

## William Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder* and the Transmission of Performance Culture

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A London morning at the turn of the century, gloomy. Carnival is past. The city wakes to a close winter dawn on the first Monday of Lent, and citizens of all shapes and sizes, carrying torches, crowd around the Lord Mayor's house, hoping for a sight of "Cauliero Kemp, head-master of Morrice-dauncers, high Head-borough of heighs, and onely tricker of your Trill-lilles and best bel-shangles betweene Sion and mount Surrey."<sup>1</sup> As the throng grows, Lent takes on a festive spirit in the person of William Kemp, London's (and Shakespeare's) famous but unemployed clown, who leaps through the crowd, dancing his way to the city gates and then on to Norwich. As readers did at the beginning of the seventeenth century, we may savor this scene by lingering over Kemp's pamphlet account published as *Kemps nine daies wonder. Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich*. My straightforward concern in this essay will be twofold: first, to recognize Kemp's brilliant but neglected prose as one of the earliest and brightest re-presentations of what we would today call "performance art"; second, to interrogate this occasion as one of the first encounters between unscripted performance and an emerging author culture that legitimates performance by ascribing it to an authorized version. We will want both to appreciate the jingling prose of this "best-belshangles" and, simultaneously, to scrutinize the alterations of performance practice in its transformation into text. Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder* is an event for contemporary scholarship, perhaps more exciting today than it was for an age familiar with the clown's techniques. We will want, therefore, to ask other questions. What does performance have to do with popular culture? What difference does it make that the so-called popular culture we study comes to us in the mediated form of texts? How did a writer, prior to the birth of the novel, go about translating popular elements into prose? In the limited space of the following discussion, I can only propose avenues of future exploration and possible answers. Kemp's morris and its generally neglected analogs will demand our attention for some time to come.

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Against seasonal expectations, the battle between Carnival and Lent has been resumed on this dark London morning. Kemp's body sweats and aches among the crowd. Of obscure origins, the athletic morris seems to have dominated Elizabethans' imaginations as the ultimate expression of ritual dance. The rigorous steps typically included a jerk, a jump, and a caper.<sup>2</sup> With the knees straight, each foot coming forward, the jerk took the accomplished dancer eighteen inches off the ground. The jump required a two-footed hop high in the air, and the caper meant a leap tied to a free-leg shake. In the random recombination of these figures, the dancer flashed in bright, contrasting colors, shimmered in green leaves and morris "napkins" (scarves), all the while jingling in the bells of spring's eventual triumph. In Kemp's dancing one finds a general atmosphere of misrule, implicating civic authority, urban behavior, rural custom, and economic practice. The smell of subversion lingered about the morris dancer. In his *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), Stephen Gosson gave voice to this contemporary suspicion:

For the eye be aside the beautie of the houses, and the Stages, hee [the Devil] sendeth in Gearish apparell maskes, vaulting, tumbling, daunsing of gigges, galiardes, morisces, hobbihorses; showing of iudgeling castes, nothing forgot, that might serue to set out the matter, with pompe, or rauish the beholders with varietie of pleasure.<sup>3</sup>

"Morisces" could ravish the beholder; they meant weakness and trouble, as the young Shakespeare recognized when, in *Henry V*, the Dauphin mocks the abilities of the English as being "busied with a Whitsun morris dance." Such decadence could easily spell subversion, as suggested in *2 Henry VI* when York declares that the rebel Jack Cade can "caper upright like a wild Morisco."

The morris meant a spectacular and therefore seductive engagement of performer and audience. As Kemp's example suggests, the morris, like most dance of the period, appeared as a heterodox combination of song, movement, and dialog. Spontaneity seems to have enabled an evolving interaction between performer and audience. Indeed, on Kemp's journey, people from the crowd offer food, blessings--and drink. Kemp writes:

forward I went with my hey-de-gaies to Ilford, where I againe rested, and was by the people of the towne and countrey there-about very, very wel welcomed, being offered carowses in the great spoon [which held about a quart], one whole draught being able at that time to haue drawne my little wit drye. . . . (5)

Some even share the performance space with the clown. Kemp goes on to dance nine days, resting at intervals to enjoy the hospitality of inns and households along the way. The exuberance of London's street culture spills

out through the countryside for several weeks, and Kemp is careful to dance every step of the way.

