the message of "Look how naturally I appear to be artful" (Berger 2002, 296). On the other hand, *spezzatura* is also the ability to hide the real personality of the subject, thus, can also be defined as a form of dissimulation.[118]

In theatrical terms, all this could refer to the actor's ability to amalgamate with the role and conceal all signs of doing it. From one perspective, this is a kind of deceit, or untrue behaviour, but, in the light of court literature, it gets a favourable overtone. This kind of posing becomes natural as well as the synonym of grace. As Castiglione puts it:

> This excellence (which is opposed to affectation, and which, at the moment, we are calling nonchalance), besides being the real source from which grace springs, brings with it another adornment which, when it accompanies any human action, however small, not only reveals at one how much the person knows who does it, but often causes it to be judged much greater than it actually is, since it impresses upon the minds of the onlookers that opinion that he who performs well with so much facility must possess even greater skill than this, and that, if he were to devote care and effort to what he does, he could do it far better (Castiglione [1561] 2002, 34).

To sum up, the courtier's attitude (which, in Greenblatt's term, we could call self-fashioning) might be interpreted in terms of hypocrisy, but, interestingly

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[118] In another Italian treatise *Della Dissimulatione Honesta* (1641), by Torquato Accetto, dissimulation is not untrue behaviour, but equals the delayed delivery of truth. Exterior beauty which covers the mutability of the body, for instance, is nothing else but noble dissimulation (Accetto, quoted in Vígh 2004, 365).

enough, noble moderation, discipline and bodily control are highly praised practices. In the common knowledge, there is, however, a difference between the Italian and the English forms of bodily gestures. Peter Burke describes the disparity of the flamboyant and the disciplined body language in Renaissance Italy. He confirms that gesticulating too much and too excessively is understood pejoratively and as "foolishness" in the English context (Burke 1991, 79-80).[119]

Greenblatt states that self-fashioning is always carried out with regard to something perceived as alien and strange, and the aim of the authority represented by self-fashioning – like perhaps in the case of Malvolio and Feste mentioned before – is to destroy otherness (Greenblatt 1980, 9). Hence, self-fashioning serves and strengthens different ideologies in order to preserve its power. In terms of actors, this might mean that the bodily/rhetorical regulations concerning serious acting described in the defences of the stage could have served the ideological purpose to legitimise the profession with conscious reference to court behaviour or oratory. Consequently, the silence concerning comic players in early modern discourses can be understood as the oppression of something that is threatening the illusion of showing human behaviour as gentle pretence.

It is not difficult to demonstrate that the physical characteristics and the attitudes of the comic players cannot be circumscribed with the terminology of courtesy books. If we take a look at playtexts, we can clearly see that traditionally, comedians are often counterpoints to noble characters, such as, for instance, Dogberry and his company in *Much Ado About Nothing* or Costard, Dull and Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Also, as

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[119] Burke in his *Varieties of Cultural History* (1997) gives examples of Christian regulations of the habits of early Italian preachers. San Carlo Borromeo, for instance, warns against "laughing, shouting and tumultuous behaviour", while "the anonymous Discourse against Carnival discussed the need for order, restraint, prudence and sobriety and underlined the dangers of pazzia, which might in this context be translated not as 'madness' but as 'loss of self-control'" (Burke 1997, 68-9).

mentioned above, both Cocke and Heywood discriminate the "scurrelous jests" as opposed to excellent acting. All this can be explained with the fact that it was the art of the tragedians which was possible to collate with the expected decorum of highly respected Renaissance individuals. Comedians and the performance represented by them remained alien, plebeian and uncontrollable. Those who could set up the rules of extempore comic performance – if there were any – were only the performers themselves. With this, they showed the example how someone is able to resist the regulation of social behaviour, which would be the key to personal freedom and independence.

Here, however, I would like to stress again that in early modern theatre, as numerous contemporary plays show, it is not always possible to differentiate between extensively humorous and serious characters. Actors who played noble or aristocratic characters like Hamlet or Richard III, for example, had to make use of the tools of audience involvement, jesting or improvisation. In these situations, thus, one could detect the simultaneous presence of sublime and clownish presence, which is also represented in the different modes of acting.[120] What follows is an analysis of performance styles, in which I would like to show how discourses on acting emphasised the disparity between art and entertainment.

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[120] Basically this is part of Robert Weimann's major argument in his *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice* (2000) when he is writing about the twofold purposes of playing in Hamlet (and in other plays). According to Weimann, Shakespeare's play represents the double authority of the author and the player in a way that the former one stands for Renaissance artistic/poetic decorum, while the latter one represents histrionic (often clownish or presentational) abilities (Weimann 2000, 151-179).

3.4 Questioning Renaissance Acting Styles

3.4.1 General Assumptions

In this subchapter, I intend to summarize the arguments and theories concerning the Renaissance style of acting. To introduce this divergent field, one can establish that, on the one hand, studies examining early modern acting styles have only been able to rely on existing textual sources, especially dramas. As a result, hypotheses are chiefly connected to contemporary drama and theatre. The thorough discussion of non-theatrical acting has been omitted and forgotten. On the other hand, since the interest in the topic has reached its peak in the 1950s and 60s, it also stands to reason that – as I am going to elaborate on it later – the discussion seems to have been vigorously influenced by psychological realism countermarked by the name of Constantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938).[121]

Definitely, it is difficult to talk about Renaissance acting not only because – as I have explained it in relation to the issue of theatrical documents in Chapter 2.1.1 – there are no direct references, but also because, as it emerges from theatre's ephemeral nature, we have to live with the fact that most of our gained knowledge remains speculation, as mentioned earlier. This is why my intention is not to reconstruct any past performances, neither do I wish to set up a comprehensive theory of early modern acting. My basic assumption, in the first place, is that – despite the wilful generalisation of some experts and their restrictive definition of the early modern acting method – the art of the 16th-17th-century player can be characterised with a diversity of "styles". Moreover, acting cannot only be located within the theatre walls or it was not exclusively guided by dramatic roles or authorial intentions. Thus, acting in the early modern period can be

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[121] The most characteristic examples are John Russel Brown (1968), Marvin Rosenberg (1968), and Jacalyn Royce (2009), whom I will refer to later.

discussed in terms of how it is used in performance. Moreover, what I would like to demonstrate is that, although a lot of famous actors seemingly fit in the decently and precisely circumscribed stylistic system (which I am going to present below), it is more probable that players could have revolted against the supposed decorum of the art. This was, as I see it, part of their extempore manners.

The comic actor might be interpreted as the symbolic figure of this stylistic subversion, and for this reason (or whereas), he is never mentioned in terms of the normative "formal action", "natural acting" or "personation", but rather in relation to popularity and bawdy humour. One can also say that while tragedians are identified as subjects in possession of spirit, knowledge and awareness, comedians are held to be instinctive and amusing entertainers. The reason why I am particularly interested in comic performance is this different judgement, which seems to evaluate comedians with a different measure.

The terms above concerning theatre acting, obviously, have many different interpretations, and the main problem when analysing them, as I mentioned earlier, is the huge mistrust that surrounds the vocabulary, which aims at describing theatrical performance. As we will see, the terminology which describes early modern acting is dependent, on the one hand, on the supposedly existing stage conditions such as the characteristics of the platform stage or the actor-audience distance. On the other hand, I am going to argue that it is also impacted by motivations and ideologies that have formed the discourse on early modern theatre. To be more precise, I do not only believe that current theories on acting – such as Stanislavsky's system or the Brechtian concept of alienation – have influenced the way we see early modern actors, but also, I am convinced that critical speech is affected by the bias against non-theatrical/comic modes of acting partly because non-theatrical and comic performance – by which I mean those types which are

constructed individually, neglecting any outer rules and decorums – is unreasonable, spontaneous and hard to define, since one cannot always rely on texts or scripts. This sort of performance is what I am going to define as improvisation

In the 1950s, the acting of early modern professional players is defined in a similar way as 18th-century acting was described in bourgeois illusionistic theatre. This latter one is defined by Erika Fischer-Lichte as follows:

> The actor who observes the Law of Analogy transforms the human body into a perfect natural sign which expresses each emotion and psychic state of the dramatic character. In being so employed, however, the body ceases to be perceived as sensual nature. The actor's body is thus presented as a cultural system which nature itself has created and defined as such: it becomes a composition of signs constituted by nature as a "text" which is "written" in the "natural language of emotion." While attempting to "read" and understand this text, the spectators supposedly forget that the actor's body is sensual nature and perceive and interpret it as a texture of signs which represent most adequately the emotions of a dramatic character (Fischer-Lichte 1989, 28).

The reason why this seems applicable to Shakespeare – and to early modern acting in general – is that we are prone to believe that Renaissance dramatic figures were complex, coherent, comprehensive characters.[122] However,

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[122] For instance: *Shakespearean Tragedy. Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, by A. C. Bradley (Second Edition, London, 1937). At this point, I mostly think of examples when one thinks about early modern acting in terms of psychological realism, where the actor uses the supposed psyche and personality of a given dramatic character. However, as is well-known, the approach of Bradley has been widely criticised from many perspectives in

theatrical approaches to 16-17th-century acting seem to emphasise the simple stage conditions, the lack of distance between the actor and the audience, the shortage of stage props etc., so, as they argue, the actors' identification with the characters were unrealistic. Also, since playtexts were intended to be published in print only secondarily, and they were formed by the rehearsals, companies and actors to a great extent, the method of acting could not rely on an extensively written and psychologically elaborated character.[123] In other words, character is only a creation of modern readings, or – in theatre – the bourgeois stage.

Beside the various approaches to early modern dramas – which, in Shakespeare's case, resulted in "romantic", "classical", "multi-cultural", "post-modern" and many other Shakespeares –, there seems to be a continuous intention to get closer to the "authentic", "original" Shakespeare and the acting styles characteristic of his Renaissance theatre. This is what the performances of Shakespeare's Globe in London represent, where acting is trying to exemplify critical knowledge of early modern theatrical period – usually with less success. I agree with Michael Hattaway saying that whenever modern companies attempt to evoke Elizabethan acting, they are "greeted with more boredom than enthusiasm" (Hattaway 1982, 73). One reason might be that these performances probably want to preserve

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structuralism, and especially after the advent of poststructuralist theories, e.g., New Historicism. Also, the idea of character in postmodern theatre have been challenged, among others, by Elinor Fuchs (*The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater After Modernism*, 1996) and Hans Thies-Lehmann (*Postdramatisches Theater*, 1999 [English translation: 2006; Hungarian translation: 2009]). Still, I tend to agree with Paul Yachnin and Jessica Slights that "although recognising "character" as a valid, analytic category became anathema for many scholars, Shakespeare's characters have continued to have a lively existence for theatre practitioners, playgoers, students and general readers" (Yachnin and Slights 2009, 3).

[123] I am aware that not everyone shares the view that Renaissance plays were primarily prepared for performance, and printing was only a secondary effect. Lucas Erne, for instance, argues that the interest in dramatic authorship arose much before Ben Jonson, and that Shakespeare himself was „far from indifferent to the publication of his plays" (Erne 2003, 33-5).

something that they do not have much precise knowledge about. Thus, they become tedious, museum-like phenomena.

In the elaboration that follows, I do not intend to propose a fixed sign system or a circumscribed style to early modern acting. Instead, after having summarised the principle theories on the art of the early modern actor, I will concentrate on the tendency of how, compared to character formation, the representation of physicality, the body, and improvisation have remained inferior in contemporary theoretical considerations and texts. Consequently, I would also like to show that comic players are completely excluded from serious discourses on early modern acting, in other words, there is no convincing theory of early modern comic performance.

3.4.2 Acting and Rhetoric

Andrew Gurr – who was a historical expert and a key figure in the rebuilding of Shakespeare's Globe in London – in his article, "Elizabethan Action" writes that between circa 1530 and 1670, the profession of the player was mainly discussed in terms of rhetoric, and stage acting was held to be inferior to oratory (Gurr 1966, 144). Since the "art of fine speaking" and acting were described approximately with the same terminology – from which a number of terms were also taken over by the modern theorists of acting –, some of these notions should be discussed here.

Beside the obvious parallels between the language describing acting in oratory and on stage, the two discourses – as Gurr calls them: the academic and the theatrical one – were separated, and the difference was defined mainly in terms of imitation. He cites Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Mind* (1604) when saying that both players and orators act with the help of imitating real people's passions, but while the orator can re-create the real feelings (the "inward passions"), the actor does not do this (Ibid.). In

other words, while the orator's passion was held to be true, the actor's emotions were "counterfeited"; and this was one reason, as mentioned earlier, why players were judged in a negative tone.

In other words, although the two kinds of external actions were quite similar, the actor's "imitation" was "feigned", while the orator's was "real" (Ibid., 147). "All the academic writers (and all the theorists of Action were university men) saw acting as kinds of imitation". As he explains, it could either be slavish copying or the essential process of artistic creation (Ibid.). The question of imitation, as I am going to argue further on, was central in anti-theatricalist writings of the period as well.

"Action" – that is, the outward motions of the body of the orator and the actor – was the physical expression of an inward "passion" or feelings. A well-known reference to Renaissance acting which also speaks about gestures related to emotions is John Bulwer's double treatise: *Chirologia, or the Natural Language of the Hand* and *Chironomia, or the Art of Manuall Rhetorick* (1644). Bulwer's work focuses on the gestures of the hand. The first part deals with the "Speaking Motions, and Discoursing Gestures", while the second is about the correct way of using the arm and the fingers to reinforce the effects of disposition and elocution (Joseph 1951, 41). The chirograms show how the author imagined different passions to be expressed with manual gestures, i.e., what Bulwer presented was a collection of rules how "manuall rhetoric" should be applied.

The one-to-one correspondence suggests that Bulwer's "methodology" was either a prescriptive or a descriptive system of rules. Although since it is often used as a reference work to take a survey of early modern performance, the question arises whether these gestures could have outshined the Elizabethan theatre's extensive verbalism (Hattaway 1982, 76). In my view, Renaissance theatre was definitely text-centred to a certain extent, but it is conceivable that body language was just as significant as the

verse. However, it is hardly imaginable that there was a set of rules which exclusively determined gestural language on stage. This might have been the reason, for instance, for the vigorous resistance to comedians as well as other disobedient performers.

Bulwer's ideas are also often referred to in the analyses of Hamlet's famous lines when the prince – often interpreted as the voice of the dramatist or director – is instructing the actors.

> [...] [S]uit the action to
>
> the word, the word to the action; with this
>
> special observance, that you o'erstep not the
>
> modesty of nature; for anything so o'erdone is
>
> from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at
>
> the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere
>
> the mirror up to nature (III. 2. 20-26).

This quotation, as I referred to it before, can be perfectly compared to Thomas Heywood's lines from *An Apology for Actors* (1612) where he writes about the rules of oratory: "it instructs him [the orator] to fit the phrases to his action, and his action to his phrase, and his pronunciation to both" (Heywood [1612] 1841, 29).

Shakespeare's and Heywood's words suggest that the actor had to accommodate his bodily gestures to his speech, that is, to the requirements of the dramatic character and the text. This implies at least two things: early modern acting was required to follow the decorum of contemporary rhetorics and the playwright's intention was primary in theatrical hierarchy. I hope to refute both of these, but what seems to me probable at first sight is that these references mentioned are not echoing prescriptive assumptions, but instead, in order to legitimise the art of the actor, they are the

description of the academic rules. Additionally, interpreting theatrical acting in terms of Bulwar's system would only suggest that both theatre and oratory applied a universal collection of signs.[124] Even if it is acceptable that nonverbal (or mimic) acting is more comprehensible to everyone, it is rather improbable that individual actors, when playing, followed uniform codes.

Still, B. L. Joseph's discussion of early modern acting in terms of eloquence (*Elizabethan Acting*, 1951, which is probably one of the most thorough studies on the topic) suggests that early modern players might have acted according to the rules of rhetorical delivery. This is proved by the fact that oratory was in the scheme of humanist learning which Elizabethan boys were familiar with and also, preachers made the public familiar with rhetorical devices. Consequently, as Joseph claims, the sign system and body language used by orators and players were equally known to contemporary spectators (Joseph 1951, 9-14).

Although it is highly doubtful whether eloquence had ever been part of popular culture (and as such, the everyday life of the uneducated part of the audience), it is undeniable that on the one hand, rhetorical treatises contain the only terminology that we can use when speaking about early modern acting. Otherwise, as I mentioned before, sources elaborating on theatre often refer to oratory as a kindred branch of arts. This can be observed on the title page of Bulwer's *Chironomia* as well, where Roscius and Andronicus instruct Cicero and Demosthenes how to pronounce inward passion properly (Figure 12).

As Joseph reckons, the only difference between acting and rhetoric could have been their style; that is while the player was "vehement" and flamboyant, the orator was more modest. This distinction imbued with bias has also been circulating in ancient Rome, when the famous orator

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[124] The universalization and rationalisation regarding the discourse of early modern acting can be understood in terms of the development of psychological control, which Norbert Elias considers the basic condition of the civilizing process (Elias [1939] 1987, 684).

Hortensius, who performed rather theatrically, was nicknamed after Dionysia, a famous dancer at the time (Graf 1991, 48).[125] As Fritz Graf explains, this anecdote suggests that, compared to orators, Roman actors were characterised as womanish, socially disapproved and with loss of self-control (Ibid.). At the same time, the eloquent speakers embodied the image of the reliable aristocrat, which could have been the archetype of, for instance, the Renaissance courtier of Baldassare Castiglione.[126] This distinction can also be associated with the view that – as it was mentioned above – the orator's presence is 'real', the actor does it in a fictional framework (Joseph 1951, 58).

Interestingly enough, while, defined in relation to the orator, the actor in general acquires the negative pole of the scale, in later theatrical discourses – as I will argue – it is the comedian who is closely related to the lack of dignity and moderation. His body language is going to be depicted as foolish, disorderly and unmanageable, which is fitting in well with the conception of Bakthtin's ideas of grotesque and carnivalism defined in *Rabelais and His World*, 1965.[127]

The greatest deficiency of Joseph's work is that he does not look at gesture as a socially and culturally specified phenomenon. Consequently, it is indicated that actors could have played in a prearranged, homogenous, sterile manner. The issue of the effect on the audience remains also subordinate in his argumentation; or rather he appears to presume that Elizabethan spectators could have reacted on these two kinds of performance in a similar way. He does not really bother about the artificiality of the supposed "method" of acting, since, as he says, "in singing it is [also] possible to be 'natural' without being naturalistic; the same is true of rhetorical delivery"

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[125] For reference, see also Quintus Hortensius Hortalus in the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, http://www.answers.com/topic/quintus-hortensius, accessed 24 July, 2011.

[126] I was elaborating on this previously in Chapter 3.3.2.

[127] I am going to use the 1984 edition translated by Hélène Iswolsky (Indiana University Press, 1984).

(Joseph 1951, 51). His other example is opera, when he wants to verify that the supposed pathos and declamatory style of Elizabethan acting was not foreign or strange to the contemporary audience (Ibid.).[128]

Nonetheless, Joseph's notion of "natural" is not exactly the same that John Russell Brown suggests. As Brown writes,

> I believe that formalism on the stage was fast dying out in Shakespeare's age, and that a new naturalism was a kindling spirit in his theatre. This naturalism was not what we understand by the word today, but, in contrast to formalism, it did aim at an illusion of real life (Brown 1953, 41).

Elizabethan "stage realism" is described here as a method, which applies "personation" as a tool. The idea of J. R. Brown, as I understand it, aims at arguing for a style of acting based on character formation on the early modern stage; a performance technique, with which the work of the comic actor can hardly be approached. In the following section, alongside with the notion of "liveliness", I am going to elaborate on this.

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[128] Although I have not found any concrete evidence, I strongly believe that the acting style characteristic of Shakespeare's Globe in London at present relies on the theories of Joseph and Gurr to a great extent. My personal experience also shows that – probably in the spirit of authenticity – the "Globe-style" is highly elevated, artificial and "rhetorical", hence it often seems to be the parody of itself. This presentiment might be reinforced with Davis Roberts' conclusion in which he states that Shakespearean acting tradition and its constituent paradigms are promulgated by theatre criticism and/or reviews (Roberts 2002, 353). Since the image of the reconstructed Globe has continuously been verified by theatre historical considerations, one can postulate that the same goes for the acting styles there as well. For the definition of (Shakespearean) acting tradition – which I am going to discuss in more details later – see Roberts 2002, 344.

3.4.3 Liveliness and Personation

Apparently the most accepted and lasting approach to reconstruct early modern acting has been the viewpoint of (psychological) realism from the 1950s on. The concept of the so called 'natural acting' has been formulated against the 'formal' way, which was rather believed to aim at the decent delivery of poetry. In contrast, as I have just referred to it, John Russel Brown suggests that early modern "natural" acting intended to show the "illusion" of real life (Brown 1953, 41).

"Illusion" used in a theatrical context is, obviously, an ever-changing concept. If we look at the early modern texts, for instance, we can see that in anti-theatrical tracts, it refers to the dark and mysterious deeds of the actor, who made a pact with the devil (Gras 1993, 191). In 20th-century theatre theory, however, illusion can mean the intention of representing life-like events and characters on stage (like in Stanislavsky's system), but also the fictional world of the play.

The theatrical-theoretical view on the early modern English stage emerged simultaneously with the concept of realist theatre, and it is conspicuous how 20th-century theatre criticism (especially related to productions of Shakespeare's plays) and philological research on Elizabethan acting go hand in hand. Accordingly, Elizabethan "natural" acting representing the "illusion of real life" was also quite a positive concept in this context compared to stylish, elevated, deliberately authentic performances at the beginning of the 20th century. As J. L. Styan explains in his book, *The Shakespearean Revolution* (1977), productions of William Poel (1852-1934) and Harley Granville-Baker (1877-1946) were followed by more and more metaphorical adaptations, where stylised acting was also replaced by different, revolutionary modes.[129]

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[129] As James C. Bulman writes it, Styan's imperishable merit is that he directed the attention to the stage-centred criticism of Shakespeare, thus, he made a huge effect on subsequent

Gurr states that "from the 1580s, 'lively' was the simplest term of praise for acting, always meaning 'life-like' [...] and 'life' was theatre's basic criterion. 'Natural' acting was similarly praised (Gurr 1966, 149). However, even when realist directors like the Hungarian Sándor Hevesi – a significant expert in Shakespeare – talk in terms of realist theatre, in my view, it is important to consider that the terms "natural" and life-like" have little to do with the 20th-century concept of stage realism and naturalism here. The ideas and concepts of modernist theatre (especially the realistic line) influence the way we think and speak about early modern acting.

As Michael Hattaway also suggests, "nature" (e.g., in Hamlet's well-known words) is a reference to Philip Sidney's "second nature" or creation, i.e., the work of art, not to naturalism (Hattaway 1982, 76). Still, "natural" has often been interpreted as a synonym to "life-like" or "lively" meaning that Elizabethans intended to play close to human behaviour (Rosenberg 1954, 106). These ideas came from the literal interpretation of passages from, for example, Thomas Heywood (*An Apology for Actors*, 1612), John Webster ("An Excellent Actor", 1615) or Richard Flecknoe (*A Short Discourse of the English Stage*, 1664).

Flecknoe – whose passage descends from a later period, still, it is often cited with regard to early modern acting – writes that Richard Burbage

> was a delightful Proteus, so wholly transforming himself into his Part, and putting off himself with his Cloathes, as he never (not so much as in the Tyring-house) assum'd himself again until the Play was done (quoted in Brown 1968, 54).

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performance-oriented theories. This has remained valuable and relevant, even if, by now, some of his establishments are outworn by indicating that he seemed to seek for some "authentic" Shakespeare experience. Hence, instead of defining them as meaning-makers, he considered actors/directors, while his assumptions are rather universal than historically particular, and they do not appear to reflect on the dynamics of our culture (Bulman [1996] 2005, 1).

Heywood and Webster say likewise, almost word by word the same about the abilities of the early modern actor: "what we see him [the actor] personate, we thinke truely done before us" (Ibid., 43).

These lines have led to the conclusion that the audience and the actors "shared the illusion of life", while Burbage did "transform himself into his part", so all in all, "Elizabethan actors aimed at an illusion of real life" (Ibid., 44, 49, 52). John Russell Brown even compares this "method" to the system of realistic theatre: referring to Flecknoe, he says that "such absorption in one's part has nothing to do with oratory; it is closer to the acting techniques of Stanislovsky (*sic!*)" (Ibid.).

