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Saying Farewell with Shoes: The Gift Cycle and Unresolved Class Tensions in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*

Partings punctuate the first scene of Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, first performed by the Admiral's Men at Richmond Palace on New Year's Day 1600.¹ Journeyman shoemaker Ralph Dampport's farewell gift to his wife Jane — a gentlewoman's pair of shoes — accompanies his emotion-packed request for fidelity from her as he leaves for war in France. In early modern drama and culture farewell gifts often represent futile efforts to secure lasting bonds during periods of separation. For the shoes to perform the task he seems to assign to them as farewell gifts, Ralph must emphasize their meaning. The shoes do not speak for themselves. He will not know whether or not Jane values the shoes that he gives her, or their marriage vow. Nor can he know the other pressures that Jane will encounter while they are parted. Once they exchange farewells and tokens, all that remains of the giver is the fashionable gift.

Other characters in Dekker's play, however, influence both the meaning of Ralph's gift and the security of his marriage. The play focuses on three distinct couples. The comical, puffed up shoemaker Simon Eyre (the owner of the shop that Ralph works in) and his wife Margery hope that Simon will move from citizen to gentleman through his mercantile success. Ralph might expect them to protect Jane once he leaves for the war since the shoemakers emphasize their fraternity's strong bonds, and Ralph asks his master to care for his wife. The dashing Rowland Lacy, nephew to an earl, and Rose Oatley, daughter to the lord mayor of London, serve as the aristocratic and wealthy pair in the first subplot. Rowland's family possesses a title, while Rose's family has money. The fathers who represent the impoverished aristocratic and the base-born wealthy families separate these lovers, who eventually unite at the end of the play. Rose and Lacy's relationship contrasts with that of the third couple: Ralph Dampport, the journeyman shoemaker, and Jane, his bride. Dekker uses these couples, the gentleman Hammon, and

Eyre's shoemakers to satirize love and marriage at a variety of social levels. Ralph and Jane appear on stage briefly, and both the comedy of the Eyres as well as Rowland and Rose's socially prominent match could easily cast them into the background. Ralph's farewell gift, however, and its influence on the play's outcome distinguish his story from the others.

Ralph's gift endangers rather than protects. Quite simply, the elaborately pinked shoes, pricked and slashed in decorative patterns, are too fancy for a shoemaker's wife. As the audience learns in the scenes between Ralph and Jane, the shoes Ralph makes especially for Jane, and gives to her in order to guarantee her faithfulness to him in his absence, represent Jane's shift from a shoemaker's wife to a gentleman's fiancée. The shoes, designed to remind her of him, don't just represent his skill as a shoemaker: they also emphasize the ladylike qualities that make her appealing to Hammon and the separation from the shoemaking community that propels her into a gentleman's world. Even though the other shoemakers take part in making the shoes, and these actions communicate that they plan to invest in this relationship by protecting Jane once Ralph departs, they leave her to fend for herself in London. Jane most likely wears the shoes as she moves into the Eyres' house, then out on her own in London, and finally, after she learns of Ralph's death, as she agrees to marry Hammon, a gentleman whom she meets while working in a London shop. On the eve of her second marriage, she sends for new shoes modelled after the first pair, which she wears for a wedding to Hammon that turns into a reunion with Ralph.

By tracking the shoes, we can see that Dekker uses Ralph and Jane's relationship to undermine his seemingly convivial ending. At first this play appears to be a city comedy that suspends class conflict by closing with a party attended by everyone from the king to the humblest shoemakers. Dekker, however, uses a pair of shoes to reveal Jane's ability to assume a new class status by simply donning expensive clothes, as Simon Eyre does to win the ship's cargo, and as the players do on stage even as they enact the scenes. Once Jane slips on the shoes, she starts on a journey that includes her loss of the Eyres' protection, and her ensuing vulnerability to Hammon. When her husband leaves, she steps away from her identity as a shoemaker's wife and into a shop where she, as well as her wares, are on display. As a result, she is put in Hammon's way and into a state between classes. These events set up a physical clash between shoemakers and gentlemen, who fight to possess her as she stands, dressed as a gentlewoman, between the two groups in scene 18. The final scenes of the play confirm that because of these class-based

conflicts, the future of Ralph and Jane's reunion remains suspended and, contrary to the arguments made by David Bevington, Jonathan Gil Harris, and David Kastan, so does the idyllic ending.²

The class composition of the period and of the playhouse suggests the provocative nature of Jane's transition from shoemaker's wife to gentlewoman. A history of shoes confirms that the vast difference between a working-woman's and a gentlewoman's footwear allows shoes to act as class markers. Finally, a look at the common method of making shoes, as well as at the fraternal bonds that exist within guilds, accentuates how Ralph's comical, class-focused friends sabotage the reunion scene by scripting Ralph and Jane's reconciliation.

