THE CYBERNETIC STAGE: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE POSTHUMAN IN "BARTHOLOMEW FAIR"

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ABSTRACT

Near the end of her Manifesto for Cyborgs, Donna Haraway poetically asks: “why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?” (36). The reply to Haraway’s question hangs over multiple meditations on twentieth century technology from Andy Clark’s Natural Born Cyborgs to Katherine Hayles’s How We Became Posthuman, all showing how our bodies extend from the terminus of flesh outwards into the world. Following Clark’s suggestion that our relationship with technology “is an aspect of our humanity, which is as basic and ancient as the use of speech and which has been extending its territory ever since” (4), this thesis reads Ben Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair with an eye for the role that technologies and objects play in constructing the subject. My project argues that within a drama concerned with contemporary social and economic situations we can see early iterations of what could be called the posthuman subject. As posthumans engaged with a particularly powerful apparatus, playwrights in the 17th century could be uniquely receptive to the possibilities of “[tasks] in which human brains and bodies act as elements in a larger, fluidly integrated biotechnological problem-solving matrix” (Clark 25). In its disguises, contracts, and metatheatricality, Bartholomew Fair represents rich early modern cyborg relationships between subjects and objects.
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**INTRODUCTION: PROTOTYPING THE [POST]HUMAN**

Near the end of her *Manifesto for Cyborgs*, Donna Haraway poetically asks: “why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?” (36). The reply to Haraway’s question hangs over multiple meditations on twentieth century technology from Andy Clark’s *Natural Born Cyborgs* to Katherine Hayles’ *How We Became Posthuman*, all showing how our bodies extend from the terminus of flesh outwards into the world. Extended cognition and networks of information provide new and exciting ways to read the (less and less aptly named) Humanities, while simultaneously poised to deliver the coup de grace to the centered human subject. The proliferation of “smart” technology – from smart phones to smart cars – has enveloped humanity in a biotechnological network from which it appears evident that “we are all chimeras… the cyborg is our ontology” (Haraway 8). Even without literal biotechnological mergers, our entanglement with technology becomes apparent every time we interact with one of the myriad flickering screens we encounter every day. Beyond this, technologies such as writing and even language reinforce the fact that who we are as a species is inextricably linked to our technologies. Clark’s “natural-born” cyborg deploys these technologies of speech and writing “to discover and harness a new kind of cognitive resource: a kind of magic trick by which to go beyond the bounds of our animal natures” (81). This idea of the technologically determined human is compelling for its inessentialism, but parsing this with the modern ability to incorporate technology for its teleological goals renders it problematic, especially, as Neil Badmington notes, since there is a “possibility that humanism will haunt or taint posthumanism… a problem of what remains, a problem of remains” (12). This project seeks to speak to those remains of humanism as a way of reconciliation: both to our recent (re)discovery of something that we have always been, and to the interpellation of that state with
the temporal and cultural marker “post” human. Thus as an introduction to a project that lies (paradoxically) before and after the human, we must again exhume the body of the “human.”

Bruno Latour notes in *We Have Never Been Modern* how “modernity is often defined in terms of humanism, either as a way of saluting the birth of ‘man’ or as a way of announcing his death” (13). To some degree then, “early modern” might be a poor name for the 16th and 17th centuries, since the constitution of its subject is a murky matter: inclined to both humanist and materialist interpretations. The modern constitution then produces the human and “the simultaneous birth of ‘nonhumanity’ – things, or objects, or beasts” (Latour 13). These nonhumans serve as crucial others humanity defines itself against, due to their nature as “inert bodies, incapable of will and bias… lacking souls but endowed with meaning” (Latour 23). The 17th century marks a period in which these ideas were still in embryonic form, if they existed at all. Jonathan Dollimore argues convincingly in *Radical Tragedy* for a subjectivity “legitimately identified in terms of a materialist perspective rather than one of essentialist humanism” (249), and Latour places the inception of the modern condition in the tension between Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle. Hobbes’s work creates “the chief resources that are available to us for speaking about power” while “Boyle and his successors developed one of the major repertoires for speaking about nature” (Latour 25). Latour’s work suggests that what is actually produced is not actually “two separate inventions but… only one, a division of power between the two protagonists, to Hobbes, the politics, and to Boyle, the sciences” (25). However, both Latour’s “modern constitution” and Dollimore’s materialist subject of the 17th century should be read with something I would argue both authors are sensitive to: that the drive of historical taxonomy to create clean and hard lines is one which, while seductive, has little basis in reality. Dollimore borrows from the Raymond Williams and considers history with an eye to “residual, dominant,
and emergent elements which coexist at any cultural moment” (7); Latour meanwhile attempts to reconstruct a particular historical moment between Boyle and Hobbes “as a way of summarizing a much longer story” of the “modern world” (15). Similarly in How We Became Posthuman, Katherine Hayles notes the irony of drawing historical and cultural lines inherent in her title, that “these changes were never complete transformations or sharp breaks; without exception, they reinscribed traditional ideas and assumptions even as they articulated something new” (6). Since the “posthuman” is thus a term that slips forwards and backwards in time, this project will locate early modern iterations of the posthuman in Bartholomew Fair.

As a play where it seems hard to find a protagonist, Bartholomew Fair proves particularly rich ground for critical approaches that decenter the human subject.¹ Jonson’s play gives as much time to the humiliation of fools like Justice Overdo and the Puritan preacher Zeal-of-the-Land Busy as it does to the social maneuvering of the gallants Quarlous and Winwife. Thus, my choice is in part due to this satirical focus on broader social interactions. Jonathan Haynes describes Jonson’s plays as possessing a “realism of the relation of subject to environment” (25), and as the play represents the multiple economic, social, and cognitive networks that the environment of the fair creates, it becomes clear the only centering element of the play is the setting of the fair. This ecological focus serves the discovery of these early posthuman attributes: Andy Clark asserts that environment plays a key role in cognition, that “at the very limit, the smart world will function in such intimate harmony with the biological brain that drawing the line [between the two] will serve no legal, moral, or social purpose” (30). However, even without this intentionally designed smart world, the environments subjects inhabit can provide affordances for both cognition and agency due to their nonhuman elements. Jonson represents the fair as a place where hybrid relationships between humans and material
objects proliferate. Andy Clark suggests that one of the hallmarks of humanity as natural cyborgs is our “ability to enter into deep and complex relationships with nonbiological constructs, props, and aids” (5). Bartholomew Fair’s disguises, contracts, and puppets bring this capacity into relief next to its satirical caricatures of subjects; additionally, the metadramatic Induction itself operates with strategies we can classify as “posthuman.” In these complex relationships with objects, the lines between subject and object become blurred like the lines between human/posthuman and early modern/modern.

Terms are important, and my insistence on the term “posthuman” throughout the rest of this project might be seen as problematic. In part, I maintain the appellation to suggest how these early modern strategies of fashioning negotiable selves bleed forwards in time. Jonson himself represents this potentiality as Haynes describes how “the kernel from which Jonson’s realism grew, or the node around which its elements began to crystallize, is the alehouse or tavern scene, whose roots go back to the late medieval morality play” (13). Similarly, I would like to suggest that the moments in Bartholomew Fair that represent negotiable self-fashioning, material objects that access agency for subjects, and environments that produce cognition and subjects as similar kernels of the posthuman. However, in addition to this, Clark, Hayles, Haraway, and Latour all suggest how our relationships with technology are an essential element to our humanity. This sits as the founding irony of the idea of “becoming” posthuman that Hayles notes, that “‘human’ and ‘posthuman’ coexist in shifting configurations that vary with historically specific contexts” (6); this is an irony I wish to preserve in order to remind how the two terms are interrelated. I do not wish to erase this coexistence between the human and posthuman by creating some new terminology to describe early modern affinities with our more recent iteration of cyborg culture brought upon by the integrated circuit.
The arc of my argument can be summarized thus: if ontologically we are “natural-born cyborgs” (and have been since that moment when language began), then there should be elements of what we now call the “posthuman” in early modern English culture. Thus, this project sits between the history of the early modern subject (and specifically its dramatic form) and the history of science and technology. Clark and Hayles have both shown the role technology plays in producing cognition and subjects; traces of these relationships come out particularly strongly since drama produces subjects on the stage. These are relationships we still live with today (especially in our hyper-networked world), and the problems and questions that the intertwined history of the subject and object raise are never really gone. In the following chapters, I will use Bartholomew Fair as my primary object of study since in bringing the fair to the Hope Theater, “dirty as Smithfield, and as/ stinking every whit” (Induction 141-2), it also provides multiple representations of these early modern posthumans. I do not posit a universal and completely actualized awareness of cybernetics in the early modern era, nor do I seek to negate the Marxist and materialist interventions on the history of the subject. Rather, this project argues that within a drama particularly concerned with contemporary social and economic situations we can see early iterations of what could be called the posthuman subject. While it may be that the 17th century was the test bed for the human subject of modernism, Bartholomew Fair represents rich early modern cyborg relationships between subjects and objects. If we are now dealing with left over “human” remains in our current era, we may be able to make sense of their persistence through their indebtedness to these early modern techniques/technologies of representation.

Chapter One constitutes an object-oriented approach to Bartholomew Fair. Following Clark’s logic that cyborgs have the ability to enter into productive relationships with
nonbiological elements, I consider four productive relationships that Jonson represents. Justice Overdo’s “habit of a fool” (2.1.8) serves as a means for him to discover the “yearly enormities of this Fair” (2.1.36); Quarlous adopts a “madman’s shape” (5.3.101) to discover the outcome of a wager for the hand of Grace Wellborn. These disguises nearly produce a subjectivity of their own, suggesting Latour’s formulation of the “quasi-object” with its own social and discursive life. Meanwhile, Grace’s book, which selects her husband by lottery, is an object that extends her own agency through an impromptu contract between Winwife and Quarlous: one that sees her safely through the fair and selects one as her husband. Finally, Quarlous’s ability to manipulate Grace’s marriage license, a carte blanche from Justice Overdo, and the book containing the information of which husband Grace has “decided” upon shows a rich informational network at the fair. Since neither the subject nor object is entirely autonomous, this chapter seeks to show how hybridity of both representational and informational quasi-objects affords agency for these early modern subjects.

Chapter Two broadens its scope, to read the theatrical situation itself as a potentially posthuman element of early modern culture. Understanding the theater as a space that facilitates a negotiable embodiment, I consider how Bartholomew Fair represents author, audience, and actors in this space. Derrida’s “theological” theater serves as a base model in order to understand how Jonson’s play explores and exploits drama’s representational techniques. Reading the Induction’s extradramatic contract, I use Giorgio Agamben’s work on the Foucauldian apparatus to show how the theater produces subjectivities in a posthuman fashion; however, rather than affording individual agency, these environments interact with beings in order to situate them as subjects. The chapter closes with an extended reading of Jonson’s puppet play as a representation of an early modern cyborg. The way that Lantern Leatherhead’s
body extends into Puppet Dionysius provocatively gestures towards Haraway’s body that extends past the skin; a negotiability of embodiment that Jonson’s play implies may also be accessible to early modern audiences.

Chapter Three closes by building upon my reading of the puppet play of the previous chapter. In this final chapter, I argue that *Bartholomew Fair*’s posthuman elements provide early iterations of the “theater of proof” that Robert Boyle’s laboratory creates. This is not to suggest a direct causality between the two; instead, I intend to show how Jonson’s puppet theater informs the representational technology that Boyle creates in the laboratory. Drawing upon Latour’s work on the modern constitution and Haraway’s reading of the “modest witness,” I consider how Jonson’s puppet play immodestly bares links between human and nonhuman that Boyle must hide to produce truths beyond the epistemological problems that the theater creates.

Thus, in answering Haraway’s question of “why should our bodies end at the skin,” I would like to suggest that in early modern drama we can see a site that situates bodies not by skin, but through hybridity with social, cultural, and material artifacts. As posthumans engaged with a particularly powerful apparatus, playwrights in the 17th century could be uniquely receptive to the possibilities of “[tasks] in which human brains and bodies act as elements in a larger, fluidly integrated biotechnological problem-solving matrix” (Clark 25). The theater served as a particularly rich space that worked through social and political problems with its technology of histrionic representation. In retracing the contours of this technology, we can discover possibilities for opening up bodies and minds to larger networks of cognition and political action. Representing theatrical hybrids can be one strategy among many through which we can prevent the resurrection of humanist remains.
CHAPTER 1: FORTUNATE SHAPES: THE QUASI-OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS OF BARTHOLOMEW FAIR

Reading the contours of early modern drama’s subjects has been a particularly fertile ground for a critique of ideologies that promote unitary subject positions. In the various theatrical representations of the period we find a conception of subjectivity that is neither the dispersed subject of the medieval tradition where, in the play Mankind, “it is hard to identify Mankind [the protagonist] as a subject… Mankind is a fragmented and fragmentary figure” (Belsey 15) nor the unitary liberal humanist subject of the Enlightenment who is “the free, unconstrained author of meaning and action, the origin of history. Unified, knowing and autonomous, the human being seeks a political system which guarantees freedom of choice” (Belsey 8). Ben Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair provides a particularly rich example of how early modern subjectivity lies between these two points; more importantly, as a play with significant economic and material concerns, it also shows the role of objects in creating the subject.

Building off of pure materialist readings of subjectivity, this focus on objects can reveal a hybrid early modern subjectivity that integrates material artifacts. The call to fairgoers of “what do you lack?” (3.4.3) from puppet master Lantern Leatherhead suggests an inescapable contour of the biotechnological ecologies that we inhabit. These are lived environments that cognitive scientist Andy Clark describes as a “varied and mutually empowering matrix of human-centered technologies” (45). This chapter will locate moments in this early modern text that reveal humans as natural-born cyborgs in the “profound sense of being human-technology symbionts” (Clark 3). In this sense Leatherhead’s “lack” is a never-completed project of augmenting and scaffolding our own biological capacities. The play provides an enactment of what Clark suggests is the hallmark of our species: “we- more than any other creature on the planet – deploy nonbiological elements (instruments, media, notations) to complement our basic biological
models of processing” (78). In *Bartholomew Fair* we can see an early modern representation of many of the elements proposed by posthumanists like Clark: subjectivity defined by relationships with tools and objects outside of the biological flesh or “skinbag,” negotiable embodiment, and an agency afforded by access to these quasi-objects rather than any essential or presocial autonomy. I borrow Bruno Latour’s conception of quasi-objects, since, as part of our own cognitive network, it becomes hard to define them as completely outside of the subject. Thus, after an initial consideration of *Bartholomew Fair*’s setting as an early modern “smart world,” where environment plays as much a role in cognition as the skinbag, I intend to show how the objects that Overdo, Grace Wellborn, and Quarlous come into contact with are invested with agency. This is an agency similar to the one Latour suggests for hybrids: the entities produced in the entanglement between subject and quasi-object. The way in which these quasi-objects act upon the play’s characters reveals a drama capable of representing the material artifacts and cognitive ecologies that work to produce subjects.