Early modern acting has started to be described as "naturalistic" especially after 1600, when the term "personation" appeared. As Hattaway explains, for many scholars, this has indicated the emergence of the concept of personality/individual/the inner self in the theatre by which the portrayal of a character becomes imaginable (Hattaway 1982, 77). Considering this, the "evolution" of acting is usually seen as a development from formal rule-adoption to realistic representation.

What we can clearly see from the debate surrounding Elizabethan acting is that, on the one hand, the picture is more or less changing according to the current theatrical "fashions" and theories: perhaps it is realistic theatre which had the greatest impact on what we think about early modern performance. On the other hand, early modern sources can be interpreted from many angles depending on our intention. For instance, as I have demonstrated above, Thomas Heywood's ideas are used to prove the relationship between acting and rhetorical delivery by B. L. Joseph; however, Marvin Rosenberg argues for the naturalistic character or acting when quoting the well-known "as if the personator were the man personated" passage (Heywood [1612] 1841, 21).

We may think that recent views on Renaissance acting have refuted the idea of naturalism (at least, in the sense Stanislavski uses it). Although there are other approaches, which discuss acting from an anthropological, cultural and social perspective, the one I am going to scrutinise below is in a significant position, since, I think, it represents the determinant approach of theatre historians to English Renaissance acting. Jacalyn Royce's article in the previously cited *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Drama* (2009) might denote the "official" historical view on early modern playing, since there is no other study on the topic in the volume.

Royce's "Early Modern Naturalistic Acting: The Role of the Globe in the Development of Personation" sets out from the fact that counterfeiting, personation and natural acting are identical terms which are contrasted to artificiality (Royce 2009, 478). The aim of her text, with theorising "the original performance" is to explore how physical space at the Globe helped acting styles (Ibid., 480). The author's major assumption is that the distance between the stage and the audience and the unrealistic scenery was not an obstacle to naturalistic acting, and resulted in the illusion of authenticity and truth. In other words, the acting method could work independently of the visual environment, because the actor could build up a fictional setting around himself.

> The actor is able to use the character-specific rhetorical language provided by the playwright, along with the appropriate rhetorical behaviour (rhetorical in that it is purposeful and significant) to create an impression of the environment: a rhetoric of space (Ibid., 483)

Royce sees the naturalistic development of acting in relation to the emergence of professional playwrights and the special design of Burbage's

Theatre, which was also characteristic of the space at the Globe. In other words, she writes, almost every early London theatre apart from these two mentioned above, encouraged artificial movement and forward, presentational style, however, with time, the personation characteristic of the Globe became the convention (Ibid., 487).

Beside the fact that Royce inequitably favours the Globe, Shakespeare and Burbage when examining the topic – which is comprehensively relevant as far as the early modern English theatre is concerned – she raises the old question of the formal-natural opposition without even referring to the arguments and their refutation I have discussed above. Also, she misses the viewpoint of the contemporary audience. Surely, we cannot esteem how early modern spectators could have reacted to their theatrical experience, but it seems obvious that the "illusion of real life" could not have been solely dependent on theatrical space. We can strongly suspect, for instance, that actors might have been recognised in their roles, so it was part of the pleasure that the spectators were able to perceive the borderline between players' civic and performing selves.

The other crucial remark I find important to make is that this discussion, again, excludes comic players, which suggests that the view on early modern acting – which focuses on personification and embodiment – is aesthetical to a great extent. In other words, it ignores comic actors' non-aesthetic bodily presence, by which I mean the improvisational technique that characterise comedians' different ways of performance. Nevertheless, approaches like Royce's seem to forget about the fact that Elizabethan theatres could have provided space to various forms of acting that reached far from character formation.[130]

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[130] As Hattaway writes: "[w]ithin each company [...] there was probably a wide variety of styles of acting. It is a common intellectual temptation to attempt to impose the patterns of reason on the complexities of art, and those scholars who have sifted through the references to players and orators in plays and pamphlets, or through Elizabethan treatises on psychology, in order to formulate one monolithic theory of Elizabethan acting forget that

3.4.4 Representation and Presentation

A more helpful approach to my argumentation is offered by Peter Thomson, who, in his intriguing article "Rouges and Rhetoricians" (1997) successfully refutes, I think, the link between early modern acting and Stanislavsky's stage realism. His thoughts can effectively be compared to the ideas of Robert Weimann and the notion of anti-character by Lesley Wade Soule. So in this section, I am going to discuss the concepts of presentational and representational acting as well as their bearings on Renaissance performance.

Thomson's starting point is the notion of character, but he does not take identification as a basic criterion in early modern theatre. He brings theatre historical facts to prove that the playmaking process could not have been long enough for the actors to be able to possess "the dynamic of becoming" the character in 20th-century sense (Thomson 1997, 322). At the same time, he also suggests that the absolute authority of the Renaissance playwright – which would be a chief condition to the existence of dramatic characters – is something that we cannot take for granted, since it was basically the players and the theatres that employed the playwright (Ibid., 325). This, together with the fact that there was a continuous production of plays in a relatively short time, implies that players favoured to show themselves as respectable and trained craftsmen rather than sophisticated artists (Ibid.).

For me, Thomson's most important contribution to the debate is related to the acting tradition when he says that the great actors of every age

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they are in danger of postulating playhouses filled with marionettes" (Hattaway 1982, 72). It is interesting to see that the image of the marionette here is used to argue that early modern actors could not have applied a homogenous acting, while in Rosenberg's article, it is the opposite, since he opposes formal-style puppets and flesh and blood humans. In the light of this, it is very interesting that Edward Gordon Craig in his *The Actor and the Über-Marionette* (1907) recommends that live actors should be replaced by an autonomous puppet – which is "the actor plus fire minus egoism" (Craig [1907] 1957, ix.) – since it does not abandon itself to its instincts and emotions on stage. In Craig's interpretation, thus, the über-marionette is the symbol of the self-controlled, obedient actor under the absolute guidance of the director.

are distinguished by their ability to be able to subvert the existing conventions (Ibid.). This is something that Marco de Marinis (quoted in Chapter 2) also points out when he is talking about the feasibility of theatrical documents: even if the supposed style of the actors is documented in certain contemporary sources, it cannot be taken for granted that the original/real performance was compatible to that. So even if we can set up the decorum or a list of rules – no matter if we understand it as a system of formal gestures or a coherent psychological system – we might suspect that it has little to do with the concrete events.

16th and 17th century players were coming from diverse social and educational backgrounds, and it is also probable that they received different and unsystematic training. Even if Thomson sees an evolution in early modern acting (which he, just as Royce or Robert Weimann, relates to the development of character in Shakespeare's dramas), he does not claim that it led to an illusionistic theatre. What is more, he also suggests that we can both find the presentational (self-displaying) and the representational (character-forming) mode of acting on the early modern stage.

Balancing between the fictional narrative and the here-and-now presence of the performance is mainly characteristic of the comic players, whose forefathers were the Tudor Vice and the ancient fool of the mimus. While fiction is the territory of the author and physical attendance is that of the actor, Weimann sees this mingling as the struggle of different authorities on stage (Weimann 1988, 1999, 2000). In other words, what is represented in Elizabethan theatre and also transcribed in dramas (especially in the prologues, epilogues and clown scenes) is the two different purposes of playing and the interaction/exchange between them, which Weimann calls *Figurenposition* (Weimann 1978, 230). The most interesting and delightful moments of a performance could have been those ones when the audience was able to detect the boundaries of the represented character and the

player's own identity, and could also realise the overstepping between the two. The pleasure of recognition could even be elevated when the two poles of this "difference" were far from each other; like in the case of impersonating madness or acting in disguise.

Weimann's theory – which is based on the binary oppositions of author/player, text/performance, representation/presentation etc. cited above – is providing fruitful foundation to further thinking. However, all his assumptions are based only on dramatic-textual examples, and he particularly discusses actors who were famous for their dramatic roles. As a consequence of looking at the personification of the character and the civic actor separately, he does not clearly consider the fact that actors, when playing, are never presenting their real personalities. From a performative perspective, they are always in role. This is also justified by the fact that (especially comic) actors, just like in Renaissance Italy, often used their pseudonyms offstage. Therefore if we intend to broaden the scope of examination, it would be expedient to see what presentation means in an out-of-theatre context. Definitely, we have fewer sources concerning theatrical activities from the times before the first theatre buildings were constructed. But, as I have pointed out many times before, we should not see early modern theatre as it was located only on the platform stage, but it includes, for instance, street performances or out-of-theatre extemporising.

Lesley Wade Soule – to whom I referred before – in the "Introduction" to his *Actor As Anti-character* (2000), quite similarly to Weimann, describes the coexistence of presentational and representational acting in early modern theatre. She contrasts the mimetic and the performative presence of the actor to contravene that there was an exclusively text- or character-centred theatre in the Renaissance. Her umbrella term is the anti-character, which signifies all states when the player does not fulfil a mimetic-illusionistic (i.e., as I understand it, a

completely role-playing) function on stage (Wade Soule 2000, 1). But to my argumentation, what is even more important is the concept that he calls *stage persona*, which – as I elaborated it earlier – is neither a character, nor the actor's offstage identity (Ibid., 6.).

Two things are important to emphasise here. On the one hand, the persona is – although it seems to be strongly related to "character" (cf. *dramatis personae*) – plainly speaking, closer to the actor's "civic self" (as I have called it before) than a fictional figure, at least in the sense that the audience perceives it as realistic. Stand-up comedy serves as a good example; when we hear the comedian performing, we would hardly ever think of him/her as an actor who is playing a role. Thus, Wade Soule's stage persona might be also interpreted in terms of performance in the sense performance studies uses it, because it is always in progress; playing/being in persona, in the spectators' eyes, is constant. Since in the case of early modern comic actors, the audience's attention is always there (even in those cases when they are not acting out a dramatic role), it is possible to define them as performers.

On the other hand, I would like to stress that the clause "persona identity exists only in the theatre" refers to the fact that the term "theatre" has to be interpreted in a sense as broad as possible. As for the premodern period, as I have shown in Chapter 2.2, theatrical occasions were not restricted to the theatre building, moreover, a major part of the performances took place on out-of-theatre locations. So maybe, in this respect also, it becomes clear that, as for the Renaissance theatre, the definitional boundaries between performance and theatrical actions are unstable, they all kinds of heterogeneous spectacles. As far as early modern performers are concerned, their main attributes, according to Wade Soule are as follows: they are celebrative, ritualistic, both demonic and ironic (in the sense of playing with oppositions), and relevant in representing

themselves as cultural identities (Ibid., 7). All this, as such, interlinks them to the ritualistic roots of performance.

Concluding what has been said about representational and presentational performance, we can see that – even if it is often emphasised that the work of the comedian involves a more liberated method – the key issue is always to determine the measure of the actor's distance from the (dramatic) character. My question is, however, if it is possible to talk about early modern acting without defining the character as a point of departure at all. That is why I am especially interested in clowns and comedians – but I do not take them as role-playing identities, neither in a dramaturgical nor in a mimetic sense. Preferably, I try to interpret the persona they play form a sociological-cultural perspective, as if it was continuously merging with their personality. For this reason, in the following chapter, I am attempting to circumscribe comic acting from the viewpoint of Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body displayed in the carnivalesque. Furthermore, I intend to define "improvisation" or "extempore performance" as the comic player's distinctive method with which he differentiated himself from "serious" actors as well as normative social behaviour and the accepted decorums of theatrical acting.

4 Comic Performance

4.1 Player, character, persona

In the first part of my dissertation, my intention was to set up the historical and theoretical framework of my thesis, and also to contextualise comic acting in early modern culture. We could see that – even if some of the approaches tried to consider the social and ideological perspectives as well – aesthetic views on acting have not really concentrated on the social and cultural aspects, which are, however, crucial part of the concept of performance I am following here. As I have discussed it earlier, it is also noticeable in the debate of theatre studies and performance that these two theoretical approaches do not merge, and they work with different notions of theatre. While theatre studies traditionally understand theatrical production as an artistic entity, performance theory rejects "aesthetic theatre" because it does not see the opportunity to identify theatrical productions as social events. Also, while performance studies intend to define "performance" as an ideologically and politically influenced phenomenon, in their view, the theatrical event has remained something sterile, sacred and untouchable. These diverse paths have an influence on how the different disciplines see the player's work.

In this (second) part of my work, I am going to analyse the early modern comic player more exhaustively detecting his persona, his bodily presence, as well as his extempore manners. The last chapters will

additionally illustrate how improvisation appeared in early modern texts, how it was perceived and can be understood as a contribution to shape social norms. With this, I hope to combine the traditional (theatre) historical approach with the stance of performance studies in order to emphasise the ideological, cultural and social bearings of extemporisation. I plan to introduce Richard Tarlton, Will Kemp and Robert Armin as performers, who, while setting an example to others, with their improvisatory ways, represented the creative framing of the social circumstances they lived in.

The reason why it is much easier to see and display the tragic actor as artist is that he is characterised by fine speaking, rhetoric and venerable stage behaviour. What is more, serious actors' co-operation with the playwright is realised in the elegant recitation of dramatic monologues and soliloquies. Nevertheless, these actors are not deprived of the ability to amuse the audience, while comic players are usually predestined to entertain only. Though it might be interesting, one cannot really imagine Charlie Chaplin playing Hamlet; and it is probably because we do not believe in his self-discipline to stay within the role, i.e., that he could represent the character. Also, we might think that the clown image is not compatible with earnest matters.

As both Thomson and Weimann point out, clowns/comic players are mainly characterised by presentational acting (Thomson 1997, 325, 332-3, Weimann 2000, 98-102). Thomson, additionally, argues that,

> Most approaches to the early history of professional acting silently assume the primacy of tragedy, where the art of rhetoric most securely resides. But the playfulness of actors,

both dangerous and delightful, was more naturally displayed in comedy (Ibid.).[131]

While I agree that comic roles provide more space for improvisation and the possibility of stepping out of the character, unlike the authors mentioned above, I would like to interpret this kind of performance without considering the distance kept from the dramatic role. Although comic players took part in dramatised plays too, what I am interested in is the performing individual (and his techniques) who stays there when, in a classical-theatrical sense, there are no aesthetic and fictional conditions of playing. This is why I approach the comic performer from the perspective of his offstage actions and concentrate on issues such as his non-aesthetic bodily presence or the borderline between his performing and civic self.

From the previous chapters, I hope it was explicit that I referred to theatricality and performance studies as interpretative/theoretical backgrounds, because in their concepts, they attempt to define not only playing/performance, but also the performing agent. As I have elaborated it earlier, according to Richard Schechner, performance is "restored behaviour", and human activity – whether individual or communal – can be interpreted as performance (Schechner 2002, 28). I have also analysed early modern antitheatrical texts, where the major fear of puritans was that spectators, following the actors' immoral and hypocritical behaviour, start to perform, and become corrupted in their souls. Both the laudatory and pejorative understandings of humans' theatrical activity, thus, acknowledge one thing: that people are not passive beholders, but active participants, and it is a significant issue how (theatre) players can be connected to human

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[131] Hornback, in his book on the English clown tradition, from the perspective of literary archeology, also argues that "'the comic' (i.e. in the sense of comical, not just the professional comedian) has been grossly underestimated both by recent literary theory and the critical tradition, that of the Renaissance more than most and of the era's clowns perhaps above all" (Hornback 2009, 3).

performers, or what the audience sees when it watches a player performing.[132]

The history of acting, according to Michael Buckley, concentrated on the actor's internalisation of the character and the relocation of passion from the heart to the mind. Thus, less attention has been devoted to the externalising processes (Buckley 2009, 277). When analysing one of the most important pictorial sources of the commedia dell' arte – the images of the Recueil Fossard collection – he cites a very well-known dichotomy contrasting the early modern Italian and English theatre. He says that while in the discussion of the Elizabethan theatre the emphasis is on interiority and the construction of the self in the mind – which is basically the same as the assumption that shapes the mimetic modes of modern dramatic performance – the commedia dell' arte reasserts the body's figurality and its grotesque, quotidian, silent claim to determine meaning (Ibid., 276).

What I would like to suggest is that, even if the early modern Italian theatre has more iconographic evidence than the English stage, and that the latter one has to be content with quite obscure textual proof, histrionic abilities of the English players can also be characterised by circumscribing the bodily presence and the extempore manners. This is the reason why it is not my major interest to deal with the dramatic roles of the players whose work I analyse, but to characterise their performance as a kind of behaviour or attitude, where verbalism is part of the scenario, but not in an exclusive way.

It is often argued that comic roles were written with regard to the clown's physical ability and skills. So, for instance, due to William Shakespeare's collaboration with Will Kemp or Robert Armin, significant

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[132] In the followings, when I write about improvisation in greater details, I will extensively refer to some of those sociological and psychological approaches (Bourdieu [1972] 1995, de Certeau 1988, Sawyer 2006) which consider individuals as active practitioners.

changes are detectable in the comic roles of Shakespearean plays.[133] Theories concerning Shakespearean clownery suggest that the player was constantly stepping in and out of character, which was a playful transit between the fictional world of the play and the real-life conditions of the audience. Robert Weimann defined this transference as *Figurenposition* meaning "the actor's changing position on the stage, and the speech, action, and degree of stylization associated with that position" (Weimann 1978, 224). The figures who acquire this technique include the porter in *Macbeth*, the gravediggers in *Hamlet*, Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Iago, Falstaff, Feste in *Twelfth-Night* and the like – all of whom we could describe as stage fools or characters with clownish characteristics (Ibid.).

The two territories between which the role-playing actor is moving are termed *platea* and *locus*. The former one is "an opening in the *mise-en-scène* through which the place and time of the stage-as-stage and the cultural occasion itself are made either to assist or resist the socially and verbally elevated, spatially and temporally remote representation", while the latter one is "a fairly specific imaginary locale or a self-contained place in the world of the play" (Weimann 2000, 181). According to Weimann, these two locales are associated with different dramaturgies: while the *locus* is under the author's supremacy, in the *platea*, the actor can display his histrionic talent. In other words, there is a dual authority or the interplay of representational and non-representational performance on the stage.

Weimann suggests that, while being in the *platea* position, the actor primarily presents himself as a player, and constructs this identity with physical closeness to the audience and a different speech pattern. Especially

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[133] As for a detailed elaboration on the topic, see Wiles 1987, 116-63 (Chapters 9 and 10). Wiles here argues that the role of Falstaff of the two *Henry IV* plays was written for Kemp, and Robert Armin later was both a new kind of theatrical and an intellectual influence on Shakespeare.

in prologues, epilogues and asides, the player addresses the audience directly and establishes immediate contact with them. However, what Weimann does not really explain is the nature of this transitional persona on the *platea*. If it is neither the player's civic self nor the actor-in-character, who speaks to the audience?

The inseparability of the different identities is clearly perceivable in the case of the early English comedians. Also, we have a similar entwining of player and character as in the early modern Italian theatre. Robert Armin, for instance, has published his *Quips upon Questions* as Clunnyco de Curtanio Snuffe, i. e. "Snuff, the Clown at the Curtain Theatre" in 1600 (Johnson 2003, 31).[134] Similarly, Tristano Martinelli, the famous Arlecchino wrote his pamphlet as *Compositions de rhetorique de M. Don Arlechin* in 1601. The fact that both of them used their stage-names or pseudonyms in print might suggest that mingling the stage and the civic identity was part of their performance strategy.[135] At the same time, it is clear that this theatrical personage is not equivalent to any of the concrete dramatic parts they played.

It is interesting to examine the extent to which comedians prove to be identical with their different roles. On the one hand, identifying with the dramatic part is far removed from being a stage clown. On the other hand, fusing entirely with the entertainer's image can also be interpreted as an act of becoming a role. It is a central question, for instance, in Nicolo Barbieri's section in his *La Supplica* (1634) where he is trying to define the buffoon in comparison with the comedians. It is important to consider that the Italian comedian (i. e. *commedia dell'arte* player) is not identical with the English clown. Thus, in the English text of Barbieri's treatise, the comedian should

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[134] I am going to analyse Armin's comedian image in more details later.

[135] As Paul C. Castagno writes, "Martinelli was the first *comico* to carry his stage *persona* into ordinary life, a stratagem devised to set himself apart from his companions as a special presence" (Castagno 1994, 79).

be seen as a synonym of the Renaissance actor, while the buffoon is understood as a non-theatrical entertainer.

Barbieri, first of all, he calls our attention to the fact that it is not always easy to determine the reason for laughter and sorrow, thus comic and tragic moments are never separable clearly. He also makes a difference between different forms of laughter: the one that the comedian uses aims at seasoning his fine speech, the other that the buffoon applies is based on quick-wittedness and is the ground of his acting (quoted in Cole and Kirch Chinoy 1949, 53-4).

Beside the fact that Barbieri, just like the early modern English theatre-makers, elevates the prestige and the reputation of the comedians by characterising them with "fine speech", i.e., rhetoric, it is really admirable that he does not seem to disdain buffoons at all. Instead, he talks about clowning as if it was a role to be taken by comedians every now and then.

> The comedian provokes laughter but is not a buffoon; for the essence of comedy is not to cause laughter but to entertain by means of marvellous imaginings in the realm of history and poetry. [...] The buffoon is really a buffoon; but the comedian taking a ridiculous part pretends to be a buffoon, and that is why he wears a mask on his face, a beard, and puts on make-up – to show that he is another person. [...] So the comedian is completely different from the buffoon, although each of the two plays the part of a buffoon. And just as the comedian, when he plays a prince, king or emperor, is neither prince nor king nor emperor off the stage, so when he takes the part of a buffoon, he must not be considered a real buffoon (Ibid.).

Barbieri noticeably emphasises the professional comedian's ability to play or personate the clown. He calls the attention to two important facts: one is that buffoonery might be a crucial part of the player's personal scenario, with which he, very atypically of the English stage, brings up the question of the "quality" of comic playing. In other words, being a comedian is the comic actor's most important 'role'. The other matter of curiosity is that he warns against any generalisation and the biased judgement of comic acting.

As I referred to it before, the performer's stage identity, which is "distinct from both his/her extratheatrical self and the character s/he is impersonating" is called 'theatrical persona' by Lesley Wade Soule (Wade Soule 2000, 6). When I write about comic actors' non-aesthetic bodily presence or off-stage performance, I believe that they are acting *in persona* in the sense Wade Soule defines it. This intentionally constructed performing identity works outside the fictional conditions of theatre, and for this reason, it seems "realistic", "natural" and "common". Spectators do not consider this as a real role or distant, artistic ego, but as one of them; this is the comedian's image of an ordinary fellow I have already discussed.

I have enumerated many examples to demonstrate that comic acting is often explained with regard to (dramatic) roles. As for the physical and practical aspects, obviously, it would be a difficult task to reconstruct the acting techniques of the early modern players as well as to unify them in a comprehensive set of rules. Next, I would like to differentiate the comic actor's body from the "serious" actor's, because on the one hand, the comedian's body can be more brought into coherence with extemporisation. On the other hand, the noble and elegant postures of tragedians I have written about in Chapter 3.1.2 ("The Iconography of Actors and Players"), which fits the depictions of Renaissance acting with the terminology of oratory, represents an aesthetic and ideological system that neglects

comedians. As for comic corporeality, a palpable parallel for analysis would be Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body.

4.2 The Grotesque Body

Bakhtin speaks of the grotesque body as the representation of the carnivalistic festivities, parodic literature and the language of the market-place in the middle ages. He emphasises that the "material bodily principle" in Rabelais' work, in its exaggerated form, marks a sharp cultural and aesthetic difference between the 16th and the 19th century, because in the classicist canon, the body is timid and modest (Bakhtin 1984, 18-26). Actually, the parodistic interpretation of the world represented in literature and folk culture is based on the grotesque view of the body.

On the basis of what I have already said about body images and iconography of Renaissance players, it is clear that the differences between the modest and licentious depictions of the body can be traced in the early modern period as well. I have shown that while English tragic actors were usually portrayed in decent, elegant postures in noble dressing, comedians were drawn while performing or dancing in colourful (theatrical) costumes.[136] These images – Tarlton on the title-page of his *Jests*, or Kemp represented with his tabor player, William Slye (Figures 7, 8) – show these comedians with similar patterns as, for instance, Bacchus is depicted on Alciato's Emblem 25, where the god of grape harvest, wine, ritual madness and ecstasy is shown while singing with drums (Figure 13).[137] Neither Bacchus, nor the comedians I speak of possess perfect and aesthetic physicality. As I mentioned before, Tarlton had a flat nose, Kemp was

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[136] I cited Michael Buckley on Renaissance acting earlier, specially his comparison of early modern acting in England and Italy. He claims that contrary to Elizabethan acting, which was concentrated on personification, commedia dell'arte reasserts the body's figurality and its grotesque, quotidian, silent claim to determine meaning (Buckley 2009, 276). However, here we can see that the iconography of English comedians thematise something similar.