Early Modern Society and the Playhouse

The class composition of early modern England verifies that social issues freight Ralph's farewell gift and influence the outcome of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. 'The great chain of being', a metaphor used to claim that nature appointed a place for everyone from a deity to the smallest creatures, argues that everyone and everything relies upon one another in order to create a functioning society. While E.M. Tillyard and A.O. Lovejoy's influential accounts of this figuration of social order have been challenged as too-totalizing, the 'great chain of being' does describe one widely-used way of prescribing social order.³ Though the links in the chain are interdependent, they are also unequal,⁴ and this metaphor rationalizes or naturalizes a social hierarchy of nobles and gentlemen, citizens and burghesses, yeomen/rural smallholders, and artisans and labourers.⁵

Education, dress, income, and occupation separated these groups. Werner Sombart cites the years surrounding 1600 as the time during which a new social class, represented in Dekker's play by Rowland Lacy and Rose Oatley, combining old nobility and new wealth, gained a more prominent place in society. While Rose and Rowland unify wealth and title through marriage, a title could also be achieved through service, by purchasing it, acquiring an estate that belonged to hereditary nobility, or obtaining offices which were usually given to the hereditary nobility. A citizen could become a gentleman if he secured a civic position, as Simon Eyre does.

Despite the avenues that allowed for social advancement during the early modern period, a shoemaker's widow marrying a wealthy gentleman is still quite a leap. Jane Dampont would arguably move from the lowest class to

the bottom level of the highest class through such a marriage. Jane's clothing is not just an effect of this leap, but a cause. Dress was a strong sign of 'gentle' status, and Jane acquires that aspect of gentility beginning with her husband's gift and concluding with her gentlewoman's wedding clothes.⁶

When the Rose staged *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, it filled its 2200 seats with a diverse group of people, with their eyes trained on one another as well as the hexagonal stage.⁷ The Rose was built in Surrey, in the suburbs so as to be out of the lord mayor's jurisdiction and possibly free of potential bans on playing.⁸ It was the third London theatre, built after the Theatre and the Curtain, for Philip Henslowe.⁹ The Admiral's Men came there in 1594. The Fortune opened in 1600, at which point the Admiral's Men moved there.¹⁰ They consistently played outdoors with a citizen repertory, whether they were at the Rose or the Fortune, and did not build an indoor theatre as the Chamberlain's Men did.¹¹ These amphitheatres, attracting people from all social levels, represented the class system in miniature. The cheap tickets allowed theatregoers to stand in front of the stage, while the expensive lords rooms separated the higher classes from these crowds; so, while these groups all watched the plays, a shoemaker would not sit next to a gentleman. Indeed, some playhouses, like Henslowe's Fortune, placed a fence topped with iron pikes around the lower gallery to prevent the standing playgoers from taking seats in the gallery.¹² As Ralph's wife, Jane might have stood in front of the stage, shifting her weight from one foot to another in order to remain comfortable, but as Hammon's wife, she would enjoy the balcony area, sitting with her feet resting on the ground and her lovely pinked boots protected from the chaotic crowd below. Whether they were seated or standing, the playgoers would be treated to the display of costumes and props that included money, garlands, beer, seal rings, velvet coats, alderman's gowns, gold chains, French hoods, cudgels, masks, and pairs of shoes made not only for Jane but also for wealthy patrons like Rose Oatley.

Early Modern Shoes and the Farewell

The fashions of the day reveal what playgoers wore to Dekker's play and what the players acquired for use on the stage. The description of Jane's shoes as well as the evidence we have of actual shoes from the period explain what constitutes a gentlewoman's shoe and confirm that Jane's shoes do indeed represent a higher status than she presently claims, since the style of the shoes, and the materials that shoemakers utilized to make them, oftentimes

signified the social position of the wearer.¹³ Audience members of the time would have recognized the incongruity of a shoemaker's wife possessing a pinked pair. The type of shoes made for Jane should be worn and displayed indoors since mud soils delicate pinking. A shoemaker's wife who, according to Simon Eyre, will have to engage in strenuous labour to support herself could not cultivate the leisurely lifestyle that fragile shoes with impractical heels require. The shoes, then, foretell her transition to a sempster's shop girl in scene 12; to a gentleman's fiancée in scene 14 when the shoe is delivered to Ralph so that he can make the bride a new pair, and in scene 18 when the shoemakers stop the couple while on their way to marry.