The scene suggests an almost paradigmatic example of popular culture and what the twentieth century would call *performance art*. As a document of popular culture, Kemp's pamphlet records these myriad interactions of the morris which, as Baskervill suggests, "belonged primarily to the folk. . . ."<sup>4</sup> As an early and thorough account of performance (one thinks of Simon Foreman's cryptic condensations of Shakespeare as a point of contrast), Kemp's pamphlet hints at the unstable relationship between textual practice and performance practice. It captures the fact that much of what we call "popular" is, by its very transience and immediate cooperation, also performance. Kemp's pamphlet seems, then, to demand more telling terms for its accomplishments. Throughout this essay I will use the term *performance culture* to signify this particular Renaissance blend of performance techniques and plebeian culture.

Without a doubt, the two most intractable difficulties in studying performance culture in early modern Europe derive from the various forms' inherent evanescence and their constant circulation between elite and plebeian groups. Nevertheless, for contemporary critics who have grown up in an age of popular culture shaped by Mikhail Bakhtin, the leap into literary texts via popular culture seems to come with few complications. Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*, a product of the 1930s first published in 1965, exists as a manifesto for scholars because, as Bakhtin argues, Rabelais "is more closely and essentially linked to popular sources and, moreover, to specific ones. . . . These sources determined the entire system of his images and his artistic outlook on the world."<sup>5</sup> With a kind of revolutionary fervor, Bakhtin concludes that "No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow-minded seriousness can coexist with Rabelaisian images . . ." (3). In recent years, writers such as Stallybrass and White, Darnton, Chartier, and Bristol have followed the call.<sup>6</sup> In light of their provocative examples, it ought to be possible to mine Kemp's pamphlet for the elements of performance culture at work in the England of 1600. But in so doing, we should have to rely on Bakhtin's metaphorical bridges between the streets and the literary text. Bakhtin tells us, for example, that "Rabelais' images are completely at home within the thousand-year-old development of popular culture" (3). He assumes that Rabelais' "novel must serve as a key to the immense treasury of folk humor which as yet has been scarcely understood or analyzed" (4). Bakhtin cajoles, telling us that Rabelais' contemporaries would "perceive the oneness of Rabelais' world. They could realize the essential relationship and the links holding together its elements, which in the seventeenth century were to appear heterogeneous and in the eighteenth completely incompatible" (61). Thanks to Bakhtin's relentless rhetoric, popular culture and literary text become one. The two distinct realms are "at home," "keys," "essential," "one." Of course, such flourishes hide the critical moment of transfer when an author appropriates and translates the

lively and always disappearing billingsgate of the market into a distinctly literary text according to a thousand protocols of written expression. Did nothing change in this instance of transmission? Was nothing of the essentially oral culture altered upon its re-presentation in writing?

Kemp's pamphlet demands that we ask these questions--in many respects for the first time. As Peter Burke, in his seminal *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, made clear, popular culture is always subject to *transmission*.<sup>7</sup> I suggest the most significant moments in this process of transmission occur when performance culture gets transcoded into a written text. The originality of my tack becomes apparent when we examine Michael Bristol's enthusiastic and sophisticated introduction of Kemp's morris in light of Bakhtin's theories of Carnival:

His [Kemp's] performance does not have sharp, well-defined boundaries between actors and an audience but is rather a form of participatory scenario that combines dance, comic improvisation and athletic endurance with an atmosphere of festive spontaneity and informal hospitality.<sup>8</sup>

As he *reads* Kemp's pamphlet, Bristol finds immediacy:

Kemp is familiar with the close and immediate relationship between a planned performance and an unplanned social drama. Such conjunctions occur within the playhouse just as they do in the streets, and they are mediated by resourceful cooperative 'scripts' shared by performers and their audience. (119)

Like Bakhtin before him, Bristol ignores the effects of textualization on these "immediate" relationships. The critic's position *as reader* has been elided. Bristol's understanding of a "close and immediate relationship" has been filtered, for Kemp has produced (and Bristol reads) a twenty-two page textual version of a live event (four weeks in duration) weeks after its happening. An immense amount of selection has taken place. More particularly, in a way completely foreign to performance culture, Kemp *directs* this version to a particular audience (in this case a literate and courtly audience, a "true Ennobled Lady") for personal motives (in this case the maintenance of Kemp's reputation and monetary gain). What experience we may now retrieve of the "improvised" has been decked out in the gayest of Elizabethan prose styles full of syntactic hey-de-gaies--all manifestly filtered by textual conventions and ideologies.