[137] The verse after the emblem writes: "Drums are not lacking in your hands, nor horns on your / head: such signs are right for whom, if not the mad?". This interestingly interconnects

enormous, and Armin was short; they used these characteristics as a source of fun (Wiles 1987, 148). Moreover, these erratic, irregular and unsymmetrical bodily features can be associated with transgressive behaviour – such as improvisation – to a great extent.

Rabelais' carnivalistic image of the body is, according to Bakhtin, characterised by eating, defecation and sexual life, which is always presented in a hyperbolic form. It is neither distanced from its environment, nor is it finite, and it is always overflowing its own limits (Ibid., 26). It looks ugly, shapeless and deformed, and it is defined as cosmic or universal. This notion, as well as the culture of laughter related to it was developed on the margins, outside the official sphere of culture and education. This is why it could gain extreme radicalism, freedom and impunity (Ibid., 72). However, in the Renaissance, it became an influential part of mainstream art and literature like in the works of Shakespeare, Cervantes or Boccaccio (Ibid.).

Though at this point Bakhtin refers to the authors mentioned above as "high artists", it is important to point out that now we could also look at them as the representatives of popular culture. In other words, although playwrights like Shakespeare have gained much respect because of his dramatic art during the years, criticism has shown that Shakespeare's plays are attached to popular culture from the Renaissance up to the present day in many respects.[138] Furthermore, early modern theatres did not belong to highbrow culture, not to mention street or tavern performances. Especially these latter forms had a liminal status, since the inn or the marketplace were uncontrolled "theatrical" spaces, where – in lack of a dramatic setting or a prearranged text – performance only depended on the player and his interaction with the audience. Thus, extemporisation could have been a

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the grotesque body, comedy, madness and drunkenness. Alciato, "Emblem 25", http://www.mun.ca/alciato/e025.html, accessed 14 August, 2013.

[138] For a detailed elaboration on this, see Weimann 1978, 2000 and *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, edited by Robert Shaugnessy (Cambridge, 2007).

major tool of these performers. Furthermore, it seems that alehouses (and of course, drinking) is compared to theatre by antitheatrical pamphleteers in the sense that it corrupts the soul and deforms the body. As Philip Stubbes say in *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1595):

> Every country, City, Town, Village, and other place haue aboundance of Alehouses, Taverns and Inns in them, which are haunted with malt-wormes, night and day that you wound wonder to see them. […] Then when the Spirite of the Buttery they are thus possessed, *a world it is to consider their gestures and demenours, one towards another, and towards every one els. How they stutte and stammer, stagger and reel to and fro, like madmen […] a man once drunke with wine or strong drink, rather resembleth a bruite beast than a christian man: For do not his eies begin to stare and to be red, fiery and bleared, blubbering forth seas of tears? Doth he not froth and fome at the mouth like a Bore? Doth not his tongue faulter, and stammer in his mouth? Doeth not his head seeme as heavy as a milestone, being able to beare it up? Are not his wittes and spirits, as it were, drowned? Is not his understanding altogether decayed? Doe not his handes and all his body tremble, quaver and shake, as it were with quotidian fever* (sigs. L1r-1v, 73-74, emphases mine)?

The drunkards' "weakeneth natural strength", "corupteth bloud", dissolved and forgetful self (Ibid.) could have been the antitheatricalist description of the actor or the spectator at theatre. Meanwhile, Stubbes' suggestive depiction recalls Bakhtin's image of the grotesque body, which is characterised by hyperbolic material images such as overdone eating and

drinking (Bakhtin 1984, 64). As I said before, this might be related to comedians, especially if we consider them as constant tavern entertainers and drinkers.

Regarding all this, it is crucial to see that even if – beside the heritage of the antiquity – early modern theatre had its connections in folk traditions and contemporary commercial culture, as we can see from the apologies and defences of theatre, the major basis for legitimizing theatre profession was to stress its relationships to the classical decorum. In the particular case of the actors, it was quite similar. As for their bodily presence, John Webster (1613) mentions his "full and significant action of body" with which he "charms our attention" (quoted in Wickham et. al. 2000, 181). John Bulwer's regular and symmetrical gestures in his manual rhetoric also indicate that the decent, adjustable, controlled body was part of the "excellent" actor's image. This view is very typical of the ancient classical canon, which Bakhtin describes as the origin of modern aesthetics. Here, the body is characterised as finite, closed, concealing, private and individual, while it is separated characteristically from its environment (Bakhtin 1984, 29), which might remind us of the highly controlled body of the Renaissance courtier.[139]

Although Bakhtin describes the grotesque body as cosmic, universal and collective, in my interpretation, this does not mean that, in the case of independent players, these patterns cannot be combined with personal characteristics as well. In other words, what I intend to suggest is that the concept of the medieval grotesque body and the work of the early comic players have common grounds, and these are especially explicit in the case of the rustic clowns like Tarleton and Kemp. Nevertheless, foolery in its more

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[139] Both the modern aestheticised body image by Bakhtin and the early modern courtier's self-control can be connected to what Norbert Elias describes as the civilised control of the individual behaviour (Elias [1939] 1987, 683). In this respect, the grotesque (comic) body's manners are contrary to the rationalised sets of behaviour supervised by the civilised self. In my view, this is a major ground of improvisation/extempore behaviour, so I am going to analyse it more thoroughly in the chapter on improvisation.

philosophical sense has also connections with deformed physicality, since – as I will show it in my chapter on Armin – "natural" or innate foolery often referred to freakery.

What I would like to imply with referring to the infinity and the openness of the grotesque body is that comic players resisted any kind of social regulations concerning physical behaviour, what is more, with their ribald afterpieces and other actions, they counterpointed noble attitudes or prudent comportment.[140] Court jesters' performance in the presence of royalties might serve a good example. Thus, comic deeds (being, in Bakhtin's words, universal and collective) could exemplify uncontrollable social manners for the contemporary audience in Renaissance society.

The clown as a term also, not surprisingly, has strong connections to physicality, even if it also signifies the comic protagonists of play-texts. As David Wiles, the biographer of Will Kemp explains, for Elizabethans, the word mainly referred to the skilled professional actor that a company employed for playing the comic parts (Wiles 1987, 61, 63).[141] The varieties of the vocabulary applied to such performers (actor, player, clown, fool) have been discussed in detail earlier, so what I want to point out here is that, to my argumentation, terminology remains secondary, since I try not to rely only on theatrical interpretations, but also on the offstage experience of contemporary participants. Thus, I am taking the colloquial speech into consideration, which, unlike playhouse language, according to Wiles, was not very precise in making a clear distinction between the "fool" and the "clown" (Ibid., 69).

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[140] In social sciences, it is also often stated that everyday practice (percieved as resistance) is not a mental process, but rather a bodily act. As Jason Kosnoski writes, both Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau argue that adaptation to everyday structures (i.e., practice) in its varied forms occur through the body, not the "mind" that applies the patterns of the system (Kosnoski 2010, 118).

[141] For the discussion of the definition of "clown", see also Hornback 2009, 2-3.

The overlapping of the different denominations fits my train of thought perfectly, since my aim in this chapter is to position the comic performer as a subject – or, in Lesley Wade Soule's term, *persona* – whose different identities merge. The non-adjustable presence/performance and the uncontrollable bodily behaviour discussed above can be more thoroughly explained if it is collated with improvisation.

4.3 Early Modern Extemporisation

Improvisation, or, in the early modern term, extemporisation was a remarkable characteristic feature of comic players of the age. It had a crucial function in many types of performance activities from jigs to extempore verses on given topics, quips, dances or street ballads. But also, if we understand it broadly, it can refer to the direct interaction with the audience or overcoming unexpected situations on stage, such as forgetting the lines, for instance.

Extempore acting is considered to be a crucial part in the methodology of the commedia dell' arte players' personal scenario as well. It was assumed that Italian actors used brief plots and sketches to develop the performance, and also, there were short comic improvisatory dialogues called *lazzi*, which served to entertain the audience between dramatic scenes.[142] But while Italian improvisation was rather a kind of composition which actors created from their classical literary works, everyday speech and commonplace books, for English actors, extempore acting meant disconnection from literary theatre (Henke 1996, 227-8).[143] According to Andrew Gurr, improvisation in the English theatre covered three major

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[142] The singular form is *lazzo*, but in the English context, it is usually the plural form, which is used as singular. Although English and Italian theatre are often contrasted on the basis of producing or lacking prewritten texts, now we can see that this differentiation is quite oversimplified. While English theatrical practice was far more than staging written scripts, the commedia dell'arte produced a wide range of literary dramatic texts. For more details, see Henke 2002.

[143] In his intriguing study, Robert Henke compares orality and literacy in early modern English and Italian theatres, and his main concern is that both traditions were competitive grounds for these two modalities. However, improvisation had different meanings on the traditionally script-based English stage and the rather improvisational Italian theatre (Henke 1996). As for me, I would refrain from such a positivist binary opposition of these two theatrical traditions concerning orality and literacy. Nevertheless – although I am aware of the fact that it is difficult to detect traces of bodily performances of earlier theatrical periods – I do not necessarily see orality and improvisation as synonyms. Extempore performance might include verbal spontaneity, but for me, it is more equivalent to unexpected behaviour.

activities: composing rhymes for exits and endings of speeches, the mocking repetition of what the other character said, or punning on the others' words (Gurr 1993, 29-33).

Since there is evidence that English and Italian players could have some physical encounters at the age – although there is no direct proof that Elizabethan actors improvised in commedia dell' arte manner – it is natural that their styles and techniques are often compared. A brilliant contemporary example of this is the ninth scene of *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* by John Day (1607) – which I will discuss below –, in which Will Kemp and an Italian Harlequin act out an improvisational "battle".[144]

In the English context, improvisation was evaluated both negatively and positively. As for the disapproval, it is enough to recall Hamlet's lines that instruct the actors not to let clowns "speak no more than is set down for them" or Malvolio's dislike for Feste I mentioned before. As I referred to it earlier, it is possible to interpret Hamlet's speech as it was an indication of Will Kemp's unpleasant habit to ruin the dramaturgy with his interruptions. In Hamlet's opinion, when the comic player improvises, he distracts the audience's attention from the "some necessary questions of the play", which would be important to perceive. The clown, however, "villainously" makes the audience laugh, thus, they will not pay attention to serious acting and the narrative of the play. One problem with extemporising is, thus, that it does not only demonstrate uncontrollable (physical and verbal) behaviour against modesty, but it also encourages others to act without regarding any social rules. It is problematic, however, to define the exact content of it, since it always exerts the elements of the present ideological states. Still, I argue that extemporisaton is not an anarchist action, but a creative attitude, which offers accomplishment and solution to those who practise it.

Nevertheless, for its uncircumsribable nature, it is comparable to the notion of performance to a great extent.

Another aspect of Hamlet's speech I want to emphasise here is that extempore acting is the fool's "pitiful ambition". This view is quite similar to what antitheatricalists echoed with reference to actors in general: they are exhibitionists, vain, bumptious, and eager for applause. As I have explained it previously, references to the well-known phrases of theatre's attackers in Shakespeare's plays might be explained with the intention to legitimise and aestheticise the profession, or, on the contrary, they can be understood as the ironic interpretation of the context.

Nevertheless, there are references where improvisation does not seem to be baseness, just the contrary. As Thorton S. Graves states, the ability to improvise, being associated with cleverness and wit, was an important skill in the case of literary men as well as clowns (Graves 1922, 431). In theatre, however, extempore acting was attributed mainly to the clown, and whenever a non-comic actor did it, he/she was considered to be clownish. Thus, extempore acting is, on the one hand, held to be a source of humour, where the joy comes from breaking the (dramaturgical) rules dictated by the text or the scene. On the other hand, it is always associated with chaotic and amoral behaviour, as we will see below based on my examples in Chapter 5.

In John Day's play, *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*, mentioned above Will Kemp visits the main character, Sir Anthony in Venice, where they meet an Italian harlequin and his wife. Sir Anthony asks the actors to act out a scene together. The players start to arrange the dramaturgy of the scene – in which the Harlequin's wife is seduced – and even if they have not reached the point of starting it in fact, the performance is done: Kemp makes a witty performance of fooling his Italian colleague. While Kemp, during the preparatory discussion already plays the seducer,

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[144] All references from *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* are from the edition by

the Harlequin is unnoticeably made a Pantaloon, i.e. a "jealous coxcomb" (Scene ix, 102).

What happens here is that within the framework of the play, a real-life situation and a theatrical scene are compounded. Kemp performs the tempter without taking up the role conspicuously, and he also presents the clown persona as usual. He is already "in role" just before the real play starts. Moreover, it is quite "invisible" and apparently natural that he is performing at the moment: it seems as if he just acted out himself.[145]

Kemp's unconformity and his invisible, undetected dramaturgy call the attention to the following facts: improvisation, in a broad sense, might represent uncontrollable behaviour compared to the social norms. Moreover, it bears some kind of irony in the sense that it mocks patterns that are usually considered to be normal, what is more, the improviser always pretends to accommodate to those norms (but he does the opposite). This might be the reason why extempore acting is an enemy to well-regulated and orderly acting, and the improvising player is an outcast both in theatre and in society.

Another well-known example of the early modern approach to extemporisation is Richard Brome's play, *The Antipodes* (1640). The plot is mainly focused on a metadramatic pattern, in which Peregrine, a noble lord obsessed with travelling, is intended to be cured with the help of a performance, in which he is taken to a fictional society, the Antipodes.[146]

Anthony Parr (*Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, Manchester, 1995)

[145] Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that providing Kemp is still alive around 1607, he might have acted himself in this play (Duncan-Jones 2010).

[146] The play's framing device might remind us of the Induction to *The Taming of the Shew*. Brome's drama, nevertheless, is exciting from many perspectives. It thematises, for instance, the healing power of theatre, or Antipodes is the anti-utopian equivalent of Caroline London, where social hierarchy is turned upside down, where a gallant begs from a beggar, poets are rich, while lawyers are poor, and servants rule over their masters. For more interesting details, see the Critical Introduction to *The Antipodes* by Richard Crave on *Richard Brome Online*, project of the Royal Holloway, University of London, http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/viewOriginal.jsp?play=AN&type=CRIT, accessed 15

The play-within-the-play is directed by Letoy, the "fantastic lord", who arranges his own theatrical company to carry out the task.

What is crucial here is Letoy's (Brome's) attitude to his players' work, since he, as a playwright and stage manager, does not insist on his lines and directions at all. In Act 2 Scene 1, he says that he is "none of those poetic furies / That threats the actor's life in a whole play / That adds a syllable or takes away" (II. 1. 20-22). What is more, the clown has a privileged position within the company, even if he is very bad at learning the lines, "yet, he makes such shifts extempore, / Knowing the purpose of what he is to speak to, / That he moves mirth in me [i.e. Letoy] 'bove all the rest" (II. 1. 17-19).

Later we read Letoy's instructions to his actors, in which, in a very similar manner to Hamlet, he warns them not to act in a "scholastic way" or tear their throat "to split the audience's ears" (II. 1. 70-73). His precepts express the rules of the acting style I called (Renaissance) natural acting earlier; that is a mode of performance when the actor aims at developing a real-life effect. However, these rules do not concern the comic player, who is "incorrigible".

> [To BYPLAY] But you, sir, are incorrigible, and
> Take licence to yourself to add unto
> Your parts your own free fancy, and sometimes
> To alter or diminish what the writer
> With care and skills compos'd. And when you are
> To speak to your co-actors in the scene,
> You hold interlocutions with the audients (II. 1. 92-98).

From the dialogue between Letoy and the clown, it turns out that improvisation, "in the days of Tarleton and Kemp" was barbaric, but now it

shines with perfection, for it does not serve the purposes of mirth and laughter only, but it allows the clown to prove his wit in order to cure Peregrine of his madness.

This might refer to a reshaped attitude towards clownery in the 1640s, however, the "uselessness" and vanity of Tarleton's and Kemp's performance cannot really be underpinned by Brome's lines. If the acting of comedians before the Caroline age was supposed to have its purpose in itself, then this should apply to Robert Armin as well. His work, however, as I am going to analyse it in details later, is probably much more substantial than just mere exhibitionism.

What we see in Brome's play, thus – though within fictional and narrative framework –, is an implicit criticism of comic acting and improvisation. Although the director and author (Letoy) encourages his clown to play extempore, he (and of course, the script) is always there as a controlling authority giving him instructions. Just like most dramas of their own age and in antitheatrical literature, Elizabethan comedians such as Tarleton and Kemp – whose improvisation as well as its social acceptance could have been changed by the 1640s – are represented here as unrefined, witless, rough bumpkins, who set up their own rules to play. Brome's ideal is the governable and ductile player, whose wit is compatible with the author's intelligence and who is in the same queue with the rest of the cast. At the same time, although the text continuously emphasises the pleasure of spontaneous acting, it does it in a way that it primarily calls the attention to Brome's verbal virtuosity, since improvisation is scripted (Kettnich 2007, 134). In this way, here, the definition of 'extempore' is limited, since it refers to a legal, well-governed order or wish of the author/director ("Tonight I'll give thee leave to try thy wit" [II. 1. 107].). Moreover, improvisational "wit" means only the ability to alter or recompose the dramatist's text – so it is

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Scott Kastan and Richard Proudfoot (London: Nick Hern Books, 2000).

mainly a textual skill – nothing more. Within this framework, real, individual interpretation equals the transgression of authority, the violation of the rules, irregularity and non-conformity.

So in my view, improvisation covers all the actions and behaviour of the player, which is non-conformable, irregular and subjective as opposed to the general premises of dramaturgy and expected social norms. I also believe that – even in the case of "serious" characters and actors – extemporising was a special source of pleasure for players and audiences alike, since it expressed the resistance to those regulations that intended to prescribe proper acting both in the theatre and in everyday life. In early modern culture, thus, where self-fashioning, social behaviour, ceremonies as well as theatre (so all the different forms of performances) were governed by precisely determined ideologies, improvisation and the comic player appeared as a symbol of freedom, independence and critique. His work was the type of creative art, which could only bear the rules set down by itself.

4.4 Improvisation in Theatre, Performance and Society

As I have referred to it several times, theatre and society are often interpreted in terms of each other. Social sciences – especially, among others, the works of Erving Goffman, Victor Turner, Dwight Conquerwood and Milton Singer – use the metaphors of theatre and drama to describe spectacular social events such as rituals, festivals or games. Human behaviour and habits are also frequently defined as performance; the best known example is probably Judith Butler's gender performative.[147] It is very different, however, how these approaches see the connection of power/rules/hegemony and the freedom of the agent who performs. Nonetheless, it is very characteristic that while certain social theories use the metaphors of theatre and performance, others insist on the fact that human acts and behaviour can better be described as improvisation. Thus, it could be relevant to compare and contrast the notions of "performance"/"theatre" and "improvisation" as they refer to everyday life.[148]

In general terms, improvisation is a type of performance when the performer, partly based on the actual situation or the audience's requirements, arranges actions or lines on the spot. It is a continuous and serial decision making process at the same time, since the actor or the musician has to observe both his partners' and the spectators' reactions in order to take the next step. Improvisation – both in music and in theatre – is

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[147] I have referred to the theories of the "performative turn" earlier. For references, see Footnote 49.

[148] Fort the definitions of everyday life, see Sommer 2012. As he says, the according to structuralist understanding, it is the sphere of alienation and the ultimate stage of capitalist exploitation. As for the 'liberal' interpretation, it is a private, de-politicised realm, while in cultural studies, it is a site of dominant hegemonies and inequalities as well as (especially in

usually identified as a skill which can be taught and developed, as it is underpinned by a series of methodology books published in the USA and after the 60s.[149] Improvisation theatre has its successors and followers in the 20th century as well. For instance, the opposition between externally controlled stage presence and self-determined acting is detectable on the contemporary stage, in which, from the 1980s on, there seems to be a demand to see "the full range of human expressiveness: shapes, sounds, silences, and this form; the human body itself" (quoted in Keefe and Murray 2008, 45). Such theatrical endeavours, which concentrate on the human body in acting, are often defined as "physical theatre", a form, which appears to give preference to physicality compared to traditional storytelling and drama. Since clownery and mime are often mentioned among the predecessors of physical theatre, one can safely link early modern clowning to it (even if physical theatre has its own problems of definition).[150] According to Simon Murray, "the 'physical in theatres' [...] are found in all theatres as centred on the (moving-speaking) body" (Ibid., 6).[151] So,

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Michel de Certeau's terms) the obstinate channel of the emergence of resistance (Sommer 2012, 3).

[149] The best known authors and experts are Viola Spolin (*Improvisation for the Theater*, 1963) and Keith Johnstone (*Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*, 1979). Spolin, the inventor of 'theatre games', is said to be the initiator of the first American improvisational theatres. Johnstone, the British playwright and director founded his group The Theatre Machine in London, and worked on the theory and practice of 'Theatresports in England and Canada. (Theatresports is a dynamic and energetic improvisatory interaction and also a form of training between the actor and the audience, which is likened to sports events because of the way of evaluation and its competitiveness.) These new forms were started in reaction to the dull and lifeless theatre repertory in the 1970s. Notwithstanding, the findings and results of improv theatre has also had a great impact on social sciences as well as education and pedagogy.

[150] Edgar Landgraf mentions that the practice of improvisation on stage and in music became banished from high art, because it is related to the distinction between eternal and transitory artistic forms. Since improvisation is held to be fleeting, it is also suppressed from official artistic considerations (Langraf 2011, 5).

[151] Physical theatre has at least as many problems with its own definition as performance or performance studies. In general terms, it is a collective notion describing those theatrical forms which intend to carry out storytelling and drama with bodily/physical means. On the other hand, the term can be applied to theatres which want to define themselves as opposed to literary theatres. For further readings on definitional issues, see Keefe and Murray 2008

extemporisation is often related to comedy and inordinate clowning, probably because it is also understood as a performance which does not use any scripts. Moreover, realistic and immediate circumstances are more proper for developing humorous situations.

Even if it is a common belief that improvisation does not require prewritten scripts, it is obvious that improvisers – even clowns – "draw on *ready-mades* – short motifs of clichés – as they create their novel performance" (Sawyer 2000, 157).[152] In other words, actors who act extempore use a "shared body of conventions, techniques, and historical knowledge" as they create their performance (Ibid.) This ascertainment is valid not only for theatre, but also for those concepts which liken extemporisation to everyday life. As R. Keith Sawyer, professor of psychology and education writes in one of his other articles, even if we improvise in our everyday lives, most of the average situations – like, for example, a restaurant scene, when one orders meal – have a conventional pattern. Besides, obviously, we mainly produce improvisational conversation and challenge (or change) the given structure (Sawyer 2001).

Sawyer in this article recommends that instead of "performance", "improvisation" would be a better metaphor for everyday conversation. As

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and *Through the Body. A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre* by Dymphna Callery (Routledge, Nick Herrn Books, 2001).

[152] It is remarkable that improvisation theories often quote Jacques Derrida's argument against the singularity and immediacy of improvisation. In this view, improvisation can never be original or inventive, because an improvised act is immediately tied to repetition. "It's not easy to improvise, it's the most difficult thing to do. Even when one improvises in front of a camera or microphone, one ventriloquizes or leaves another to speak in one's place the schemas and languages that are already there. There are already a great number of prescriptions that are prescribed in our memory and in our culture. All the names are already preprogrammed. It's already the names that inhibit our ability to ever really improvise. One can't say whatever one wants, one is obliged more or less to reproduce the stereotypical discourse. And so I believe in improvisation and I fight for improvisation. But always with the belief that it's impossible. And there where there is improvisation I am not able to see myself. I am blind to myself. And it's what I will see, no, I won't see it. It's for others to see. The one who is improvised here, no I won't ever see him (*Unpublished Interview*, 1982)". "Derrida on Improvisation." *New Day Blog*, 6 February, 2009,

he argues, humans learn to extempore while role-playing in their childhood, and throughout their lives, they continuously face the tension of improvisation and script, while there is a natural drive to behave and speak creatively. As he says, social sciences – especially those with a structuralist perspective – mainly focus on the fixedness and stability of structures instead of examining creativity and freedom humans are all capable of (Ibid.).[153] If we read Sawyer's claims along with the theory of civilisation by Norbert Elias, it seems that creativity and civilisation – defined as self-control and rationalisation (Elias [1939] 1987, 683, 736) – are contradictory notions. Thus, Greenblatt's idea of Renaissance self-fashioning – that is the ideology-dependent behavioural patterns by which the individual displays himself (and which I connect to Renaissance tragedians) – can be understood as a part of systematic behavioural change towards controlled manners, while the extemporisation of Tarlton, Armin and Kemp seems "uncivilised" and uncontrolled. Nonetheless, I strongly believe – and the theories concerning the issue will reinforce this – that improvisation should not be identified as a practice which totally neglects rules.[154]

According to Sawyer (and other social theorists I am going to refer to), creativity and improvisation are strongly related notions. In his *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation* (2006), he describes creativity as the "highest level of human performance" (Sawyer 2006, 3), which does not only appear in high arts, but also in everyday life.