The materialist and decentered subject proposed by Jonathan Dollimore in *Radical Tragedy* serves as a productive starting point for tracing the hybrid subject, given the significant role that social relations, ideology, and material reality play in his work. Dollimore notes how Jacobean drama was “deeply receptive to the implications of the decentered subject” (158), and that materialist readings of early modern drama are not anachronistic. Dollimore argues that Montaigne’s work on custom and politics constitutes a nascent perception of Marxian (and specifically Althusserian) ideology; Montaigne and Althusser “see ideology (or custom) as so powerfully internalized in consciousness that it results in misrecognition; we understand it (insofar as we ‘see’ it at all) as eternally or naturally given instead of socially generated and contingent” (17-18). What happens “to both religion and law is a process of demystification
whose basis is a radical relativism… robbing the universal of its ideological power to reduce diversity to unity” (15). The possibility that both religion and law are socially determined and relative also opens up a providentialism that “aim[s] to provide a metaphysical ratification of the existing social order” (87) to a similar relativism. In demystifying this providential and political ideology, the framework that centers man in the universe through relation to God is also decentered, and thus medieval subjectivity is brought into crisis. Instead of these metaphysical relations, Dollimore’s work identifies dramatic subjects defined by their material/economic and lived/socio-political relations: for example he argues how King Lear’s “madness [is] less divine furor than a process of collapse which reminds us just how precarious is this psychological equilibrium we call unity, and just how dependent upon an identity which is social rather than essential” (195).

However, by focusing on socio-political relations, Dollimore’s work elides the way in which some early modern subjects are able to “enter into deep and complex relationships with nonbiological constructs, props, and aids” (Clark 5) and thus represent an emergent quasi-subject/quasi-object relationship in the period. Bruno Latour has suggested that “Quasi objects are much more social, much more fabricated, and much more collective than the “hard” parts of nature… on the other hand they are much more real, nonhuman, and objective than those shapeless screens on which society – for unknown reasons – needed to be “projected”” (55). Quasi-objects are situated for Latour neither as purely constructed projections of societal desire, nor the final Other outside of all social interaction (natural or divine), which “determines, informs and moulds the soft and pliable wills of the poor humans” (53). Early modern theaters provided a medium that produced social life of these objects, which are both cultural projections and things in their own right. The unique possibilities afforded by the theatrical mode are most
apparent in the drama’s obsession with disguises; however, *Bartholomew Fair* provides other instances of these possibilities with the goods purchased, stolen, and written upon by the fairgoers. Francis Barker has argued for the importance of these elements and notes a tendency in early modern criticism: “at the level of representation what has been elided – or acknowledged only in the condemnatory form of the charge of sensationalism – is the theatricality of this theatre” (14). Following this, the theatrical moments that draw upon staged action rather than spoken language can reveal the early modern relationship between subjects and objects. What *Bartholomew Fair* represents is neither an object that simply serves as an abject repository for social dramas nor an extrasocial object that subjects humans. Instead, Jonson’s objects are invested with a nuanced living agency that works for the characters of the play as much as against them.

Jonson’s multileveled ensemble plot could be described in the simplest terms as one in which bourgeois characters attend a fair where they are subjected to varying levels of indignity or transformation by crooked merchants and quasi-underworld criminals. Through the course of the action’s multiple plots the social fabric unravels: the Puritans (exemplified by Zeal-of-the-Land Busy) reveal their hypocrisy as they indulge in the fair’s bodily appetites; Justice Adam Overdo disguises himself as a madman in order to discover the fair’s quasi-illegal excesses, only to be put in the stocks; and two gallants, Quarlous and Winwife, go to the fair to observe the raving Humphrey Wasp. However, Quarlous and Winwife begin courting Grace Wellborn, the betrothed of Wasp’s foolish master, Bartholomew Cokes. Meanwhile, Cokes himself is the object of exploitation at the hands of shady merchants like Leatherhead and thieves like Ezekiel Edgeworth. In contrast to more typical comedies that resolve themselves neatly, *Bartholomew Fair* leaves many social and economic groups shattered. By the end, the Puritans are either
drunk or cuckold; Quarlous, married to the widow Dame Purecraft, will make Winwife pay him
to marry Grace; Cokes is left utterly destitute at the hands of the fair people; and Overdo has
been publicly humiliated. No character escapes the action in an entirely stable position, thus this
resolution also has the function of leaving a disproportionate degree of potential loose ends.

As Jonathan Haynes notes, the proposed feast at the end “would be the genuine festive
experience, but it is hard to imagine it in the light of the still unresolved (and perhaps
unresolvable) divisions the play has opened up. Can Grace really sit down with Ursula? How
will Winwife get along with Quarlous, who has just defrauded his fiancée of her inheritance?”
(138). More questions could be brought up regarding the outcomes that befall the Puritan fools,
but there is a common arc that all attendees experience: a net transformation has happened, and
the ending of the play seems to be particularly distanced from the marriage plot’s resolution of
economic problems or the general tidiness of more typical comic endings. Most notably, even
for the three characters that retain most of their dignity, Quarlous, Winwife, and Grace, there are
lasting economic and social consequences similar to those that Bartholomew Fair’s fools, such
as Cokes, Busy, and Overdo, are subjected to. While various members of the fair community
like Edgeworth or Ursula may be more instrumental in bringing about these changes, the fair’s
environment provides the most significant factor for the transformations. Haynes notes how at
the fair “Quarlous is playing a larger game; for someone in a socially marginal position a general
disruption will create openings” (129) and this “general disruption” the fair provides also serves
as the source of the other characters’ humiliation.

The fair is invested with both discursive and material significance, working as an ecology
in which strategies like Quarlous’s or Grace’s schemes are capable of operating. Andy Clark has
proposed a model of human cognition that subsists “in a hybrid, extended architecture (one
which includes aspects of the brain and of the cognitive technological envelope in which our brains develop and operate)” (33), and I would argue the fair constitutes a type of technological-cognitive space in the early modern period. The festive and carnivalesque elements of the fair in their temporary disorder allow for the pursuit of strategies that would otherwise be under sanction – be it the widespread fraud of the fair people or Quarlous’s strategic manipulations. Overall, Jonson’s resolution to these chaotic elements seems perfunctory: similar to what Dollimore suggests of radical tragedies, Jonson complies with political ideology’s “letter after having destroyed its spirit” (27). *Bartholomew Fair*’s plot shows how, rather than a site of restoration of social order and orthodoxy, the space of the fair provides a “temporary suspension… both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank” (Haynes 120) that allows characters with access to quasi-objects to go to work actively on their own societal positions. The life of the objects which afford these transformations for subjects in the play reveals how at least some members of early modern society were becoming sensitive to the way in which material artifacts work just as much as discursive and political relations in constituting subjectivity.

1. “Middling Things”: Disguise, (mis)Representation, and Embodied Hybrids

Jonson’s play highlights the interpenetration of subject and object through characters predominantly bereft of the interiority that is the hallmark of the modern bourgeois subject. In addition to representing an environment in which objects are able to take on a life of their own, Jonson populates his play with characters that appear particularly open to the feedback that the hybrid entities of the fair create. Taken individually, the play’s cast seems primarily to be caricatures rather than characters: Jonson’s naming conventions for the fair people reinforce this, with pickpockets named Edgeworth or madmen named Trouble-all. Ironic inversion also exists in the play, as Dame Purecraft is hardly pure, and Littlewit’s wife Win-the-Fight loses the battle
of marital faithfulness as the fair adopts her and Mistress Overdo as whores. Rather than reading too deeply into how Jonson plays with these naming conventions, I would instead propose that what is at stake in *Bartholomew Fair*’s caricatures is a representation of what Clark suggests is an accurate vision of the posthuman subject, one that “by nature, [is a product] of a complex and heterogeneous developmental matrix in which culture, technology, and biology are pretty well inextricably intermingled” (86). In fact, because an ensemble comedy like Jonson’s represents a slice of society, it highlights the power of material or social forces in producing what we might call a cyborg subject. In particular, avoiding long asides and soliloquies to the audience (the longest being Overdo’s comical bloviating), *Bartholomew Fair* reinforces Katharine Maus’s assertion of “the importance in English Renaissance culture of two fantasies: one, that selves are obscure, hidden, ineffable; the other, that they are fully manifest or capable of being made fully manifest. They seem to be contradictory notions, but again and again they are voiced together, so they seem less self-canceling than symbiotically related or mutually constitutive” (28). Overdo unmask Busy at the end as a “super lunatical hypocrite” (5.6.37), and the other Puritans similarly come to display their two-faced nature. At first glance the humor of these comic discoveries would seem to require the fair’s chaos to strip away a performed “disguise” and reveal a true nature underneath. However, the way in which the fair and its “enormities” has been complicit in unmasking hypocrisy also suggests that it is not a “true nature” that is revealed, but rather a process through which what is understood as a “self” is subject to modification by environment and disguise. Since the “unmasking” of the Puritans coincides with when Overdo and Quarlous reveal their own disguises, the way these disguises work upon their wearers suggests how both possibilities exist simultaneously: an internalized self
that may or may not coincide with an exterior performance constituted by what is represented through objects. The possibility that all of the characters in *Bartholomew Fair* are “wearing” disguises shows the negotiable identity of the early modern period, especially when seen in light of how the actual disguises of the play operate.

In *Bartholomew Fair*, the two disguises are first and foremost a tool for characters: Overdo adopts “the habit of a fool” (2.1.7) to “discover” the fair’s excessive legal or social “enormities” while Quarlous uses the madman Trouble-all’s clothes to discover which name Grace Wellborn wrote in her book (and thus which suitor she will marry). These disguises remind us of the way that tools augment our own cognitive capacities. However, they also (sometimes violently) present their users with unintended feedback and noise. The cultural and social signals that disguises create are mixed and at times indeterminate due to the performative and bodily elements required in the adoption of an alternative persona: one that complicates the readability of outward signs as a cultural marker even as it relies on them in order to operate.  

*Bartholomew Fair* makes “it seems less and less clear where what [a subject can] know ends and what “it” (the technology) makes available starts” (Clark 132). Overdo makes explicit note of his own position in a cognitive network as a judge, with his lament that “for (alas) as we are public persons, what do we know? Nay, what can we know? We hear with other men’s ears; we see with other men’s eyes; a foolish constable or a sleepy watchman is all our information” (2.1.25-27). Obviously, Overdo is a foolish figure himself, hence the comedy when he admits his own cognitive network is flawed as he complains how “a while agone, they made me, yea me, to mistake an honest zealous pursuing for a seminary, and a proper young Bachelor of Music for a bawd” (29-31). However, his awareness of this social-cognitive network reinforces Dollimore’s argument for an early modern identity that is socially determined rather than
essential. However, in lieu of his social identity, Overdo dons a material disguise, one that completely alters his own position within the social relations of the fair. Thus, while he is able to enter into “the very womb and bed of enormity, gross, as herself!” (2.2.100), he is afforded this specifically by his disguise – as he notes “I shall by the benefit of this, discover enough and more, and yet get off with the reputation of what I would be: a certain middling thing between a fool and a madman” (2.2.130-135). The irony of this description comes to bear in the final act as the justice himself is revealed to be another enormity of the fair: this Overdo, “Adam, flesh and blood” (5.6.94), is seen as just as foolish as those he discovered. He may have discovered Rabbi Busy as a “super-lunatical hypocrite” (5.5.38) or the pander Whit as “esquire of dames, madams, and twelvepenny ladies” (5.6.42). However, Overdo’s discoveries are ultimately turned upon him because he has become that which he says he simply would be seen as; he is literally a middling thing between his performed madness and his own foolishness.

Like Overdo, Quarlous adopts Trouble-All’s disguise to discover information that would be denied him otherwise. Grace Wellborn has proposed that she decide between Quarlous and Winwife as a potential husband through lottery, and each suitor writes a word into a blank book. Grace asks the “next person that comes this way… which of the two words he or she doth/approve; and according to that sentence fix my resolution and/ affection without change” (4.3.46, 48-50), and the madman Trouble-all marks the book in favor of Winwife. However, Grace, in order to guarantee her safety at the fair, has “leave to conceal that [the winner] till you [the suitors]/ have brought me either home, or where I may safely tender myself” (4.4.44-55). Quarlous employs the cutpurse Ezekiel Edgeworth to acquire Grace’s marriage license; however, he decides that it would be pointless labor if Winwife’s word is picked. As he realizes that it was a madman who marked Grace’s book, he decides to “make another use of him” (4.6.141).
Quarlous disguises himself as Trouble-All and returns to Grace to determine which name was marked. Discovering that Winwife has won the contest for Grace’s hand, Quarlous appears to have gained nothing from his disguise – until Dame Purecraft confronts him with her love and “six thousand pound” (5.2.46).

The disguise has an unpredictable life of its own outside of its original utility to discover the name in the book; however, Quarlous is capable of adapting his own position strategically as new opportunities appear thanks to his disguise. His consideration, “why should I not marry this six thousand pound… t’other wench Winwife is sure of; there’s no expectation for me there!... It is money that I want; why should I not marry the money, when ‘tis offered me?” (5.2.69-74) speaks to his ability to adapt to the new circumstances that his physical appearance has presented. Since he has realized that the acquisition of the license is “nothing to me, without other circumstances concur” (4.6.29), he exploits the cultural and social information that interpenetrates his disguise to his advantage. Quarlous’s ability to embrace his virtuality as “Trouble-All” continues as Justice Overdo offers “what may do thee good” (5.2.91) and he acquires another object invested with social relations: Overdo presents him with “my hand and seal, Adam Overdo; if there be anything to be written above in the paper, that thou want’st now, or at any time hereafter, think on’t; it is my deed” (5.2.106-108). Overdo’s gift to Quarlous is interpenetrated with social information that Quarlous reads; rewriting the document allows the deed to improve the gallant’s economic situation. As he notes earlier when debating if he should marry Dame Purecraft, “I have a license and all; it is but razing out one name and putting in another” (5.2.74-75); a document signed by the judge is similarly open to Quarlous’s manipulation. The disguise ends up providing him with a double windfall of money: first Dame Purecraft’s six thousand pounds through marriage, second Justice Overdo’s carte blanche with
which he transfers Grace’s wardship. Quarlous is right in his exclamation that “this madman’s shape will prove a very fortunate one, I think!” (5.2.101-102), but equally important is his ability to manipulate the information embodied in the quasi-objects of the fair. His acquisition of these documents shows not only that he is aware of the way identity is socially constructed, but also that quasi-objects are invested with a social identity, and access to these objects can afford agency as much as one’s (constructed and negotiable) material appearance.