Far from being a simple shaping of formal qualities, this transformation participates in the general evolution of Renaissance controls over plebeian celebration and theatricality. Pointing to Stubbes' *Anatomie of Abuses* as an early example, Bristol himself describes

a larger program to restore the structure of authority by subjecting popular culture to vigil and surveillance and coercive restraint. As far as the theater itself is concerned, however, there is an alternative to abolition, that is to reinvent the institution so as to provide it with a well-defined and carefully limited social function. The project of legitimation seeks to diminish the dispersed, anonymous authority of 'players' in favor of a well-defined author function that allows for the ownership of texts and, just as important, for lines of accountability to *de jure* authority.<sup>9</sup>

The gradual imposition of an author function on mimicry, maypoles, Lords of Misrule, and the morris eventually found a kind of consummation in Jonson's establishment of the authorized performance, of "the playwright as the individual center of production" (119). Like Rabelais' own works, Kemp's conversion of his progress into an authored pamphlet exists as a distinct and fascinating step in this process.<sup>10</sup> One may wish to celebrate the redeployment of carnivalesque energies in written genres, but one simply cannot ignore the fact that those energies have been colonized by written conventions.

Rather than offer a simple "reading" of Kemp's pamphlet, an activity that would only hide the manipulations of transmission, I want to turn to the text as a preliminary glossary of the more provocative points of confrontation between textual practice and performance culture.<sup>11</sup> Kemp's prose will continue to bubble, but we will also attend to the ways in which performance culture has been reconstructed by a contemporary.

*Distillation contra Copiousness.* The experience of a morris dance lasting nine days must have been nothing less than wonderful as the borders of Elizabethan communities burst with the clown's progress, his accumulation of disparate voices:

By the way many good olde people, and diuers others of yonger yeers, of meere kindnes gaue me bowd sixpences and grotes, blessing me with their harty prayers and God-speedes. (3)

For these good people, the experience (contra the reader's experience of the pamphlet) must have been, more often than not, irregular, irresolute, and copious. When the mud got too deep, Kemp paused. The people down the road had no idea of his location. Kemp passed through London, and some people arrived on the scene too late for a good view or with too little information. Kemp passed in irresolution. Even the artist himself could miss a given performance, as Kemp explains:

Many good fellows being there met, and knowing how well I loued the sporte, had prepared a Beare-baying; but so unreasonable were

the multitudes of people, that I could only heare the Beare roare  
and the dogges howle. . . . (4)

At the worst, the poorly informed would have simply stumbled on the event, leaving Kemp's mighty project in utter irrelevance. Such is the copiousness of performance culture, a condition that does not, however, impede crucial communal functions. Kemp's passing may have been completely irrelevant to a substantial portion of his audience, but their participation in communal identification would not have been lost. The celebration went forward.

Lacking here, obviously, is the authority advocated by Stubbes and Jonson, a mode of control whose crucial manifestation occurs in the textualization of dispersed voices. Kemp first makes this residue usable through *distillation*, a discursive strategy of quantification. For example, though Kemp obviously encountered hundreds of people on the road, these disparate voices become, variously, "kind peoples" (3), "multitudes" (4), "great numbers" (5), "the people" (7), and so on. In this way, the participants become a single, often beastly Other. Throughout the course of the pamphlet, Kemp is taking pride in his popularity even as he is "stealing away from those numbers of people that followed mee" (6) and deceiving "the people by leaping over the church-yard wall at S. Johns" (17). At Chelmsford, Kemp captures the experience precisely:

So much a doe I had to passe by the people at Chelmsford, that it was more than an houre ere I could recouer my Inne gate, where I was faine to locke my selfe in my Chamber, and pacifie them with wordes out of a window instead of deeds: to deale plainly, I was so weary, that I could dance no more: (7)

This kind of unwieldy mass seems even to deserve distillation, if only for Kemp's comfort as he droops out of the window. In reading the author's lively account, especially in an era defined by the novel, we may too easily pass over Kemp's transformation of copiousness into textualized Other. To grasp the political implications of his strategies for the age, one need only consider Luther's famous apology for the mass murder of peasants, an argument made possible by a similar strategy of distillation.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, Kemp is no villain, but his discursive choices mesh with some of the most powerful hegemonical strategies of the day.