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http://sisterezili.blogspot.hu/2009/02/derrida-on-improvisation.html., accessed 2 September, 2013.

[153] I do not intend to particularise in details the standing debate on the workings of structure (the overarching stable social order) and agency (the autonomous actions of individuals). For further readings, see "Agency and Structure" in Edgar and Sedgwick 2011, 10-11.

[154] Edgar Landgraf's argumentation is pertinent: "The conceptualisation of improvisation then, need not concern itself so much with the advent of Otherness, but rather with the mechanisms that promote variation and lend stability and connectivity to innovation. From this vantage point, improvisation is not about the absence of rules and structure, not about the advent of true Otherness, but rather can be understood as a self-organising process that relies on and stages the particular constraints that encourage the emergence of something new and inventive" (Landgraf 2011, 5).

Creativity is ephemeral, and its most important components are improvisation, collaboration and communication (Ibid., 7). Sawyer uses similar adjectives to characterise creativity that I – when referring to the approaches of performance studies and theatricality – have cited in terms of performance in the earlier chapters. Also, he stresses the presence of collective extemporisation in everyday life and as the characteristic feature of societies, cultures and historical periods (Ibid., 122).

Improvisation (and creativity) in society is always discussed with reference to pre-existing structures (scripts). However, as I have indicated it before, it should not be interpreted as the total dismissal of constraints, but as an inventive application of the rules. Probably the best known social theorists elaborating on these issues are Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau. In this part of my dissertation, I am going to concentrate more on Bourdieu and de Certeau, since they deliberately used the terms "improvisation" and "creativity" to define everyday practices and human performance.[155]

So the reason why both Bourdieu and de Certeau are in the centre of my interest is that they both refer to everyday behaviour as a form of creativity/improvisation. One of Bourdieu's key concepts, for instance, is habitus, which he, in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, defines as a "principle of regulated improvisations" (Bourdieu 1977, 78.). Habitus is a collection of "individual and collective practices" (Ibid., 82) which "tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions in the production of their generative principle" (Ibid., 78).[156] As Karl Maton explains, it can also be described as the combination of the individual's social and historical background, in which everyday practices are generated

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[155] According to Moritz Sommer, while de Certeau focused on how agents, in their everyday lives, practiced resistance to the dominant logic with their tactics and strategies, Foucault concentrated on the subject's embeddedness in power relations defining it as the effects of the exercises of power (Sommer 2012, 4-6).

[156] For the history of the term, see Maton 2008, 54-55.

(Maton 2008, 50-62). Improvisation is regulated, because human acts are controlled by opportunities and constraints in various situations, just like it works similarly in a performance situation in the case of artists.[157] Similarly, Michel de Certeau in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* discusses "the procedures of everyday creativity" (De Certeau 1988, xiv), which he describes as "production" or "the tactics of consumption" (Ibid., xvii.). Agents are producers, since they do not only bear the rules of the given social structure, but with their tactics and strategies, they creatively respond to it.[158] Production is also a particular form of resistance, where individuals use their creativity to activate their selfhood within power structures (Sommer 2012). Resistance seems to be a key term in both Bourdieu's and De Certeau's terminology, and it refers to the fact that within social structures, practice can be characterised by collective or individual freedom as well. Bourdieu's "regulated improvisation" and de Certeau's "tactics" and "strategies" are practices of resistance, which aim at the dominant logic/power structures.

If we read theatrical and social theories of improvisation parallel with each other, we see that it is a feasible argument that improvisation is a better metaphor to describe everyday activities than performance or theatre. In the binary opposition of extemporisation and performance (even if in performance studies, improvisation is definitely the part of performance), it seems that while the latter one is governed by rules, repetitions and structures – see, for instance, Schechner's term of "restored behaviour" or Jan Assmann's "ritual coherence" – the former one is characterised by individual creativity. Thus, improvisation is, on the one hand – just like Bakhtin's

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[157] Bourdieu's other key concepts are field ("arenas of struggle for legitimation") and doxa (the "deep structure of fields") (Swartz 2007, 123-125). Everyday practices occur when habitus encounters fields, and human action reflects that structure (Ibid., 141). However, actors are not rule followers or norm obeyers, but they are strategic improvisers and practical strategists who, on the basis of their habitus, subvert the given system (Ibid., 100).

[158] Strategy is the calculation and manipulation of power relationships connected to a proper locus. Tactics are inventive employment of possibilities within strategic circumstances (Highmore 2002, 157, 159).

notion of the carnival – festive and chaotic in the sense that it changes and turns the existing structures upside down. On the other hand, it is liminal with regard to the fact that – to some extent – it is regulated, due to the familiarity of the scripts. At the same time, it is unforeseen, ephemeral and obscure. As Ben Highmore says when defining de Certeau's notions of strategy and tactics, everyday practice can be characterised by disguise, surprise, discretion, secrecy, play and bluff (Highmore 2002, 159). In theatrical terms, these are comic characteristics, and as I explained earlier, they are also the qualities of the Renaissance comic actor, who was continuously judged by different authorities.

4.5 Early Modern Improvisation as Resistance

As I hopefully managed to show, in social sciences, everyday life is theorised in terms of performance, or, more precisely, identified with improvisation on the basis of the observation that there are no strict scripts, and agents use the given cultural and social contexts creatively. We could see that even if extempore behaviour in culture is held to be chaotic and unorganised, it always bears some connection to regularities and social systems. According to Bordieu, moreover, practices are precisely generated by habitus, i.e., the systematically ordered (cultural and social) property of agents (Maton 2008, 62).

Nevertheless, both habitus and everyday practices are carried by the physique, which is a social and an individual entity at the same time.[159] The theories of Bourdieu, de Certeau, Norbert Elias and Jan Assmann could be related in the sense that they all emphasise how tradition and the correspondence of past, present and future is encased in the human body. Assmann claims that the carriers of cultural memory are the poets, the shamans, the priests and other similar characters (Assmann 1999, 54). Bourdieu says that we do not learn by imitating models, but other peoples' actions (including, for instance, "bards") (Bourdieu 1977, 87), and this is the way how we learn to master the improvisational techniques.

> Between apprenticeship through simple familiarisation, in
> which the apprentice insensibly and unconsciously acquires
> the principles of the "art" and the art of living – including

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[159] One of the origins of this idea is Marcel Mauss' theory of "body techniques", which is the way in which people, from society to society know how to use their bodies. Mauss says that these techniques are traditional, and their transmission is realised by education. For further readings, see Mauss (1934) 1992, 455-477.

those which are not known to the producer of the practices or works imitated, and, at the other extreme, explicit and express transmission by precept and prescription, every society provides for structural exercises tending to transmit this or that form of practical mastery (Ibid., 88).

For this reason, it might be convincing why I would like to present the early modern comic actor as an agent, whose extempore manners are understood and taken over by the audience. I think since they displayed their body in front of others not only on the stage but in other fields of performance,[160] players explicitly exemplified the transmuting power of improvisation, which is also characteristic of everyday practices in general. Moreover, as I have already discussed, comedians faced and fought with several ideological phenomena – artistic decorum, court behaviour, antitheatrical thinking, authorial intentions – that intended to strengthen structure and fixity. In other words, comedians existed in a constant tension, because they perpetually tried to overreach and outwit the rules that concerned them, let those be dramatic scripts, social or theatrical roles, or the expectations towards theatre or actors.[161] The fact that Tarlton, Armin and Kemp could succeed without a safe theatrical environment (e.g. they prospered in offstage genres and locations like taverns and markets) might prove that the ground of their achievements was their own talent and skills.

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[160] Fields, in sociology (and more precisely, in Bourdieu's terminology), are the arenas of struggle for legitimation. Practices can happen when habitus encounters fields, and the action reflects the structure of the field in any way (Swartz 2007, 123, 141).

[161] Beside the theatrical context, improvisation is often discussed in terms of jazz music. As Sarah Ramshaw explains, improvisation in jazz was originally related to black musicians because of the (supposed) lack of professionalism and the disability to read music notes. Especially with the emergence of bebop in the 1940s, black artists were associated with deviancy, arrogance, violence and foolishness, because their music was interpreted as the abuse of melodious musicality, or, in broader and more symbolic terms, the law of Western "civilised" musical culture and society (Ramshaw 2006, 2-3). In this respect, the estimation of (early modern) comic performers and jazz musicians seem markedly comparable.

Another reason why I chose comedians is that their liminal stage persona (which is not identical to the character nor to the civic self) could make them easily remarkable and peculiar, still close and familiar to people. This immediate contact with the audience came from the comedian's image which presented him as an ordinary man. At the same time, comic actors (or clowns), as Louise Peacock quotes, always reveal the chaotic, mercurial, childlike, rebellious and amoral characteristics in the spectators (Peacock 2009, 35). As long as the clown is enigmatic and puzzling, just like in the early modern era, he remains the critic and the commentator of society (Ibid., 154). In the Renaissance, the clown persona did not lose its iconic status, thus, in the audience's eyes, he did not become – with Peacock's words – "debased" and "overfamiliar" (Ibid.). That is why, for instance, Richard Tarlton – being a mediator between the royal court and popular culture, official theatre and street performance, an acknowledged artist and a rustic street performer, etc. – could serve as a critic of the court and the queen. Another example of the improvising comic figure could be Erasmus' Folly.

> I shall entertain you with a hasty and unpremeditated, but so much the more natural discourse. My venting is *ex tempore*, I would not have you think proceeds from any principles of vain glory by which ordinary orators square their attempts, who (as it is easy to observe) when they are delivered of a speech that has been thirty years a conceiving, nay, perhaps at last, none of their own, yet they will swear they wrote it in a great hurry, and upon very short warning: whereas the reason of my not being provided beforehand is only because it was always my humour constantly to speak that which lies uppermost. […] I appear always in my natural colours, and an

unartificial dress, and never let my face pretend one thing, and my heart conceal another; nay, and in all things I am so true to my principles that I cannot be so much as counterfeited, even by those who challenge the name of wits, yet indeed are no better than jackanapes tricked up in gawdy clothes, and asses strutting in lions' skins (5, 6-7).[162]

Folly's self-praise, mocking rhetorical manner and self-assertion might remind us of theatrical clownery. Furthermore, Folly's metaphorical character is self-identical and it is omnipresent. With its erratic existence, it is the prime mover of the world representing the satiric criticism of corrupt and hypocritical social practices such as Catholicism.

To sum it up, what I see is that early modern comedians' work and art – that is their improvisatory techniques – exemplify the resistance to social structure and codified behaviour. Extemporisation, which is characteristic of Tarlton's jests, Kemp's dances and Armin's quips is not "self-fashioning" in the sense that they it does not represent contemporary power relations explicitly. It is an own practice, which obviously uses and applies the elements of the system, but only in order to mock, subvert or ironize on them. Kemp, for example, in his *Nine Daies Wonder*, pretends to be sober, because that is "civilised", however, he does it in a way that everyone knows what the truth is. These "improvisatory" attitudes, I think, were examples for the spectators to follow.

In the following part of the dissertation, I am going to analyse texts which, I believe, exemplify typical characteristics of early modern comic

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[162] The references from Erasmus' work are from the following edition: *Erasmus. In Praise of Folly, Illustrated with many curious Cuts, Designed, Drawn, and Etched by HANS HOLBEIN, with Portrait, Life of Erasmus, and his Epistle addressed to Sir Thomas Moore.* 1876. Translated by White Kennett. London: Reeves and Turner 196, Strand, W. C. *In Praise of Folly* was translated into English several times, the first English edition by Thomas Chaloner was published in 1549.

players. What these sources have in common is that all of them are non-dramatic, because, as I mentioned earlier, I am interested in offstage performance and the extratheatrical identity/stage persona (Lesley Wade Soule's term) of the subjects. Moreover, I also intend to show how these instances represent improvisation as the intention to (re)gain the control over the performance.

5 Extempore Performance in Texts

5.1 Comic Writing/ Comic Performance

In this part of my dissertation, I am going to scrutinise contemporary primary texts which, as I see it, are relevant from the point of view of extemporising. This intention necessarily raises the problem of the relationship between textuality and performance. I would like to declare that I do not intend to treat these texts as if they were transcriptions or reconstructions of real performances, nor do I want to suggest that they are "marked with stage potentiality" (Elam 1980, 208).[163] As I have denoted it before, I agree with the basic assumption of Peggy Phelan that performance is always "nonreproductive", that is, it cannot be saved, recorded or

[163] It was the assumption of Keir Elam and researchers of theatre semiotics that drama is "determined by the need of stage contextualization" and it is "marked with stage potentiality" (Elam 1980, 208). Even if I do not analyse dramas in detail, the texts I deal with are characterised with the possibility of performance. In spite of this, it is not my intention to suggest that they were concrete realisations of performed events. For more readings on theatre semiotics, see, for instance, *Theatre As a Sign-System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance* by Elaine Aston and George Savona (Routledge, 1991); *The Semiotics of Theatre* by Erika Fischer-Lichte (Indiana University Press, 1992); *Theatre Semiotics: Text and Staging in Modern Theatre* by Fernando de Toro and Carole Hubbard (University of Toronto Press, 1994). For Hungarian references, see *Színház-szemiográfia. Az angol és olasz reneszánsz színház ikonográfiája és szemiotikája.* (Theatre Semiography. The Iconography

documented (Phelan 1993, 146-8). Nevertheless, although these sources are not plays, they are definitely in strong connection with theatre (or performative) events, which also implies that they provide an interpretational framework of those opportunities how different improvisatory scenes could have been acted out. In other words, they have reference to the cultural context in which extemporisation was beheld and expounded.

Opportunity is a crucial word here, since what I am interested in is the way these documents could be informative about possible extempore scenes on and offstage, and also what details they carry about the potential ways of improvisation. I hope to show that they vindicate my major assumption that improvisation can be interpreted as a tool by which the regular, repeated and accepted ways of behaviour could have been disturbed, and by which the control over the performance is regained by the individual. At the same time, obviously, these extempore manners relied on (and played out) social norms, habits, and contemporary cultural knowledge. Thus, referred texts are handled in the method that Marco de Marinis suggests when he says that everything can be used as a theatrical document which is connectable to a theatrical activity (de Marinis 1999, 50-56). By "theatrical" in this context, of course, I mean "performative" – hopefully in my theoretical chapters I managed to explain why, from my angle, I can reckon the two concepts synonymous. In other words, in compliance with the assumptions of performance studies, I consider all self-realising activities and processes as performance, and I regard the written sources I am going to analyse as traces by which early modern performance can be detected.

This might result that my philological attitude to the primary texts in this last chapter is not as delicate and refined as it would be in a philological work, since what I am interested in is performative/extempore manners, and

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and Semiotics of English and Italian Theatre.) edited by Katalin Demcsák and Atilla Attila

I am using the written sources to help to interpret this major issue. Moreover, *Tarlton's Jests*, Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder*, and even *Quips upon Questions* are in a liminal position, as far as their reliability and textual/authorial fidelity is concerned. In other words, as "documents" of performance, they notably work as anecdotes and gossips in the sense that they are unstable from the point of view of factualness, even if at times, the author equals the performer (Kemp), and even if the text itself is carefully edited and effectuated (Armin).[164] *Tarlton's Jests*, for instance, is undeniably based on the legends told about the player, but we might suspect that Kemp's street performance-journey was also embroidered to a great extent. If we acknowledge this in light of the fact that printing as an institution – especially with regard to theatre products – was in an insecure and unconfirmed position at the turn of the 16th century, we can even more accept the in-between location of these texts.[165] Not to mention the fact that legendary rumours included in *Tarlton's Jest* or the fact that the jig Kemp performed is mixed genre (dance, music, lyrics) have a lot to with the culture of orality, i.e., with the genres of ballads, jests and tales and the like.

So these textual sources are in a liminal status in the sense that they combine the fixedness of textuality with the fluidity of oral culture as well as the spontaneity of improvisation as their essential topic.[166] There are,

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Kiss (Szeged, 2011).

[164] For further readings on the use of gossip, anecdotes and autobiography in theatre history, see Postlewait and McConackie 1989.

[165] As Andrew Gurr writes (mainly with reference to Shakespeare's theatre), "[t]he companies that bought they plays were actively hostile to the idea of printing them. The players were there to give entertainment and to raise money. There was no reason to make the product durable or to record it for future generations" (Gurr 1980, 4). As opposed to this, however – knowing that other authors such as Ben Jonson were highly interested in publishing their work – we can also presume that the publication of plays were the common effort of companies and authors alike. The reasons could have been profit and/or emphasising authorial occupancy. For further readings on the printing of plays and authorship, see *From Playhouse to Printing House. Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* by Douglas A. Brooks (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[166] As Adam Fox puts it, "England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, therefore, was a society in which the three media of speech, script, and print infused and interacted with

certainly, several components of extemporisation that cannot be written down and documented, that is why I am especially interested in the hiatuses of these writings as well. I agree with Marco de Marinis to the greatest extent when he claims that (theatrical) documents might often have remained silent about certain events, but these silences are just as important as the explicitness (de Marinis 1999, 56). As for the genre of these writings – perhaps with the exception of *Quips upon Questions* – we could call them pamphlets, which also strengthens the view that they are transitory pieces of writings. According to Joad Raymond, pamphlets "came to refer a short, vernacular work, generally printed in quarto format, costing no more than a few pennies, of topical interest or engaged with social, political or ecclesiastical issues", and they were "closely associated with slander or scurrility" (Raymond 2003, 8).[167] Moreover, as he follows, pamphlets bear similarities with the history, origin and popularity of rouge literature and cony-catching tracts (Ibid., 17), which also balance on the margin of fiction and fact.[168]

The presence of "slander" and "scurrility" must not be surprising if one reads texts by contemporary comic players, since, as I have pointed at it before, ribaldry and obscenity were more or less part of the early modern entertainers' image. This kind of style is characteristic of the pre-modern

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each other in a myriad ways. Then, as now, a song or a story, an expression or a piece of news, could migrate promiscuously between these three vehicles of transmission as it circulated around the country, throughout society and over time. There was no necessary antithesis between oral and literate forms of communication and preservation; the one did not have to destroy or undermine the other" (Fox 2000, 5).

[167] Raymond also writes that "[e]ven in its late sixteenth-century usage, the word pamphlet was deprecatory. Pamphlets were small, insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, untrustworthy, unruly, noisy, deceitful, poorly printed, addictive, a waste of time" (Raymond 2003, 10). As I see it, this might also reinforce not only the low social and literary status, but also the doubtful estimation of the pamphlet.

[168] "The premise of moralising fictions is the penetration of the criminal underworld by an honest man, who subsequently exposes their deceitful practices, explaining their confidence tricks, social structure, mores and language. The boundary between fact and fiction in cony-catching tracts is knowingly distorted. Though – with the benefit of hindsight – they belong

vernacular as well as different genres of popular culture, and this has been the case ever since. Opposing profane talk with the erudite speech would, however, directly lead us to the contrast of oral/popular and literate/elite culture. But – as we also know it from Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World –* the popular register cannot be excluded from the discussion of early modern art and culture. A similar elimination of binary oppositions is needed if one discusses oral and literate culture of the age.

As Adam Fox argues, it was not only the unwritten language, which influenced the printed texts, but the process worked contrariwise as well.

> No one was immune from the influence wrought by the written word. Everyone who spoke the language, uttered its habitual sayings, sang its popular songs, inherited its commonplace assumptions and adhered to its normative beliefs, was absorbed in a world governed by text (Fox 2000, 10).

So when I am examining these texts, I intend to avoid or lessen the antithesis of written/printed and spoken manifestations with regard to the fact that the printed form of these texts might add up to the interpretation. At the same time, I also believe that the broad and flexible concept of performance can comprise written/printed self-expression, too.

Thus, in the textual sources I am going to discuss below, I intend to concentrate, on the one hand, on the comic persona and its formation influenced by different social and cultural circumstances. On the other hand, I will focus on the improvisational attitude of these players and also those cultural phenomena that these practices seem to interpret, subvert and criticise.

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to the realm of imaginary literature, their first person narrators emphasise that they are

5.2 "Mad Merry Companion": Richard Tarlton

5.2.1 Tarlton's Public Image

Dick Tarlton was a master of presentational strategies. Beside character formation, he developed a wide range of acting practices including dancing, fencing, jigging, playing music and telling jokes. It is also often emphasised that he mixed the rural traditions and ritualistic practices with official theatre-making (Weimann 2000, 99). He was the author of several ballads, jests and a play, and became associated with The Queen's Men from 1583 on. The fact that he was present and acknowledged in many fields of contemporary culture/theatre makes him a versatile figure. Also, as Peter Thomson emphasises, Tarlton was a provincial immigrant in London, so he – although, at the same time, being an admitted celebrity at the end of the century – could have an external perspective of the city. At the same time, since he was, for instance, a rustic entertainer and a professional actor simultaneously, we might interpret him as a liminal character from a social, a cultural and a theatrical viewpoint as well.

Before analysing his extempore strategies, I would like to show how his public image (his comic persona) was created in the early modern period. I find this significant because it is important to show that his different roles and his private identity merge with the legends that created his myth.[169] Tarlton's supposed clownish characteristics did not only influence his theatrical roles, but the clown identity he possessed was a set of attributes that he could not be independent of in any spheres of his action. As a matter of fact, his posthumously published work, *Tarlton's Jests* (1613) also belongs

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documenting reality [...]" (Raymond 2003, 17).

[169] Peter Thomson in his 2000 article summarises those approaches (by M. C. Bradbrook, Robert Weimann, Davis Wiles, et. al.) that establish the historical Tarlton's legend, and he emphasises the insignificance to separate myth from reality, which would otherwise be impossible (Thomson 2000, 195).

to this myth-making process, since – as I am going to argue for it later – it assembles collective memories about Tarlton's performance.[170]

Both Edwin Nungezer and Alexandra Halasz emphasise the fact that Tarlton's fame was at its zenith after his death.[171] As Halasz says, "the representation of Tarlton or the use of his name is imbued with a nostalgia for his performance" (Halasz 1995, 22). The fact that Tarlton, after his death, was still in common knowledge as if he was alive indicates again that he was considered as a liminal figure, a trespasser between life and death. He might be interpreted as an archetypal personage, similarly to Harlequin, who was originally considered the successor of the "Erl-könig", or "the kin or race of hell".[172] This attributes him with supernatural characteristics, which is a feature of celebrities, too. Tarlton's celebrity status was also sustained by the poems composed on the occasion of his death. One of the best-known ones is from *Wits Bedlam* (1617):

> Here within this sullen Earth
>
> Lies Dick-Tarlton, Lord of mirth;
>
> Who in his Graue still, laughing, gapes
>
> Syth all Clownes since haue be[…]ne his Apes:
>
> Earst he of Clownes to learne still sought;
>
> But now they learne of him they taught

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[170] In my dissertation, I am going to use the J. O. Halliwell's 1844 edition of *Tarlton's Jests*. All parenthetical references are from this edition, the numbers refer to pages.
For the exact philological history of this and other editions, see the homepage of *The Tarlton Project* supervised by Diane Jakacki,
http://www.lmc.gatech.edu/~djakacki3/tarlton/blog/?page_id=261, accessed 3 December, 2012.

[171] In order to refer to biographical and bibliographical facts, I am using Nungezer's entry on Tarleton in Nungezer 1929, 347-65 and Peter Thomson's entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004).

[172] As for the etymology of 'Arlecchino', see Nicoll 1963, 267-9. The actor-as-devil was a recurrent image in antitheatrical writing as well. This went together with the anecdotes about real devils turning up in the audience during the performance (cf. Edward Alleyn's case with Doctor Faustus) (Worthen 1984, 23). About the relationship of actors and black arts, for more details, see Gras 1993, 187-96.

> By Art far past the Principall;
>
> The Counterfet is, so, worth all,[173]

This epitaph represents very clearly that Tarlton seemed to gain lots of respect during his career, and that he influenced the succeeding comic performers to a great extent. Moreover, it is also very specific that his fame and means of performance can only be discussed on the basis of posthumous works (always attributed to outsiders' authorship), which necessarily include fictional assumptions and elements concerning Tarlton's character and technique. So Tarlton's persona does not only include the composed of the roles and identities he played, but it was also created in the audience's memory during his life and after his death. Even Hamlet's Yorick speech – describing the long deceased jester as a "fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy", someone who mocks his own grinning (V. 1. 202-203, 210-211) – seems to keep Tarlton's remembrance.