Thus, his surprise in the next line, “Can a ragged robe produce these effects!” (5.2.110) elides how the play suggests an identity not only socially constructed, but also augmented by the ability to manipulate other (quasi) subjects and objects. Haynes has suggested that part of why Quarlous avoids the total disintegration of the Puritan group is that “Quarlous establishes not what he is, but what he can do” (129), and the most important ability he possesses is an awareness of the volatility of the objects which he encounters. As a potentially posthuman subject, Quarlous is only afforded agency through these quasi-objects (and especially his disguise), undermining an essentialist identity that Jonson’s naming conventions might otherwise suggest. As Jonson deploys flattened characters like Quarlous, it highlights their own openness and mutability as quasi subjects in relationships with quasi-objects. Quarlous’s ability to capitalize (literally) on the effects his ragged robe produces suggests that his position and identity are at the whims of entities that are neither purely discursive nor purely material. If “virtuality is the cultural perception that material objects are interpenetrated by information patterns” (Hayles 13), Quarlous serves as a fascinating example of how these information patterns can be seen even in the early modern era. The material object of his “ragged robe” is permeated with information, and Quarlous encounters the multiple ways in which this information can act upon him. In fact, the identity of Trouble-all seems more indebted to his
madman’s shape than his actual flesh-and-bone body: Quarlous, through the disguise’s information and his own performance, is capable of accessing this identity for his own profit, but it is only with the volatile material of a quasi-object.

Additionally, Quarlous shows how the early modern period’s understanding of representation could be seen as similar to Hayles’ concept of embodiment, which ”has been systematically downplayed or erased in the cybernetic construction of the posthuman in ways that have not occurred in other critiques of the liberal humanist subject” (4). With Quarlous’s augmentation of his body, he represents an instance of how even in the early modern period embodiment:

Differs from the concept of the body in that the body is always normative relative to some set of criteria… In contrast to the body, embodiment is contextual, enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology, and culture, which together compose enactment. Embodiment never coincides exactly with “the body”, however that normalized concept is understood. Whereas the body is an idealized form that gestures toward a Platonic reality, embodiment is the specific instantiation generated from the noise of difference. Relative to the body, embodiment is other and elsewhere, at once excessive and deficient in its infinite variations, particularities, and abnormalities.

(Hayles, 196)

Thus, embodiment operates synchronically, and encompasses all the various (corporeal and textual) signifying strategies in both dramatic representation and Quarlous’s disguise. Quarlous’s embodiment is negotiated through the myriad cultural, material, and political markers his “madman’s shape” provides in addition to his own gestures and utterances. The performative aspects of embodiment require that Quarlous, as a subject invested with a negotiable
representation, enter into a complex hybrid relationship with a quasi-object. Taken together, an effective impersonation is enacted since everyone takes Quarlous for Trouble-all. The material of his disguise provides the body of Trouble-all’s mad shape; however, Quarlous’s performance of madness and strategic directing displays embodiment, as he both engages with and enacts the “noise of difference” the fair represents. The disguise is also “at once excessive and deficient” as it works for and against Quarlous’s broader schemes. To summarize the difference: Quarlous is capable of incorporating the disguise-as-body into his own embodiment.

Meanwhile, Overdo also disguises himself as a madman yet ends up humiliated. Rather than merely using the disguise to gather information, Overdo becomes, or already is, the madman he would merely represent. Like Quarlous, his imitation seems effective: he is mistaken for “mad Arthur of Bradley” (2.3.116). However, the environment of the fair is less favorable to him as he is mistaken for a cutpurse by Wasp and beaten (2.6), then pointed out by Edgeworth as a cutpurse again and carried off to the stocks (3.5). While he attempts to put on the madman’s guise to gather information, Overdo mistakes the body for embodiment, assuming that there is a firewall between the affordances of the quasi-object and the actions of the subject. Therefore, the inaccuracies of some of his discoveries, the most egregious being his mistaking of the cutpurse Edgeworth as an innocent youth, are due to his donning a disguise without understanding that the information he gains is contingent on his adopting the persona of an “enormity” of the fair. Since while disguised he is still unable to read men, Overdo’s failure to understand information is systemic. However, the disguise does provide him with an alternative mode of discovery: in this sense he is just as posthuman as Quarlous. The gallant ironically notes this commonality after he rebukes the justice, suggesting “you and/ I will compare our discoveries” (5.6.95-6). Overdo’s inability to accurately interpret is in large part due to
misrecognition of his willing entry as one of “enormities” of the fair, naively assuming that
despite adopting his madman’s disguise he will remain unaffected. This miscalculation is
brought to bear comically as Wasp begins to beat Overdo claiming he is “the patriarch of the
cutpurses” (2.6.138), reading the exterior trappings of Overdo’s disguise in a way Overdo
himself does not comprehend.

The inability of Overdo to actually exploit his hybridity is the reason for the consistent
comic failure of his scheme; his performance as a madman is uncannily like himself, as Mistress
Overdo suggests the disguised judge “hath something of Master Overdo, methinks brother”
(2.6.69). In this sense, Overdo represents a very traditional conception of disguise as he is the
same person underneath, only no one realizes it due to his outward signs. Therefore he gains
little new insight, continuing the flawed cognitive network he refers to in his opening speech.
Overdo’s attempts to maintain his autonomy and agency stand at odds with his experience at the
fair as he is beaten or put into stocks in his fool’s disguise. While he represents himself to the
audience as a subject which is “unified, knowing, and autonomous” through his asides, his
interactions with the other characters in the play suggest otherwise, as he is consistently taken
only for whatever his outward signs show. Overdo’s asides and soliloquies work to remind us
that dramatic representation requires conceptions of selves that are on one hand internal and
obscured, but on the other, on display through representation (Maus 28). However, Jonson’s
comic portrayal of an outer self that correlates so closely to the inner self (despite the disguise)
suggests a subversion of the autonomy and unity that the interior subject might suggest. While
Overdo is granted a comic unity between interior and exterior, his fantasy of an interior unity
possessed of a “political brain” (3.5.1) that is permanently divorced from his external
presentation serves to drive his misadventures. Yet, the possibility for change and cognitive
enhancement that Overdo recognizes in the disguise shows that early modern culture was grappling with the possibility that technology provides for malleable selves. However, Overdo falls into the trap of “an ancient western prejudice – the tendency to think of the mind as so deeply special as to be distinct from the rest of the natural order” (Clark 26). This attempt to prevent his own “self” from contamination is at the root of his own misrecognition of the way technology works. Overdo’s own ideological positions blind him to the possibility of hybridization even as he (poorly) enacts it. As he is called a “lewd and pernicious enormity” (3.5.201) by his wife, his exclamation “mine own words turned upon me like swords” (3.5.203) reminds the audience how he becomes one of the many legal and social excesses of the play by the very means he adopts to discover them. Unlike Quarlous, Overdo is unable to read the social currents of the fair for strategic intervention; while he may be able to take advantage of the inscription of information into his disguise, he cannot fathom that others might similarly be other than they seem. It is no surprise then that Quarlous who is only “mad but from the gown outward” (5.5.59) reminds Overdo of his failure to read: he points out to the justice that the “‘innocent young man’ you have ta’en such care of all this day, is a/ cutpurse that hath got all your brother Cokes his things, and/ helped you to your beating and the stocks” (5.6.73-75). This rebuke, when taken with the suggestion they “compare discoveries,” evokes the posthumanity both characters share; it is an awareness of the degree that this negotiable embodiment affects oneself and others that separates the two.

2. “The fitter for what they may be employed in”: Informational and Inscriptional Quasi-Objects

Within the action of Bartholomew Fair, there are many other objects in addition to the disguises that fit Latour’s framework of the quasi-object as a real, discursive, and social entity.
Two of these entities are Grace Wellborn’s marriage license, the book that Grace uses to decide her husband, and Overdo’s *carte blanche*. As material artifacts, the license and book operate in a condition of virtuality. These three quasi-objects instantiate discursive and social relations, transmuted into information through their inscription into material objects. This augmentation of a mundane object into one invested with value (similar to the handkerchief in *Othello*) also follows Marx’s readings of the early modern period – in this sense, awareness of virtuality might also be seen as a product of capitalism. However, Grace’s marriage license and the book waver between their use-value and exchange-value. As they begin to materialize social relations, both are objects with definite utility for their owners, but with the possibility for Grace’s guardian to profit off her wardship, they also represent a definite economic exchange as well.

Grace Wellborn’s journey through the fair represents an intersection between writing, bodies, and quasi-objects, as she takes hold of her own position not through pure will or autonomy, but through the use of Winwife’s blank book. She enters the play as part of a comic marriage plot involving “a girl dispossessed by a ridiculous but powerful blocking figure, representing an unjust and foolish society, who escapes his authority with the help of the young man she will marry” (Haynes 128). Jonson’s alterations to this plot highlight the peculiar degree of autonomy and agency afforded to Grace at the fair. As mentioned above, Grace borrows a book from Winwife in order to select her husband by lottery with the stipulation both suitors will work together for her safe passage through the fair. Adopting this device, Grace both escapes her potential marriage to the foolish Cokes and prevents the two gallants from fighting with each other (at least temporarily). The book becomes an object with a social power over all three; the book binds Quarlous and Winwife to “work together friendly and jointly, each to the other’s fortune” (4.3.58-59), since they do not know which one has “won” Grace’s hand. Meanwhile,
she has her husband selected by a madman’s choice. Grace’s own manipulation of the fair’s quasi-objects represents a unique moment of agency as she enlists the two gallants to prevent her marriage to Cokes. Thus, while she turns her choice between the two, whom she describes as “both equal and alike to me” (4.3.30), into a coin flip, she does so by investing the book with its own agency. In offloading her own decision onto the book, Grace also materializes the social relations between her and the gallants into a (quasi) object. Thus, the book becomes more than a mere artifact for society to project its desires upon since the book has power over all three parties – it becomes society itself inscribed onto an object. Her device employs both suitors towards escaping the fair and inscribes their contractual relationship in the book. In employing these men, she is able to release herself from her betrothal to Cokes, a man so loathsome that she would marry “anybody else, so I might ‘scape you” (1.5.75). While her device works only as long as Quarlous is unaware of which husband she has picked, she still selects her own husband on her terms: she receives her “anybody else.” While not completely autonomous, Grace is not completely subjected either. Using the fair’s environment and adding Quarlous and Winwife’s capacities to her own, she is able to secure a more dignified husband, even as Quarlous undermines her economic agency. Haynes argues that “for the disenchanted lovers the Fair has only this in common with the world of romance, that it is full of accidents and happy chances through which they gain their freedom. The temporary unraveling of the social fabric allows them to reestablish who they rightfully are, by nature and birth” (129); however, it is only in a manipulation of this fabric, or network, in which an assertion (I hesitate at Hayne’s term of re-establishment) of social position can happen. Haynes suggests that Grace is as aloof as Winwife, but while she may remain at ironic distance with the play, her willingness to entrust her choice of husband to the mad Trouble-All constitutes a strategic moment in which she rewrites her own
social position. Because of her symbiotic relationship with the quasi-object of the book, Grace enters a network that incorporates Trouble-All, Quarlous, Winwife, and by extension Edgeworth, since he acquires the marriage contract for Quarlous; in doing so she overrides her prior relationships with Overdo as her guardian and Cokes as her betrothed. While much of this is outside of her direct control, it is this moment in which she deploys the book, as an object with these relations written onto it, that allows her access to an autonomy that would normally be denied in the early modern economy of wardship. Her description of herself as “a woman of extreme levity… or a strange fancy” (4.3.19-20) because she is willing to entrust the choice of husband to chance hides how she has seen the Fair as a chance to exercise an opportunity: “rather than be yoked with this bridegroom is appointed me, I would take up any husband, almost upon any trust” (4.3.9-11). Therefore, while her scheme is disrupted by Quarlous, since he discovers Winwife has won the day, the fact that her agency relies even more crucially upon access to quasi-objects – both the marriage license and the book are required to secure her position – than the other characters shows the precarious social position she occupies.

Due to the device that Grace Wellborn decides upon, Quarlous’s own social situation similarly relies on two objects at first – the marriage license and the book marked by Trouble-All. The book subjects Quarlous even as it enables agency for Grace. Grace’s device functions neither as pure writing surface for social relations, nor as an absolute apparatus of control, since Quarlous is able to manipulate it even as he is subjected by it. However, the codes of meaning inscribed in the contracts (literally through writing) or the social meaning inscribed in Overdo and Quarlous’s disguises show how the inscription of information into material objects begins to give them a volatile and mixed nature. Unlike disembodied information where “human identity is essentially an information pattern” (Hayles xii), in *Bartholomew Fair* these patterns are
embodied and intermixed with the humans who create them. The contracts that serve as materializations of networks or the disguises that serve as an embodiment of multiple discursive forces—all these quasi-objects are rooted in bodies which contain an agency of their own, in their capacity to change (some in dramatic ways) the positions of the fairgoers.