*Focalization contra Accretion.* Multiplicity under control, Kemp undertakes a serious and for the most part successful *focalization*, a directorial strategy aimed at controlling the reader's attention. Kemp lends to performance culture a narrator.

As the people crowded around the dancer during performance, attention would have flowed in waves. What sense there was of focus occurred

accretively over the duration of the event. Bakhtin describes this aesthetic and ideological quality so foreign to Kemp's narrator:

carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a [modern] theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. (7)

This quality, perhaps more than any other, undermines the appropriation of the event for use by a particular ideology.<sup>13</sup> As long as performance occurs in waves of accretion, no single act may be isolated for punishment. As long as everyone participates, who can observe to author the official version?

On the other hand, from a crowd of two hundred faces, the authored text selects a single face and determines how long and in what detail the reader sees it. Other faces simply never appear. Focalization makes possible the graceful introduction of comic dialog in prose:

At length, comming to a broad plash of water and mud, which could not be auoyded, I fetcht a rise, yet fell in ouer the ankles at the further end. My youth that follow'd me tooke his iump, and stuck fast in the midst, crying out to his companion, 'Come, George, call yee this dauncing? Ile goe no further,' for, indeede hee could goe no further, till his fellow was faine to wade and help him out. I could not chuse but lough to see howe like two frogges they laboured. . . . (8)

More than simple good fun, this passage signals, for its day, genuine innovation, a technical accomplishment. Appropriate to performance culture, the two young men participate in the morris with Kemp. Suddenly, decades before Defoe, we see the footlights of prose appear and a break between observer and observed occurs as the two young men give substance to a unified *scene* drawn from England's roads and villages. The narrator can now step back and comically compare the participants to frogs. The move from performance positively enables the craft of the prose writer.

On the fifth day's journey, out of the multitude, Kemp isolates a butcher and a "Country lasse." The butcher tries and fails to keep up with Kemp's pace. The Country lasse laughs, claiming she can do better. In a sparkling piece of focalization, Kemp writes: "I lookt vpon her, saw mirth in her eies, heard boldnes in her words, and beheld her ready to tucke vp her russet petticoate" (9-10). At the end of the episode, Kemp the author can paste in a few verses (by a friend) about the woman:

A Country Lasse, browne as a berry,  
 Blith of blee, in heart as merry,  
 Cheekes well fed, and sides well larded,  
 Euery bone with fat flesh guarded. . . . (10)

The translation from performance culture's accretion to a writerly focalization allows for a writerly accretion of *texts*. The embryonic novel continues to poach on the thriving performance practice.

At such a juncture, we may appreciate Kemp's craft while simultaneously noting its simulation. In a way that Dickens will later perfect, Kemp *seems* to have shown us "the people." In fact, the butcher figures nicely as an out-of-work type from Lent, while the Country lasse summons up images of Maid Marian.<sup>14</sup> Though hardly English realism, the passage suggests how a Breughel landscape could be produced, how the differences of everyday life could be reduced to writerly motifs that seem documentary.

Kemp's encounter with cut-purses proves more difficult and even more suggestive. Rather than view this segment as indicative of the improvisation of performance culture, I would point to the tiny fissures in Kemp's otherwise flawless control. By focusing our attention on the thieves, Kemp is forced to admit that disreputable folk habitually participate in such entertainments. Deftly, the writer turns this admission into an opportunity to improve his own moral standing by contrast. Nevertheless, the dancer's observations destabilize his account when he reports that these unsavory types are regularly caught at the theater and tied to a post *during a performance* "for all the people to wonder at" (6). How is the wonder of thieves different from the "Nine Daies Wonder"? In this admission, Kemp's role as a writer addressing himself to an "Honorable Mistris" in the pamphlet's dedication seems to merge too much with the life of the street. Performance seems to be linked inherently to transgression. Moreover, players willingly divide their audience's attention between their own production and a collection of cut-purses. At this juncture in the history of textualization, performance culture is too ubiquitous and vigorous to be summarily focalized.