The most characteristic work commemorating his death (dated in 1588), *Tarltons Newes Out of Purgatorie*, was registered in the Stationers' Registers in 1590. Its authorship is dubious (he calls himself Robin Goodfellow, an "old Companion" to Tarlton); some suggest that it might have been Robert Armin's text (Creigh and Belfield 1987, 131).[174] The name (Robin Goodfellow), obviously, also recalls the fairy evil from English folklore and early modern literary works.[175] All his general characteristics – disguising, mischievous pranks, taking the shape of animals, tricks – might

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[173] *On Tarlton*, Epitaph 16. *Wit's Bedlam* was a collection of epigrams published anonymously, but its authorship is attributed to John Davies of Hereford.

[174] All the forthcoming references to *Tarltons Newes Out of Purgatorie* are from *The Cobler of Caunterburie and Tarletons newes out of Purgatorie* (Leiden: Brill, 1987) edited by Geoffrey Creigh and Jane Belfield (Creigh and Belfield 1987). All parenthesised page numbers are from this edition. For more information about the authorship, see the "Bibliographical Introduction" (Creigh and Belfield 1987, 126-37).

[175] For the literary "career" of Robin Goodfellow, see the "Introduction" to the 17th century ballad, *The Mad Pranks and Merry Jests of Robin Goodfellow* by J. Payne Collier (*The Mad*

remind us of comedians, while Puck's characteristics in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggests that he was also able to maintain relations between humans and the supernatural world. This mediatory role, to some extent, was also attributed to actors of the age, especially to clowns who continuously involved the audience. Additionally, as I have already mentioned, Harlequin (or, as for his early modern Italian name, Arlecchino) was identified with "Erl-König", the king of hell, and consequently, with the devil (Nicoll 1963, 267-269). The enigmatic identity of the author fits the curious fictitiousness of the text to a great extent.

The narrator is one of Tarlton's mourning admirers, who plans to visit the theatre, but falls asleep in Hoxton fields. Tarlton appears to him in his dream, and tells him his journey to Purgatory.[176] Here, I would not like to discuss the embedded stories in *Tarltons Newes*. The Tale of Friar Onion, The Cook's Tale, The Tale of the Vicar of Bergamo, The Tale of the Gentlewoman of Lyons or The tale of the two Lovers of Pisa and the like are all descended from Boccaccio's *Dekameron*. What I am interested in is how the narrator characterises Tarlton and his talent. First of all, he compares Tarlton to great orators, saying that "he was a mad merry companion, desired and loved of all: amongst the rest of whose welwishers my selfe being not the least, after his death I mourned in conceit and absented my selfe from all plaies, as wanting that merry *Roscius* of Plaiers, that famozed all Comedies so with his pleasant and extemporal invention" (Creigh and Belfield 1987, 145). By saying that "he [Tarlton] was only superficially seene in learning, having no more but a bare insight into the Latin tongue, yet hee had such a prompt

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Pranks and Merry Jests of Robin Goodfellow Reprinted from the Edition of 1628, London, Reprinted for the Percy Society, 1841, v-xx).

[176] As the Introduction writes, some elements of Tarlton's description recalls traditional medieval visions of hell, and it follows the 'news from Hell' tradition originated from the middle ages (Creigh and Belfield 1987, 117). As for the Hungarian equivalents, we could mention the case of Lőrinc Tar. For further readings, see *Tar Lőrinc pokoljárása. Egy fejezet lovagi irodalmunk történetéből* (*Lőrinc Tar's Descent to Hell. A Chapter from Our Court Literature*) edited by Kovács V. Sándor (Budapest, 1987).

witte, that he seemed to have that *Salem ingenij*, which *Tullie* so highly commends in his Orator" (Ibid.), it becomes clear that Tarlton was a kind of performer who did not attract his fans' attention with his classical education, but with his natural wit and extemporising talent.[177] At the same time, mentioning "the salt of wit" suggests that the narrator does not identify Tarlton as a simple, foolish buffoon, but as an honoured, witted actor. Even if this parallel with the great orator, Roscius is a joke, it is still a conscious citation of those contemporary references, which – as I argued earlier – intended to elevate the esteem of tragic actors. As I see it, among the three comedians I am going to write about, Tarlton was the only one who received this high respect. This might be connected to the fact that he was also favoured by the queen and her court. However, this lauded and bright personality is quite contrary to the image which *Tarlton's Jests* (1613) represent.

In his narration in *Tarltons Newes*, the ghost of the player describes Purgatory as a hall with seats, which is similar to an Amphitheater (all the underworld is a stage). The situation also resembles Tarlton's performances at court with all the nobilities sitting around him. Purgarory in this context appears as a place where the performer's achievement – basically his life till then – is judged. Ironically enough, "for all the mad wanton tricks" that he

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[177] *Tullie* refers to Cicero, and "salem ingenij" ('salt of wit') might allude to a phrase in his *De Oratore* (Creigh and Belfield 1987, 187). Cicero, when writing about the character of the orator, say that "[a] certain intellectual grace must also be extracted from every kind of refinement, with which, as with salt, every oration must be seasoned". For further readings, see *Cicero on Oratory and Orators* translated by J. S Watson (Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1875), 45. The phrase can also be found in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria, Book 6*: "When, therefore, we speak of the salt of wit, we refer to wit about which there is nothing insipid, wit, that is to say, which serves as a simple seasoning of language, a condiment which is silently appreciated by our judgment, as food is appreciated by the palate, with the result that it stimulates our taste and saves a speech from becoming tedious" (quoted from Harold Edgeworth Butler, ed., *Quintilian. With An English Translation*, Cambridge: Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1921,
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0063%3Abook%3D6%3Achapter%3D3%3Asection%3D19, accessed 15 September, 2013).

did when he was alive, Tarlton purgatorial task is that he, without ceasing, should sit and play jigs all day on his tabor to the ghosts, what is more, as he says, ironically, he plays far better than when he was alive (Ibid., 185). The situation itself is also ironic, since the punishment for Tarlton is the activity that he was continuously doing in his lifetime. So it is not really retribution, but an elongation of his fame, or an extension of his legend.

Tarlton's performance is, thus, beyond the frontiers of life and death, his fame is everlasting. In *Tarltons Newes*, his improvisational skills are praised as well as the way his image was kept in the audiences' memory. One important space where he could commit himself to his spectators' memory was the alehouse and the tavern while he was doing tableside entertainment. We can relate this fact to the clown's image of being a constant drunkard – this was perpetuated by both Tarlton and Kemp – however, as I referred to it earlier (and as Thomson also claims), it was in fact only a component of the comic persona. As Thomson writes, by his drinking, he identified himself with those displaced countrymen who took refuge in alcohol from the harshness of urban conditions (Thomson 2000, 199). In other respects, Tarlton's tavern/alehouse manners can be obviously compared with the uncontrolled (or uncontrollable) and grotesque bodily presence of drunkards – described by Philip Stubbes – who acted inordinately and beastly, as I have explained it previously.

Apart from being a theatre player, thus, Tarlton's image can be characterised by rustic and simple attitudes, and it seems that his most convenient places of performance were the tavern and other colloquial spheres. He lived and played with this persona wherever he appeared, and he was a liminal figure in many respects: at the same time, he was a theatre actor and a street player, a jester to the queen and a country folk, a creator of performance and a participant in community events at the same time. Also, it is a crucial fact that his persona, which we can be familiar with, was a

production of those who kept him in their memories. In other words, Tarlton's complex persona is a creation of collective remembrance in the sense Jan Assmann conceptualises it. According to Assmann, cultures without writing can be characterised by "ritual coherence" where collective memory is represented in circulatory, repetitive rituals, while literate cultures possess "textual coherence" which places confidence in literacy and texts (Assmann 2004, 87-88). As opposed to rituals and the texts of everyday communication, writing is "normative" and "formative" in the sense that it preserves and fixes information (Ibid., 91). However, since the tradition (or canon) of written texts is changeable – because, for instance, certain texts are forgotten, others are added to the canonical "corpus" – it provides opportunity for innovation and variation.

As for Tarlton, collective memories concerning his identity can be interpreted as a transmission from ritual to textual coherence, because the texts which I am referring to seem to aim at preserving his improvisational performances. Communal memory could have kept him, because he was a paragon of rebellious manners, which was an example to people. These performances he presented had ritualistic features in the sense that they involved the spectators and they used recurring elements when reacting on immediate situations. Nonetheless, from his myth and legendary, we can deduce his (contemporary) audience's expectations.

Tarlton's jests and scenes did not have prewritten scripts. His persona was more of a rustic entertainer, so it is very interesting to see how he accommodated and reacted in more ennobled circumstances, just as we can read about it in *Tarlton's Jests*. In my view, Tarlton was a perpetual objector, who had the freedom to break all social and behavioural rules, and his ever-changing persona was a tool to 'advertise' this. He was popular among people (and was kept in their remembrance) probably because his performance was direct, non-aesthetic, similar to everyday life. At the same time, one must

not forget about the fact that collective memory creates myth and legends about the perpetuated subject/phenomenon, which – as indicated before – applies to Tarlton to a great extent.

5.2.2 "Veryest foole in the company": *Tarlton's Jests*

Tarlton's Jests was published in 1613,[178] but it might have been written earlier, and although it is not completely authentic as far as its verity and authorship is concerned, it is a crucial source to corroborate Tarleton's clownery. It perfectly fits into the jest-book tradition of the age marked by *The Hundred Merry Tales* (1526) and the *Merry Tales and Quick Answers* (1530). *Tarlton's Jests* can best be compared to *Scoggin's Jests* (1613, 1626), where the main character (author) is the legendary, quasi-historical character, Scoggin. Scoggin, just like Tarleton was known as a jester-buffoon, he is even mentioned by Shakespeare.[179] Opinions vary whom we should identify Scoggin with, or whether he was a real person or a metaphorical jester figure created in/by the various textual sources.[180] However, such jester identities can certainly be interpreted as ones being preserved by collective (cultural) memory, as I have mentioned earlier. Consequently, the limits between their "real" and their fictive selves are unsure and vague. Thus – in lack of performance journals at the age – jest books might also be read as selections of anecdotes, which collected memories about the audience's

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[178] For more information about all editions of *Tarlton's Jests*, see the website of The Tarlton Project ("Tarlton's Jests", http://www.lmc.gatech.edu/~djakacki3/tarlton/blog/tarltons-jests/, accessed 19 July, 2013).

[179] In Shakespeare's *The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*, Scoggin is mentioned with reference to Falstaff. Shallows says, "I saw him break Skogan's head at the court gate, when a'was a crack not thus high (III. 3. 33-34).

[180] As John Southworth summarizes, Scoggin could be identified with the jester of Edward IV, but "Shakespeare and Ben Jonson conflate him with Henry Scogan the poet, who was a friend of Chaucher's and tutor to Henry V". He also emphasises that Scoggin was probably the mythological conglomeration of historical and imagined fools Southworth 2003, 119).

favourite performers in a textual form. A jest book is, therefore, a special collusion of "ritual" and "textual coherence".

With regard to the text of *Tarlton's Jests*, it is very important to note that the humorous anecdotes are told from a narrator's perspective, who – referring to the actor in third person singular, just like in the case of *Tarltons Newes* – is definitely not Tarlton himself. It is also certain that the stories cannot be taken as completely authentic, but they provide access to how the public image of Tarlton can be envisaged and accessed. With this, it is not only his supposed identity and technique that is demonstrated, but also the society which accepted, cheered and created him by keeping him in their collective memory. As for Tarlton, the features that characterise him in the jests are also assumed and imagined, however, they feed on the common belief of the contemporary viewers. According to Peter Thomson, in the *Jests*, Tarlton is represented as "a scourge of folly, a detective of hypocrisy, a social corrector with almost a political programme on his own" (Thomson 2000, 196). At the same time, however, he is also presented as a rogue, a drunkard, a rebel and a social outcast, as I have mentioned before, so his identity in the text is liminal and varying.

Not only the reminiscence of Tarlton, but also the collective experience of jesting can be approached from the perspective of cultural memory by Jan Assmann, since the point is how the viewers/participants of the events kept Tarlton's attitudes in their memory. In this way, *Tarlton's Jest* as a piece of writing is a reconstructive attempt to preserve something which is gone but wanted to be preserved at the same time, and the persona of Tarlton is the key to help the participants to remember and to identify themselves in the collective experience of extemporising. If we take the jests as small pieces of performances, similarly to rituals, they could be interpreted as crucial components to form, change and shape the community and the

early modern individual.[181] Tarlton's tool – or the tool attributed to him – is improvisational behaviour, and the main point of the jest is to apply satire on the main character or a joyful moment. Even if for today's reader, the anecdotes do not appear to be funny, they apparently suggest a spontaneous and a liberated atmosphere.

It is questionable whether the anecdotes could be read as a sequence or a narrative. In my view, the episodes show incidental scenes of Tarlton's entertainment which also demonstrate his three most important playgrounds. His "court-witty jests" are displayed at the banqueting hall, his "sound city jests" are often located at the theatre, and his "pretty countrey jests" might represent the street and the tavern. This division proves that Tarlton felt at home on all these stages and that he was at ease with different types of audiences. Just like in *Tarlton's Newes*, he was a traveller not only between theatrical, but also social spheres. No matter that some of his stories take place in the theatre, while reading the lines, it becomes quite clear that the focus is on his extemporising abilities, both physical and verbal. Regarding his appearance, iconography shows that Tarlton was short and unhandsome.[182] There is even a jest in which his flat nose is ridiculed to which, referring to the injurer, he can give a humorous repartee:

> Though my nose be flat,
>
> My credit to save,
>
> Yet very well, I can by the smell,
>
> Scent an honest man from a knave (29).

Contrary to this pretended offence, his ugly appearance was definitely one of Tarlton's most important instrument to entertain his audience, and he was

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[181] For more on Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory, see Assmann 1999, 20-158.

[182] For more details on Tarlton and the iconography of Renaissance players, see Chapter 3.1.2.

aware of this. As Halliwell also emphasises, though the modern reader might not discover the merit in Tarlton's jests, as for the contemporary viewers, "Tarlton's face seems to have set people in a roar, without any other assistance" (Halliwell 1844, xxvi). Henry Peacham demonstrates the same (1620):

> As Tarlton when his head was onely seene,
> The Tire-house doore and Tapistrie betweene,
> Set all the multitude in such a laughter,
> They could not hold for scarse an houre after.[183]

Tarlton's ugly appearance, on the one hand, contrasted him with the aestheticized body image of the dignified Renaissance humanist described earlier. Certainly, Tarlton belonged to the sphere of popular culture, still, being a stage player, he is comparable to the – more glorified – actors of the age. He is mentioned in Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors*, although only in terms of his popularity and because of his service to the queen as a jester (Heywood [1612] 1841, 43). From Richard Brome's play, *The Antipodes* (1640) we learned that improvisation was "barbaric", because it only served the purposes of mirth and laughter. In the quoted scene above, what is more, Tarlton plays a similar scene to Robert Greene's "Tu Quoque" aside; the liminal gesture of peeping the audience from behind the curtain. As I have referred to it earlier, this Latinism (meaning "you also") and the movement might indicate that the audience is involved in the game.

On the other hand, on the basis of the text, Tarlton seemed an everyday person with ordinary manners and attitudes, and perhaps this was the reason why people felt that they could have a direct relationship with him. A crucial part of his image was to be – as M. C. Bradbrook puts it – a

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[183] Quoted in Nungezer 1929, 362-3.

"common player", someone, with whom the average spectator could feel the same lineage. From this perspective, the common participation in the episodes written in *Tarlton's Jests* (even if they are not factual, only imaginative) can be understood as set of collective improvisations, where player and audience are not clearly separable, and in which resistance to different phenomena of social structures is put into shape.

In one of his jests in the city, a fellow at the theatre throws a pippin at Tarlton to which he replies with a humorous pun: "Pip in, or nose in, chuse you whether; / Put yours in, ere I put in the other" (14). Then the same fellow casts an apple at him, so the player teases him with his wife: "But as for an apple, he hath cast a crab; / So, instead of an honest woman, God hath sent him a drab" (Ibid.).

In the following story, Tarlton also reacts to a viewer's sudden and unexpected gesture when he points at him on the stage by showing two of his fingers towards the man. The man takes this as if Tarlton gave him horns, and the player agrees, since "for my fingers are tipt with nailes, which are like hornes, and I must make a shew of that which you are sure of" (15). The spectator, because of the audience's disapproval, finally leaves the theatre, because the play cannot continue until this irksome scene finishes.

These episodes show that the theatre was a constant ground for audience interference as well as that players could and wanted to react to every abrupt occurrence. One of the major locations of the "sound city jests" is the theatre, which indicates that improvisation is displayed and set forth there. The spectators who were mocked sit on the gallery, which suggests that they could have been wealthy. Extemporising at their expense emphasises Tarlton's rustic, jester, clown identity, because he annoys them with ease, for the pleasure of the audience. Furthermore, making fun of cuckoldry is a typical feature of comedies (for instance, the Italian commedia dell'arte or the English city comedy).

However, it is not only the player who is shown to be spontaneous and witty, but also a beggar, for instance, whose social connection with stage clowns was referred to in earlier chapters. In the beggar scene among the city jests, the last word is that of the panhandler, since he can smartly answer Tarlton's rhyme when giving him two pence (16). Tarlton and the beggar seem to be partners and fellow players in this episode, the latter one, in his verse, can even imitate the exact rhyme of Tarlton's lines. Contrary to most of the other scenes, this one is not about mocking and joking, but it demonstrates good fellowship.

Although David Wiles claims that Tarlton was rather a rustic type of clown (Wiles 1987, 17), I preferably agree with M. C. Bradbrook saying that "nothing could have been more metropolitan than Tarlton's country mirth" (Bradbrook 1962, 165). In fact, as I see it, he was a liminal figure who could succeed in front of the royal as well as the urban and country audiences. It is without doubt that his outfit – as I have elaborated it in Chapter 3.1.2 – was more of a rustic image. There are also a lot of references to him being a drunkard (5) as well as being penniless (41), gullible (34) and mocked by his wife (17). These all belonged – and in my view, has ever since been a part of – to the clown's reputation. In another beggar scene, the player tries to trick a poor man – even if the beggar asks for a penny first – by cheating away his last cent and buying ale. The old man, who, in this way, unintentionally invited Tarlton for a drink, saying that "where I was borne, that hee that payes for the drink must drink first", finally drinks all the ale (34). Elsewhere he, giving her a crown of gold, asks his wife if he is a cuckold on condition that if the answer is yes, he will take it back. Kate remains silent, but when Tarlton wants to get the money back, she asks: "Why, […], have I made any lye?" (18). So it is denotable that these ridicules are always reciprocal, that is it is not only Tarlton who is mocked, but he jeers at others too. Good examples of this are the previously mentioned beggar episodes (16, 34).

Tarlton's wife is also a constant character in the jests, sometimes she is the deceiver (17), sometimes the deceived one (21, 35).

Compared to this, it is noticeable that being a Master of Fence and a pleasant talker to the Queen might prove that he was regarded (or, at least, he intended to present himself as) a gentleman.[184] Tarlton's alleged and pretended nobility shows that he had a special liking for using those behavioural patterns that he could witness in upper social classes. For instance in his last city jest, he, "as other gentlemen used, at the first comming up of tobacco, did take it more for fashions sake then otherwise" (26). Two men, who arrive with wine, however, think that he was on fire, so they throw their cups of wine in Tarlton's face. Even if Tarlton has a funny riposte, finally the gentlemen leave him alone to pay the piper. So Tarlton's conceited and occasionally bumptious behaviour is also part of his manifold image, he imitates certain attitudes in order to mock them in an improvisatory way.

As for Tarleton's nonconformist behaviour, the best examples are provided in Tarlton's "court witty jests", where his behaviour, on the one hand, can be keenly contrasted with courtly manners and *spezzatura* (see Chapter 3.3.2).[185] On the other hand, it also turns out that although the clown's activities seem foolish, imbecile and unreasonable, according to the rules of carnivalesque dramaturgy, he occupies an upper hierarchy in his relationships with the nobles by his wit. In other words, with the Queen, for instance, the ordinary royal – jester dichotomy worked, in which Tarlton often ridiculed the Queen's noble environment and activities related to it. In

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[184] For more details on this, see Tarlton's biography on the Shakespeare and the Queen's Men Project website (http://tapor.mcmaster.ca/~thequeensmen/history/biopages/RichardTalton.html, accessed 3 December, 2012).

[185] Thomson also claims that instead of uniting country, city and court, Tarlton in *Jests* is rather defeating the (social) authorities (Thomson 2000, 201).

the jest, where he "plays" the drunkard, he criticised the size of a beer that her majesty allows him to drink.[186]

> [H]e counterfaited a drunkard, and called for beere, which was brough immediately. Her Majestie, noting his humor, commanded that he should have no more; for, quoth shee, he will play the beast, and so shame himselfe. Feare not you, quoth Tarlton, for your beere is small enough. Whereat Her Majestie laughed heartily, and commanded that he should have enough (5).

It is quite clear that here, Tarlton only pretends to be a hard drinker to cheer up the queen, who is "discontented". In a later jest, however, he ridicules his fellow actor who got drunk before having a performance in front of the mayor and his brethren in Salisbury. Tom gets so drunk that he falls asleep, so Tarlton puts a pair of bolt on his feet and takes him to the jail on his back. When the actor wakes up, he gives way to despair, and swears that if he can escape, he will give up drunkenness (32).

In another city jest, he contemplates the "ungodly", "uncharitable" and "unprofitable" nature of oysters, when certain ladies and noblemen ask his opinion: "They are ungodly, sayes Tarlton, because they are eaten without grace; uncharitable, because they leave nought but shells; and unprofitable, because they must swim in wine" (6). If we take oysters as the symbol of court behaviour, the ridiculousness is explicit. Although Tarlton is nearby "the oysters", he does not intend to take it.

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[186] For more about the relationship of Tarlton and Queen Elizabeth I, see Southworth 2003, 147-51. The fact that the title of the first jest is "How Tarlton plaid the drunkard before the Queene" reinforces the belief that drunkenness was a well-known and often used personal/performative tool of the comic actor.

Conclusively, even if they may be fictional to some extent, all of Tarlton's jests seem to highlight the comic player's improvisational skills both in words and in gestures. They lend themselves particularly well to understand as social activities or everyday performances in the sense that the performer is always attuning himself to the current, unexpected circumstances. The basic pattern of these interactions is action and reaction, in which the performer – in whose identity the "civic" and the "acting" self can hardly be discerned – always provides unfamiliar and strange responses. This applies to his occasional silences as well. Tarlton's reticence belongs to his improvisational talent, and we might suppose that these situations were characterised by meaningful physical performance. As Peter Thomson says, his silences were just as intentionally meaningful as his words (Thomson 2000, 196).[187] His example is the episode in Tarlton's "city jests" where he is mocking William Banks, a performer to the Earl of Essex. According to the story, Banks' horse chooses Tarlton as the "veryest foole in the company", and he only responds "God a mercy horse".[188] Afterwards, Tarlton instructs the jade to pick the "veriest whore-master", and the leads its master to the player again (24). Tarlton repeats his first sentence: "God a mercy horse, indeed", and after this, only the narrator speaks. "The people had much ado to keep peace: but Bankes and Tarlton had like to have squar'd, and the horse by to give aime. But ever after it was a by word thorow London, God a

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[187] As Thomson argues: "[a]t a merely technical level, Tarlton's calculated silence has no more significance than a skilfully executed double-take. It is the combination of technique and combative purpose that distinguishes the Brechtian performer. There is, in the published *Jests* and anecdotes sufficient evidence of that combination (broadly speaking, the technical and the political) in Tarlton to justify the allusion to Brecht. Tarlton's recorded victories were rarely easy. Many of them involve a recovery from humiliation, a recovery, what is more, that sometimes divides the bystanders into opposing camps" (Thomson 2000, 196).

[188] According to the legend, Banks' horse, Marocco was a performing animal which entertained the audience together with his master. He is mentioned in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) as well as *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609). For further reference, see *Maroccus Extaticus: or, Bankes' Bay Horse in a Trance* edited by Edw. F. Rimbauld (London: Reprinted for the Percy Society, 1843). In this pamphlet, Banks and his horse has a dialogue on the hypocrisy of puritans and other abuses against performance.

mercy horse, and is to this day" (Ibid.). Here, from a theatrical perspective, it is not the speech, but the gesture and the silence, which is expressive. Furthermore, the episode serves as a piece of cultural memory concerning Banks and Marocco transcribed into a jestbook.