A brief history of shoes illuminates how Jane's pinked pair marks her status for a contemporary audience. Inventories and wills from the early modern period list two types of footwear: boots and shoes. Shoemakers used calfskin, sole leather, train oil (from whales), hard tallow, soft tallow, and rosin to craft them.¹⁴ Poorer people probably made their own shoes. People living in rural areas generally wore calf-length shoes without heels: dirt and mud made heels impractical.¹⁵ Shoes that were not made to measure had open sides that accommodated different widths of feet. Shoes known as foot bags or cows' mouths had the broad toes and lack of heels that suited people who did not have shoes designed specifically for them. The shoes did indeed look rather shapeless and sack-like.¹⁶

Wealthier people, however, had shoes called 'straights', with each shoe identical to the other, made to measure. In contrast to the wide, slashed, impractical shoes that achieved popularity in Henry VIII's time, the Elizabethan shoe evolved from broad and square, to close-fitting and almond-shaped.¹⁷ Queen Elizabeth I often wore shoes that were pinked, embroidered, and scented; these characteristics belonged to more expensive shoes. Such a pair, in the Ashmolean Museum, made of white suede, is decorated with comparatively simple zig-zag pinking, which extends across the top and around the heel. The shoes feature large openings along the sides, straps fastened across the instep with ribbons, and holes lower down on the tongue where a decorative rose may be attached. The shoe is also embroidered with flowers and vines, and beaded along the line between the upper and the sole.¹⁸ A pair in the Hardwick National Trust, thought to be Queen Elizabeth's ca 1599, is flat and round-toed, with a closed heel and a buckle fastening. Jewels and pinking embellish the shoes. The pinking extends in a square over the top of the shoe and on the heel, forming an unusually elaborate criss-cross pattern overlaid with flowers.¹⁹

By the end of Elizabeth's reign the heels on shoes had grown to two to three inches in height.²⁰ Although English fashions never approached the style of the fifteenth-century Venetians who wore chopines, or backless slippers up to fifteen inches in height, a shoe with a heel and an arch became a sign of fashionable distinction at the end of the sixteenth century.²¹ Lucy Pratt and Linda Woolley confirm that 'Shoes are one of the most evocative areas of dress. Often beautiful and sculptural objects, they can be powerful indicators of the social and economic status of the wearer. The more elaborate and decorative, the less likely they are to be functional or easy to wear'.²² Pratt and Woolley suggest that shoes verge on works of art. They are also a means of announcing and securing social advancement. The authors also argue for a link between Elizabeth I's status display and *The Shoemaker's Holiday*:

Elizabeth I is shown in an engraving of c. 1593–95 wearing wedge-heeled shoes. In 1595, Peter Johnson made the first pair of shoes for her described as having high heels and arches. These probably had heels of wood like those requested by Dame Margery in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* by Thomas Dekker, 1599: 'Prithee, let me have a pair of shoes made; cork, good Roger; wooden heel too'.²³

While Dame Margery demands stylish shoes that will help her on her quest to climb the social ladder, she is not content with a new pair of shoes when she perceives that her husband will soon move from master shoemaker to sheriff. She plans to acquire a new farthingale, a French hood, a bumroll, a periwig, a fan, and a mask (10.37–47). She knows that these items will both represent and facilitate her upward mobility. Eyre seems to understand this connection between clothing and status as well, since when we first see him as sheriff he enters the stage wearing a gold chain and carrying a French hood for Margery. His first words while occupying his new status are 'See here, my Maggy, a chain, a gold chain for Simon Eyre. I shall make thee a lady. Here's a French hood for thee' (10.147–9). Eyre tells her twice that he has acquired a gold chain, since clearly it is not the gold chain that is hard to conceive of, but rather the fact that it belongs to Simon Eyre. The gold chain represents his new status. Margery needs something that will do the same for her — a French hood. Eyre's way of making her a lady is to give her the hood. While his new status is what actually gives her hers, his way of speaking acknowledges that her garments take a part in making her a lady, just as Eyre's disguise of an alderman's seal ring, velvet coat, and embroidered

gown allows him to acquire the valuable cargo to begin with (7.107–8). No other change in him is apparent. He needs only the appearance of wealth to convince the skipper to deal with him, just as Jane acquires the appearance of wealth when Ralph gives her the pinked shoes that travel with her to the shop and into Hammon's grasp. The fact that Ralph claims he will recognize Jane's shoes anywhere confirms that they are of the beautiful and sculptural sort, and inaccurate representations of her class position. Dekker emphasizes the shoe's beauty rather than utility when he reveals only one characteristic to the audience: its frivolous décor.