However, Quarlous’s ability to manipulate the fair to his ends works to show a far richer relationship with both quasi-objects and environments than any other character. Through the course of the play, Quarlous is able to negotiate the fair’s environment and reorient objects to his advantage. In the same moment where Overdo’s disguise has him dragged off to the stocks, Quarlous begins to enter into the convoluted network of the fair. His hiring of Edgeworth shows that he is as capable of integrating others into his schemes as well as Grace; Quarlous understands the capacities of the young cutpurse and employs him to augment his own abilities. Able to employ other parties in his endeavor, Quarlous as a subject definitely “has the virtues—alertness, aggressiveness, the ability to improvise, a detached but practical intelligence, and a willingness to get his hands dirty—that make one master in this world” (Haynes 129). As noted above, one of the important conceptions for Clark’s cyborg is the idea of the smart world, and while the fair may function primarily as an outlet for pleasure and excess, Quarlous exploits it for his own utilitarian purposes. Since he is able to adapt his strategies to the task at hand, and even willing to entertain Edgeworth’s vanity and serve as a spectator to the theft since “the act is nothing without a witness,” (4.3.99) Quarlous is able to acquire Grace Wellborn’s marriage license. After he completes his dealings with Edgeworth, he takes stock of his situation: realizing “how impertinently I labour, if the word be not mine that the ragged fellow marked” (4.6.29-30). While he may have told Winwife to “find out a priest i’ the meantime” (3.3.114) as he acquired the license with Edgeworth, Quarlous also realizes he must fulfill additional
conditions before he can ensure success with Grace. Acquisition of the license is not enough for Quarlous because Grace’s book is not a well-behaved object. Instead, it resists an easy manipulation by the subjects at the fair, and works to display an environment where objects are not simply “shapeless screens on which society…[needs] to be projected” (Latour 55); instead, the objects of Bartholomew Fair often gain a life of their own. Quarlous recognizes this, and avoids easily delivering the license to Winwife, instead opting for a longer strategy through which he can lessen the potential feedback to the subject that quasi-objects can create. As he disguises himself and exploits the fair’s festive environment, Quarlous discovers that he will be unable to marry Grace; the additional objects he acquires allow him to turn the domination the book had over him into an advantage.

As we have seen, disguises, while still interpenetrated with information, have an additional effect of completely changing the way that Overdo and Quarlous are socially read as subjects. While access to the inscriptive and informational surfaces, like the book and license, provides a means to augment one’s agency or change one’s social position, the disguises nearly occupy a subjectivity of their own. Francis Barker has argued that “the Jacobean body is at once sacred and profane, tortured and celebrated in the same gesture, because it traverses even the polarities of the culture’s investments: or rather, it is the medium and the substance in which, ultimately, those meanings are inscribed” (21). However, the identities of characters like Overdo and Quarlous are overwritten by their disguises, showing how the meanings inscribed in the Jacobean body are also being inscribed in these quasi-objects. While Grace’s corporeal body is never overwritten in this fashion, the material objects upon which she writes (and is written) become surfaces that her social identity can be re-written. The effectiveness of disguises and objects in securing agency in the play shows how material objects are also being invested with a
writing similar to that which Barker inscribes on the body. These simultaneous writings on bodies and objects overlap to create the subjects of *Bartholomew Fair*. Within the complex biological-material ecology Jonson represents, the lines between subject and object become thoroughly blurred.

The fortunate (and unfortunate) shapes that populate Jonson’s fair show how objects in the early modern period are neither the passive receptacles for cultural “writing” nor the completely alien “material” that, when developed, forms culture’s superstructure. Rather, these early objects continually gesture towards a hybridity: a symbiosis that completes both quasi-subject and quasi-object. Discourse, politics, social relations, and material reality all play a part in constituting these elements of an early modern hybridity; the robust and embodied nature of these hybrids in action (as shown by Quarlous and the Justice) suggests that early modern representation is linked to a complex relationship with nonbiological elements. The agency afforded by manipulation of quasi-objects for Quarlous and Grace shows how Jacobean culture was coming to terms with a radical new subjectivity, one with an “identity which is social rather than essential” (Dollimore 195), but also one in which we can begin to locate the ambivalent relationship between interior ineffability and exterior representation that constitutes Clark’s conception of a “soft-self:” “a rough-and-tumble, control-sharing coalition of processes – some neural, some bodily, some technological – and an ongoing drive to tell a story, to paint a picture in which “I” am the central player” (Clark 138). Overdo possesses the narrative drive and posthuman network, but is unable to read the potential for negotiable embodiment in others. Grace has access to bodily and technological processes through which she extends her cognitive network, but her interventions into social processes are limited. Quarlous serves as the best representation of this “soft self” as he readily modifies his identity and employs nonbiological
aids to suit his own narrative of solidifying his social position. Most importantly though, Jonson represents the multiple ways in which feedback from the nonbiological elements in this problem-solving matrix can open up new possibilities or block off others for subjects who are “mad but from the gown outward” (5.5.59).
CHAPTER 2: “DO YOU CALL THESE PLAYERS?”: METATHEATRICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE POSTHUMAN IN **BARTHOLOMEW FAIR**

Of the multiple strategies through which Jacobean drama complicates and questions early modern conceptions of identity, representation, and performance, the moments in which playwrights scrutinize the theatrical artifice itself provide some of the most striking examples. Early modern authors engage with varying degrees of metatheatricality: from the play-within-a-play to the direct address to spectators, these devices use acting, authorship, and spectacle to make apparent to the audience that the theater destabilizes identities. *Bartholomew Fair* provides two particularly dense examples of this obsession as the Induction and puppet show appropriate these devices to display their role in both the construction of authorship and their implications for society. Jonson’s text may circumscribe the action, but his representations of theater and improvisation work to complicate easy readings of textual authorship. While the play’s textual boundaries may be the perfect example of the “theological theater,” one in which all meaning descends from the absent author-god, this chapter will examine resistances to this conception of theater from within the text, considering how Jonson’s representation of embodiment on stage suggests an alternative model of theater and authorship. While Jonson’s text gestures towards theology, his parodies of theater within the play reveal the interrelated human and nonhuman elements of dramatic – and what I claim is also a technologically mediated – representation: a representation that breaches the theatrical realm and enters into the everyday. Therefore, while *Bartholomew Fair* may gesture towards a theological theater, it exposes the technological elements of this theater, making apparent to the audience the constructed and artificial nature of representation and theology. Jonson’s parodic miniatures of theatrical representation that acknowledge its mediating elements (either the contract between author and audience or the materiality of the puppet) suggest a posthuman subjectivity and
cognition; thus, in examining the “theatricality of this theater, the innocent foregrounding of its device” (Barker 14), we will also discover how theater creates a space in which early modern hybrids can actually be read and conceived as such.

1. The Techne of Theology: Creating an Author for the Stage

The theater of the early modern period provided authors with a multiplicity of representational techniques. The individual strategies that make up these techniques – onstage deaths and violence, interaction with props on stage, disguises, and the spoken lines of the play – could be broadly partitioned into two main categories. I do not wish to suggest these as hard and fast categories, but rather a productive distinction in how the drama unfolds. First, we can identify a tradition within early modern plays that relies heavily on spectacle: Francis Barker’s work suggests that early modern theater is grounded by “graphic stage devices which overwhelmingly mark the visual and the specular as the plane of this theatre’s signification” (17). Plays as varied as Cymbeline, The Revenger’s Tragedy, and A Game at Chess all draw upon a tour de force of stagecraft that provides the center of the action: awakening next to a headless corpse, an overly-violent revenge on the body, or a disguised character behind a “magical” mirror all implicate the audience in a moment of visual reception. The center of the action in these scenes relies particularly heavily upon an actor’s presence upon the stage and the corporeal body upon which cultural and social questions are written and read. The other dramatic tradition could be called the textual mode, one best embodied in speeches and soliloquies, with the pausing or sidelining of spectacle for the actor to attempt to represent through language that which Hamlet suggests passeth show. The early modern theater negotiates and hybridizes these two strategies, which also highlight Katharine Maus’s two competing fantasies of interiority: a spectacular tradition which supports selves “that are fully manifest or
capable of being made fully manifest” (28), discovered through violence and corporeality, and a poetic-textual tradition employed to instead read into “obscure, hidden, ineffable” selves (28). In *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson employs both strategies to construct and represent theatrical representation itself: the induction provides an example of how Jonson’s text becomes the focus of the action (and circumscribes the entire play), the puppet play serves as a particularly strong hybrid between spectacle and text, and the resolution of the debate with Busy relies on a spectacular moment for its central refutation.

However, all these strategies can still be seen as textual, inasmuch as they serve to subject actors’s bodies to a “process by which a ‘performing’ object is animated or ‘in-spired’ by some external authority” (Shershow, 13). Soliloquy and spectacle are both representational strategies not only for actors but also for playwrights, and Barker suggests that of the two, the mode of representation “which is in essence spectacular although words are also spoken, has been judged in principle inferior to the kind so frequent in Shakespeare which is effected, allegedly, in language although accompanied by stage business” (13-14). I would like to suggest in part that this obsession with the language over “stage business” is in part due to the indebtedness of criticism to a model of theatrical representation as “theological.” Derrida suggests that “the stage is theological for as long as it is dominated by speech” (235), and it is to this theology that criticism where “the word has found a place of privilege over the image” (Barker 13) is indebted to. This is not to say that the performed or spectacular elements of drama lie outside of the theological and textual realm; rather, spoken language of the play text provides the strongest link to an authorial sanction or signature that is always impossible to attain. The staged elements of theater may vary in performance, but they still all lie beneath the overarching
authorial sanction as long as they sustain the overall representation of the text. While Derrida describes the theater as one where:

An author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation, letting this latter represent him as concerns what is called the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas. He lets representation represent him through representatives, directors or actors, enslaved interpreters who represent characters who, primarily through what they say, more or less directly represent the thought of the “creator.” (235 second emphasis mine)

The primacy of spoken language does not necessarily position the spectacular elements of theater against theology. The most apparent elements over which the author has control are the lines spoken by the players, but even the spectacular elements of drama are still within the sanctioned elements of the action. Thus the focus on language over visual elements, which Barker contends “overwhelmingly mark the visual and the specular as the plane of this theatre’s signification” (17), is in part due to the ease in which a play text can be seen as more stable than the variability of the spectacle; however, both are employed by the theological model in creating the author.

Barker’s work is significant as it opens up new possibilities for embracing the spectacular. Therefore, while the theological model is always a fantasy since it is impossible for any performance to be perfectly “faithful;” it can often become realized again in critical approaches to play texts. This (yet unrealized) theater with its creator-god figure is also a model that Jonson’s text engages with through *Bartholomew Fair’s* multiple levels of metatextuality. While this theater is not yet entrenched, Jonson’s play seems particularly concerned with the conception of authorship from the Induction on. Scott Shershow notes of this model:
Literal authorship and literary authority – an “inspiration” which is linguistically and philosophically derived from the primitive belief in a divine spiritus or “breath” – descend from the poet down to player-puppets, who represent in articulate multiplicity the singularity of the authorial intention…. This theological model of authorship has been rhetorically constructed, upheld, and imposed on the theatrical enterprise from the humanist revival of the early Renaissance to our own century, even though it has seldom accurately described the theater’s real conditions and social relations. (20)

The fact that Jonson’s text never arrives at this in all its representations of the theatrical situation reminds us that in the early modern period such a model was not yet the norm for either the composition or reception of the play-text, and that it is also always an unattainable fantasy of representation. However, this potential of “inspiration” plays heavily in *Bartholomew Fair* as the Induction begins with representatives of the author who literally read the “author’s” words; the final act involves a puppet show that parodies spiritual and authorial inspiration.

The focus on the most stable of all the potential volatilities of the theater – the text – serves to uphold what is ultimately an illusory model. While both the text and action of the play in this model represent this authorial inspiration, the spoken lines of the play serve as the element that is closest to the signature of the author: the promise that the printed text the actors speak accurately conveys the original composition of “Shakespeare” or “Jonson.” In a discussion of authenticity and forgery in *Languages of Art*, Nelson Goodman establishes an ontological split between arts that are complete at the moment of composition and those with an additional element of performance, since “of the London Symphony… there can be no forgeries” (112). Goodman describes how an art is “autographic if and only if the distinction between original and forgery of it is significant” (113). D.N. Rodowick updates Goodman’s terminology and adds
writing into the autographic, expanding the definition to “the arts of signature… autographic arts are defined by action – the physical contact of the artist’s hand” (14). It is from this that I draw the metaphor of a theatrical signature; it is the idea that at some point a manuscript touched Shakespeare or Jonson’s hand before being printed. Thus, even though Goodman asserts “there is no such thing as a forgery of Gray’s Elegy” (114), the drive to attribute a work to an individual author (or collective of identifiable authors) suggests how early modern criticism is influenced by the autographic art.8

The presentation of a contract ostensibly written by the author during the Induction gestures towards this: while still bound by the representational text of the play, the “articles drawn out in haste between/ our author and you” (55-56) are literally autographic. Similarly, right before the puppet play in the last act of the play, Cokes’s question to Leatherhead “but do you play it according to the printed book?” (5.3.94) gestures towards the original printed Hero and Leander poem that serves as the basis of the play. In referring to the original Marlowe poem, Bartholomew Fair gestures towards autographic arts, since the poem is complete once the author’s hand has left the page and printing begins.9 However, the play’s narrative quickly doubles the irony of any artistic faithfulness: the text is bastardized by Littlewit and Leatherhead, who have taken “pains to reduce it to a more familiar strain for our people” (5.5.103). Unlike the poem or contract, this play is not complete until Leatherhead’s puppets perform it. Borrowing Goodman’s term, Rodowick elaborates the other class of arts as “allographic arts... They are two-stage arts in which there is a spatial and temporal separation between composition and performance. More important, they are amenable to notation. Here the primary creative work is finished when the notation is complete” (14). Therefore, with the allographic nature of theater, the idea that through textuality the author’s signature can be recovered is impossible. Yet, the

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fantasy of the theological theater figures strongly in Jonson’s playtext, with the Induction and performed puppet show providing the primary nodes from which the nature of dramatic authorship is parodied and paraded before the audience; in both metadramatic scenes

*Bartholomew Fair* represents breaks in authorship and allographic faithfulness through moments of improvisation, and in the Induction the actual reading of a text. These strategies require cognitive affordances of a theater not defined by the theological relationship between author and actors, but rather a technological stage that links all parties in a cybernetic circuit. In the Induction *Bartholomew Fair* seems particularly anxious about both the position of the author and the audience within the overarching situation of the theater; in light of this, the theological model remains a productive baseline to see how Jonson’s play simultaneously exposes and exploits the theater’s ability to create subjects within the audience.