*Cartography contra Mental Mapping.* One of the most obvious characteristics of Kemp's pamphlet is its attention to place. The arrangement of the text depends on the careful recording of Kemp's course. In an age that was busy developing cartographic skills but generally lacked maps of England showing the location of roads, Kemp's contemporary reader must have paid special attention to the clown's care in charting the course from Whitechappell to the North-east Suburb, to Mile-end, to Stratford Bow, to Ilford, to Romford, and so on.<sup>15</sup> Always a local affair, tied to a particular community and a particular season, the morris had never before been a mode of travel. The novelty did not escape the playwright William Rowley who noted in 1609 that "Yee haue beene either eare or eye-witnesses or both to many madde voiaiges made of late yeares, both by sea and land, as the trauell to Rome with



the returne in certaine daies, *the wild morrise to Norrige*. . . .<sup>16</sup> By taking his morris on the road, so to speak, Kemp boldly links his dancing to the exploits of men like Drake.

In the experience of the celebration, Kemp's voyage would have meshed with popular knowledge. In an essentially oral world, as Barry Reay has noted,

When older members of the community wanted to provide younger members of the community with a mental map of the parish boundaries, they imparted the message visually or physically, escorting them around the perimeter, striking them about the head at strategic points, tripping them by the heels, or throwing them money.<sup>17</sup>

Reay also cites the recollections of a Gloucestershire vicar who explained that his perambulations with parishoners during Rogation days in 1606 were "not for any superstitious sake, but to see the bounds of the parish" (8). What Raleigh and Hudson set out to do with ships and compasses, ordinary folk did at home, on foot. As he passed through the villages on his way to Norwich, the dancing clown would have meshed neatly with this ancient process of mapping because performance culture encouraged ordinary folk to form and perform their connections with the land.

In pamphlet form, Kemp's morris functions not unlike the map of a colonial explorer, bringing the areas surrounding London into a "metropolitan" connection. The pamphlet form merges neatly with the age's evolving linkage of cartography to authorial control.<sup>18</sup> In its translation into text, Kemp enables the displacement of a community's mental mapping and the subsequent appropriation of the same terrain defined in new, textual terms.

*Choreography contra Dance.* Few elements of performance culture have deeper roots or more theoretically subversive potential than dance. As Weimann points out, "fooling," with its irreverential mocking, is no doubt etymologically one with dancing (47). For Elizabethans, dance meant a heterogeneous mix of costume, song, dialog, and movement. (In our own age, Stephanie Skura's *Survey of Styles* [1983] mimics, questions, and fools its way through a similarly heterodox repertoire alive in the 1980s. Like Kemp, the dance theater of Pina Bausch initiated performances that lasted for hours, carefully fooling with the most basic movements in human behavior.) From the point of view of authorities, whose positions of power depend both today and in the Renaissance on the standardization of print, dance remains disturbingly combinatory, its practice implying a communal participation rather out of place in a hierarchical society unleashing an experiential force quite resistant to condensation by prose or even video equipment.

Turned out onto the roads surrounding London, dance becomes provocative as it engages a particular topography. Borrowing Michel de

Certeau's formulation of walking for dance, one could say that Kemp's dancing "creates a mobile organicity in the environment, a sequence of phatic *topoi*."<sup>19</sup> People follow Kemp, and in their following new relationships obtain. Kemp recounts how the Maid of Chelmsford comes to join him: "They being intreated, I was soone wonne to fit her with bels; besides she would haue the olde fashion, with napking on her armes; and to our iumps we fell" (7). Kemp's prose hints at the cadence and bounce of preparation. A reader may only guess, however, at how traditions find acknowledgement in such a dance, how the community strikes new bonds.

Above all, as Kemp explains, the old and cherished bond of hospitality is reactualized. For the Elizabethan age, hospitality meant an intricate set of social responsibilities: the lodging of guests, the care of the poor, and the ordering of the family. A wealth of pamphlets proclaimed the demise of this valued tradition.<sup>20</sup> During his dance, Kemp grows tired, injures himself, grows hungry. The clown pauses before a door; and in doing so, he recuperates an ancient code of communal care, marking with his own perspiration a sequence of phatic *topoi*. Kemp finds "the great spoon." He locates Master Foskew, who provides him with "liberall entertainment" (9). He arrives at the door of the widow Everet, who offers "so plentifull variety of good fare I haue very sildome seene in any Commoners house" (11).