With his jests, he often ridicules others or – which might seem strange – himself, too. Conscious self-irony is also a crucial part of his image, which differentiates him from dull comic characters. Nevertheless, his performer gestures are well-known to the spectators (in the tavern, the street, at the theatre as well as the court), since they repeat usual comic patterns. They work like comic scenes in plays, where, by the clown's appearance, we are immediately expecting fun, but we are not aware of its tools and content yet.[189] The gist of Tarlton's extempore performance is the unforeseeable series of actions, which unbalances the ordinary way of events. This can be explained by the clown being the agent of carnivalesque processes, but at the same time, it can represent the ability that the performer can overwrite the strongly regulated social behaviour.

Tarlton's jests represent the criticism of early modern society in every sphere of it (country, city, court), so his persona accomplishes what Louise Peacock denotes as the most essential characteristic features of clowns. He is commentator of society, who also reveals the chaotic, mercurial, childlike, rebellious and amoral characteristics in the spectators (Peacock 2009, 35). These jests, which had been preserved in the cultural memory of the early modern audience, can be described as (Renaissance) self-fashioning with the proviso that Tarlton (just like Erasmus' Folly, perhaps) represents power relations in an ostensible, satirical manner. The tool that he uses to do this is improvisation, which is also a general attribute of everyday life. In the

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[189] Thomson brings Tarlton directly into connection with the Shakespearean canon concerning the following roles: Launce, Lancelot Gobbo and Bottom, what is more, Richard III regarding his entrances, jigs and body. Nevertheless, he sees Tarlton's character – and the clown's lost power in later years in English drama – in the disempowered figure of Caliban with his deformed body (Thomson 2000, 205-6).

forthcoming subchapter, I am going to discuss Will Kemp's activity, who is regarded as a successor of Kemp not only in theatre clowning, but also as an agent of extempore performative practices. I intend to argue that, compared to Tarlton, Kemp was a slightly different improviser, since his independence is even more purposeful, intentional as well as striking.

5.3 "That Most Comical and Conceited Cavalier": Will Kemp

5.3.1 Kemp's Fame

Kemp is probably the best known solo performer of the Elizabethan age. He was often identified as a clown mostly because of the roles he played at different theatrical companies and plays.[190] Also, he is one of the characters in early modern theatre history, who stands in the full glare of publicity not only because of his ambiguous relationship to William Shakespeare, but also because of his remarkable career.[191] However, in this chapter, what I am especially interested in is his solo activities and non-theatrical performance. Among these, the most characteristic genre was his jigs and dances, and none of these lacked improvisation. I intend to show how Kemp's presentational techniques can be interpreted as subversive ways to act against controlled social behaviour. But before that, I find it important to discuss his public image and his persona which is represented by his written works and the available theatrical references.

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[190] For a comprehensive study of Kemp's theatrical roles, see Wiles 1987, 73-83 and 99-136 and Mann 1991, 54-73.

[191] The most significant work which studies Kemp's artistry is Wiles 1987. As for the Hungarian elaboration of the topic, see *William Kemp: A Comic Start in Shakespeare's England* (Phd dissertation, Eötvös Lóránd University, 2011) by Krisztina N. Streitman, which provides a cultural-historical-biographical approach.

As for his lifetime career, his reputation as a clown was established in London by the 1590s. He was a member of Strange's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's Men. His roles included Peter in *Romeo and Juliet* and Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*.[192] After leaving the Globe in dubious circumstances in about 1599, he danced his celebrated jig from London to Norwich. He was touring in Germany and Italy, and back to England he is known to have joined Worcester's Men. According to Nungezer, he is not traceable after the end of Elizabeth's reign (Nungezer 1929, 220), however, a recent article of Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that he was alive and performing in 1610 (Duncan-Jones 2010).[193]

He was commonly held as the successor of Dick Tarlton, at least according to the author (probably Thomas Nashe) of *An Almond for a Parrot* (1590), who dedicates his writing to "that most comical and conceited cavalier, Monsieur du Kempe, jest-monger and vicegerent general to the ghost of Dick Tarleton".[194] Thomas Heywood in his *An Apology for Actors* also mentions that Kemp succeeded Tarlton "as wel in the favour of her majesty, as in the opinion and good thoughts of the generall audience" (Heywood [1612] 1841, 43). With these allusions, Kemp's jester identity is emphasised, so beside the fact that he was an independent performer, he takes the role of the subservient fool, which is – as we saw it in Tarlton's case – fitting for opposing and criticising the power systems. What is more, Nashe's work emphasises Kemp's Italian connections too, when it recalls an encounter with a "famous francratrip', Harlequin", who is enquiring if the author knows "Signior Chiarlatano Kempino" in London.

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[192] Wiles also argues that Kemp played Falstaff (Wiles 1987, 100), however, it is opposed by Martin Butler, since, as he says, it is a much more developed part, and its age, size and character does not fit Kemp's skills and abilities (Butler 2004b).

[193] For an extended biography of Kemp, see Nungezer 1929, 216-22, Butler 2004b and Wiles 1987, 24-43.

[194] A modern-spelling edition of *An Almond for a Parrot* is available at The Oxford Authorship Site (http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/Marprelate/Almond_Parrot.pdf, accessed 3 December, 2012). All my references are from this edition.

Kemp's connections to commedia dell' arte histrionics have already been discussed in the chapter on extemporisation, when I referred to John Day's *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607), in which he has a battle of improvisation with an Italian Harlequin. Nevertheless, it is not only the acting which might bear resemblances, but also Kemp's image and persona can be compared to that of Italian performers'. His stage presence and civic identity are often mingled. As Paul C. Castagno writes with reference to Tristano Martinelli , Kemp is also a *comico* who carries his stage *persona* into ordinary life, "a stratagem devised to set himself apart from his companions as a special presence" (Castagno 1994, 79). As several examples show, Kemp was often mentioned in plays by his civic name, what is more, Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that he might have played himself in Day's play (Duncan-Jones 2010). If so, it could have been a special theatrical moment, when Kemp's stage persona was displayed, and when he himself could thematise and represent his improvisational talent.

Kemp was pronouncedly not a jester to a royalty (although in his *Nine Daies Wonder*, there are hints that he played upon this characteristic feature as well), but, as Wiles also emphasises, his image was rather a descendant/a combination of the Lord of Misrule and the medieval Vice (Wiles 1987, 26-8). As his depiction on the title page of *Nine Daies Wonder* shows, he was dressed as a plain morris dancer, but other designations (for instance, he calls himself "Caualiero Kemp" in his pamphlet) (3), as well as the previously cited dedication by Nashe, inform us about his "lordly" identity.[195] From this perspective, thus, Kemp can be interpreted as a ritualistic figure, and the fitting characteristic features of the Lord of Misrule and the Vice also refer to his rebellious manners not only on stage, but also in society.

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[195] In my dissertation, I use the 1840 edition of *Nine Daies Wonder* edited by Alexander Dyce (London, Printed for the Camden Society, 1840). All parenthesised page numbers are from this edition.

Although Kemp, in his most successful years, was not poor at all – we know that he was a shareholder of the Globe theatre – his pronounced nobility might be a reference to the carnivalesque topsy-turvydom in the clown's identity, and as such, simply the mockery of gentlemanlike manners. The fact, yet, that Nashe calls him "Chiarlatano" might hint at the fact that Kemp's image as a comedian – as I have pointed out before – was comparable to commedia dell' arte players in the sense that he never stepped out of character, and his main playground was the street where he offered his jigs and dances. "Charlatanry" refers to the unfavourable judgement of comic players, and also to the tricky and sensationally entertaining manners of clowns/vices/comedians.[196]

Kemp as a "charlatan" can also be viewed as a performer in the theoretical framework of performance studies as well as the medium of collective memory according to Jan Assmann. As Assmann says, the mediums of cultural memory are shamans, bards, priests, artists, scientists and scriveners, who are in a special position and rise above everyday existence (Assmann 1999, 54). Remembrance is often realized in forms of rituals, feats and celebrations, where memories take the shape of songs, texts, dances and images. During these occasions, the collective identity of the community is formed (Ibid., 53). I will show that Kemp's nine-day morris

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[196] This is excellently portrayed in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, when in Act II, Scene 2, the main character is disguised as Scoto of Mantua the famous juggler and magician. As Peregrine says, "They are quacksalvers, / Fellows that live by venting oils and drugs?" (II. 2. 5-6). Moreover,

"As I have heard they are most lewd impostors;
Made all of terms and shreds; no less beliers
Of great men's favors, than their own vile medicines;
Which they will utter upon monstrous oaths,
Selling that drug for two-pence, ere they part,
Which they have valued at twelve crowns before" (II. 2. 14-19).

Volpone as Scoto of Mantua in this episode represents the materialistic, bawdy, fallacious and charlatanic side of acting. The quotations from *Volpone* are from *Ben Jonson's Plays and Masques*, selected and edited by Richard Harap (Norton Critical Edition, 2001).

dance can be approached as an extempore communal performance, which evokes and displays resistance in many respects.

As for his outward appearance, Kemp, with the contrast in his huge physique and his skilfulness as a dancer, could have been an odd sight. While Tarlton was said to be a squinter, Kemp was not only big, but – as far as he writes of himself – a "stammerer" (1). Characterising himself as a stutterer might refer to the fact that he was more a physical actor than a fine orator. This is also supported by the linguistic abilities of some of the roles he played: Bottom is a fake rhetorician and tragedian, Dogberry is notorious for his malapropisms. At the same time, chaotic speech can be a feature of carnivalistic language described by Mikhail Bakhtin. As Bakhtin writes, "the familiar language of the marketplace became a reservoir in which various speech patterns excluded from official intercourse could freely accumulate" (Bakhtin 1984, 17). This discourse included bawdy speech, parodies of Latin dialogues, debates, prayers, council degrees, etc., so it was a manifestation of resistance to official, governmental, administrative and professional language. Nonetheless, Kemp describes himself a "stammerer" in the inscription of his *Nine Daies Wonder* (I will analyse the dedication later in more details), so it is also possible that this pretended modesty was a component of his irony.

Kemp is often seen as a liminal character, not only because of his transitional status between theatre and marketplace acting or his image as the Lord of Misrule in his *Nine Daies Wonder*, but also because his solo performance is characterised by the combination of writing and performance. This applies to his jigs – several of which have been published by 1595 – as well as his dramatic roles. The gist of the jig could have been its performance, since it was a combination of dance, music and verse, however, its publication could only settle the text. As for Kemp's roles, as I have mentioned before, characters such as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream could have let him improvise, so Shakespeare's – even though mocking – criticism concerning clowns in *Hamlet* (III. 2. 42-50) could have been a reference to him.

At the same time, it seems that Kemp was not only a (theatre) historical figure at the age, but he was often a character in plays, and we use these references to prove his persona, his attitude and his acting qualities. In other words, Kemp is an actor and a *dramatis persona* at the same time, and our knowledge concerning his performance is descending from this complex picture. His contribution in *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day – in which he plays an extemporising battle with an Italian Harlequin – has already been discussed earlier. The other well-known reference is *The Return from Parnassus; Or, The Scourge of Simony* (1606), in which Kemp, in the company of Richard Burbage, instructs two students how to act.[197] Beside the fact that this scene might remind us of a parody of how Roscius and Andronicus instructed Cicero and Demosthenes to develop inward passion (Figure 12), it is a rare scene to see a comedian and a tragic actor to agree to such a great extent.

In the play, after Kemp's morris and tours abroad are referred to – Studioso welcomes Kemp "from dancing the morrice ouer the Alpes" and asks "how doth the Emperour of Germany" (59) – both Kemp and Burbage start to teach characterisation to the students. Burbage explains Hieronimo to Studioso, while Kemp's task is to instruct Philomusus how to play a "foolish Mayre or a foolish iustice of peace" (Ibid.). These denominations show that Kemp's, the actor's interpretation of such authoritative characters is necessarily ridiculing, and so is his attitude towards the student he ought to educate: "[...] is it not better to make a foole of the world as I haue done,

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[197] As for *The Return from Parnassus*, I use the 1895 edition by Edward Arber: *The Return from Parnassus or The Scourge of Simony*. Publicly acted by the Students of Saint John's College in Cambridge [In] January 1602. Printed] 1606. (published by Archibald Constable and Co.). All parenthesised page numbers are from this edition.

then to be fooled as you schollers are?" (Ibid.). So Kemp, the universal clown is superior in performance to those who in is a higher social position that him.

At the same time, this sentence informs us that Kemp prevails over those whom he mocks, that is, he does not assume common fate with those who are ridiculed. This might show the player's power over scholars, which is remarkable, especially with regard to the fact that acting – even if defenders of theatre, like Thomas Heywood, steadily proposed – could have never become as highly respected and elevated as academic knowledge or oratory. On the other hand, since that play itself is a parodistic allegory of academic life and scholarly development, it can also be connected to the carnivalesque subversion of official (university) discourse mentioned above.

Concerning Kemp's writings – not only his morris pamphlet, but also his jigs – it is a relevant issue whether these were written documentation of live performative events, or fictional narratives.[198] Most analyses approach them as texts (or at least "textualised performances").[199] It is no wonder, since the written documentation cannot really preserve the performative components, so what we can in fact concentrate on is the written form. For my argumentation, the crucial element is extempore behaviour which can be detected in Kemp's texts, and its extensive meanings.

5.3.2 "Against all lying Ballad-makers": *Nine Daies Wonder*

After leaving the Chamberlain's Men, Kemp's most significant project was his nine-day-morris from London to Norwich. The actual trip could have taken about four weeks, but the pamphlet published to commemorate it refers to nine days only. The published version undeniably has financial as

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[198] For an extended discussion of Kemp's jigs, see Wiles 1987, 43-60. For a thorough analysis of the genre of jig and its relations to stage clowning, see the unique monograph *The Elizabethan Jig* by C. R. Baskerwill (New York, 1965).

well as promotional purposes. Kemp definitely recognised the importance of print, by which he could keep the tracts of his exceptional dances and performative actions.

He dedicates his pamphlet to Anne Fitton, "Mayde of Honour to the most sacred Mayde, Royall Queen Elizabeth" (1), which might show his commitment to nobility. However, as David Wiles argues, Kemp's dedication is an intentional error, since Anne Fitton was never a Maid of Honour to the queen, thus, what Kemp wanted to emphasise was his liberty from courtly success (Wiles 1987, 28-9). Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that Kemp confused Anne with her sister, Mary, who was a Maid of Honour indeed, and the dedication applied an appeal to the queen herself, who is actually mentioned in the pamphlet (Duncan-Jones 2010):

> M. Weild the mayor gaue me 40.s. yeerely during my life, making me a free man of the marchant venterers, this is the substance of al my iourney; therfore let no man beleeue how euer before by lying ballets and rumors they haue bin abused, y^t either waies were laid open for me, or that I deliuered gifts to her Maiesty. Its good being merry my masters, but in a meane, and al my mirths, (meane though they be) haue bin and euer shal be imploi'd to the delight of my royal Mistris: whose sacred name ought not to be remebred among such ribald rimes as these late thin-breecht lying Balletsingers haue proclaimed it (18-19).

Whichever interpretation is valid, the gesture itself justifies that Kemp (mockingly) adopted himself to the manners of a court jester in an

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[199] See, for instance Palmer 1991, 33-47.

interesting way. What is more, he wants to prove his honour and commitment with an exceedingly plebeian form of entertainment.

He also says that he is writing the pamphlet against "euery Ballad-singer" who "proclaime[s] me bankrupt of honesty" (1). Those "lying Ballad-makers" are mentioned many times in the text, with special emphasis in the closure, where the narrator asks them not to "fill the country with lyes of his neuer done actes" (20). Since the morris happened after Kemp left the Chamberlain's Men, there are many conjectures that the player's enemies – whom he calls "Shakerags" – could have been people from his previous theatre company, and the lies concerned the reasons why he left the troupe.[200] All in all, the narrator in the pamphlet speaks against "jigmongers" and their gossip and rumour, which is weird, since Kemp's artistry cannot be characterised by factualness either. I have already mentioned that in *An Almond for a Parrot*, he is described as a "jest-monger", so it seems that Kemp wants to defend himself from improvisers like himself. What is more, hearsays and anecdotes mean fame and reputation for celebrities ever since, so Kemp's outcry could have been ironic and exhibitionist. This is much more typical of a comedian who demands attention, so the polite, respectful tone of the text is quite surprising.

If we look at the pamphlet from a theatre historical perspective, it becomes clear that the text can hardly be a written documentation of a performance *per se*. It rather collects anecdotes and stories related to Kemp's dance, so it works as a kind of cultural memorization, which might contain more myths than facts. The pamphlet preserves the morris dancer's ritual action in a written form; that is it represents a compound of ritual and textual coherence (which are Jan Assmann's terms). This is not unusual in

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[200] Another reference which might ironically refer to Shakespeare's theatre is the following: "I met a proper vpright youth, onely for a little stooping in the shoulders, all hart to the heele, a penny Poet, whose first making was the miserable stolne story of Macdoel, or Macdobeth, or Macsomewhat: for I am sure a Mac it was, though I neuer had the maw to see it" (21).

the early modern period – as I have referred to it before – since in the Renaissance, beside the fact that written culture was emerging and developing, oral traditions were still prevalent. Jests, jigs, ballads and other genres I have mentioned in Chapter 5.1 were liminal in the sense that beside their written form, their performance component is extremely important.

Nevertheless, Kemp's pamphlet cannot be simply regarded as the transcription of his morris dance. As he writes on the title-page, "wherein is set downe worth note; to reprooue the slaunders spred of him", so on the one hand, he admits that he did not write down everything, on the other hand, the aim was not to record his morris, but to defend his reputation. *Nine Daies Wonder*, thus, – similarly to *Tarlton's Jests* – functions more like a marketing tool for Kemp than real theatrical documentation.[201] Besides, it is possible to interpret the whole act (dance and writing) as a complete process of performance, in which Kemp's inseparable self (or with Wade Soule's term, persona) is the performer. Improvisation can be detected in the fact that not everything is set down, so many more performative actions could have happened in real. Also, the language of the text is closer to the vernacular than to the literary register.

On the basis of the idea that it is not only the morris, but also the whole text that constitutes the performance itself, it is not difficult to agree with Daryl W. Palmer, who analyses *Nine Daies Wonder* as a "confrontation between textual practice and performance culture" (Palmer 1991, 37).[202] The pamphlet addresses partly the ennobled lady, Anne Fitton, but later Kemp speaks to his readers/his audience, and thus gives a hint of topicality in the

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[201] For the unreliability and problematic nature of theatrical documents (especially biographies, autobiographies and rumours) see Chapter 2.1.1.

[202] Palmer occasionally refers to Michael D. Bristol's discussion on Kemp's text, who understands it as if it was representing the "relationship between a planned performance and an unplanned social drama" (Bristol 1985, 143). With this approach, both Palmer and Bristol sees Kemp's dance as a performance (in Palmer's words, "performance art" and as Bristol says, "social drama"), what is more, they both acknowledge it as an everyday-life event that

recollection of the events. The past tense of narrative prose and the present tense of drama are mingled here, and the split personality of the storyteller is also continuously transposed: he is alternatively a narrator and a performer. Also, he mixes prose and verse.

> [...] lightly I tript forward; but I had the heauiest way that euer mad Morrice-dancer trod; yet
>
> > With hey and ho, through thicke and thin,
> >
> > The hobby horse quite forgotten,
> >
> > I follow'd, as I did begin,
> >
> > Although the way were rotten (8).

These rhymes might remind us of the language of Kemp's jigs, and may suggest that while dancing, he was also singing. Both these songs/ballads and farce jigs were to a great extent improvisational. At the same time, while reading the pamphlet, the reader realises that it is not the concrete performative events which are recorded, but the surrounding anecdotes and stories. So it is not only because of its commercial purpose that the text cannot function as an authentic theatre historical source, but also because of its shifting of stresses. The narrator only intends to emphasise those events which are crucial from the point of view of his good reputation.

As for the performance side of the event, it is a fact that on the one hand, Kemp's performance is not linked to one single locus, it is a wandering event. One can clearly see that Kemp's dance actually creates a palpable theatre sphere wherever it goes; it transforms streets, markets and towns into

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is a play which does not consider the difference between (literal) stage and non-stage or players and spectators.

stages.[203] On the other hand, it involves the audience into action: it is not only Kemp, who entertains people, but vice versa. In Stratford, for instance,

> Many good fellows being there met, and knowing how well I loued the sporte, had prepared a Beare-bayting; but so unreasonable were the multitudes of people, that I could only heare the Beare roare and the dogges howle [...] (4).

Also, from time to time, spectators join Kemp in his morris. At Chelmsford, a maid accompanies him for an hour ("a whole hour she held out") (7). In Sudbury, a lusty, tall butcher and a country lass do the same (9).[204] Dance is mentioned in performance theories in relation to "restored behaviour" (an equivalent term of performance), that is the way how individuals experience their own social existence. According to Richard Schechner, the most essential purpose of all artistic and ritual activities is that the individual could experience and interpret his/her own position in culture and society (Schechner 1985, 35). The fact that comic actors could have manifested this intention might be verified by their iconographic depictions: even if Robert Armin's motions are calm and slow, all of them are represented while dancing (Figures 7, 8, 9).

What is the most crucial concern from my point of view is that Kemp's performance can be interpreted as a subversive activity in the sense that anti-theatricalists were thinking about theatre and actors. I already quoted Philip Stubbes' *The Anatomy of Abuses* – with regard to the election of the Lord of Misrule – earlier: "Thus all things set in order, then have their Hobby horses, their Dragons and other Antiques, togither with their baudie

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[203] For more about the relationship of performance and spaces (especially the city), see Bennett 2008, 76-91 and Müller 2005, 117-129.

[204] Kemp calls the girl his "Maydemarian", which suggests that he identifies himself with Robin Hood. For an extended discussion of the relationship between Robin Hood and morris dance, see *The Early Plays of Robin Hood* by David Wiles (Cambridge, 1981).

Pipes, and thundering Drummers, to strike up the Deuils Daunce withal"
(P2). He also mentions the striking clothes of the dancers, and he compares
them to madmen.

The announced timing of Kemp's morris can also be characteristic
from this respect, since he chose to do his dance during Lent, which is
definitely not a habitual time for the morris (Wiles 1987, 28). Deciding on
Lent – which is the festive season just before (and opposed to) Carnival – is a
deliberate incongruity with traditions. Kemp, moreover, attracted viewers
into his action, just like some early modern Pied Piper. Distracting people
from their jobs and everyday duties was a common accusation against players
by the attackers of theatre. Kemp, who involves people in his dance
wherever he goes, does it in a way that he seems to remain modest and
harmless, a "poore seruant" (19).

This picture is also strengthened by the scene when he refuses to
drink on the first day.

> [H]ow euer, many a thousand brought me to Bow; where I
> rested a while from dancing, but had small rest with those that
> would haue vrg'd me to drinking. *But, I warrant you, Will*
> *Kemp was wise enough: to their ful cups, kinde thanks was my*
> *returne, with Gentlemanlike protestations, as "Truely sir, I*
> *dare not," "It stands not with the congruity of my health."*
> *Congruitie, said I? how came that strange language in my*
> *mouth? I thinke scarcely that it is any Christen worde, and yet*
> *it may be a good worde for ought I know, though I neuer made*
> *it, nor doe verye well understand it; yet I am sure I have*
> *bought it at the word-mongers at as deare a rate as I could*
> *haue had a whole 100 of Bauines at the wood-mongers.*
> Farwell Congruitie for I meane now to be more concise, and

> stand upon eeuener bases; but I must neither stand or sit, the
> Tabrer strikes alarum (4, emphases mine).

This comic argument exemplifies the comedian's infamous friendship with alcohol as a crucial part of his image, and although Kemp rejects the cup, he immediately makes his own decision relative. Using the word "congruitie", which is a "Christen worde" and strange to his mouth (as he expresses with a pair of rhetoric questions) might also involve the mocking criticism of puritan manners. Nevertheless, by comparing Christian words to goods that one can buy at "word-mongers", he points out that both words and the Christian way of thinking (or ideology) are commodities – just like theatre and performance, from a certain perspective.

 The behaviour of those people who take part in Kemp's morris can be interpreted as a form of improvisation, since they participate in something, which is completely alien to their everyday controlled behaviour. This is mockingly portrayed in a scene on the eighth day, when the host of the Rockland inn salutes Kemp:

> On Munday morning I daunst to Rockland ere I rested, and comming to my Inne, where the Hoast was a very boone companion, I desir'd to see him; but in no case he would be spoken with, till he had shifted himselfe from his working dayes sute. Being armed at all poyntes, from the cap to the codpeece, his blacke shooes shining and made straght with copper buckles of the best, his garters in the fashion, and euery garment fitting Corremsquandam (to use his owne word): hee enters the Hall with his bonnet in his hand, began to crye out: "O Kemp deere Master Kemp! you are euen as – as – as," and so stammering, he began to study for a fit comparison, and I

> thanke him at last he fitted me; for saith he, "thou art euen as
> welcome as the Queenes best grey-hound" (12-13).

So, after the innkeeper finished his daily schedule, he changed his clothes and greeted "the Queenes best grey-hound" in the appropriate outfit, and he was so excited that he could not express his thoughts. This is certainly an ironic episode, since the job of an inn's host can hardly be considered as a decent profession. Similarly, Kemp's (and other comic actors') relationship to the queen is ambiguous: although comedians showed a preference for taking the court jester's part, they also functioned as the critics and the satiric commentators of the social system.

Nevertheless, being a dancer and a street entertainer, Kemp's position was similar to that of early modern mountebanks in Italy (as I mentioned before, being entitled a "Chiarlatano" might affirm this idea), whose oral performances were completely incontrollable by the authorities, but very popular among people. These performative events combined commercial and medical activities, and quacks were often considered to have supernatural power over illnesses and death.[205] The curing power of their theatre and the medicine they sold can be connected, and the same healing and liberating effect can be attributed to laughter as well.[206] As I have shown the examples in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593/94) and *The Antipodes* (1640), theatre can be used for curing peoples' (mental) problems. Similarly, it is possible to understand solo performers as if they were the healers of society. "Resistance", which I consider the major function of improvisation, might be analogous to this, since it also helps people surmounting the obstacles and overcoming the difficulties and restrictions provided by social

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[205] This is very convincingly elaborated in M. A. Katritzky's book on early modern female mountebanks in Italy. For more details, see Katritzky 2007.

[206] Concerning laughter, this is the standing-point of carnival theories. As for the curing effect of plays, both in *The Antipodes* (1640) discussed previously and in the Induction to the *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593/94), theatre is used for healing a character.

engagements.[207] Thus, in Kemp's activity, dance, wandering and humour are analogous in the sense that they are all improvisatory devices by which he can demonstrate opposition. He acts, for instance, against official theatre, "ballad-Makers", the supremacy of words (in performance), and he offers his audience a more liberated outlook upon life.

In *Nine Daies Wonder*, mirth is detected in many episodes; the most characteristic one is maybe the encounter with the country lass in Sudbury I referred to it earlier. As Kemp writes, "I lookt vpon her, saw mirth in her eies, heard boldnes in her words, and beheld her ready to tucke vp her russet petticoat; I fitted her with bels: which [s]he merrily taking, garnisht her thicke short legs, and with a smooth brow bad the Tabrer begin" (9-10). They dance together, the girl "shooke her fat sides" to the audience's great delight, which Kemp records in a verse. This random couple – Kemp, who was stout and the lady, who was roundish – could have been an amusing sight in a frisky morris.

So on the one hand, Kemp's morris is a special individual performance, and even if its promotional aim is explicit and deliberate, its tools and implementation are improvisational. The performer – although he politely dedicates his pamphlet to an ennobled lady, and counts on the queen's benevolence too – is independent of the authorities and the traditions; his only interest is to involve and to motivate his audience. He continuously speaks against the "lying Ballad-makers" and their slanders spread of him, and it seems that he intends to have total control over his own reputation; that is why he dances rebelliously against these falsities, which

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[207] De Certeau in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) describes walking in the city as an act of resistance by which "individuals use their bodies and not their minds to resist the discipline and *habitus* imposed by social space, thereby cultivating a subjectivity that allows them to autonomously interpret the environment around them" (Kosnoski 2010, 115). The city, as he argues, is a strict structure in the sense that it is generated by instituties and authorities, and provides established paths of walking. The individual, however, has the opportunity to chose tactical and non-determined routes (e.g., shortcuts and bypasses) by which he shows a critical attitude to the system.

the reader does not have much information about. His whole presence and performance can be interpreted as a counterpoint, an "other", since he always exists and acts as an antagonist. Understanding all this within the context that Kemp performed his morris after he was dropped from the Globe might even more reinforce Kemp's image as being an outsider.

Additionally, Kemp's player identity cannot be clearly separated from his civilian self. What is more, the same applies to all the other participants of the dance, who also become performers at the moment they meet Kemp. It is not the street, the towns or the marketplaces which provide location for the performance, but it is the performative act, which transforms all fields into a "stage".

On the other hand, as I mentioned before, the text comprehends several registers: the narrator speaks to Anne Fitton, to the readers or to his enemies (the "Shakerags") in a different way. These alternations are not consistent, but improvisational, because of which it is not only the morris, but also its textualisation can be considered as an extempore act.

5.4 "He Proves a Motley": Robert Armin

5.4.1 Armin's Stage Identities

Compared to his predecessors in professional theatrical life, Robert Armin is considered to be a literate clown and a dramatist. He is generally held to be an author, who successfully mixed his clownery with his literary skills, wrote plays and verbalised his improvisations and quips. His literary works include *The Italian Taylor and his Boy* (1609), the translation of the Italian fantasy poem, and two plays, *The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609) and *The Valiant Welshman* (1615). In this way, since it is possible to define him as an author, we might suspect that he negotiates real theatrical improvisation,

because it is contradictory to authorial power. However, most of his written works thematise clowning and foolery, often in a speculative method. Concerning this, Armin is often interpreted as a more sophisticated successor to Will Kemp, since, compared to Kemp's rebellious stage behaviour, Armin seemed an ideal company clown and a theoretician. According to Nungezer, he joined Shakespeare's company around 1599 at the Curtain, and joined them at the Globe as well (Nungezer 1929, 17).[208] In *Tarlton's Jests*, we find reference about how he became the "adopted sonne" to Tarlton. According to this story, however, the basis for sympathy did not involve physical performance, but Tarlton read Armin's verse – written about an insolvent customer of his master, the goldsmith – on a wainscot:

> O world, why wilt thou lye?
>
> Is this Charles the great! that I deny.
>
> Indeed Charles the great before,
>
> But now Charles the lesse, being poore (22).

Tarlton answered this rhyme with his own, and symbolically adopted Armin so that he could "enjoy [his] clownes sute after [him]" (23). This episode suggests that the two players were in strong collegial relationship as for their verbal extempore abilities, while – even is in Nashe's *An Almond for a Parrot*, he was mentioned as Tarlton's successor – Kemp was an outcast, a dancer who could not affirm his boundaries to any theatrical companies for a longer while.

Moreover, the scene can also be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural memory. It is very characteristic that, while in the anonymous *Tarlton's Jests*, the memory of Tarlton and his extempore attitude is preserved primarily by the jests ("ritual coherence"), and secondly by the

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[208] Besides Nungezer's summary, as for Armin's biography, my main reference is Martin

collection of the stories (by means of "textual coherence"), Armin – in the quip "Wher's Tarleton" (which I am going to particularize later) – records Tarlton's comic presence with the determined purpose of perpetuating and transmitting his traditions. We can see that there is continuity between Tarlton's and Armin's work with regard to their improvisatory skills and the aim of committing these skills to people's memory.

Although Armin was an acknowledged author of plays as well, what I am interested in are those performances that do not strictly connect him to theatre, and do not require verbatim role play or characterisation. As I have already mentioned, it seems to be explicit that Armin, whatever he did, was mostly interested in the nature of foolery, which necessarily involves improvisation.[209] His most characteristic work in this respect is *Foole upon Foole* (1600, 1605) or *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608).[210] The latter one is a new, revised edition of the first version, in which – according to J. P. Feather – the theory of folly is more explicit and quasi more philosophical than in *Foole upon Foole*, where this content is hidden in the narratives.[211] Basically, these works belong to the canon of European fool literature, where the unifying theme is that the fool – such as Erasmus' extemporising Folly, as I have shown – can be wiser than the wise man.[212] Armin makes a distinction

Butler's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Butler 2004a).

[209] One of his plays is *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609), in which he played John, the natural fool, while the other main character is Tutch, the artificial domestic fool. The title page shows the well-known image of Armin, which I have discussed in Chapter 3.1.2 (Figure 9).

[210] I have consulted two editions of *Foole upon Foole/A Nest of Ninnies*. These are the Lippincott edition (Salzburg, 1973) and the John Payne Collier edition (London, 1842). The changes of the three existing quartos are summarised in the Lippincott edition (Lippincott 1973, 36).

[211] All biographical and editorial information concerning Armin's works is convincingly collected in the introductory sections to each text in the facsimile edition by J. P. Feather: *The Collected Works of Robert Armin* (Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972).

[212] The term fool literature refers to a collection of satirical essays in the early modern period in Europe. These texts thematise the different archetypes of fools, jesters and vices, and they aim at criticising the awkwardness and absurdity of contemporary society. The best known pieces are Erasmus' *Encomicum Moriae* (*In Praise of Folly*, 1509) and Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff* (*A Ship of Fools*, 1494). The first work was available in English from the

between natural and artificial fools, where the latter one could be a reference to comic artistry.

> Naturall fooles are prone to selfe conceipt:
>
> Fooles artificiall, with their wits lay wayte
>
> To make themselues fooles, liking the disguise,
>
> To feede their owne minds, and the gazers eyes (12).[213]

In this paragraph, it is very interesting to see that "artificial" foolery is defined as a witty performance in front of an audience, while natural foolery is an unsophisticated condition. However, as we found in Erasmus' work, Folly does not disguise himself, it does not pretend or counterfeit, and its manners are "ex tempore" (5, 6-7). Thus, natural and artificial foolery might not be that distant of each other as Armin suggests.

This multiple personality of natural and artificial fools seems to be a recurrent topic in Armin's ouvre. In his *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke*, it is probable that he played both "John in the Hospitall", the natural fool – a well-known contemporary figure in London – and Tutch, the witty fool. John's simple sentences and phrases and Tutch's clever reposts can be distinguished clearly throughout the play, however, the double identity of Armin fuses at the end of the story, when Tutch, imitating his sentences too, is disguised as John.[214] It shows, on the one hand, that artificial

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middle of the 16th century, while *Narrenschiff* was adapted into English in 1509 by Alexander Barclay (*The Shyp of Folys of the Worlde*). Erasmus' piece is usually said to be a humorous academic writing focusing on the joy of foolery, *A Ship of Fools* – in which Narragonia or the fools' land is a symbol of human society – is a universal bitter criticism of contemporary moral states.

[213] As for *A Nest of Ninnies*, all the parenthesised page numbers refer to the John Payne Collier edition (1842).

[214] When, in the play, Tutch, the clown first appears, he starts with wordplays, which remind us Shakespeare's witty clowns or even Tarlton's or Armin's verses. "Ill tutch the tippes of their tongues, & their tongues tippes, ile bafte their bellies and their lippes til we haue ierk't the cat with our three whippes" (A2v). However, John typically gives short, repetitive, nonsensical answers.

fools, that is comedians could have used the characteristics of the imbecile for artistic/performative purposes. On the other hand, representing John and Tutch in unity might represent the fact that the two types of foolery are not far from each other, both can be interpreted as performance.

In the sense that he was a player, Armin was, of course, considered to be an "artificial" fool. Nevertheless, his assumed physicality could have been used as part of his stage persona too; while Tarlton had a flat nose and Kemp was huge, Armin is said to be small (Wiles 1987, 148). His bodily features, thus, could have been among the reasons why he got and wrote himself these kinds of comic roles where physical humour could have been applied as well.[215] All in all, the character of Armin holds the characteristics of both natural and artificial fools in the sense that he was a determined and purposeful entertainer who also had those weird physical qualities as other comic players had. With John Cocke's words – from his description of the common player – "he proves a motley" both with his physique and his words. Cocke's phrase, of course, refers to Armin's – and other fools – well known apparel, too.[216]

What is also essential in relation to these works is that on the title page of *Foole upon Foole*'s both editions, the author signifies himself as "Clonnico de Curtanio Snuffe" and "Clonnocio del mondo Snuffe", and these

---

"*Boy*. Iohn Where had'ft this bread and butter?
Ioh. The crow did giue it me.
Boy. But take heede the kite take't not from thee.
Ioh. I'le choake firft.
Boy. Iohn fhal'st play at counter-hole i'th cloifter?
Ioh. I ha nere a counter.
Boy. Ile giue thee one for a point.
Ioh. Do, and I'le play hofe go downe" (C3r).
The references from *The Maides of More-clacke* are from the Alexander B. Grosart edition (*The Works of Robert Armin, Actor*, 1880).
[215] Wiles assumes that Armin was obsessed with theorising on the 'artificial fools' and 'natural fools' because according to his physicality, he belonged to the latter category (Wiles 1987, 148-9).

designations refer to Armin being a clown at the Curtain and the Globe.[217] Similarly to his play mentioned earlier, Armin's different identities merge, or, in other words, his civic, authorial self cannot be separated from his clown image. A fool contemplates about foolery, so the seriousness of the topic is dubious. Furthermore, the fact that he uses his pseudonym in publication might remind us of the Italian habit of comic actors, for instance, of Tristano "Arlecchino" Martinelli's manner.[218]

These publications and the nicknames of Armin (Snuff, Robin, Pink and all the others) might suggest that – even if he was more a stage clown than any of his predecessors – he was also playing upon the mingling of his different identities. The actor Armin and the fool characters he acted both in dramas and on the occasion of other performances cannot strictly be separated.[219] So an essential point in interpreting Armin's identity is that his different selves are merging, and he was continuously improvising on these similitudes and disparities. It is also often argued that the dramatic roles he played – Touchstone, Carlo Buffone, Feste, Lavatch, Thersites, Passarello – were written according to his characteristics, or his personality added a lot to these parts.[220]

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[216] A thorough analysis of the fool's costume can be found in the appendix of David Wiles' book. Here, Wiles compares the motley and its different variations to the references of Armin's (his roles') stage costume in Shakespeare's plays (Wiles 1987, 182-191).

[217] In the Lippincott edition, the title pages of the three editions can be compared (Lippincott 1973, 41-3).

[218] According to J. P. Feather, Armin had several pseudonyms, and one of these was Robin. This name might recall Robin Goodfellow as well as Robin Hood, which characters can both be related to early modern clownery. The authorship of *Tarltons Newes* is also attributed to Armin because of this concordance, since the narrator of this text identifies himself as Robin Goodfellow. According to Nora Johnson, this argument is unpersuasive, however, it emphasises the fact that among the contemporary comic players, Armin was the most committed to (re)produce performance in print (Johnson 2003, 27).

[219] As Johnson argues, as far as authorship is concerned, Armin is "fluid in his self-presentations", which means that his authorial position feeds on his diverse roles in plays and non-dramatic pieces as well as on his relationship to the audience and the cultural context around him (Johnson 2003, 12, 17). Yet, the ambiguity in his identity comes from the fact that he is still and individualized figure.

[220] For more details about Armin's dramatic roles, see Wiles 1987, 144-58.

As I said before, Armin is considered to be an author and a literate person more than any of his predecessors. Nora Johnson in her book *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (2003) convincingly explains how Armin's personal/performed charisma could have been appropriated to writing; and using a communal rhetoric, how he sets up a special kind of theatrical authorship, which cannot exist without relying on performance and the presence of the audience (Johnson 2003, 1-2, 17). In other words, Armin could effectively use his experience with his spectators in building up his authorial voice. Johnson's argumentation goes against the general presumptions that Armin was a non-extempore clown and a dramatist. In other words, she does not see Armin's emerging authorial consciousness in contrast to his improvisational abilities. This is also credible in light of the fact that in early modern theatre, as alluded before, the audience's unexpected reactions and interruptions were inevitable, and they had to be responded.

Accordingly, my assumption with the next subchapter is to prove that Armin, by continuously referring to the audience, intends to emphasise their importance, and that his authorship is not an individualistic position, or at least not to the extent with which he would rule the other equally crucial participants of the performance. Also, I would like to show that building upon the improvisatory traditions of his colleagues, Armin also aims at keeping, gaining and/or recollecting the control over the game, and he induces the audience to do the same.

5.4.2 "To iest at a Iester": *Quips upon Questions*

Quips upon Questions was first published in 1600 under the authorship of "Clunnico de Curtanio Snuffe". The 1605 edition signifies "Clunnico del mondo Snuffe" as its author, and as we could see previously, these

designations both referred to Robert Armin and his shifts between the theatres in London. At first sight, the quips seem to be the transcriptions of Armin's (theatrical) improvisations, and in this respect, they might remind us of Tarlton's famous jests. However, the *Quips* are verbalised to a greater extent in the sense that they follow a question and answer dramaturgy, and not primarily based on an unexpected physical situation. The reader cannot distinguish the participants in the scenes so clearly, although it is obvious that the narrator has a dialogue with others. All the verses rhyme. Moreover, the fact that the text informs us about editorial fastidiousness also proves that it is a textually comprehensive work.[221] The text includes a dedication to the readers, where the author, "Snuffe" offers "a bottel of Tower-hill water, with which hauing cleared your eye-sight, you may read with more regard" (A iijr.). Thus, quips feature verbal extemporisation, where the person of the quipper stands in focus, even if the opening question – we may suppose – is always put by the audience.

The structure of the episodes is very strict and regular: they consist of a question, an answer and a humorous conclusion at the end. They constitute a tripartite structure, and seem to represent a moral precept in a mocking way. Because of this, they might slightly remind us of Renaissance emblems, where the title, the image and the verse construct a symbolic unity.[222] In this respect, the quips may represent the caricature of emblems or emblematic

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[221] For more authorial information, see Nungezer 1929, 18. In my dissertation, I use the Frederic Ouvry edition of *Quips upon Questions*. According to both Nungezer, Ouvry, based on John Payne Collier's *Bibliographical and Critical Account of the Rarest Books in the English Language* (1865), attributes *Quips* to a certain John Singer, "comedian in the time of Shakespeare" because of an "MS. note on the first leaf" (Nungezer 1929, 18). From the perspective of my argumentation – as I have referred to it earlier – the specific issues of authorship are of minor importance, so all the parenthesised references to *Quips upon Questions* are from *Quips Upon Questions by John Singer, Comedian in the Time of Shakespeare* edited by Frederick Ouvry (London, 1875).

[222] I have referred to Alciato's *Book of Emblems* in Chapter 3.2.2. The tripartite strucutre of the emblem was introduced by him, where the unity of the *inscriptio*, the *pictura* and the *subscriptio* provided the symbolic meaning of the emblem. The single parts of the emblem cannot mediate the meaning by themselves.

thinking, which was prominently characteristic of the early modern perception of the world.[223] Although there are no pictorial representations in the text, we can assume that visibility and spectacle were the inherent components of quipping in case they were performed.

Armin's *Quips*, in my view, can also be interpreted as a piece of fool literature, just like his *A Nest of Ninnies/Foole upon Foole*, since – although particularly in a theatricalised form – it represents "A Clownes conceite" on different (general) subjects – for instance, happiness, death, glory, the devil, daily habits of people, etc. – which are appropriate for criticising the awkwardness of society. The opening scene, for example, which is entitled "WHO began to liue in the worlde?", the narrator generalises Adam's and Eve's disgraced position when saying "Was he the first? I and was thus disgrast, / better for him, that he had been the last" (Aiijv). And the quips writes, "Thou art a foole: Why? for reasoning so, / But not the first, nor last, by many mo" (Ibid.). By connecting it to the first human couple in the world, the narrator ascertains foolery as a universal phenomenon. We are all fools, and we all possess the skill of improvisation.

The reader might suspect that these funny scenes happen after the play at the theatre in a way that the clown gives a funny reply to the spectators' posing. In this sense, *Quips upon Questions* appears to be the documentation of Armin's solo theatrical performance. However, the textual edition (and my recent example) implies that it is not only the performer/narrator who speaks; there are at least two narrative voices in the text. Considering the structure of the quip, this is quite logical: there is the one who asks the question (e.g. "Who sleepes in the grasse?") and the one who answers and quips. In the theatre, this would look as a very simple interaction of two or three people, however, since in Armin's text, the different roles are not marked, we cannot plainly differentiate the speakers.

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[223] For further readings on the emblematic expressions, structures and cultural

It happens many times that there are two narrators within one sentence ("Thou art a foole: Why? for reasoning so"). When reading *Quips* carefully, one can become aware of the multiple voices and participants. So the text does not only record Armin's improvisations in a supposedly theatrical situation, but all the other speakers' reactions, too. The voices are mingled in an almost inseparable way.

Nora Johnson remarks that the partakers in the text can mingle even in the lengthy answers to the questions, and the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you' might refer to more different personalities (Johnson 2003, 30-31).[224] Or in other cases, the opening line is not a question, but an interrogation, such as "Two Fooles well met" (B2r), so the question arises if this is a sentence by the quipper or a spectator. Otherwise, in this episode, we can additionally identify Armin with one of the evoked fools (or both) when the text says,

> Seest thou this Bird (quoth he) in yonder wood?
>
> I giue thee her to rost. O wilt thou so?
>
> That meate I loue, and I will not denie her.
>
> Take her (quoth he) and if thou canst come by her,
>
> Were not these fooles, to promise what they had not?
>
> Where such want wit, t'were better their tongs gad not (B2r).

What is more, in the final quip, a third fool is mentioned too, marked with a "thou" pronoun: "Three Fooles well met, for thou shalt be the third" (Ibid.). All in all, in the written quips, it is neither easy to identify Snuff (or Armin) nor is it explicit who the other participants (voices) are. Still, this confusion is not a drawback, but it might be explained as a crucial component of the performance. It displays that the quips (both as a textual and as a

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representations in the Renaissance, see Szőnyi 2003 and Kiss 1999.

[224] Nora Johnson's example is the quip "What wisht hee?", where there seem to be more subjects to have a dialogue in the answer (C3r).

performative form) is a communal genre, where players and spectators collaborate, and the boundary between these roles is not definite.

The speech situation is complicated further if one reads the title page of *Quips*. As it says,

<div style="text-align: center;">

QUIPS

UPON QUESTIONS,

OR,

A Clownes conceite on occasion offered.

bewraying a moralised metamorphoses of changes

upon interrogatories: shewing a litle wit, with

a great deale of will; or in deed, more

desirous to please in it, then to

profite by it.

Clapt up by a Clowne of the towne in this last restraint,

hauing litle else to doe, to make a litle use of his

fickle Muse, and carelesse of carping.

By Clunnyco de Curtanio Snuffe.

Like as you list, read on and spare not,

Clownes iudge like Clownes, therefore I care not:

Or thus,

Floute me, Ile floute thee; it is my profession,

To iest at a Iester, in his transgression.[225]

</div>

On the one hand, the "Clownes conceite on occasion offered" might remind us of jests, which are also mentioned in this quoted part of the text ("[t]o iest

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[225] I have transcribed the title page of the Ouvry edition (1875).

at a Iester"). Being aware of the fact that Armin was a stage clown rather than a tavern entertainer, we might presume that the quips are intended to represent the (fictional) documentation of improvisatory stage scenes. Nevertheless, the location of the episodes is not specified, however, the reader may rather associate them with the tavern than with the theatre. Early modern comic actors certainly did not only play at the playhouses, but they also had offstage performances, and even if it was not as typical of Armin as of Tarlton and Kemp, we can regard offstage performances as a crucial part of the clown image. Moreover, taverns and inns were those spaces where comedians could meet ordinary people in a close encounter.

The last two lines of the title page extract show that "jesting" is mutual, so the addressee (the reader or the spectator at the theatre) has the same skills, opportunities or obligation as the comedian. "Flouting" is the comedian's perpetual profession and duty, and the same applies to all the other agents present. "Transgression" might either refer to sins and faults which should be criticised by jesters, or to the contravention of the roles between player and spectator.

On the other hand, the title page reveals the clown's intention, instead of making a profit, is a mocking "moralisation" upon those who interrogate with the intention of pleasing. "Shewing a litle wit" and the desire to entertain both belong to the comic performer's image, what is more, he does not only flout others, but expects others to flout him, too. Thus, mocking and being mocked are interchangeable, and they both belong to the communal game within the performing community. This reciprocity can be comparable to the multifarious narration of the text, and it also postulates that "his transgression" mentioned on the cover might be characteristic of both the actual players and viewers.[226] Quipping becomes a collective and mutual performative game, and this shows that Armin, just

like any of his predecessors needed and counted on the co-operation of the audience.