2. Situating an Audience: The Apparatus and Early Modern Theater

The theater is central to the play’s Induction, which directly addresses audience members in order to orient them in the space of the Hope Theater. Jonson’s comic prologue works as a particularly obvious mediator between author and audience, drawing heavily upon textual elements, since the Scrivener literally reads a contract. The overall theatrical situation Jonson creates with this Induction is similar to an “apparatus,” which in *What is an Apparatus*, Giorgio Agamben posits as a creator of subject positions. Developing this relationship, he describes “a general and massive partitioning of beings into two large groups or classes: on the one hand, living beings (or substances), and on the other, apparatuses in which living beings are incessantly captured” (13). Agamben considers among apparatuses “anything that has in some way the capacity to orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings” (14); the theater fits particularly nicely among the
multiple strategies of power that constitute the apparatus. However, the hybridity of apparatus and substance is unavoidable, since in Agamben’s framework, subject positions are created from “the relation and, so to speak, from the relentless fight between living beings and apparatuses” (14). Yet, in a passage that cannily echoes Andy Clark’s logic, Agamben suggests that among the apparatuses is even “language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses – one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realizing the consequences that he was about to face” (14). The difference between Agamben’s apparatuses and Clark’s technologies is somewhat fuzzy; however, to draw a distinction, Clark’s technologies are often specific contributing elements to the overarching social situation of an apparatus. I would also like to suggest a distinction in what each produces: apparatuses produce a subject, while technologies produce expanded cognitive or physical capacities. Therefore, the same nonliving things can operate as both apparatus and technology (and many do). Clark sees language as a technology that unlocks a multiplicity of cognitive shortcuts inside the biological brain, including those that “allow us to think and reason about our own thinking and reasoning” (78); Agamben sees language as an apparatus (among many others) that initializes “the very process of ‘humanization’ that made ‘humans’ out of the animals we classify under the rubric Homo Sapiens” (16). Even as it represents one of the most important elements of writing as a technology (the absence of the writer), Jonson’s Induction, through its comic use of contractual writing, exposes it as an apparatus to the audience. In the extended metadramatic prologue the theater itself becomes an apparatus that orients all bodies in its domain – spectators, actors, and author.

This is not to suggest that the theater’s apparatus can only construct a passive spectator: if anything, Jonson’s play reminds us the early modern theater itself was a hub of active appetites
not unlike the fair that he represents. Aside from his representation of the chaotic audience of
the puppet theater, the Induction also explicitly mentions the bear baiting that took place in the
theater, as the Book-Holder begins to usher the Stage-Keeper off the stage with his nod to “the
broken apples for the bears within” (Induction 47). Within the spatial bounds of the theater then,
there are audience subject positions across the spectrum of genres and activities: the bloodsport
of bear baiting, revenge tragedies, comedies, and satire all took place within the same locale.
The multiplicity of potential audience positions that the space of the theater (as an apparatus)
provides reminds us that “the substances and the subjects, as in ancient metaphysics, seem to
overlap, but not completely. In this sense, for example, the same individual, the same substance,
can be the place of multiple processes of subjectification” (Agamben 14). However, I would like
to suggest that apparatuses are also multivalent – that the early modern theater does not orient
the audience unilaterally. The theater is used for activities ranging from bear baiting to drama;
therefore, its space provides a multiplicity of potential subject positions for these activities. An
additional reason is the potential that each audience member is already interpenetrated by other
apparatuses, something Agamben notes. However, the potentiality for audience interference
meant that the theatrical apparatus had to be robust enough to incorporate and provide subject
positions for these unruly spectators and the more critically reflective audience member that the
Induction tries to create.

From the very first lines that beg the audience to “have a little patience, they are e’en upon/
coming, instantly. He that should begin the play, Master Littlewit,/ the proctor, has a
stitch new fallen in his black silk stocking; ‘twill/ be drawn up ere you can tell twenty” (1-4), the
Induction calls attention to the artifice of theatricality with the comic gesture towards the silk
stocking for the Puritan’s costume being hastily sewn up backstage. The theatricality referred to
is the Induction’s own, since the Book-Holder, Stage-Keeper, and Scrivener are also characters, likely costumed as well, who perform Jonson’s play just as Littlewit does. However, the direct addresses to the audience through the performed roles of the Stage-Keeper and the Book-Holder attempt to push past the dramatic illusion to the realm of improvisational performance. The breach of the fourth wall causes this miniature play to take on the guise of reality, despite being bounded by the text of the play. The Induction’s immediate call to the artificiality of theater’s illusions (stating that Littlewit has the first lines) both effaces and makes apparent (and comical) the fact that the play has already, in fact, begun. Throughout the speeches, the consistent references to the figure of the author during the Induction culminate as the Scrivener reads a document ostensibly written by “Jonson” for him and the audience. The metatheatrical spectacle, with the production of the contract, thus makes most apparent, at the moment of reading, the overarching textuality of theatrical representation. Derrida describes how the author never creates on the stage, that he “only transcribes and makes available for reading a text whose nature is itself necessarily representative” (235). The Induction doubles the stakes, purporting to present a text written by the author “made available for reading” directly to the audience. However, there is in actuality no difference between these two representations: the contract is one and the same with the Stage-Keeper’s denigration of “Jonson” as a poet since both are authorized by the text of the play. The piece of writing brought on stage provocatively plays with the possibility that the actor on stage is (and could be) actually reading and therefore “presenting” the document, rather than merely representing the text of the play. In having a document read on the stage, the Induction perversely exhibits the overarching textuality of the theater and creates a leaky boundary that bleeds through to the audience. Jonson’s prologue
makes the theater a liminal space: it places the theater in plain sight as an apparatus and then collapses the distance between the representation on stage and lived reality for the audience.

While the Induction’s device of the contract crosses representational boundaries, the content of its speeches attempts to close off the audience’s potential to disrupt the diegesis to follow. Haynes notes how “the audience literally as well as figuratively shared the stage with the actors [in]… public houses like the Globe [gentlemen] could sit if not on the main stage – there is conflicting evidence on this point – at least in the “Lord’s room” also used as an upper stage” (68). The “fourth wall” is particularly permeable in the early modern dramatic situation, and the directness with which the Induction breaches it foreshadows the similar comedic breaches to the puppet show in the play’s final act. From the beginning, as the Stage-Keeper enters and mocks the play to come, the Induction is structured to address and either silence or convert subject positions outside of those Jonson prescribes. The Stage-Keeper serves as an initial antagonistic receiver of Jonson’s text, telling the audience that “for the whole play, will you ha’ the truth on’t?... It is like to be a very conceited scurvy one, in plain/ English… [The poet] has not hit/ the humors – he does not know ‘em; he has not conversed with/ the Bartholomew-birds, as they say” (5-12). Jonson uses the Stage-Keeper as the representative of the one authenticity that resists the dominance of his textual authority: faithfulness to the historical fair. A “critic” of the theater in his own right, the Stage-Keeper threatens Jonson’s play since the delights of the theater may not live up to those of the lived bodily experience from the historical Smithfield. Jonson addresses his own poetic license through the straw man he sets up; reminding the audience how “these master-poets, they will ha’ their own absurd courses; they will be informed of nothing!” (24), he inscribes the play that could have been into his text and acknowledges the very thing he proceeds to erase. The reading of the comedic contract that takes up the rest of the induction serves as a
broader iteration of this initial technique of presenting then censuring an opinion. However, the Stage-Keeper and Scrivener’s direct addresses to the audience require that the representational illusion is sustained while the narrative illusion is (apparently) bracketed for the audience. While Jonson’s text still maintains control, since the Stage-Keeper is a representative of the “author” despite his language, the Induction engages in a strategy that parodically acknowledges the very thing the theological theater works to erase: the actively resistant critic of the play like the Stage-Keeper who attempts to overwrite the authorial text with his own.

Just like the Stage-Keeper, the Book-Holder and Scrivener directly address the audience: after remarking to the Stage-Keeper how “it’s come to a fine degree in these spectacles when such a youth as you pretend to a judgment” (49) the Book-Holder turns to the audience and suggests that despite this, judgment is the order of the day, that, “yet he may, i’ the most o’ this matter I’faith: for the author/ hath writ it just to his meridian, and the scale of the grounded judgments here, his play-fellows in wit” (50-52). Jonson presents a document of writing that affirms the place of a critical audience member, but also works to construct that critical member on his own terms. The contractual obligations between the audience and author direct the attention of the spectators towards particular authorial strategies. The framing of the entire contract is that it is “not for want of a prologue, but by way of a new one” (53) and serves to partition the audience into “spectators and hearers, as well/ the curious and envious as the favoring and judicious, as also the/ grounded judgments and understandings” (66-68). This suggests degrees of receptiveness as well as class connotations, with the continual references to “grounded judgments,” as well as the partitioning of audience by ticket value from “six-pen’orth… half a crown, to the value of his place” (79, 80). Additionally, the Induction makes apparent both the textual and spectacular contours of the theater by splitting “spectators” from
“hearers.” However, immediately after, the Book-Holder reconstitutes them all as an audience that must “severely covenant and agree, remain in the places their money/ or friends have put them in, with patience, for the space of two/ hours and a half, and somewhat more” (69-70).

This work of separation and reintegration continues towards a general splitting of the audience though, as the contract ostensibly written by Jonson continually partitions off various groups while using the apparatus of the stage to orient the “spectators and hearers” to become the individuated and judicious “every man” (87). Instead of the unruly crowd of a bear baiting or public spectacle, the author of the contract wishes an audience ready to accept his text.

Ostensibly each member has “his or their/ freewill of censure, to like or dislike at their own charge… it shall be lawful for any/ man to judge his six pen’orth, his twelve pen’orth, so to his/ eighteen pence… to the value of his/ place, provided always his place get not above his wit” (76-81). This term purportedly licenses individual audience criticism and censure, comically restricted to ones societal and spatial position in the theater. Yet, the Induction restricts group agency more than this comic term restricts individual judgment: splitting the audience diminishes the potential for the whole audience to either disrupt or censure the performance. The crucial moment comes when the scrivener lays out the terms that “every man here exercise his own judgment and not censure by contagion, or upon trust, from another’s voice, or face, that sits by him, be he never so first in the Commission of/ Wit” (87-88). On one level, this term is intended to isolate the individual heckler as an object of scorn, allowing the judicious audience member a moral superiority. Beneath this, the Induction uses the theatrical apparatus to collectively isolate audience members from each other, imagining a passive position facing the stage, despite the Hope Theater’s round design that would make this impossible. In order to perform these acrobatics of subjection though, the Induction again gestures towards the otherwise normally
masked subject-producing apparatus of the theater. Jonson may be the canniest operator of this apparatus; however, he still requires all the affordances of this technology to insulate his dramatic work from the possibility of a disruptive audience. His choice of the contract is especially provocative in light of the narrative’s contracts, which are open to Quarlous’s manipulation. Like the play’s contracts, which are open to meddling with their permeable borders, the theater itself is a materially negotiated environment where social relations can be instantiated and worked upon. The potential of a suture between that which is represented on stage and the spectators in the Hope suggests the potential to manipulate the linguistic apparatus to effect change in society. While not every member of the Hope may have access to a theater like Jonson, access to writing and printing was growing in the era. The potential to similarly orient others through language – represented both within the diegesis and the induction – suggests potential agency for all the spectators of the Hope.

3. “No fitter match than a puppet:” Mediating Representation beyond Textuality

As Bartholomew Fair reaches its climax, another representation of theater is exhibited in miniature with the puppet show. During the final act a majority of the cast arrives at the puppeteer Lantern Leatherhead’s theater to witness a performance of “The ancient modern history of Hero and Leander” (5.3.6). Ostensibly reduced “to a more familiar strain for our people” (5.3.102) by Littlewit for Leatherhead’s performance, the burlesque of the Greek myth and Marlowe’s poem is performed for an audience that includes the hyper-engaged Bartholomew Cokes (5.4) before being interrupted by the Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. Busy enters a debate with Puppet Dionysius (5.5) in which he spouts anti-theatrical commonplaces that are all roundly refuted, the final being the charge of cross-dressing. The puppet play parodically stretches theological conventions to their limit, as the “author” Littlewit immediately abandons his play to
the performers, as he tells Sharkwell “peace, speak not too loud; I would not have any notice/taken that I am the author till we see how it passes” (5.3.21-22). Through the proctor-playwright, Jonson parodies the authorial figure, showing a creator who intentionally denies a theological link. This pragmatic exploitation of the allographic nature of theater by Littlewit also reveals the way the author is easily forgotten in the theater. Derrida goes so far to suggest that this reveals the fundamental impossibility of theology: “[the author] moreover – and this is the ironic rule of the representative structure which organizes all these relationships – creates nothing, has only the illusion of having created, because he only transcribes and makes available for reading a text whose nature is itself necessarily representative” (234). In relinquishing his authority (temporarily) to Leatherhead, Littlewit does not simply make his text available for reading; he disavows his own role in its production. In erasing Littlewit from the picture, the play gestures towards allographic art’s reliance on the notation that delineates one performance from another; however, once this notation is produced, the author is inconsequential. This is not to say that Littlewit cannot have a stake or role in the production of the puppet play, but as we will see his position is not the privileged one that theological creation implies. Instead, as an author Littlewit has merely provided the text of the play, which serves as one informational and technological element (materially instantiated in whatever text was given to Leatherhead and then in the histrionic representation itself) in a wider cybernetic environment.

Even before Busy’s arrival in 5.5, which completely derails the narrative of the puppet play as he interrupts and attempts to stop Leatherhead, the burlesque of Hero and Leander shows how early modern theatrical audiences and performances are antithetical to theological models. Bartholomew Cokes’s interruptions provide a parodic glimpse into the way early modern theaters could play out “rival social claims of aristocratic audience and professional actors and
playwrights to the space of the theater. This was a real struggle” (Haynes 68). At this point in the play, Cokes has lost any semblance of dignity his station as landed gentry may provide, and Wasp notes how “he’s at work in his doublet and hose” (5.4.85). Nearly destitute, Cokes serves as a defanged representation of these aristocratic hecklers that Jonsons has already called out in the Induction. Cokes’s infantile enthusiasm for the puppets undermines his potentiality as an actual threat, even as he attempts to usurp Leatherhead’s job as “the mouth of ‘em all” (5.3.69), since Cokes claims he will “interpret” (5.4.100) to Wasp. Shershow notes how “in Renaissance puppetry a kind of showman or “interpreter” provided the voices of and bantered comically with his cast of artificial players” (53); Cokes takes it upon himself to double this role of “interpretation” as he banters with Wasp and Leatherhead. However, Cokes is a terrible reader of puppet theater: after the initial extended uninterrupted exchange between the puppets, he interjects “what was that, fellow? Pray thee tell me; I scarce understand ‘em” (5.4.134). Despite Littlewit’s best attempts to make the play “a little easy and modern for the times” (5.3.104), Cokes is unable to follow the dialogue of the play, let alone the “semiotic “codes” of puppet theater” (Shershow 103). Cokes’s attempt to “interpret” quickly collapses on multiple levels, yet he continues to interrupt the play to the point where Knockem remarks “this gallant has interrupting vapours, troublesome vapours” (5.4.209).