Fashioning Jane

Jane's life after Ralph's departure demonstrates the problem that the shoes represent: that of distinguishing a person from his or her clothing. In *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass ask us to throw off our modern ideas of being subjects first, who then wear objects, by arguing that during this time, 'clothes permeate the wearer, fashioning him or her within ... clothes, like sorrow, inscribe themselves upon a person who comes into being through that inscription'.²⁴ Their language evokes Ralph's description later in the play of the shoes that have returned to him: they encase Jane's feet, and while only a small part of her, they represent all of her. If clothes permeate, fashion, and inscribe, the shoes have the power to attach themselves to Jane's body and remake her in their image. She comes into being or is reborn once these shoes take hold of her, so this refashioning sounds permanent, inscribing her with deep, indelible marks reminiscent of the pinking that Ralph carves into the shoes.

Given how Jane's story unfolds, the shoes she receives seem to influence her perception of her own worth, thereby altering her behaviour. The shoes may also influence other characters' perceptions of her and further her refashioning in that respect as well. Margery Eyre certainly seems to think Jane's shoes have changed her, since she reports to Ralph that Jane's attitude caused a quarrel between the women that resulted in Jane's departure. When, upon his return from the war, Ralph asks Margery about Jane, she says, 'She was here awhile, and because she was married grew more stately than became her. I checked her, and so forth. Away she flung, never returned' (10.90–2). Margery confirms that Jane changed only after Ralph left and she moved in with the Eyres: she 'grew more stately'. Since Jane 'flung' away, Margery judges that she is haughty, and also that she believes she possesses qualities

that make her superior to the Eyres. However, the play portrays Jane as rather meek before her removal to the Eyres' house: she only cries and obeys the people around her. So what changes right before she moves? Ralph presents Jane with the shoes, and he leaves. Margery blames Jane's behaviour on her status as a married woman, but even though Ralph and Jane are called newly married, all we know is that they have been married for less than a year (1.153). Yet marriage itself does not seem to have changed Jane, since Margery asserts that Jane changed only after Ralph's departure, causing Margery to alter her opinion of her. Since Jane becomes stately after she acquires a gentlewoman's shoes, the quality of the shoes seems to separate her from the others right after Ralph leaves, and continues to do so for the rest of the play.

Although Margery only points out that she finds Jane's behaviour repellent, the shoes alone might cause her to view Jane differently. Since Margery expresses her own ambition in terms of clothes and shoes (10.34–50), she might be jealous of Jane's attractive, pinked shoes. Wearing the shoes, Jane may not need to say anything at all in order to make an enemy of Margery: the shoes likely offend Margery's eyes just as Jane's actions do. After all, Margery, used to being the sole woman in the house (aside from some servants), suddenly has to share attention and space with a younger, prettier woman who wears finer shoes than she does. The shoes silently communicate that Jane does not know her place.

Since shifting self-perceptions riddle this play, we must ask whether Jane's purported stateliness should be seen as permanent given the class mobility that city comedies promote. Jane appears to change after she receives the shoes, at least from Margery's point of view, but this change, even if Margery describes it correctly, would not preclude the possibility that Jane's behaviour might alter again, just as her appearance would, once Ralph returns. Jane likely once wore garments that marked her as a shoemaker's wife, and this inscription does not prevent her from becoming newly fashioned as a gentlewoman. Her steps up in the world suggest that she could also retreat back down, that her inscription may not be permanent. If clothes are indeed powerful markers, what happens when people experience a series of refashionings? How do people read themselves, and how do others read them, when layers of garbled inscriptions render their state illegible? Indeed, Jane's multiple inscriptions cause the confusion in the final scenes about where she must finally belong. Since the scene suggests that Jane must choose which group to join, in this moment she may have the opportunity to inscribe herself.

In language similar to that which Jones and Stallybass employ, Mark Osteen points out that ‘gifts are not only made by subjects but also make subjects; and all transactions are imbricated in the complex skein of made and withheld exchanges through which our fluctuating, convertible social identities are fashioned’.²⁵ Osteen’s arguments about gifts corroborate my claims about gifts of clothing. The shoes ‘make’ Jane. But his theories help us think about how it matters that Jane receives the shoes rather than buying or making them for herself. In his assessment of how gifts work to shape identity, Osteen offers a more flexible definition of identity than Jones and Stallybass assume. If the shoes are a gift as well as a garment, Ralph plays a powerful role in fashioning Jane by creating a particular type of shoe. After all, Ralph’s conception of a suitable shoe initiates Jane’s transformation. This play in general focuses on ‘convertible social identities’, from the Eyre’s social climbing to the titled Rowland Lacy’s masquerade as a shoemaker. By taking the aforementioned concepts together, we can clarify the question that animates Ralph and Jane’s reunion scene: will Jane throw off her new identity and return to Ralph, or is her status as a gentlewoman so deeply inscribed on her that they can never again be entirely united? When Jane decides to return to Ralph, she rejects her gentlewoman’s status, thereby illuminating the idea that she is still free to choose. She cannot, however, remove her rich clothing until she returns home with Ralph, and we never see her do so.