Perhaps for these reasons, Kemp notes carefully the choreography that governs and shapes the dance. The progress is described as a definite movement between the house of the Lord Mayor of London and the welcome of the Lord Mayor of Norwich. Beginning and ending exist as foci of governmental authority. Of the ninth day's journey, Kemp notes that upon arriving at Norwich, he was advised to "stay my Morrice a little about Saint Giles his gate, where I tooke my gelding, and so rid into the Citty, procrastinating my merry Morrice daunce through the Citty till better oportunitie" (15). Far from an experience of improvisation, the pamphlet here foregrounds the choreography of popular elements, the prior shaping of the audience's response, and the steady control exercised (it appears) over the whole event.

*Ownership contra Communal Privilege.* One of the most frustrating facets of performance culture for ruling interests is its inherent resistance to ownership. As one of its cardinal principles, Elizabethan culture supported the ideal that "a making" must be ownable and therefore marketable. Of course, the people following Kemp on his way to Norwich "make" wholeheartedly what they choose of the spectacle and none of the making can be owned. Bakhtin describes this communal privilege as a kind of communication

impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and

liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. (10)

Kemp acknowledges this communal and multiple making in his description of his departure from London:

Being past White-chappell, and hauing left faire London with all that North-east Suburb before named, multitudes of Londoners left not me: but eyther to keepe a custome which many holde, that Mile-end is no walke without a recreation at Stratford Bow with Creame and Cakes, or else for loue they beare toward me, or perhaps to make themselues merry if I should chance (as many thought) to giue over my Morrice within a Mile of Mile-end. . . . (4)

The community follows but makes as it will.

In a sense, Kemp's whole pamphlet is meant to challenge this capacity. He introduces his text with the complaint that "A sort of mad fellows, seeing me merrily dispos'd in a Morrice, haue so bepainted mee in print . . . I shall appeare to the world without a face, if your fayre hand wipe not away their foule colors" (1). It seems print has engendered a new kind of cut-purse. At stake in this appropriation of the performance experience, Kemp claims, is nothing less than his identity: he has nearly become faceless! Naturally, such a fate awaits every participant in a popular entertainment. By raising the issue of identity in relation to performance, Kemp's authoring innovates. It exists as a subtle subversion of the fundamental noetics of performance culture. He writes to negotiate with a market (of readers) for ownership of his participation in the practice. Author legitimates writing and writing legitimates (an otherwise faceless) author.

Far from being an anomaly in the period, Kemp's whole project resembles nothing so much as a *colonizing* of performance culture. In the blink of an eye, Kemp's mapping turns into an elaborated discourse of colonial ownership. Like the members of joint stock companies, the firms responsible for New World exploration and Shakespeare's theater company, Kemp explains that he has "put out some money" (19). Like an official of a joint stock company, Kemp has organized a voyage among an alien culture, charting the safe harbors among these people. Now, just as the Virginia Company depended on Thomas Harriot to produce a pamphlet describing the company's activities, a text that would lure new investors, Kemp depends on his own writing. Stephen Greenblatt describes the joint stock company's reliance on such texts:

Committed for their survival to attracting investment capital and turning a profit, both companies [the Virginia Company and the

King's Men] depended on their ability to market stories that would excite, interest, and attract supporters.<sup>21</sup>

In this way, the pamphlet form emerges as an entertaining locus of ideological and economic struggle, a particular intersection, moreover, of the expanding possibilities of ownership and the transient events of performance culture. Like Harriot, Kemp writes not simply to control his own re-presentation but to appropriate the speech of the Other, in this case England's rural Other. Only a text makes this kind of colonization possible.

In his pamphlet, Kemp records, for example, the speech of the Host at Rockland:

'O Kemp, deere Master Kemp! you are euen as welcome as--as--as--,' and so stammering he began to study for a fit comparison, and, I thanke him, at last he fitted me; for sith he, 'thou art euen as welcome as the Queenes best grey-hound.' (12-13)

Later, he gathers his audience's invitations into so many London cries: " 'Lack ye? what do you lack, Gentlemen?'" and "'The fayrest way was thorow their Village'" (14). In such passages we read (and collect) the humor of the natives. At the birth of the public theater in England, one discovers colonization and theater sharing the same kind of financial arrangements. More surprising is the shared dependence of colonial and theatrical companies on the conventions of prose narrative, in its power to commodify, to appropriate speech, to produce an other that justifies the exertions of a dominant culture.

Ultimately, authorized versions of performance culture, such as Kemp's pamphlet, did not represent the final reification of plebeian forms, a linear transmission of sender to receiver. The appropriations of performance culture remained far more complex. Pamphlets, in fact, regularly returned to the oral culture. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Saint George of village performances, an official of the community, was patching together speeches out of the inherited oral tradition with speeches that could only have come from pamphlets.<sup>22</sup> In other words, with the advent of the text came the possibility of poaching on that text. What performance culture lost through its confinement in texts could be regained through the theft and dismemberment of those same texts. Kemp's exuberant prose in his *Nine Daies Wonder* can therefore hardly strike the contemporary reader as villainous. Having historicized its place in the uneasy exchanges between performance culture and textual practice in the period, we may note its complicity but also appreciate its wonderful inauguration of what Roland Barthes would call "scripting." Indeed, in his preface to Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Thomas Nashe, Kemp's superior in such translations, imagines the morris as a kind of prose style. Nashe humbly complains that "my stile is somewhat heauie gated, and cannot daunce trip and goe so liuely, with oh my love, ah my love, all my loues gone,

as other Shepherds that haue been fooles in the Morris time out of minde."<sup>23</sup> For a moment Nashe imagines a prose, a scripting, that partakes of the combinatory and transient properties of performance culture. In the *Nine Daies Wonder*, Kemp realizes such a prose.

Today, performance art seeks just this kind of reckoning with textuality. While this is not the place to recount that play of flirtation and theft, I suggest that if performance is to challenge dominant institutions, it must begin to explore its own past and the checkered transmission of that culture from sources centuries old, each one carefully mediated by textualities. In her introduction to performance art, RoseLee Goldberg claims to tell an "untold story." Her story begins with Futurism, but not without a brief backward glance toward "Renaissance examples," Leonardo da Vinci dressing his performers as planets, Polidoro da Caravaggio staging floods.<sup>24</sup> Shadowy, unconsidered examples multiply. What of the Earl of Hertford, who built a mock village in sixteenth-century England for a good show? Or William Cecil, England's noble Cecil, carefully directing the painting of leaves on the paths of his estate with whispered welcomes? What of the marginalized women who staged themselves as witches, both in protest and for survival? Knowledge of this other past, of performance culture's genealogy, has been repressed with amazing success. In an artist like Kemp, we find sources, techniques, momentary tactics, new understandings of the relationship of text to performance. To gather these resources, we hardly have the words.

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## Notes

1. William Kemp, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder: Performed in a Daunce from London to Norwich*, ed. Alexander Dyce (1600; rpt. London: Camden Society, 1840) 3. Subsequent references to this pamphlet appear parenthetically in text.

2. Charles Read Baskervill, *The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1929) 353.

3. Quoted by Baskervill 95.

4. Qualifications of this point are in order. Baskervill himself quotes a contemporary account of a morris dance performed before Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575: "'a liuely morrisdauns, according too the auncient manner, six daunserz, Mawdmariou, and the fool'" (352). A particular practice may have belonged "primarily" to the folk, but that same practice certainly circulated between elite and plebeian groups. On this matter see, for example, David Hall, introd., *Understanding Popular Culture*, ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton, 1984) 8-11; Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) 25.

My own argument is meant to be, in part, an extension of these qualifications. One of the ways in which a popular practice circulated was through its conversion into text. This conversion really emerged in a full-blown way during the Renaissance, and we have as yet no articulated poetics of its strategies and effects.

5. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 2.

6. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986); Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988); Roger Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Methuen, 1985).

7. Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper, 1978) 91-115.

8. Bristol 142.

9. Bristol 119. A study of this evolving imposition of authority must consider Michel Foucault's seminal "What Is An Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977) 113-38, in which the historian marks a bold separation between the flesh-and-blood author and the *author function*, between the author whose eating and sleeping habits remain hopelessly removed from us through an immense collection of mediations and the author function whose existence has been constructed from the text for *use* in the culture. What Stubbes and his followers accomplished was to assert the presence of the flesh-and-blood author while inserting a useful author function. Traditionally, Foucault explains, we have failed to distinguish between the two and so have contented ourselves with repeating the following questions. Who really wrote? What constitutes the author's work? With what originality did the author write? In studies of traditional genres such as the novel or the essay, the asking of such predictable questions may hide the text's relationship to cultural practices.

Kemp's work is no exception. In his introduction to the Camden edition, Dyce carefully sorts out Kemp's authority, noting the evidence for the clown's authorship of the pamphlet, dismissing claims for the clown's publication of other works, and qualifying the participation of an unknown poet in writing verses for inclusion in the pamphlet (vi-xxvi). Surrounding the pamphlet, we find a compact bibliography of research attempting to flesh out the author, his travels in the Low Countries, employment difficulties, theatrical roles, and so on. See, for example, R. C. Bald, "Leicester's Men in the Low Countries," *RES*, 19 (1943) 395-97; Henry David Gray, "The Roles of William Kemp," *MLR*, 25 (1930) 261-73.

10. Recent theorists have found a novel resistance to discursive control in the medium of performance art. See, for example, Josette Feral, "Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified," *Modern Drama* 25 (1982): 170-81; Chantal Pontbriand, "The eye finds no fixed point on which to rest . . .," *Modern Drama* 25 (1982): 154-62.

11. What follows owes an obvious debt, as so much research in popular culture does, to Walter Ong's classic *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982). It should go without saying that my gestures toward the lost experiences of the performance culture cannot claim any ontological status as Truths. I merely seek to give some idea as to what we have lost and so better fix the writerly effects we can study. See also Martin Elsky, *Authorizing Words: Speech, Writing, and Print in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989).

Another way of viewing my method in the following pages can be found in Frederic Jameson's *Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981). Jameson suggests that we read for *textual determinants*, "quasi-material transmission points which produce and institutionalize the new subjectivity of the bourgeois individual at the same time that they themselves replicate and reproduce purely infrastructural requirements" (154).

12. See, in succession, Martin Luther's "Admonition to Peace: A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants in Swabia" (1525) 71-84; "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants" (1525) 85-88; "An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants (1525) 89-99 in *Luther: Selected Political Writings*, ed. J. M. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974). In Luther's texts, the peasant revolt is contained and the brutal treatment of the peasants justified through a careful process of "textualization."

13. One of the principal sources for work in the popular culture of early modern Europe, Peter Burke, in his *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978),

comments that with the advent of textualization, "Concious innovation became easier, no longer held back by the techniques of oral composition" (147). "Concious innovation" and notions of "originality" are textual ideas which may be little more than cues for ideological appropriation.

14. For the role of butchers in such Lenten entertainments, see Bristol, 72-87. For a discussion of Maid Marian in the morris, see Barbara Lowe, "Early Records of the Morris in England," *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 8 (1957) 64; Baskerville 26.

In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson discusses the irony of classic narrative's ongoing attempt to restore the qualities of "face-to-face storytelling" (155).

15. For a discussion of the state of cartography in England during the period, see Harold Whitaker, *A Descriptive List of the Printed Maps of Lancashire, 1577-1900* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1938).

16. Quoted by Dyce viii.

17. Barry Reay, introd., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985) 7-8.

18. See Richard Helgerson, "The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England," *Representations*, 16 (1986), 51-85.

19. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984) 99.

20. See Felicity Heal, "The Idea of Hospitality in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 102 (1984) 66-93.

21. Stephen Greenblatt, "Martial Law in the Land of Cockaigne," in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 148. On the relationship of Kemp to carnival and commerce, see Colin MacCabe, "Abusing Self and Others: Puritan Accounts of the Shakespearean Stage," *Critical Quarterly* 30.3 (1988): 11.

22. Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1982) 11.

23. *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958) III, 332.

24. RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (rev. ed; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988) 8-9.



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