Through Cokes Jonson farcically represents the audience members who would fancy themselves as “first in the Commission of Wit” (Induction 89) and attempt to overwrite a performance with their own inane comments. Leatherhead deploys the puppet theater to reorient Cokes into being a less disruptive audience member; through this the text of Bartholomew Fair once again displays the apparatus of theater for the audience. Leatherhead alternatively ignores or redirects Cokes’s noise, sometimes soldiering on with the text with exasperated requests such
as “I pray you be content; you’ll have enough on him, sir” (5.4.184), other times employing strategies that threaten to draw Cokes himself into the action with rejoinders such as “aye, peace, sir, they’ll be angry if they hear you eavesdropping, now they are setting their match” (285). I would like to suggest that while the first strategy of silencing the audience is one the theological mode relies the most upon, the second strategy points towards the more dynamic and cybernetic early modern model of theater that not only implicates but integrates the audience into the dramatic process.

Before the puppet play is completely derailed by Busy’s arrival, *Bartholomew Fair* presents a model of theater that serves to parody the theological conception of authorship. An author makes available a text to an interpreter licensed via faithfulness to an abandoned allographic notation; the disruptive audience that encounters the theatrical apparatus is pacified as it receives this “master text.” Shershow suggests that “the actual puppet show repeats, along the axis of the hierarchy of representation, something like the same strategy: with an overturning and eventual reaffirmation of authorship and authority” (101); Jonson’s miniature drama, where even the puppet theater’s apparatus silences parodies of an unruly audience and puritanical preaching, reinforces this reading. The simulations of theatrical improvisation within the Induction and puppet play are still bound by the text of *Bartholomew Fair*. However, what Shershow misses is that the strategies which Jonson deploys to “[demonstrate] how multiple layers of improvisational performance are finally subsumed within the fixed boundaries of a master theatrical text” (103) are technologically determined. *Bartholomew Fair* exposes how authorship, represented within both the text of the play and the overarching textual boundary, requires the informatics, hybrids, and cybernetic theatrical strategies it represents in order to exist. As noted above, Leatherhead integrates Cokes in the drama of the puppet show in order to
continue the performance of Littlewit’s play; in doing so he reveals the way in which theatrical texts, along with the dialectic of presence-absence that the theological model deploys with its present performers standing in for an absent author, require improvisational strategies that are “authorized.”

In her discussion of the “flickering signifier” of information, Katherine Hayles suggests how the signifier “can no longer be understood as a single marker, for example an ink mark on a page. Rather, it exists as a flexible chain of markers bound together by the arbitrary relations specified by the relevant codes” (31). The chains of signification that go into creating a single flickering signifier mean that dramatic changes can be made with minimal effort: Hayles describes how entire documents can now be changed with a keystroke, suggesting that “the longer the chain of codes, the more radical the transformations that can be effected” (31). Similarly, with its allographic two-step deployment, the playtext itself works as a potentially flickering signifier that can be affected by the unpredictability of performance, which can mutate the dramatic text. This mutation is what we actually see represented in Leatherhead’s integration of Cokes into the puppet play’s sphere of dramatic illusion: a moment in which “some random event… disrupts an existing pattern and something else is put in its place instead. Although mutation disrupts pattern, it also presupposes a morphological standard against which it can be measured and understood as a mutation” (Hayles 33). This productive relationship between the actual performed text of the puppet play (the mutation) which incorporates Cokes and Busy, and the text that Littlewit created (the pattern and allographic “notation”) creates an additional comic text for both audiences (that of the puppet play and that of Bartholomew Fair); additionally, the mutation of the text represents the early modern theater’s capacity to incorporate unruly audience members. While this potentiality for productive deviation always exists due to the allographic
nature of theater, a “Dionysian madness as a result of its complex temporality” (Rodowick 14), Jonson deploys a simulation of improvisation within his dramatic text in order to represent the underlying technologies that constitute authorial representation. Thus, even as the inescapability of Bartholomew Fair’s overarching text subsumes any random elements into its pattern, through representing Littlewit’s puppet play Jonson inscribes the underlying conditions of theatrical performance where mutations in the pattern of the text are productively reincorporated. Within Bartholomew Fair, the popular theater represented gestures towards one where authorial and audience agencies are incorporated into the text at the moment of performance. To understand the non-textual technologies of the theater, we must move from the mutated but allographically ‘acceptable’ Hero and Leander play into the debate with Zeal of the Land Busy, where textual representation collapses. In this debate, Bartholomew Fair portrays a theater ruled by spectacle and momentarily unhinged from the reliance on text and author.

The arrival of Busy on the scene of the puppet play constitutes a complete break of the action being performed by Leatherhead and his puppets. Until this point, the noise produced by Cokes has been reappropriated by the puppet play; however, the interjection from Busy, “Down with Dagon, down with Dagon! ‘Tis I will no longer endure your profanations” (5.5.1), followed by Leatherhead’s perplexed “What mean you, sir?” (5.5.2), signals how at this point the puppet show’s authorial text collapses. However, even as Shershow notes that the “whole scene of improvised debate within puppet show within play also constitutes (and is constituted by) the text of Bartholomew Fair” (104), the actual arguments of the debate show how theatrical authorship is predicated on a technology, one that can operate without the domination of an authorial text. Forcing a departure from representing the textual elements the theater’s narrative provides, Busy’s debate highlights the spectacle of the theater. If the puppet theater’s
representation to this point has served as a comic model of theatrical authorship, the complete
degeneration of the text that sits at the core of the theological fantasy opens the door to a
breakdown of authorial sanction. The interruption is not rebuffed by Leatherhead’s assertion, “I
have the Master of the Revels’ hand for’t sir” (5.5.16), because political sanction is not Busy’s
game: the Puritan indicts theater generally, suggesting “thy profession is damnable” (5.5.18),
echoing the logic of critics of the theater like Stephen Gosson who suggests in his Playes
Confuted that “Stage Playes… were consecrated to the honour of Heathen Gods, therefore
consecrated to idolatrie” (B5R). In refuting charges like this Bartholomew Fair works to provide
a general defense of the theater, doing so through the technological affordances theater provides
rather than the textual possibilities that may or may not pass political censorship. Jonson,
skewering a caricature of a different sort than Cokes, resorts to a strategy that, while generally
defeating anti-theatrical opponents, also serves to completely undermine textual authorship.
Leatherhead, as the director-actor of the play, takes control and integrates multiple
improvisational strategies to appropriate Busy’s interruption. Rather than follow the suggestion
of Cokes that Leatherhead corporeally involve Busy through the puppets as “friends that will go
to cuffs for him” (5.5.25); the puppet master adopts Edgeworth’s strategy “to end it by
disputation!” (28). Appealing to both audience and interrupter, Leatherhead dissolves the text
but not the hyper-material dramatic illusion of the puppets. From this point forward, the puppet
theater begins to operate closer to the realm of spectacle; yet, the breaking of the text that opens
Leatherhead/Puppet Dionysius’s debate serves to show an additional strategy of Jonson’s in
representing theatrical technology.

Jonson simulates a theatrical breakdown, predicating his broader goal of defending the
stage from the unworthy parties he mentions in the Induction on a moment of obstruction. If
until this moment the theater in miniature was assumed to be operating more or less properly, in doing away with text and simulating an improvisation (and breakdown) *Bartholomew Fair* makes the theater an object that is no longer, to borrow terminology from Andy Clark, transparent technology. Clark describes transparent technologies as “those that become so well fitted to, and integrated with, our own lives and projects that they are… pretty much invisible-in-use” (Clark 28). The way in which the puppet play continues with the audience apparently engaged to varying degrees suggests how the cognitive environment of the theater requires a “kind of flipping between invisibility-in-use and availability for thought and inspection” (Clark 48). The comedy of Cokes’s hyper-engaged reactions, which see the puppet theater as “real,” relies on how the audience at Smithfield (and Hope) can read the codes of the dramatic illusion and thus oscillate between transparency and opacity in a way that Cokes cannot. The assumption of normalcy to the dramatic illusion tends towards transparency, but this must be jeopardized to engage Busy, whose attack is against theatrical representation itself. The Puritan lacks the naïve credulity of Cokes or the oscillation of the audience and instead simply sees an “idol”

Theatrical performance and representation, with their potential to leak out of the theater and into lived experience, occupy an ambivalent position in the early modern period; these strategies waver between transparent and opaque technology, which “is one that keeps tripping the user up, requires skills and capacities that do not come naturally to the biological organism, and thus remains the focus of attention… Notice that “opaque” in this technical sense, does not mean “hard to understand” as much as “highly visible in use”” (Clark 37). The myriad re-representations of the theater in the plays of the time recall the audience to this visibility and the artificiality of drama; additionally, maintaining the otherwise transparent identity of the puppet as “Dionysius” after the end of the puppet play’s diegesis renders representation momentarily
opaque. Even without the added opacity of metatheatricality, critics like Gosson find issue with the negotiability of representation: he describes in his tract how “in Stage Playes for a boy to put one the attyre, the gesture, the passions of a woman; or a meane person to take vpon him the title of a Prince with counterfeit porte, and traine, is by outwarde signes to shewe them selues otherwise then they are” (E5\textsuperscript{R}). This noting of both attire and gesture, the interior self and outward signs, suggests an anxiety that the manipulation of theater’s visual and textual may leak out into lived experience. Barker argues that “if the Jacobean texts continually remark beneath their breath or in loud clear voices, “Regard me: I am a play,” or if it was sometimes necessary for them, in order to achieve a sufficient extraordinariness, to double the stakes and let the play within the play raise the density of representation to the second power” (15), this obsession with the dramatic artifice stems from continuity between “the world in which they were performed and the world they perform” (15). If the theater problematizes subjectivity by blurring the line between artificial (opaque) and natural (transparent) (re)presentation in so effectively mimicking lived social relations, Jonson’s play goes a step further. Busy is seen as a person within \textit{Bartholomew Fair}’s diegesis, but remains an actor playing a Puritan; meanwhile, the puppet is outside its own diegetic “role,” but still clothed in the garb of Dionysius and “inspired” by Leatherhead. The puppet steps out into the world of Busy, a world that mimics the world of the audience. The break with narrative that this moment creates calls into question the potential to bracket off performance and representation within the theater.

The opacity of representation is required for Leatherhead to accomplish his end of silencing Busy: his disputation using the puppet serves to highlight the hybrid relationship that subjects have with objects. Initially, Puppet Dionysius may have little affordance as a technology for Leatherhead outside of the comedic value of the diminutive scrivener lecturing
the preacher. The initial complaints leveled at the theater apply as much to actors as the puppet; Busy’s claim that “idol, thou hast no calling” (5.5.45) reflects the common criticism of actors as socially marginal in the time period. Gosson’s text argues that “Most of the Players haue bene eyther men of occupations, which they haue forsaken to lyue by playing, or common minstrels, or trayned vp from theire childehoode to this abominable exercise & haue now no other way to gete theire liuinge” (G6V). Children apprenticed by the theater have no other way to get their living, since their skills with representation and performance rest outside of the honest productive labor of the time period; meanwhile, the adults have abandoned honest work to become actors. After the puppet puns on “calling” and replies “You lie, I am called Dionysius” (5.5.46), it defends itself against the attack that he has “no vocation, idol, no present lawful calling” (49) by suggesting that “Idol is a lawful calling” (53), turning Busy’s calling “of the spirit” (52) upon itself. As the argument develops, Busy’s initial declaration that “I will not fear to make my spirits and gifts known! Assist me/ zeal; fill me, fill me, that is, make me full” (5.5.38-39) works against him as he is just as “inspired” as the puppet or the actors. Placing Busy, who calls upon an absent alterity, next to a puppet that has fallen out of the dramatic illusion into a debate orients subjectivity towards material and exterior representations with the ineffectuality of Busy’s spiritual inspiration. Since Busy’s “interpreter” can never be present, spiritual interiority becomes comically close to the “inspired” voice of the hyper-material puppet; with the moment of opacity we see this leaky border between Busy and the puppet. Puppet Dionysius is a puppet “freed” from his theatrical text; Busy is a preacher entering into a theatrical spectacle. As both meet in the middle, their debate begins shows how technology, subjectivity, and representation are all implicated in constructing not only the theatrical plane but lived experience as well.
If in this moment Busy represents theology, he also shows the limits of the same ideology; even as he calls upon a Biblical master-text to refute Puppet Dionysius with the charge that “you are an abomination; for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the/ female, and the female of the male” (5.5.87-88), Busy is undone. The puppet has provided a blank body on which meaning is created through the interrelationship between spectacular elements (the puppet’s garment) and text (Leatherhead’s voice). In order to silence the Puritan, Leatherhead acknowledges the hybridity that the (puppet) theater provides: his multiplicity of voices and ability to represent any gender upon the unmarked body provides him with an infinitely malleable virtual self. Showing how they are connected, either through a puppet on the hand of Leatherhead or revealing the mechanism that leads down to the puppeteer, reveals a material hybridity and “presence” that Busy’s spiritual inspiration cannot produce. The entity that interacts with Leatherhead and speaks with his voice erases the gap that the theological model requires, instead substituting in its place a hybrid that is neither human nor non-human. The raw material of the puppet on its own cannot overcome the charge of cross-dressing, and neither can Leatherhead’s “skinbag” silence Busy on its own.