The title page is followed by the first dedicatory epistle to "The Right Worthy Sir Timothie Trunchion: *Alias* Bastinado" (A ijr). Here, the narrator renders thanks to his cudgel for his "kind companie" and for his protection. Also, he utters his worries about the "envious tongues, whose teeth are blacke with rancor of their spight", which is a similar ironic anxiety about negative criticism that we have seen in Kemp's case, when he mentions the lying ballad-makers. The speaker's only hope is that either his "simplicitie of loue" or the truncheon's "crueltie in cudgeling" that can guard him. The performer affected modesty is opposed to the ruthlessness of his 'partner'.

From the stage clown's perspective, it may not be surprising at all that the comic actor speaks to and performs with his truncheon, nonetheless, it brings him closer to a juggler or a buffoon than to a stage actor. The jester's bauble was an essential tool for court entertainers (as well as the traditional *marotte*, the fool's head on a stick), and on this stage, it is a symbol of control and discipline against "ribald mockes" or the reluctant readers. As we can read it in the second epistle, "To the Reader":

> I am tedious, my request is; Vse thy disgression, or thy discression. He that must of force endure, is willing of force to be patient: but if your patience willingly endure vnforst, I shalbe the more beholding to you: otherwise, let Sir *Timothie* reuenge it, (and so a thousand times making legges, I goe still backward, till I am out of fight, hoping then to be out of minde :) [...] (A iijr).

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[226] For the interpretation of the title page by Nora Johnson, who is concerned about the issues of authorship, see Johnson 2003, 31-2.

If readers and beholders do not treat the quipper kindly, he will get physical retorsion by his tool at hand, his truncheon. Impersonating the cudgel and mockingly menacing with it can refer to the fact that Armin disliked the unexpected interaction of the audience. It might also represent a sense of physical theatre, where bodily gestures are more important (or at least, as important as) than speech. At the same time, the truncheon suggests that Armin is not as far from the image of the rustic clown as we might think. In his performance, the crabstick stands for rustic, bawdy and rough humour, while he takes the witty clown's part. As such, his extempore quipping could not have been rendered independent from earlier (corporeal) clown traditions, and also, even if his work can be interpreted along the more philosophical wise fool literature, in practice, he could have been a genuine entertainer in league with the audience as well.

In the episode entitled "Wher's Tarleton?", the narrators says "Tarletons name is here, though he be gone" and "His Body's dead, few Clownes will haue his wit" (E3r). Armin himself is expressly one of these few clowns. It is not only him who refers to this master-apprentice relationship, but it is also mentioned in *Tarlton's Jests*.[227] The quip at the end looks as if it was a self-address:

> Though he be dead, dispaire not of thy wisdome,
> What wit thou hast not yet, in time may come:
> But thus we see, two Dogges striue for a bone,
> Bout him that had wit, till them selues haue none
> (E3v).

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[227] For the occurrence of Armin in *Tarlton's Jest*, see Chapter 5.2.2. As we can see from the various cross-references in the writings of early comic actor, even is their images and performances are slightly different, they originate from similar traditions.

These lines do not only show respect towards Tarlton, but also connect clownery/foolery to wisdom.

Simplicity and irrationality – obviously characteristic of plain stage entertainers – can be detected in the "Incouragement to the Booke", where it says: "Some fooles make Rules, for the wise to flout at" and declares that "fooles haues tooles sharpe in season, / To vvound and confound vvithout reason" (A iijv). In other words, the fools are those who create laws in the world, which witty comedians ridicule. This paradox confusion of wisdom and foolery represents the carnivalesque logic also detectable in early modern fool literature. Moreover, lacking reason might be a feature of extempore performance, or at least it belongs to the clown's image. Even if the performance is extempore, Armin's considered and structured writing is not unreasoned at all. Nevertheless, the text exists in a liminal status between the territories of performance and book. It works as a co-operative/communal performance itself; Schechner's and others' quasi-definitions would definitely include such a phenomenon.[228] The narrator often addresses the readers directly, not only in the opening epistle, but also in the last quip ("He begins well, but endes ill"). Here, he says:

> All is much to say, the Author feares,
>
> The Reader vowes to haue him by the eares:
>
> Because beginning well, and ending ill,
>
> Shewes haughtie thoughts, using but little skill.
>
> How ere it happens, my good will is such,
>
> As what I doe, I doe not thinke too much (H1r).

This epilogue-like closure represents reason disguised as unreason again, but at this time, from the author's perspective. Beside the mocking topsy-turvy

finale ("begins well, but endes ill"), these last lines strengthen the confusion regarding authority again, and although senselessness is emphasised, the structure and the conceptualisation of the text are obvious.

Regarding that *Quips upon Questions* is on the edge of being a performance and a book, these lines basically entrust the success (of the performance and the book alike) to the audience, both spectators and readers. Armin's work features improvisation in a way that it represents the fool's (the comedian's) criticism on society while it relies on the tradition of fool literature as well as his predecessors' work.

The texts and performances of Tarlton, Kemp and Armin display extemporisation, which is always carried out in the presence of the audience. The identity of the early modern comic player is manifold, and these different roles and functions require the ability of adaptation, which is comparable to the ordinary practices of everyday life. Improvisation always works as an oppositional action; as criticism and resistance, and it has many forms. The only common feature is perhaps that it always questions the supposed traditional order of things, let that be, for instance, dramaturgy, authority, classification or contemporary decorum. This is the reason why Renaissance comedians are popular and formidable at the same time.

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[228] Concerning the definitions of performance I am applying in my dissertation, see Chapter 2.3.1.

6 Conclusion

My starting point in the preface was the figure of the player, who – as I hopefully managed to show – was a controversial figure of the early modern era. In the 16th-17th centuries, varied terminology was used to refer to people acting on- and offstage, and I applied both "player" and "actor" as well as "comedian" to describe them; the last one to signify those ones who were generally regarded as comic actors and entertainers, even when they did not embody a dramatic role. Although I believe these terms, to some extent, signified artistic, social and ideological differentiation, my intention was to use them without suggesting any hierarchical distinction.[229] Even if the variability and the instability of the terminology shows that contemporary players were resisting classification and identification, we can still detect value judgement concerning players in the early modern age, especially in discourses that attempted to degrade comic players. Certainly, there was inequality between the judgement of Richard Burbage and Will Kemp; trained actors versus amateur ones, theatre actors versus street entertainers, tragic versus comic players, dramatic and physical acting, etc. These

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[229] According to Muriel C. Bradbrook and Robert Weimann, the alternate use of these terms, however, signified social difference as well as distinct positions in the theatrical hierarchy. Bradbrook in her book *The Rise of the Common Player* (1962) – although the subtitle is *A Study of Actor and Society in Shakespeare's England* – consequently uses the term 'player', while Weimann claims that the two are synonyms, however, "actor" appeared rather in the context of printed language, whereas manuscripts and the vernacular register preferred "player" (Weimann 2001, 131). The difference between "player" and "actor" might also refer to the cultural difference in performative practice (entertainment versus personation) as well as the ideological distinction between the "jester" and the "artist".

prejudices, I think, are traditionally maintained not only in theatre practice, but also in discourses about theatre.

One of the major goals of this dissertation was to explore the ideologies which shape these distinctions not only in Renaissance culture, but in theatre and performance studies as well. Comic actors have often been described as the agents of destruction, who "battled" against the author, the text, fellow actors and even the theatre as an institution with all its rules and regulations. Will Kemp's dismissal from the Globe can be understood as a characteristic example of this incongruity. Moreover, I have shown several examples previously how comedians, beside the stage of a theatre and 'dramatic' acting, preferred alternative spheres and modes of performance, with which they could create their own aesthetic, political and moral context, which often contradicted the contemporary decorum, behavioural patterns and social regulations. In this way, comic actors cannot only be circumscribed in terms of subversion or demolition, but also in terms of creation.

My approach is very similar to Ute Berns' view in his foreword to *Solo Performances: Staging the Early Modern Self in England* (2010), where, starting out from the performative aspect of Greenblatt's idea of self-fashioning, intends to merge "discourse" and "performance" in the notion of "process". As he says,

> If we conceive of utterance not simply as 'language in performance' but, more specifically, as 'discourse in performance', then we are capable of analysing in a more concrete manner how discourse molds – an in turn is molded by – the speaking self. At the same time, the nature of self-fashioning as a process foregrounded by the concept of solo performance allows for new insights into the intricacies of this

process, which may deepen our comprehension of the complex relations between agency and determination (Berns 2010, 18).

So the activity of the comic players cannot always be related to the official theatre of the age, and it is questionable whether we can approach him with the regular terminology of theatre, play and acting. It appears that the comic actor's work is placed on the margin in many respects. He balanced not only on the edge of fiction and reality, art and entertainment or the different shapes of their identities, but he also challenged institutional theatre. This might be paralleled with performance studies' theoretical ambitions to reshape theatre as a discipline.[230]

 For these reasons summarized above, my intention was to use the extended notion of "improvisation" or, in early modern terminology, "extemporisation" to characterise the performance of the early modern actor. In my understanding, extempore performance is the capacity which is used against regulated acting/behaviour in theatre and in society as well, and for this reason, it is not entirely tolerated at any of these spheres. Ute Berns' previously cited volume conceptualises 'solo performance' as somewhat similar to this.

 The notion of 'solo performance' can be applied to eminently public forms of self-fashioning as well as to self-modelling in much more private contexts. It invites critics and readers to compare and to connect the fashioning of 'social selves' with that of 'inner selves', thus, further developing fertile

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[230] I am not only referring to Schechner's well-known ATHE speech (1992), which urged that the discipline of theatre studies should be replaced by performance studies, but also to Jill Dolan's argument that the considerations of performance studies could assist theatre studies to get rid of the "traditional insistence on privileging the humanist ideology of the aesthetic and by its ubiquitous theory/practice (even mind/body) split" (Dolan 2001, 66).

approaches in recent studies of Early Modern inwardness and subjectivity (Berns 2010, 18).

Berns' "solo performance" or my concept of improvisation is a constructive attitude, which subverts and applies social rules in an inventive way. This was the reason why the social theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau were applicable to my argumentation, since both "regulated improvisation" (Bourdieu 1977, 78) and "the procedures of everyday creativity" (Certeau 1988, xiv) forecast a performative aspect. In other words, individuals' effectiveness in society – as well as their everyday practices by which they adapt to the systems they are part of – can best be described with creative extemporisation, which is a similar train of thought as defining our everyday life as a performance. However, performance is rather considered as a set of previously practiced and repeated activities (in Richard Schechner's term, restored behaviour), as for improvisation, its ingenuity and resistant nature is emphasised.

Analysing early modern players' extempore performance is not only remarkable because with the approach of performance (studies), the traditional theatre historical view on Renaissance comedians can be challenged. In my view, their performative manners also served as an example, which their audience understood and acquired. In other words, comic actors exemplified and displayed the transmuting power of improvisation, which is also characteristic of everyday practices in general. My selected examples, Richard Tarlton's jests, Will Kemp's morris and Robert Armin's quips as they were maintained and preserved in the community's cultural memory show that the spectators raised a claim to their attendance and actions.

This common need for genuine, direct and immediate performances is still present, which is proved by the fact that the popularity of community

theatres (and related theatre projects such as, for instance, initiations of Theatre in Education movements) has been growing recently.[231] Here, the aim is to create a collective experience, to blur the distinction between player, character (if there is such a thing) and spectator, and to emphasise the cultural, political and social aspects over the aesthetic ones. To give a current Hungarian example, as Árpád Schilling – the leader of the former theatre company, Krétakör, which presently functions as an art centre producing "creative community plays" – says, the Hungarian audience in the 21st century needs radically new theatrical forms in order to awaken people's social and political consciousness via physically getting involved in the performance (Schilling 2010).

For this reason, the latest projects of Krétakör does not adapt theatre plays, but – utilising the ideas and the creative skills of civic participants – they thematise current and relevant social issues such as segregation, prejudice, poverty and corruption.[232] The "scripts" of these performances are written by the partakers, who rely on their own everyday experiences. In other words, Krétakör, as a former theatre group encourages and urges people to realise and practise their inherent creative and improvisatory skills. In this process, the artist steps behind in order to give a full scope to the spectator to act.[233]

With their work – in my understanding – Schilling and the company utter the intention that they are willing to revive people's extemporal abilities, which – as the social theory of everyday practices theorises it – help us to make our social constraints endurable, dupable and liveable. As we

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[231] For my remarks concerning community theatre, see Footnote 54.

[232] For further readings on Krétakör and its new projects, see their website: http://www.kretakor.eu

[233] The best known example of this was the programme entitled *Új Néző* (New Spectator), in which Krétakör (in co-operation with Káva Kulturális Műhely and anBlokk Egyesület) made an effort to provide discourse between the Roma and the non-Roma communities in two north-east Hungarian villages, Ároktő and Szomolya. They realised it with the complex tools of Theatre in Education, contemporary arts and forum theatre.

learn it from the early modern comedians' examples, this is inconceivable without humour, irony and a hint of foolishness.
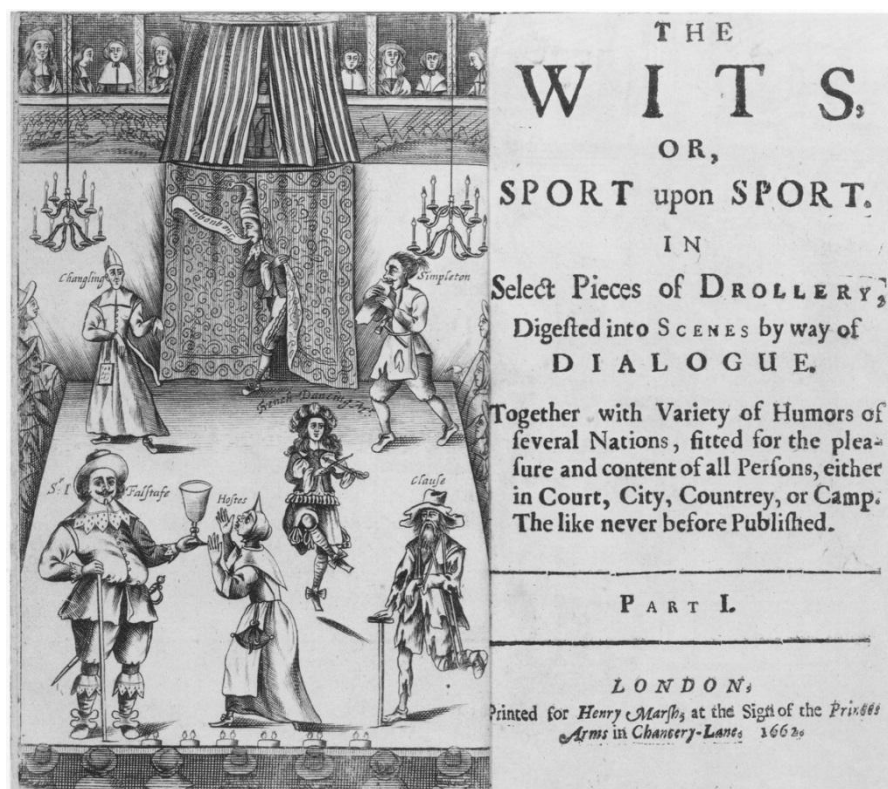
Illustrations

Fig. 1: Frontispiece to *The Wits*, showing theatrical drolls (characters taken from different Jacobean plays, including Shakespeare, played together) in Restoration Theatre in England. *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport* frontispiece, 1662. Wikipedia, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/ff/Restoration_Theatre_Drolls_1662.jpg>

Fig. 2: Portrait of Richard Burbage, cca. 1600. Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, <http://93.152.54.52:8086/web/php5/media.php?irn=3439&image=yes &width=500&height=500>

Fig. 3: Portrait of Edward Alleyn, Inscribed 1626. Dulwich Picture
Gallery, London,
<http://93.152.54.52:8086/web/php5/media.php?irn=3316&image=yes
&width=500&height=500 >

Fig. 4: Portrait identified in Cartwright's inventory as Nathan Field,
1587-1619/20, London actor and member of the King's Men, circa
1615. Dulwich Picture Gallery, London,
<http://93.152.54.52:8086/web/php5/media.php?irn=3433&image=yes
&width=500&height=500 >

Fig. 5: El Greco, The Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest, cca. 1850, oil on canvas, 82 cm x 66 cm, Royal Collection (Collection of Felipe V, Quinta of the Duke of Arco in El Pardo, Madrid, <http://www.museodelprado.es/imagen/alta_resolucion/P00809.jpg>
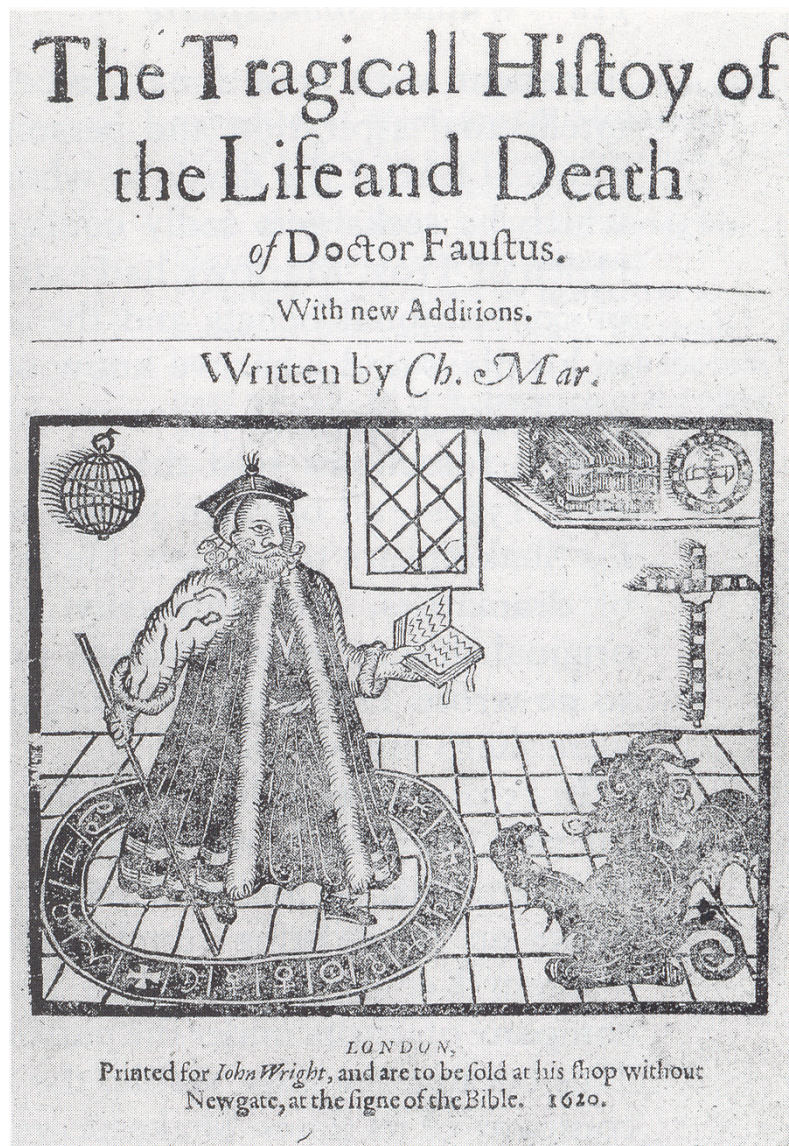
Fig. 6: Title page of a late edition of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, with a woodcut illustration of a devil coming up through a trapdoor, 1620. Wikipedia, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cd/Faustus-tragedy.gif>
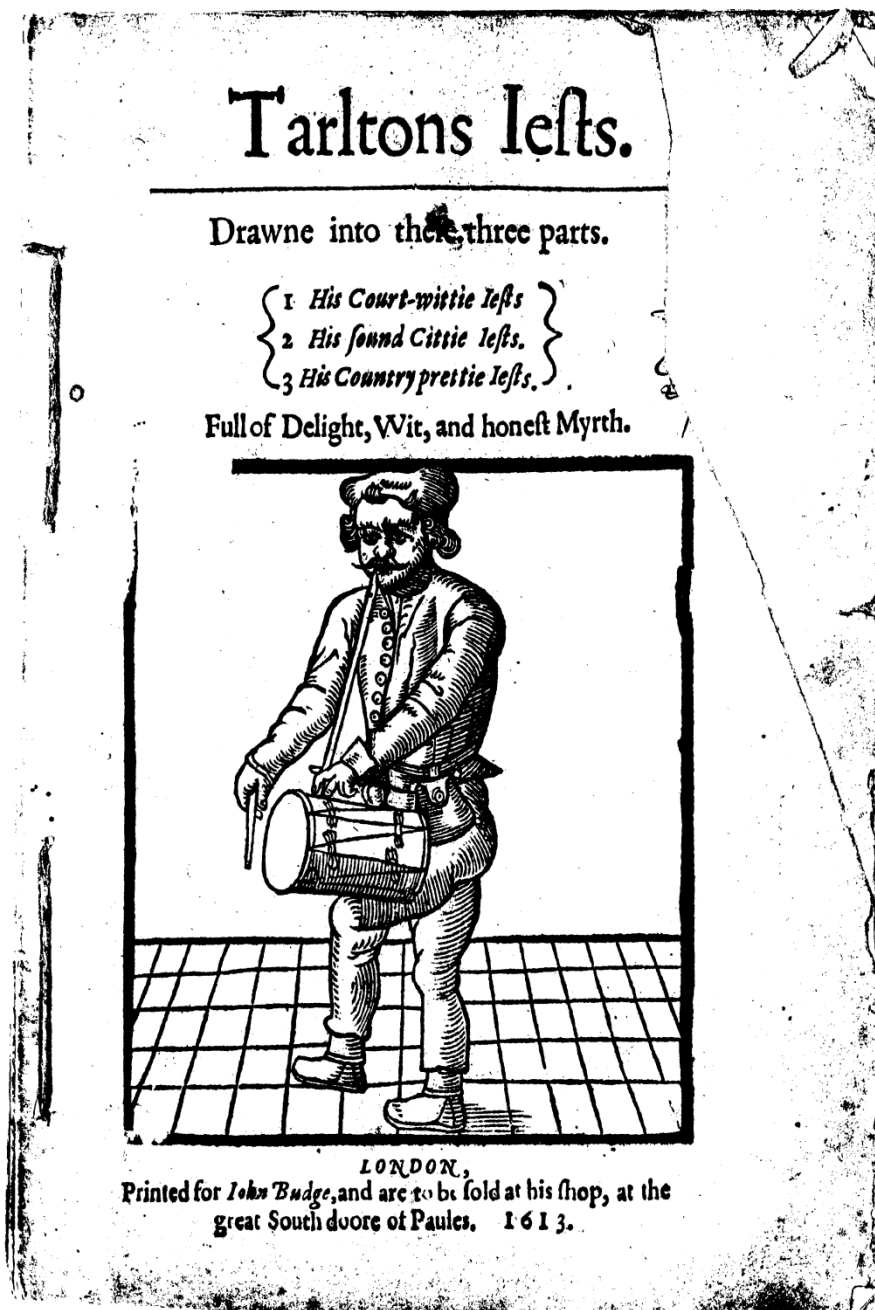
Fig. 7: Image of English Elizabethan clown Richard Tarlton in rustic apparel with pipe and tabor, 1613. The title-page of *Tarlton's Jests*. Reproduced from Early English Books Online.

Fig. 8: Will Kemp on the title page of *Nine Daies Wonder Performed in a Daunce from London to Norwich*, 1600. Reproduced from Early English Books Online.

Fig. 9: Cover of *The History of the two Maids of More-Clacke*,
written by Robert Armin. The man designed on the cover is Armin.
Source: British Library. Wikipedia,
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ae/Robert_Armi
n.jpg>

Fig. 10: Will Sommers, court jester to Henry VIII. Scanned from Robert Chamber's "Book of Days", 1871. Wikipedia, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e9/WillSommers _engraving_300dpi.jpg>

Fig. 11: Alciato, *Book of Emblems*, 1531, Emblem 53. Latin-English online edition of the Memorial University of Newfoundland, <http://www.mun.ca/alciato/images/l053.gif>

Fig. 12: Title page of John Bulwer MD's *Chironomia* (1644), showing rhetoricians and actors: Demosthenes, Andronicus, Roscius and Cicero. Scanned from *The Players Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* by Joseph Roach (1985). Wikipedia, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/John_Bulwer _Chironomia_frontispiece_1644.jpg>

Fig. 13: Alciato, *Book of Emblems*, 1531, Emblem 25. Latin-English online edition of the Memorial University of Newfoundland, http://www.mun.ca/alciato/images/l025.gif

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