Friendship and a Reunion

During the farewell scene, Ralph intends that the shoes represent his place in the community. He tells Jane, ‘Here, take this pair of shoes cut out by Hodge, / Stitched by my fellow Firk, seamed by myself, / Made up and pinked with letters for thy name’ (1.237–9). Hodge, Firk, and Ralph all give her these pinked shoes, pricked and slashed in decorative patterns that reveal fabric of contrasting colours underneath. Even the order in which he describes the process highlights the work of the other men, as he tacks his contribution onto the end of the statement. Ralph’s emphasis on the fact that the fraternity of shoemakers made the gift reveals his intention of drawing his wife and friends together so that he can be sure they will look after her. Jonathan Gil Harris argues for the importance of a prop’s ‘social life’, referring to Arjun Appadurai’s work through the use of that term. For him, the customized shoes are not only a gift for Jane, but also for the audience. The shoes act similarly to a modern advertisement by gesturing to ‘an extra-theatrical

world of goods, producers, and consumers'.²⁶ Gil Harris questions whether these advertisements focus on the product, the manufacturers, or something else entirely. He ultimately argues that the play's passages demonstrate two concepts of property: 'the familiar notion of property as individual commodity and/or capital *asset*; but also, just as importantly, the more elusive notion of property as *membership* within a corporate body'.²⁷

Since the three men make the shoes together, they appear to share a strong friendship; having all of them work on a single pair of shoes does not reflect standard shoemaking practices, at least as the play describes them. All other descriptions of their work reveal that the men take on jobs and make shoes by themselves. Not only does Ralph engage to make Jane's second pair of shoes (14.5–7), but in scene 13 he also works alone on a pair of shoes for Mistress Priscilla (13.24–5). Lacy/Hans makes Rose's shoes (13.56–7); Hodge makes Margery's (10.32–5); and Firk makes shoes for Sibyl, Rose's maid (7.87–8). The play does not mention that the men help one another at any point in the shoemaking process. Indeed, when Ralph speaks of making shoes for Mistress Priscilla, he claims that she specifically asked him to make them. The play, therefore, seems only to work within Gil Harris's concept of skill as a property that guarantees membership in a fraternal, corporate brotherhood protecting one another from outside threats when it comes to Jane's first pair of shoes. Only hers are corporate. According to Gil Harris, 'Ralph ennobles the shoes as the skillful product of collective craftsmanship. In doing so, he invites the audience to view the shoes less as a love token for Jane than as a homage to the artisans' property of fellowship and association'.²⁸ If the first pair of shoes represents fraternity rather than love, it is significant that Jane wears them as she leaves the Eyres' protection, goes to work in a shop, and becomes engaged to Hammon. That first pair, then, suggests the breakdown of fraternity rather than its sustenance. When the shoemakers go to 'rescue' Jane she is wearing the second pair, made only by Ralph, and therefore more clearly a love token. Ralph's commitment and skill, rather than the strength of the fraternity, precipitates the quest to retrieve Jane.

Jane's first pair must be special, and distinct from those that they make to sell, since the fact that all of the men unite to make Jane's gift receives emphasis. The shoes likely, in part, represent the fraternity's awareness of a duty to care for Jane, given the strong bonds to which these comrades frequently lay claim. Their assistance might confirm for Ralph that Jane will be safe while he is gone. Juana Irene Green also analyzes the involvement of Ralph's comrades in the gift, seeing it in a positive light:

Hodge, Firk, and Ralph have all had a hand in producing the shoe that will embrace Jane's foot while Ralph is away. Discursively, Ralph wraps his wife in what he believes will be the protective custody of his trade: the shoes function as a wedding ring, symbolizing not only Ralph and Jane's union but also Jane's union with the brotherhood of shoemakers who have fabricated her shoes.²⁹

Unfortunately, Jane's union with the brotherhood is not even sustained for one scene. The farewell scene, rather than marrying Ralph and Jane to the guild, precedes both Ralph's and Jane's departures. Simon Eyre tells Jane that once Ralph leaves she must find work (1.15); Firk suggests that Jane may soon be so destitute that she will have to beg and prostitute herself in order to survive (1.138–43); and both Hodge and Firk send Ralph off to war in a few lines. Eyre does not promise her protection; the shoemakers joke about replacing Ralph in her life, and about her future poverty. While some of these comments can be attributed to the shoemakers' attempts to get Ralph out of military service, they still also represent Ralph and Jane's pending isolation from the fraternity. Although Green believes that the fact 'that the crew of shoemakers worked together to make Jane's shoes demonstrates the group's cohesion and Ralph's inclusion in the community', whatever cohesion the group briefly achieves can only be demonstrated by their interactions in the first scene.³⁰ We don't see them make the shoes together, and Rowland Lacy (disguised as Hans) takes Ralph's position until scene 10. Lacy, not Ralph, drinks and carouses with the men. Ralph leaves his fraternity behind as he joins the community of soldiers, and when he returns to the shoemakers, they welcome him but ultimately use him for their own entertainment in the reunion scene and don't treat him as a comrade who is on an equal footing with them.

The quality of the shoes and the fact that many men made them unite to impede the progress of the scene in which Ralph and his friends must fight to prevent Jane's marriage to Hammon. In the fight scene the shoemakers use their association with Simon Eyre to further their attempt to retrieve Jane. Eyre, who embodies the values of a citizen comedy, defeats the wealthy and titled and purchases, through his mercantile success, the stature that makes him sheriff and eventually lord mayor of London.³¹ His achievements then prompt his shoemakers to achieve their own victory over the wealthy as they confront Jane's gentle suitor in order to reacquire Jane for Ralph without surrendering the new clothing Hammon has given her or the money that Hammon offers in order to purchase her for himself. He tells Ralph,

Mark what I offer thee [*Laying down money*] Here in fair gold
 Is twenty pound. I'll give it for thy Jane.
 If this content thee not, thou shalt have more. (18.83–5)

The shoemakers' victory depends on their threat of force. They do, however, use Simon's position as lord mayor as surety for their success; it enables their daring words and actions. Firk exclaims that, 'And for Hammon, neither Hammon nor hangman shall wrong thee in London. Is not our old master, Eyre, Lord Mayor?' (18.19–22). Firk goes so far as to say that abusing a gentleman, and even committing a crime that calls for hanging, is possible now that they are so well connected. While Firk surely exaggerates when he speaks of avoiding the hangman, his connection to a citizen who now holds influence in the city emphasizes the idea that Eyre's success implies all along: with money comes influence in circles that used to be closed.

This scene is still comic in many ways, despite these unsettling class issues. Hodge and Firk manage to engineer the play's comic ending by organizing the rescue and scripting Jane's recognition of her husband. She initially does not know it is him. Hodge states, 'Jane, dost thou know this man? 'Tis Ralph, I can tell thee. Nay, 'tis he, in faith; though he be lamed by the wars, yet look not strange, but run to him, fold him about the neck, and kiss him' (18.38–41). Hodge speaks as if giving stage directions, thereby setting up a reunion that might seem contrived. Hodge's words also reveal what Jane does while he speaks. She must pause or shake her head, or hang back, refusing to believe that Ralph is alive, since Hodge tells her three times that she must go to him. He tells her how to embrace her husband, and since he does not allow her any time to free herself from Hammon and go to Ralph, Hodge's interference both emphasizes Jane's hesitation and makes her ultimate return to Ralph look like Hodge's choice more than hers.

In this scene, the shoemakers have the opportunity to redeem themselves by retrieving Jane after losing track of her during Ralph's absence. Hodge's focus, however, is on getting the best of the gentleman. He suggests that Jane should be set in the centre of the stage, between both parties, and asked to choose the man that she loves (18.58–60), and correspondingly to which class she belongs. Many eyes must be trained on this figure wearing a gentleman's clothes, as she muses,

Whom should I choose? Whom should my thoughts affect
 But him whom heaven hath made to be my love?
 [*To Ralph*]. Thou art my husband, and these humble weeds

Makes thee more beautiful than all his wealth.
 Therefore I will but put off his attire,
 Returning it into the owner's hand,
 And after ever be thy constant wife. (18.61–7)

Once Jane separates herself from the men she speaks confidently. Her opening question and prompt decision do not seem at all confused. She does not hesitate when she chooses Ralph. She confirms that she thinks only of him, which is what Ralph asks her to do when he gives her the shoes. She attempts to communicate that she has received and interpreted Ralph's gift correctly; she has remained faithful, even if her external trappings suggest otherwise.

Jane also claims that heaven has made their love, but what does this claim mean? Does she think that their love was always meant to be, or that she must choose him because she is already married to him? Heaven has sanctioned their union; they have been married before God, and she dares not break her marriage vows. She answers her own question by stating that he is indeed her husband. She has an obligation to him that supersedes her promise to Hammon.

Once she acknowledges this fact, she must quickly realign herself with the class that she has left behind, so she tells Ralph that she loves him for his poor clothing, presumably because she knows that she must make clear that she cares more for him than for all of her present finery. She knows that she must change her appearance in order to fulfill her vow that she will be the wife of a shoemaker once more. She must persuade Ralph that she prefers humble weeds, because she prefers him. Since she can't very well strip off her rich garments on the spot, she cannot become his constant wife quite yet. Her speech only gives the promise of future constancy, so their union remains uncertain.

Despite the fact that she and Ralph have refused both finery and money during their efforts to reconnect, Hodge and Firk make sure that Jane still remains dressed for a wedding with twenty pounds in her possession. Amy L. Smith argues that this reunion marks a remarriage for Ralph and Jane: 'this "ceremony" — a woman in a wedding gown taking her husband to be hers "after ever" — closely reiterates a more typical ceremony, in some sense doubly marrying or remarrying the bride and her long-lost husband'.³² According to Smith, the fact that Jane keeps the gown and the money just adds a pleasant bonus to their reunion. Problematizing this theory is the fact that the shoemakers intercede on Ralph's behalf and accept Jane's purchase price. The two groups of bickering men push aside Ralph and Jane's words of

love for each other. They fight over Jane and Ralph, and clothes and coins, rendering people and objects indistinguishable as they battle. The shoemakers win Jane, the clothes, and Hammon's money, but at what cost? Jane is still dressed as a gentlewoman, as signified by Oatley and Lincoln mistaking the masked Jane for Rose (18.120), so she is still separated from Ralph. Ralph cannot win Jane back, nor can she willingly return to him while they are both hampered by the symbols of her new status. This unstable ending is reminiscent of *Twelfth Night's*, which leaves Viola dressed as the boy Cesario. That play ends with Cesario, not Viola, engaged to Orsino, and so the relationship remains suspended until Cesario becomes Viola. Jane is in a similarly precarious position: she cannot return fully to Ralph until she can divest herself of a gentlewoman's clothes, and she never does so during the action of the play. In the end, Dekker refuses to relieve the tension caused by the wealthy donning humble garments (Lacy), and those of lower rank dressing themselves in accordance with their changed status.

David Kastan claims that 'the romantic logic of the plot overwhelms the social and economic tensions that are revealed: Rafe and Jane are reunited, Lacy and Rose are wed, and class conflicts dissolve in the harmonies celebrated and confirmed in the Shrove Tuesday banquet at Leadenhall'.³³ Kastan is certainly correct: the king sanctions Rose and Lacy's marriage, and the shoemakers enjoy a fabulous party. David Bevington also surmises that since the shoemakers defeat Hammon nothing stands in the way of a comic ending.³⁴ Ralph and Jane, however, last appear on the stage as a couple divided by shoes, gown, and friends. Ralph shows up alone at this final party, and he does not speak at all. Only Rose and Lacy remain to celebrate harmony, and since Rose and Jane mirror each other in the sense that they both lose the men that they love and they are both courted by Hammon, Rose's presence emphasizes Jane's absence. Rose's happy ending implies that in order for Jane to participate in the resolution of class tensions, she would have to choose Hammon. The presence of a newly wed Hammon and Jane would provide symmetry to the final scene, with the marriage of a gentleman to a working-class woman complementing the union of an aristocrat and a middle-class heiress. Those two unions would effectively marry all classes. Instead, Jane's absence affirms the disharmony between the gentle and working classes, as do Hammon, Hodge, and Firk's unresolved arguments.

For Kastan, in contrast, 'the reaffirmation of Rafe and Jane's marriage redeems the alienation of working-class lives, discharging the threats of social disintegration and neutralizing the temptations of materialism'.³⁵ But Jane

last appears dressed as a gentlewoman and clutching gold coins, and since she and Ralph probably stand next to each other on stage, Ralph's humble weeds stand in stark contrast to Jane's garments. This visual element implies that their marriage does not signify a working-class victory, or an idealized victory of love over materialism. For this victory to take place, Ralph and Jane need to come to the party with hands clasped, and Jane clearly dressed as a shoemaker's wife once more.

Ralph's solitary state at the end of the play confirms the inconclusiveness of their union. The jolly shoemakers celebrate at their promised party with only Ralph left alone. Lacy and Rose, the titled and wealthy versions of Ralph and Jane, celebrate together at the party. We do not know what has happened to Jane. The Eyres and their favoured shoemakers celebrate hand in hand with the wealthy and titled. All seems unrealistically well unless you pay attention to the second subplot. Kastan confirms that,

The play cannot be understood as a realistic portrait of Elizabethan middle-class life. It is a realistic portrait only of Elizabethan middle-class dreams — a fantasy of class fulfillment that would erase the tensions and contradictions created by the nascent capitalism of the late sixteenth century.³⁶

Dekker gives the audience its fantasy, but its realization is hampered by Ralph's loss of his wife, his debilitating war injuries, and his role as a figure to be used by others whenever they find it convenient. Ralph gives, and waits for his return.

Green argues that 'the shoes magically reunite not only husband and wife but also the couple to the guild. This mystical reunion is yet another idealized resolution of real social tensions'.³⁷ Since the shoemakers force the couple apart in the process of reuniting them, they also make it impossible for the guild to embrace the couple. Jane is not welcome. As Margery stated previously, when Jane grows 'stately' she must go. Despite the magnificent party at the play's end that displays royalty, gentry, and shoemakers mingling, Ralph and Jane's uncertain fate ensures that the class conflicts remain unresolved.

Notes

- 1 Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, *English Renaissance Drama*, eds. David Bevington, Lars Engle, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen (New York, 2002), 483–543. Subsequent citations of this play will appear in parentheses in the text.
- 2 David Scott Kastan, 'Workshop as Playhouse: Comedy and Commerce in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*', *Studies in Philology* 84.3 (1987), 324–37; and Bevington, Introduction to *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, 483–7.
- 3 E.M. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (Macmillan, 1946), 10–20; Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (New York, 1960); and Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (New York, 1960).
- 4 Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580–1680* (London, 1982), 17–29.
- 5 Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge, 1996), 50–1.
- 6 Werner Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism* (Ann Arbor, 1967), 6–9, 14.
- 7 Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* (Cambridge, 2006), 46. The star actor for the Admiral's Men was Edward Alleyn; their most famous dramatist was Christopher Marlowe; and Philip Henslowe owned the theatre. Gurr, *Playgoing*, 60. All playgoers documented between the years 1567–1642, as well as all references to playgoers in other texts record only a little over 400 references out of the probably fifty million people who visited the theatre over the years. Gurr suspects that certain people were mentioned because they were unusual in some way, a fact that would impede any attempt to detect the characteristics of the common playgoer. His records include, for example, references to almost as many women as artisans, and the gentry represent 115 out of 195 names. The list contains only twelve citizens, despite the fact that this class supposedly comprised the majority of the amphitheatre's audiences.
- 8 Andrew Gurr, 'Henry Carey's Peculiar Letter', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56.1 (2005), 52.
- 9 F.G. Fleay, 'On the History of Theatres in London, from Their First Opening in 1576 to Their Closing in 1642', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 10 (1882), 114–15.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 115.
- 11 Andrew Gurr, 'Venues on the Verges: London's Theatre Government between 1594 and 1614', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.4 (2010), 476.
- 12 James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (New York, 2005), 117.

- 13 Robert Morris, *Headwear, Footwear, and Trimmings of the Common Man and Woman, 1580–1660* (Bristol, 2001), 26.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 16 Tudor Shoe: 1485–1602, permanent exhibit at the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery.
- 17 Lucy Pratt and Linda Woolley, *Shoes* (London, 1999), 15–17.
- 18 Ashmolean, ca 1600.
- 19 Jenny Tiramani's extensive archive of studies of period costume at the Globe Theatre led me to the locations that allowed me to examine these early modern artifacts. Tiramani was director of theatre design at the New Globe Theatre, Southwark, London from 2003–2006. Hardwick Hall, Doe Lea, Chesterfield, Derbyshire is a Tudor house built for Bess of Hardwick.
- 20 Morris, *Headwear*, 26.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 22 Pratt and Woolley, *Shoes*, 8.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 24 Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000), 2.
- 25 Mark Osteen, 'Gift or Commodity?', Mark Osteen (ed.), *The Question of the Gift: Essays Across Disciplines* (London, 2002), 240.
- 26 Jonathan Gil Harris, 'Properties of Skill: Product Placement in Early English Artisanal Drama', Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (eds), *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge, 2002), 36.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 50–1.
- 29 Juana Irene Green, 'Desired Properties: Materializing and Managing Social Relations in Early Modern City Comedy', PhD thesis (Columbia University, 1999), 24.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 26. For further discussion of the argument about the gift and its status as an object growing social bonds, see Jacques Godbout, *The World of the Gift* (Montreal, 1998); David Cheal, *The Gift Economy* (London, 1988); Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986); and Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York, 1990).
- 31 Gurr, *Playgoing*, 152.
- 32 Amy L. Smith, 'Performing Cross-Class Clandestine Marriage in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*', *Studies in English Literature* 45.2 (2005), 347.
- 33 Kastan, 'Workshop as Playhouse', 324–37.

- 34 Bevington, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, 486.
- 35 Kastan, 'Workshop as Playhouse', 328.
- 36 Ibid, 324.
- 37 Green, 'Desired Properties', 26.