The particularly negotiable embodiment provided by human-object hybridity is at the heart of Busy’s attack against theater and the naked representation of the puppet; even as he becomes a vessel for an inspirational spiritual text, he indicts an alternative bodily conduit upon which texts are written and overwritten. The fact that interiority is malleable and open to alteration in the theater, with an actor speaking with a voice that is his own but lines from another, is often safely bracketed since it facilitates the larger stability of the plot: temporary suspension of coherence between inward and outward self can be sanctioned in the service of the theological model since it represents a larger authorial “unity.” However, Jonson’s simulation of
improvisation allows this textual self to enter a simulation of early modern culture: one that has
earlier crossed the theatrical border into the Hope during the Induction.11 Leatherhead and his
Puppet refute Busy’s argument by calling attention to how the Puritan lacks an understanding a
body that can be re-written through outward signs. The willingness of Leatherhead and the
Puppet to “show themselves as they are” stems from the fact that what they “are” is built on the
unmarked body beneath the clothes. The fact that there isn’t anything that they “aren’t,” that in
performance both Leatherhead and Puppet are always “otherwise than they are,” creates a
moment of agency and power over the essentialist Puritan. The spectacular body of
Leatherhead-Puppet, with his capability of multiple voices, male and female, suggests the
absurdity of the charge of cross-dressing: even with his marked sexual body Leatherhead has
through his puppets put on the outward signs and sound) of a woman in portraying Hero.
Theater’s mismatch between internal text and outward spectacle becomes wholly ruptured by the
puppet and his puppeteer. As the puppet finishes his coup de grace of physical and corporeal
spectacle as an answer “by plain demonstration” (5.5.95), he also provides an additional textual
proof, reminding us of the closeness between Busy’s puppetlike nature and Dionysius. The
puppet papers over his lack with the final discursive assertion that “my standing is as lawful as
his; that I speak by inspiration as well/ as he; that I have as little to do with learning as he; and do
scorn her helps/ as much as he” (5.5.99-100). While this invocation of the “inspiring” behind
theology and textuality may attempt to “reinvoke the Jonsonian system of representation with an
implacable logic; for the puppet is also quite literally “in-spired” by the voice of Lantern
Leatherhead (and of Ben Jonson)” (Shershow 106), this attempt to reaffirm the dominance of the
text he does not erase the complementary materiality and raw spectacle that was just provided
by the puppet-human and human-theater hybrid. To answer the charge that most closely attacks
theater’s representational openness, and the mutable and negotiable embodiment it provides, the play must reveal its reliance on a re-writing of the spectacular and textual body. In doing so, *Bartholomew Fair* drags both the affordances and problems of theatrical representation out from the puppet theater and into the diegesis that already simulates reality. The body composed of Leatherhead and Puppet Dionysius stands as an accessible cyborg technology that can overwrite the “inspiration” of both textual and interior identity in reality as well as in theater.

Andy Clark suggests that “with speech, text, and the tradition of using them as critical tools under our belts, humankind entered the first phase of its cyborg existence” (81); however, early modern theater placed a particular convergence of these tools under close scrutiny, allowing for a space that conceives of cyborg subjects. *Bartholomew Fair* consistently exposes the artificial elements that construct the dramatic illusion. If the cyborg is the blending of organism and machine, the puppet play represents this quite literally for the audience. However, Agamben suggests that simply encountering an apparatus subjects an organism; *Bartholomew Fair*’s representation of theater opens elements of the apparatus to broader manipulation and interaction – interaction that can lead to cybernetic agency. Instead of a theological theater that “comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers… attending a production that lacks true volume or depth, a production that is level, offered to their voyeuristic scrutiny” (Derrida 234) the Jonson’s theater remains one in which the audience is not only implicated but actively a part of the action represented on stage. Barker’s most provocative suggestion is that Jacobean theater’s representations “share an unbroken continuity – across the proscenium which *is not there* – with the world in which they were performed and which they perform” (15). This continuity between the dramatic representation and ordinary subjectivity must be broken for the theological theater to exist; however, *Bartholomew Fair*’s Induction and puppet play
provocatively draw upon that continuity to suggest that cybernetic strategies, both written and bodily, may exist for the audience as well.
CHAPTER 3: (NON)HUMAN AUTHORSHIP: THE AFTERLIFE OF BARTHOLOMEW FAIR’S METADRAMATIC SPECTACLE

The spectacular elements of early modern theater gesture towards a material body: one open to writing, but one not yet replaced by the text. This spectacle, even when discovered by a character in solitude like Innogen in Cymbeline, who wakes alone next to Cloten’s headless body, is also witnessed by the audience. In the act of witnessing the audience participates in Innogen’s soliloquy that attempts to read the body; text becomes a technique to read a visual reality and attempt to make meaning out of it. Innogen’s attempt ends in a misreading as she mistakes Cloten for Posthumus, and in Bartholomew Fair, Busy’s attempt to read the puppet’s body also ends in a failure. In these examples from early modern drama, reading the spectacular body often creates epistemic crises rather than resolution, in part due to the fact that “this early body lies athwart that divide between subject and object, discourse and world, that characterizes the later dispensation” (Barker 21). The theater problematizes spectacle; since even as “truths” like Puppet Dionysius’s genderless body are paraded in front of the audience, they are bounded within a representational field. However, it is precisely the theatrical situation with its collective experience of spectacle that defines Boyle’s laboratory. This final chapter will follow how the theater’s underlying posthuman attributes were employed in the construction of the laboratory. Bartholomew Fair portrays theater as both subject-producing apparatus and representational technology; the laboratory produces facts from objects that purport to be beyond representation. Using Donna Haraway’s work on the “modest witness” and Bruno Latour’s conception of the “Modern Constitution,” I intend to show how Jonson’s play creates nascent techniques that the laboratory appropriates for its own theological project. The subject-object split of modernity may not yet be represented in early modern drama’s spectacular bodies; however, in Jonson’s text we can see these two poles of modernity moving apart. The bare technology of theater
represented in Jonson’s text must become mystified in the laboratory. Most importantly, in Jonson’s metadramatic devices we can see both the creation of witnesses qualified to experience his drama and the testimony of a nonhuman witness to produce a spectacular matter of fact; Boyle adopts and enhances both of these strategies in the creation of the laboratory. In these two techniques, *Bartholomew Fair* represents a prototype of the truth-producing theater modernity built for its bipartite constitution.

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour describes the Modern Constitution as a “double separation… between humans and nonhumans on the one hand, and between what happens ‘above’ and what happens’ below’ on the other” (13). For Latour, “below” describes the plane of society that produces “mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture;”; meanwhile “above” demarcates the realm that “creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other” (10-11). Latour traces the origins of this constitution to the time of the English Civil War and the work of Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle.12 Crucially, both Hobbes and Boyle construct theatrical domains: Latour describes how Boyle’s laboratory becomes a “theatre of proof” (18) while Hobbes places the Sovereign as “the Actor of which we citizens are the Authors” (19). Hobbes and Boyle both draw upon theater as a metaphor, but from different directions. Boyle places the audience in the position of power, able to properly “read” the facts produced in front of them. Meanwhile, Hobbes’s theater is one in which the author (as the collective body politic) creates meaning for the actor (sovereign) to enact. Hobbes’s model obviously draws heavily upon the theological model; however, Boyle’s model seems more indebted to the model represented in the Induction and puppet show of *Bartholomew Fair*, one in which a spectacle is beheld and collectively witnessed and read by the audience. To prove the existence of a vacuum, Boyle
developed an air pump “that would permanently evacuate the air from a transparent glass container… [that was] the equivalent of a major piece of equipment in contemporary physics” (Latour 17). Within the air pump Boyle was able to “suffocate small animals and put out candles” (17) for his audience. Yet, as we have seen in Bartholomew Fair, the early modern theater represents how spectacle approaches the limits of reading. While Puppet Dionysius’s body is initially misread by the foolish Busy, even the blank body revealed beneath the clothes marks a materiality that Scott Shershow describes as “a sort of tabula rasa on which the complex patterns of sexuality and gender are endlessly (re)written and read” (105). This endless rewriting on a spectacular body resists the closure and matter of fact that the laboratory must produce. In order to produce these facts beyond politics and discourse, a crucial element that Boyle’s laboratory adds to the theatrical apparatus is that of the “modest witness:” one that Jonson begins constructing in his Induction.

Donna Haraway describes the modest witness as the “the man – the witness whose accounts mirror reality – [who] must be invisible, that is, an inhabitant of the potent ‘unmarked category,’ which is constructed by the extraordinary conventions of self-invisibility” (223). This witness who fades into the periphery of the room to observe dispassionately is essential to Boyle’s theater of the laboratory. The audience Jonson’s contract speaks to in the Induction of Bartholomew Fair is not yet modest; it is willing to “swear, / Jeronimo or Andronicus are the best plays” (94-95) or may enter the theater looking “back to the sword-and-buckler age of Smithfield” (104). The Induction acknowledges spectators that enter the Hope with poor tastes and expectations; however, in making sport of the audience’s preconceptions the contract also integrates these opaquely opinionated spectators into the play on its terms. If it does not yet rigorously enforce modesty for the audience, Jonson’s Induction works to at least establish a
base spectatorial position for judging *Bartholomew Fair*. All three characters in the Induction invoke judgement, and the text goes so far as to comically suggest it is “agreed that every person here have his or their/ freewill of censure… to the value of his. place, provided always his place get not above his wit” (76-77, 80-81). While for Jonson the suggestion that the value of one’s place, spatial or social, correlates to one’s license to judge becomes a point of comedy; Boyle relies on this very valuation in order to gather “credible, trustworthy, well-to-do witnesses… [to] attest to the existence of a fact… even if they do not know its true nature” (Latour 18). While one’s social status provides access to the laboratory, these spectators elide this in their modest testimony. Social status allows one to bear witness to the spectacle; however, in Boyle’s laboratory critical judgment is evacuated. Latour notes that “Boyle did not seek these gentlemen’s opinion, but rather their observation of a phenomenon produced artificially in the closed and protected space of a laboratory” (18). The judicious mind that the Induction desires becomes an element that must be excised from the audience in the space of the laboratory. 

While *Bartholomew Fair*’s Induction may well imagine a passive spectator, the play works to accommodate the unruly contemporary audience. However, there is a hint of modesty in Jonson’s text as well. The Induction baits the witness to watch the spectacle critically in the same breath that it suggests not to read too deeply: “it is finally agreed by the foresaid/ hearers and spectators that they neither in themselves conceal, nor/ suffer by them to be concealed, any state-decipherer, or politic/ picklock of the scene, so solemnly ridiculous as to search out who/ was meant by the gingerbread-woman” (120-124). The contract brackets reading the play so closely as to discover direct correlation between Jonson’s caricatures and real persons. This is a (comic) request for the audience’s willing modesty: to observe and contemplate, but not to read so deeply it forfeits “the stage and [its] laughter” (131). Similarly, Boyle requires a competent
audience for the laboratory; his spectator adds “nothing from his mere opinions, from his biasing embodiment” (Haraway 224). Instead of a human audience then, the modest witness becomes a puppet-like body for the air pump’s authorial text: a blank body like Puppet Dionysius’s, but one that allows a modest (instead of a lewd) retelling to be written.

The emergent strains of modesty in Jonson’s text work to construct the modest witness; however, the production of truth in the laboratory’s theater requires more than the modest witness to erase the representational problems theater creates. *Bartholomew Fair* portrays how the ability to re-write representation (and to technologically manipulate it) exceeds the ability to read these representations through characters like Quarlous; the laboratory, rather than solve this problem theater creates, attempts to elide it through the introduction of a nonhuman witness. Latour describes how with the introduction of the scientific instrument of the air pump “we witness the intervention of a new actor recognized by the new Constitution: inert bodies, incapable of will and bias but capable of showing, signing, writing, and scribbling on laboratory instruments before trustworthy witnesses” (23). Of course, this nonhuman testimony is still within the domain of the laboratory’s “theater of proof,” and the representational slippage of theater can affect it. Jonson’s play depicts the testimony of a particularly immodest, willful, and biased “nonhuman” in Puppet Dionysius’s debate: a product of culture, the puppet also acts as a prototype for the problem Boyle’s laboratory works to solve. The puppet indict the possibility for a nonhuman to speak on its own: while it appears to speak of its own voice it calls attention to how it is manipulated and literally “inspired” by Leatherhead. The puppet’s claim to a voice equal to Busy’s, since he speaks “by inspiration as well/ as he” (5.5.98-99), argues both for and against the testimony of a nonhuman. Jonson’s play literally represents how a nonhuman artifact can produce a text “more reliable than ordinary mortals” (Latour 23) since the puppets can
elegantly produce two “matters of fact” that refute Busy’s accusations in one stroke; however, this refutation also predicates its own “nonhumanity” on the potential of slippage back to humanity, as the nonhuman representative also speaks against any possible unshackling from its human interpreter. Puppet Dionysius is not the impartial mechanism Boyle’s laboratory produces, but as a nonhuman it immodestly exposes the “regions under the room with the visible air-pump, of the labor of the crucial artisans who built and tended the pump” (Haraway 226). Dionysius revels in the inextricable link between the human and nonhuman; he prevents a forgetting of the human manipulation that literally “inspires” him. The fact that Leatherhead is not forgotten and hidden below the floor reveals another element of fundamental immodesty in Bartholomew Fair’s testimony of a nonhuman, an element that must be excised for the air pump to operate in the laboratory’s theater of proof.

Crucially, I would like to suggest that Jonson’s nested puppet theater provides an immodest prototype for the metadrama of Boyle’s laboratory. The laboratory appropriates the puppet play’s nonhuman actors to perform a spectacle for the human witnesses; however, like Jonson’s puppet theater it is pressed into the service of a larger project of authorship. A miniature theological chain is established: nonhumans “lacking souls but endowed with meaning” (Latour 23) make their “texts” available to modest witnesses, “the legitimate and authorized ventriloquist[s] for the object world” (Haraway 224). These witnesses then re-represent this text in their impartial accounts, speaking no more than that which is set down for them by the nonhuman author. Even though Bartholomew Fair’s puppet show parodies the theater, the miniature theater is capable of mastering its audience. Shershow suggests that Jonson’s vision of authorship is one that “fills the puppetlike bodies of his auditors with the mastering spirit of his own authorial design” (61). If Bartholomew Fair does not represent this
authorship completely,\textsuperscript{16} Boyle’s air pump reinvokes this fantasy to fill its modest auditors with an ineffable truth. Additionally, above this modest reincarnation of Jonson’s puppet theater sits Boyle himself; he is the broader author of the drama as he arranges both the audience-actors of modest witnesses and nonhuman author-player in the theater. This theater is silently operated by actors chosen by the author: the “men who worked below the bellows in Boyle’s home laboratory [that] were his men” (Haraway 226) ensure the nonhuman actor functions properly.

Puppet Dionysius immodestly calls out the human actor that ensures he can even speak: an actor himself playing the part of Leatherhead in Jonson’s text. Boyle becomes “the author of their work. He [speaks] for them and transform[s] their labor into his truth” (Haraway 226); however, as Derrida suggests of theology, in the laboratory Boyle has not \textit{actually} produced anything himself. The semi-independent actions of the nonhumans, hidden humans, and quasi-human modest witnesses in the laboratory all refine the metadramatic devices \textit{Bartholomew Fair} uses with one key difference: the nonhuman testimony is not only witnessed, but re-represented in accounts from the witnesses that deliver the matter of fact to society at large.

If Jonson accepts the limitations of the theatrical spectacle and text for the production of truth; Boyle’s laboratory transforms the reading of spectacle in this miniature theater through the voluntary “transparency” of the nonhuman’s interpreters in their recounting of events. The recounting serves a crucial function in the laboratory’s reorientation of the theater from a subject-producing apparatus to a fact-producing technology. Haraway describes how “those actually physically present at a demonstration could never be as numerous as those virtually present by means of the presentation of the demonstration through the literary device of the written report” (226). The production of these reports is the most important element to reorienting the theatrical apparatus: the reports make the metadramatic core of the laboratory and
its witnesses stand in for the broader theatrical situation where Boyle and his actors beneath the pump are implicated. Additionally, as opposed to the subjective tastes of a Jonsonian audience, the written report produces a multiplicity of texts that attest to the veracity and sameness of the spectacle. While the spectacular event\textsuperscript{17} is witnessed by a select few; these few actors re-present the drama witnessed as their own text. It is this reproduction in text of spectacle that ensures that the theater of the laboratory can claim to produce a truth that transcends the early modern theater’s representational limits. Boyle, his assistants, and the modest witnesses become facilitators for the revelation of “matters of fact independent of the endless contentions of politics and religion” (Haraway 224). The texts these men write act as interpreters for the air pump. The laboratory mimics Bartholomew Fair’s puppet show: a nonhuman speaks through an interpreter, but no longer does the interpreter immodestly enter into dialog with the object like Leatherhead and his puppets. Instead, these interpreters faithfully reproduce the script produced by the nonhuman that stands in for the figure of the author. Rather than a collectively witnessed spectacle, the laboratory produces an account of a spectacle, represented in a text that can propagate beyond the spatial limits of the laboratory’s “theater.” Through the production of (authorized) witness accounts, the laboratory effectively effaces how the author of the theater only “makes available for reading a text whose nature is itself necessarily representative” (Derrida \textit{WD} 235). The spectators of the air pump become actors authorized to produce their own written texts; texts that while still representative, through their modest style purport to produce something beyond the bonds of representation. Opposed to Puppet Dionysius’s insistent opacity that “we have neither male nor/ female amongst us” (5.5.91-2), the modest witness’s\textsuperscript{18} narratives “become clear mirrors, fully magical mirrors, without once appealing to the transcendental or the magical” (Haraway 224). This invisibility of writing is what Jonson’s text
is unable to allow: *Bartholomew Fair*’s metatheatrical devices remind the audience that no mirror reflects (or represents) perfectly. Jonson embraces the potential that opaque representations provide for lived experiences; Boyle must create transparency for his laboratory to operate properly.

The indifferent testimony of the modest witness still constitutes a dramatic performance: one that erases the spectacular elements of drama. As subjects authorized to represent the matter of fact, they embody author, actor, and audience all at once. Author of a report, actor in Boyle’s larger theater of the laboratory, audience to the metatheatrical spectacle: the modest witness carries the theater within himself. This collapse erases the theatricality of the laboratory and the earlier fragmented theater: the multivalent agencies in the early 17th Century’s theater are neatly subsumed into the production of multiple documents reinforced through their insistent harmony. The opacity of *Bartholomew Fair*’s theatricality insists the audience read bodies that slip through multiple representational filters. Barker asserts that Jacobean drama is not one where “production has quite ‘disappeared’ into… at the level of representation the conventions of that bourgeois naturalism which has nothing to do with nature, and everything to do with naturalizing the suppression of the signs of the artefact’s production” (15). However, as a theater, the laboratory operates exactly in this fashion: Boyle is capable of staging a spectacle and effacing its production, transmuting it instead into the rarefied text of the modest witness. Shershow suggests that in the early modern theater “not only the character, the player, and the audience but even the author himself are implicated in and contaminated by a system of representation within which they have taken crucially distinct and yet ultimately analogous places” (65). In collapsing all of these parties, the laboratory produces a new entity – puppetlike but not a puppet – that is capable of a unity of purpose that Jonson’s parodic puppet theater only gestures towards. As
“authorized ventriloquists” the modest witnesses become only the masters of the puppet: a nonhuman purportedly beyond culture that must be interpreted by these transparent men.

However, in order for the laboratory to complete its transformation into a producer of facts, the transparency of both the nonhuman’s testimony and the modest witness’s account must become sacred. Agamben describes how in Roman religion and law “‘to consecrate’ (sacare) was the term that designated the exit of things from the sphere of human law” (18). The “culture of no culture” the modest witness occupies becomes the sacred intercessor for pure objects: beyond the human markers of politics, class, religion, race, and gender, the unmarked gains a religious contour. It is the suppression of the spectacle’s production and simultaneous creation of the new artifact of the transparent written text that brings the laboratory’s theater into the realm of what Agamben describes as the religious: “one can define religion as that which removes things, places, animals, or people from common use and transports them to a separate sphere… the apparatus that activates and regulates separation is sacrifice” (18). The modest witness (willingly) sacrifices culture in order to sanctify the air pump’s spectacle; the written report intercedes for the object and brings it into the sacred realm of the pure fact. While *Bartholomew Fair* may often gesture towards the religious and theological, the text remains outside of the sacred space of modernity: its human and nonhuman bodies are marked and rewritten far too immodestly for the modern project’s separations. Crucially, an object brought into the sacred can be reclaimed for everyday use: “‘to profane’ signified, on the contrary, to restore the [sacred] thing to the free use of man” (Agamben 18). While *Bartholomew Fair’s* puppets are not profane in this specific sense, since the nonhuman object has not yet been sanctified, Busy does claim that Puppet Dionysius’s profession is “profane” (5.5.59). In arguing otherwise, the puppet collapses the distance between his nonhumanity and Busy’s humanity.
While the puppet argues he is not profane, the tactic he uses to win the argument, claiming that he speaks “by inspiration as well/ as [Busy]” (5.5.98-99) is the definition of profanation. After the argument neither Busy nor the puppet are set apart from the human realm. Puppet Dionysius’s insistence on his human interpreter also reverses the sacrificial separations of the laboratory; his testimony that nonhumans must “speak by inspiration” speaks to a core strategy for profaning the laboratory’s apparatus. Preserving the other implication of Puppet Dionysius’s collapse, that a human who speaks by “inspiration,” either divine or textual, is still just as profane as the puppet, can allow a similar profanity for the theater. The equality of both forms of inspiration creates a crucial resistance to theology in *Bartholomew Fair*.

Agamben argues that our current epoch is defined by the apparatus: “it would probably not be wrong to define the extreme phase of capitalist development in which we live as a massive accumulation and proliferation of apparatuses. It is clear that ever since Homo sapiens first appeared, there have been apparatuses; but we could say that today there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modeled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatus” (15). However, he admits himself that language is an apparatus, and when taken with Clark’s assertion that the critical use of writing and speech “allow us to think and reason about our own thinking and reasoning” (78) we can see that the condition Agamben locates in late capitalism has always existed since the origin of language. It would be more accurate to say that the multiplicity of apparatuses in our current epoch – cellular phones, television, the internet, and the more recent collapse of all of these into “smart” devices – constitutes a difference in degree rather than kind. However, Agamben argues that “instead of redeeming our world, this machine…is leading us to catastrophe” (24) due to its sacred nature. As long as these apparatuses are sacred, hiding their hybrid production like Boyle’s laboratory, we cannot engage
with them as technologies capable of affording agency. Rather than continuing the process of technological post-‘‘humanization’’ that made ‘‘humans’’ out of the animals we classify under the rubric Homo sapiens” (Agamben 16), the sacred apparatus does “not give rise to the recomposition of a new subject, except in larval, or as it were, spectral form” (Agamben 21).

The early modern theater represents a particularly profane apparatus: one that immodestly exposes its technologies of self, spectacle, and text for the audience’s own (potential) use. Through reclaiming the early modern era’s posthumanity, we can open up modern apparatuses like the laboratory to profanation, allowing them to once again produce subjects, rather than sacred truths beyond the human.
NOTES:

1. Jonathan Haynes notes how “our descriptive vocabulary breaks down in the face of the profusion of this play” (124) as he attempts to succinctly describe the play as a carnival where bourgeois fairgoers are leveled.

2. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* provides the best case what I would call economic innocence – both suitors are of equal status, and the one with the father’s favor is not preferred by the daughter. *Bartholomew Fair* does not only make the economics of marriage an issue from the first act (with Winwife’s desire for Dame Purecraft because of her money); it leaves the issue unresolved.

3. Scott Shershow suggests of *Every Man out of his Humour* that “there is something distinctly puppetlike about this Jonsonnian “humour,” which he defines here as a particular form of focused, single-minded, and unbalanced behavior, the consequence and index of a particular corporeal “quality” that “possesses” and wholly masters the “spirits” and “powers” of the individual” (59). In *Bartholomew Fair* the interplay between the “spirits” and the corporeal elements is brought into sharp focus with the presence of the Puritans and their claim to spiritual truths. However, it is no longer an organic bodily quality but rather the material and bodily appetites of the fair that override the internal “spirit.”

4. This performative-cultural marker relationship also provides the basis for ambivalent misrecognitions like Mistress Overdo’s, “He hath something of Master Overdo” (2.6.70). The disguise reveals how the Justice’s language and action are close to those of the madman, and even Justice Overdo acknowledges this: “they may have seen many a fool in the habit of a justice” (2.1.7).
5. Marx describes how “value… converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language” (322). I would like to suggest that Marx’s Value is interrelated to, and likely a subset of the overarching “information patterns” of material objects.

6. The Oxford edition of the play notes “The guardianship of Grace has been sold by the crown to Overdo. Should she marry without Overdo’s permission, she would have to pay compensation unless she could prove disparagement, i.e. that he had tried to marry her to one of inferior degree” (510). This obviously turns not only the document that Quarlous uses to transfer Grace’s wardship, but Grace herself into a commodity for exchange.

7. An ironic goal in the face of how material texts of early modern plays often defy this. One need only consider the ever-expanding length of the “notes on the text” sections for critical editions of early modern plays. Their justifications for editorial emendations in light of Quarto or Folio editions remind the reader that the text as read is more often than not a hybrid between multiple editions, which can be influenced as much by the editor’s interpretation of the play as potential historical printing mistakes.

8. I am influenced here by the collaborative authorship of Sir Thomas More, and the attempt to identify actual manuscript hands as an effort to attribute scenes to Shakespeare. This play is also especially interesting for an understanding of criticism that focuses on text as autographic since it was never printed and literally had direct contact with each author’s hand. Cases like this make me prefer Rodowick’s distinction over Goodman’s – it more accurately captures the auratic contours that autographic arts possess.
9. Of course, errors in printing quickly complicate this model as well. In addition, *Hero and Leander* was an unfinished poem, completed by Chapman. What I wish to note here is not the ways in which the autographic model is potentially open to critique, but rather the distinction between the conception of a printed text as “finished” when the manuscript is completed and the intentional two-stage nature of theatrical representation.

10. In *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*, Jonas Barish suggests that “Jonson himself would not have countenanced the suggestion that he was attacking the theater in its essence. He would have claimed to be reforming it, scouring off its excrescencies, restoring it to nature and truth after its long bondage to false conventions. Jonson belongs, that is, among the company of artists determined to rescue their art from excessive artifice… he enlarges [dialogue’s] role, making it do duty, it would almost seem, for the element of spectacle he has so strenuously downgraded” (135-6). Since both Busy and Cokes are transformed into docile spectators, it does seem that a remediation of the audience figures prominently in *Bartholomew Fair*. However, the visual and corporeal contours of the play’s disguises, pickpocketing, bodily excess, and puppet-theater suggest how spectacle and artifice still play a role in Jonson’s comedy as both object of satire and genuine device.

11. The contemporary setting of the satire serves a particularly important function here: even though in the Induction Jonson cautions towards attempting to read his figures specifically (Leah Marcus suggests how “we are not encouraged to stray in search of particulars. Jonson’s characters are composites” (40)), at this point the setting works to force engagement with the representational problem the play creates. If the world of *Bartholomew Fair* is relatively contemporaneous with Jonson’s audience, then the puppet problematizes not only Busy’s sense of self, but the audience as well.
12. Latour and Haraway both draw their readings of Boyle’s work in the laboratory from the work of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer in *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Way of Life*.

13. Haynes notes how “the audience is legally separated from the stage, made physically (if not mentally) passive, turned into consumers of a commodity rather than participants in a ritual” (131). However, in drawing this line the Induction must also stretch across it. While Haynes uses Bakhtin to read this separation as both the founding of theater and antithesis of carnival, we have seen how the crossing of dramatic borders *Bartholomew Fair* enacts works to maintain (and represent) the potential for interchange between audience and stage.

14. Leah Marcus suggests an additional function: “This formulation effectively shields *Bartholomew Fair* against accusations of slander. If any individual is so rash as to protest that he has been singled out for reflection in the unflattering mirror of the play, it will be because he cannot think well of himself” (39).

15. Shershow notes how “the puppet-player seems enjoined quite specifically to speak more than has been set down for him” (104). Despite the fact that Jonson’s text is still only a simulation of improvisation, its acknowledgements of dramatic representations freed from text are particularly effective.

16. Shershow suggests that the puppet’s testimony “finally reinvokes the Jonsonian system of representation with an implacable logic; for the puppet is also quite literally “in-spired” by the voice of Lantern Leatherhead (and of Ben Jonson)” (106). However, while the text of *Bartholomew Fair* does sit above the simulation of improvisation, the slippages of representation the play touches off with the Induction, Quarlous, Overdo, and Puppet Dionysius’s body provide an interior resistance to totalizing theological dominance.
17. One that, as noted before, still operates textually.

18. The genderless body of the puppet seems a particularly informative link considering Haraway’s work in the gendering of the modest witness. She describes masculine scientific modesty as one “whose gendering came to be more and more invisible (transparent) as its masculinity seemed more and more simply the nature of any non-dependent, disinterested truth-telling” (232). The appropriation of the puppet by Jonson may serve as a moment where an object that Shershow suggests typically “resembles the cultural image of Woman” (72) becomes invested in a degree of masculine authority in its genderlessness.


WORKS CITED:


