Performing Historicity in Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*

BRIAN WALSH

In a recent book on Shakespeare and genre, Lawrence Danson writes that most Elizabethan plays labeled as histories represent “a tiny sliver of the past,” and “deal mainly with the public realm, with political events, and specifically with the things that happened to or because of a few English kings.”¹ As Danson implies, such a reductive definition of the genre denies the full breadth of the dramatic historical field in this period. Closer examination of the performance of pastness in the late-Elizabethan and early-Jacobean theaters indeed suggests a historical imagination among popular playwrights that was open to more than the “tiny sliver” that is most often recognized as historical drama. The commercial stages were wide enough to accommodate visions of the English past in which housewives, merchants, and citizen figures dominated. In plays such as *Arden of Faversham, A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *The Roaring Girl*, the early modern stage tapped into historical subject matter that complemented the kind of state history Danson describes by focusing on what can be broadly called the “middling sort.”²

Perhaps the best-known play to feature a middling-sort history is Thomas Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (1599). Dekker recounts the story of Simon Eyre, a figure from the English chronicles, who becomes Lord Mayor of London in the fifteenth century. *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* presents a multilayered plot, and features, along with this historical story, a prominent romantic narrative in which Eyre is only peripherally involved.

Brian Walsh is an assistant professor in the English Department at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He has published essays and reviews in *Shakespeare Quarterly, Performing Arts Journal, Theatre Journal*, and elsewhere. He is working on a book-length study of theoretical performance issues in Shakespeare’s early history plays, entitled *Shakespeare’s Past*. 
Critics traditionally give greater weight to this romantic aspect of the play, and it is thus usually classified as some species of comedy.\(^3\) In this essay, I focus on Eyre’s trajectory toward the office of mayor. Through scrutiny of this storyline, I want to consider *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* as dramatic historiography in order to explore what impact staging a middling-sort past might have had on the historical imagination of the early modern era. I aim to show that, through its engagement with the “local” past of London and its citizens, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* participates in cultivating a critical awareness in audiences that historicity is an effect that is produced by modes of performance. This effect is achieved in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* through an emphasis in the play’s language and characterizations on the humanly produced nature of historical knowledge, an emphasis that is sharpened and reenforced by the practical dynamics of dramatizing a London past on the London stage.

To read *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* as an Elizabethan history play helps to redefine the limits of that genre, while also helping to redefine the relation between the popular theater and the emerging historical consciousness of the English Renaissance. The history play was a predominant genre in the commercial theater in the age of Shakespeare. The popular stages were thus sites for the cultural work of historical transmission, places where the past became intelligible through the dynamics of drama. I begin exploring the place of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* in this context with a brief discussion of tensions over the subject matter of historiography in the sixteenth century in order to see how Dekker positions himself within these debates by locating the local within the historical sensibility of his play. I then look at Dekker’s protagonist Simon Eyre as a figure who creates himself through his language and role playing as a significant subject of history. I next move to an analysis of moments of history making within the play that demonstrate Dekker’s interest in establishing historicity as a temporal effect itself constructed in time. Finally, I examine the play’s conspicuous citation of its London environs, a move by which *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* reveals itself, and the practice of staging history at large, as originating in the laboring imaginations and bodies of theater artisans in the context of an increasingly plentiful and powerful urban citizenry.

While *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* cannot deliver a comprehensive answer to the ancient question “*Quid sit historia?*” or “What is History?” for the Renaissance, it can expand our imagination of how, and indeed where, early modern playwrights imagined
the past. As the sixteenth century and the Elizabethan era drew to a close, Dekker’s experiment with dramatizing history took into account the past of the environment in which the play was generated: the city of London and the milieu of the middling-sort actors, authors, proprietors, and audiences of the commercial theaters. *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* marks a moment in the late-Elizabethan era at which thinking about, telling, and “doing” history had become more fully popular and more explicitly a form of cultural production.

**SUBJECTS OF HISTORY**

In the late sixteenth century, there was an emerging controversy over the proper content for works of “serious” history. Thomas Blundeville’s *The True Order and Methode of Wryting and Reading Hystories* (1574), usually cited as the first English philosophy of history, emphasizes the importance of distinction and discrimination in historical subject matter: “It is meete that the lyues of Princes shoulde bee chronicled that it may appeare how things were gouerned vnder euerye kinde of Prince, were he good or bad.” According to this formulation, historical figures could be benevolent or evil, so long as they were of sufficient noble stature to be impressive as examples to be emulated or villains to be disavowed. In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham makes the point in more explicitly social terms. Discussing the most fit subject matter for writers interested in “veritable” histories, such as Thucydides, as well as those who make fictions from historical material, such as Xenophon, Puttenham writes: “the actions of meane & base personages, tend in very few cases to any great good example: for who passeth to follow the steps, and maner of life of a craftes man, shepheard or sailer . . . yea how almost is it possible that such maner of men should be of any vertue other then their profession requireth? Therefore was nothing committed to historie, but matters of great and excellent persons.”

Making the place of the “craftes man” preposterous in historical writing, Puttenham anticipates dismissals by other humanist writers who disparage lower-born historians along with lower-born subjects of history. Gabriel Harvey could write of the chroniclers “[Richard] Grafton, [John] Stow, [Raphael] Holinshed, and a few others like them who are not cognizant of law or politics, nor of the art of depicting character, nor are they in any way learned,” while Thomas Nashe in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592) notes a
conflation of vulgar writers and vulgar subjects, disparaging “lay Chronigraphers, that write of nothing but of Mayors and Sheriefs, and the deare yeere, and the great Frost,” who “want the wings of choise words.” When Nashe refers contemptuously to writing of “Mayors and Sheriefs,” he is specifically critiquing emphasis on the city and its prominent figures—the local rather than the national—in historical writing, a charge directed against the urban-oriented histories that proliferated in chronicles, shorter prose works, poems, and ballads.

Richard Johnson’s poem *The Nine Worthies of London* (1592) offers an alternative perspective. *The Nine Worthies of London* features a kind of dream vision in which the figure of Fame fetches Clio, the muse of history, to record the deeds of some “Worthies” of “famous London.” Fame must first explain to Clio and the other muses that these worthies are not “Kinges and mightie Potentates, but such whose vertues made them great, and whose renowne sprung not of the noblenes of their birth, but of the notabl[e] towardnesse of their well qualified mindes, aduaunced not with loftie titles, but prayed for the triall of their heroycal truths: of these must you indite, who though their states were but meane, yet dooth their worthie prowessse match superiours.” Fame then awakens the series of deceased heroic citizens sleeping in Elysium, among them vintners, grocers, a merchant tailor, and a fishmonger. The “worthies” each tell their stories filled with acts of virtue and valor, and Clio records their deeds for future remembrance, because, Fame insists in closing, “I would haue malicious mindes that enuye at the deserts of noble Citizens, by proofe of these mens worthinesse to repent their contempt, and amend their captious dispositions, seeing that from the beginning of the world, and in all places of the world, Citizens haue flourished and beeene famous.”

Johnson’s heady statement in defense of the historical place of citizen heroes, and his affirmation of the importance of London itself as a *locus* of the historical, might be read as an answer to Blundeville’s humanist template. Along similar lines, Thomas Deloney’s *Strange Histories* (1602) presents a series of ballads on the English past. Deloney contrasts unseemly actions among noble figures to the doings of a more inspiring citizen type, as songs of King Edward II’s lurid death and King Henry II’s imprisonment of Queen Eleanor give way to the heroic story of Sir William Walworth, fishmonger and one of the featured Lord Mayors in Johnson’s *Nine Worthies*, noted for slaying the rebellious Wat Tyler and effectively squelching the fourteenth-century rebellion.
of Tyler and Jack Straw. Such commitments can be seen across Deloney’s oeuvre, in particular in his novelistic prose works *Jack of Newbury* and *Thomas of Reading*, and the two parts of *The Gentle Craft*, each of which probably appeared between 1597 and 1600. Deloney and Johnson are representative of a cluster of popular authors who were expanding romance plots toward matters of social, urban history. Both men present an alternate field of historical subject matter, making clear that the more exclusive preferences of humanist writers did not preclude a flowering of more inclusive modes of historical representation. *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* demonstrates this alternate perspective migrating to the commercial stages, where a low-born playwright like Thomas Dekker might depict a citizen like Simon Eyre.

Deloney’s influence is in fact directly palpable in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*. Dekker drew on historical sources, namely Stow’s *Survey of London* (1598), for some details in his play, but his primary narrative debt is to Deloney’s *The Gentle Craft (The First Part)* (ca. 1597). Deloney’s novel introduces the figure of Simon Eyre by citing and perhaps incorporating the authority of the chronicle histories that flourished in the sixteenth century: “Our English Chronicles do make mention that sometime there was in the honourable City of London a worthy Maior, known by the name of Sir Simon Eyer [sic], whose fame liueth in the mouths of many men to this day, who, albeit he descended from mean parentage, yet, by Gods blessing, in the end he came to be a most worthy man in the commonwealth.” Dekker’s play follows the paths taken by Deloney and Johnson by making the middling sort a component of the historical imagination. Just as Deloney transfers Eyre’s story from chronicle to novel, Dekker transfers it from novel to the stage, where it takes its place alongside plays exploring figures from English history such as Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, usually dated as exactly contemporaneous with *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (a coincidence I will explore later in this essay).

It should be noted, though, that Dekker himself did not claim to be doing historical work in his play. In an “Epistle” prefacing the 1600 quarto, he calls *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* a “merry conceited comedy” wherein “nothing is purposed but mirth.” In the “argument” of the play put forward in the Epistle, Dekker devotes just one line to Eyre’s “coming to be Mayor of London” (Epistle.16), and seems mainly concerned with describing the romantic plot involving Lacy, a nobleman who disguises himself as a shoemaker to woo a prosperous, but low-born, citizen’s daughter. While Dekker chose to advertise his play in terms of its romantic
and comedic elements, one of the play’s most salient features is a concern with telling a story from the past and a more general idea of enacting pastness. The play proposes a cross-class love match that alludes to rising social tensions between the wealthy nonaristocracy and the old nobility, a story that, I will argue, is interrupted and punctuated by moments that complexly mark the play world as a thing of the past, and thus cultivate a sense of historicity.

This historicity is structured around the humble rather than the great. Simon Eyre, and not the king with whom he socializes at the play’s end, is the prominent character in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*’s historical narrative. In fact, the king is not even named. One critic has conjectured that Dekker sought to suggest Henry VI, because according to the chronicles it was during his reign that Simon Eyre became Lord Mayor, while another, noting the king’s bonhomie among the tradesmen, has asserted that Dekker’s king “could only be” Henry V. Such arguments are conjectural. What is certain is that leaving the king unnamed has the effect of diverting attention from the monarch figure to the historic specificity of the middling-sort hero of the play. In this story about the past, the monarch is a composite, and, while he performs important—indeed, necessary—functions at the play’s end, his particular identity is not central to the story of Eyre’s journey toward the Lord Mayor’s office.

The focus on the Londoner Eyre at the expense of any particular interest in the king gives a place to the *local* in the historical imagination. Along these lines, Simon Morgan-Russell has claimed that in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* “allegiance to the monarch” is represented as being “at odds with an allegiance to London citizenship.” The tension of the “odds” Morgan-Russell describes is evident in Eyre’s first scene in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, as he attempts to spare his workman Ralph from conscription so that the young man can remain with his new bride and continue working in the shoemaking shop. Eyre thus enters the play in opposition to the demands of an impending conflict between England and France and the martial, national imperatives it suggests. National concerns are certainly raised in the play, as when the nobleman Lincoln desires a trajectory for his nephew Lacy that would involve making a name for himself through service to the state. Lacy promises his uncle that he will “guide [his] actions in pursuit of France / As shall add glory to the Lacys’ name” (I.88–9). The sentiment is familiar, as Lacy outwardly aspires to win renown in posterity for himself and his family as well as
promote his country through military action. However, as quickly becomes evident, Lacy has secret commitments, particularly his love for Rose, daughter of the grocer Oatley, that overshadow the traditional values he professes.

The king himself ultimately gives priority to the local over the national. At the play’s end, upon hearing that Lacy neglected his sworn duty to lead troops in the wars in France in order to stay in London and marry Rose, the king declares to Lincoln:

\[\text{your nephew for her [Rose’s] sake did stoop}\]
\[\text{To bare necessity and, as I hear,}\]
\[\text{Forgetting honours and all courtly pleasures,}\]
\[\text{To gain her love became a shoemaker.}\]
\[\text{As for the honour which he lost in France,}\]
\[\text{Thus I redeem it: Lacy, kneel thee down.}\]
\[\text{Arise Sir Rowland Lacy.}\]

(XXI.109–15)

Lacy’s choice to renounce his duties in France, remain in London, and work as a shoemaker is rewarded with a knighthood, while his shirking of national responsibility is glossed over. The solution pleases the citizen Oatley, whose daughter Rose thus becomes a lady, but not the noble Lincoln, who tells the king he is satisfied only “since there’s no remedy” (XXI.119). In *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, the national, traditional historical narratives favored by Lincoln are articulated but countered and eventually trumped by local concerns.\(^\text{16}\)

By adopting the figure of the citizen hero, Dekker broadcasts a historical sensibility that recognizes people of the middling sort who are enmeshed in local concerns as having an at least parallel place in history with kings and high nobles. *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, then, intervenes in contemporary disputes about the most fit subject for historical narratives. However—and this is an important point I will explore more below—the play goes beyond simple celebration of such figures. *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* in fact cultivates a critical consciousness of history, including “citizen history,” at the same time as it presents a chronicle of a London folk hero. This critical consciousness is partly achieved through the play’s emphasis on Eyre’s use of dramatic, and at times amoral, strategies to establish his own historical relevance, by which Dekker suggests that the past comes into being as narrative through a self-interested, theatrical construction of historicity.
“PRINCELY BORN”

Writing on early modern London’s citizen literature, Lawrence Manley notes that “[a]n important element in the ideology of civic pride was the creation of a gallery of famous Londoners to whom citizens could turn as examples of public virtue and personal achievement.” For Dekker, however, the characterization of Simon Eyre functions more complexly than such exempla. The play connects Eyre’s rise to historical prominence with his accumulation of wealth, and Eyre employs a bit of chicanery in acquiring this fortune. Eyre accumulates his wealth under the instigation of Lacy, while Lacy is disguised as a Dutch shoemaker named Hans. Lacy arranges for Eyre to purchase clandestinely and cheaply the commodities of a distressed Dutch merchant in order to make a sizable profit discharging the cargo. To enact this transaction, Eyre disguises himself as an alderman and uses borrowed money he purports to be his own capital in order to buy the Dutch captain’s goods, the sale of which establishes his prosperity. Eyre’s progressive rise to historical prominence is marked by his seeming amorality.

When Eyre dons the alderman’s gown to enact the transaction guilefully, one of his shoemakers, Hodge, informs him “Why, now you look like yourself” (VII.118). As David Scott Kastan cannily observes, Eyre’s scheme is viewed by his friends as a moment of “proleptic propriety” rather than “cunning hypocrisy.” This foray into deception, however, makes Eyre’s characterization ambiguous, rendering the shoemaker a morally questionable, albeit clever, historical hero. Even Eyre’s famed good fellowship is undercut. At one point, Eyre sends a boy to the Boar’s Head to fetch drinks for his workers, announcing “a dozen cans of beer for my journeymen” (VII.77–8). But Eyre deliberately promises more than he intends to deliver, privately warning his boy that if the tapster fills “any more than two [cans of beer], he pays for them” (VII.80–1). When the boy returns with two cans, Eyre wonders aloud “Where be the odd ten?” before changing the subject to what work must be done that day (VII.84, 85–6). Such moves make ironic Eyre’s eventual self description to the king: “I am a handicraftsman, yet my heart is without craft” (XXI.10–1). The play throughout extols the munificence and ennobling virtue of the shoemaking trade, while its chief shoemaker shows himself at moments stingy toward his workers and willing to gain wealth and prominence through a shady business transaction.

The play’s apparent celebration of Eyre is thus tied to an exposure of his “craft.” This puts The Shoemaker’s Holiday in line
with a good deal of early modern writing on the changing dynamics of life in London, as writers such as Stow and Dekker himself often expressed anxiety over the new opportunities for personal gain the city made possible. Dekker’s apostrophe to the city in *The Seven Deadly Sinsnes of London* (1606) sums up this perspective: “Thou hast all things in thee to make thee fairest, and all things in thee to make thee foulest.” This sense of ambivalence hovers just at the edges of the play’s more laudatory presentation of city and citizen life. Its presence prompts a critical reflection about the city and its past, and the specific use of disguise by Eyre foregrounds the use of deception and role playing as central to how he establishes his place in the city’s history.

The deceit involved in the purchase of the cargo participates in a move toward theatricalizing the historical narrative the play unfolds. Dekker’s interest in exploring the theatrical as a component of the historical is evident in his handling of source material. Despite his reference to the chronicles for help in making other aspects of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* more historical, Dekker follows Deloney in reinventing the occupation of the Simon Eyre of the chronicles. In both Grafton and Stow, Eyre is described as a draper rather than a shoemaker, a significant professional distinction. Deloney, though, presents Eyre as a shoemaker who eventually becomes a draper, while Dekker has Eyre remain a shoemaker. Arguing that this occupational shift de-historicizes *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, Paul S. Seaver asserts that the transformation of Eyre from draper to shoemaker is a ploy to render the play a fantasy. As Seaver points out in discussing the guild politics of fifteenth-century London, the chances of a shoemaker ever becoming Lord Mayor were almost nil. According to Seaver the characterization of Eyre as a shoemaker pushes his story toward the deliberately unrealistic, and thus more pleasingly improbable. I would argue, rather, that this reimagination of Eyre lends historical action a performative aura, as Eyre’s progress in the play is dependent on his ability to disguise and play the part of a social superior. He must borrow money and then in the guise of an alderman gain on that capital in order to become sheriff and eventually mayor. His actorly self-invention is a crucial element in establishing his historicity.

Eyre’s posturing takes on even greater significance through his speech. Eyre’s status as a historical figure relies not only on his capacity for deception, but also perhaps even more on his eccentric way of speaking. The manic oddity of Eyre’s language is the most pronounced feature of his characterization, a trait that commentators within and on the play have linked to his class
Eyre is marked by an inscrutable lunatic excess in his dialogue, what one commentator has described as his “linguistic corpulence.” Through his unusual way of speaking, however, Eyre establishes his distinction and integrity while claiming space for himself precisely as a subject fit for remembrance.

Eyre introduces himself early in the play as “the mad shoemaker of Tower Street” (I.129–30), and his madcap reputation springs almost entirely from his verbal exuberance. Sending away his companions to reflect on his new post late in the play, he proclaims “Go, vanish, vanish, avaunt, I say. By the Lord of Ludgate, it’s a mad life to be a Lord Mayor. It’s a stirring life, a fine life, a velvet life, a careful life” (XVII.39–41). The cadence of repetition that ends this speech is consistent with his general manner of continually enlarging on his descriptions, figures of speech, and insults. It is Margery his wife for whom he reserves his wildest, Falstaff-inflected linguistic flourishes: “Away, you Islington white-pot. Hence, you hopperarse, you barley pudding full of maggots, you broiled carbonado” (XX.52–4). Eyre’s joy in unusual phrases and appellations is seen in the names he chooses for his workmen, who, in addition to being his “fine dapper Assyrian lads,” are alternately his “Hyperboreans,” his “mad Mesopotamians,” and his “true Trojans” (XVII.54; IV.129; VII.83; XXI.148). These names evoke both a jumbled but vibrant sense of pastness and a seemingly limitless capacity for verbal variation.

Dekker’s protagonist as defined by his own language use is, in most senses, at odds with the more serious subjects of historical narrative. Thomas Worden may be too harsh in calling him a “coarse buffoon,” but Dekker’s Eyre is certainly not troubled with concern for gravitas. At one point in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, Eyre describes to his wife’s maid, Cicely Bumtrinkel: “She has a privy fault: she farts in her sleep” (IV.37). Eyre’s unprovoked, punning, and scurrilous account of Cicely is more concise than most of his utterances, but is nevertheless emblematic of his verbal mode: surprising, wild, and most often less than majestic. But the impression that he is solely a “bully swaggerer,” in the words of another critic, or a “huffcap” (XIX.10) in the king’s words, is too simplistic. Eyre’s refusal to recognize verbal constraints suggests a developed, self-conscious sense of language use as his distinguishing feature. Particularly, Eyre continually asserts his integrity as a speaking subject, one fit to be juxtaposed with more prominent figures. In his first appearance, on the verge of making a request to noblemen of the military, he asserts his ability to speak with anyone, including “Gentlemen, captains, colonels,
commanders,” proclaiming: “I am a man of the best presence. I’ll speak to them an they were popes” (I.125–7). As a “man of the best presence,” Eyre is not merely being bombastic, but is also staking some claim to his own historical importance.

When Margery warns him to moderate himself when he meets the king, Eyre refuses in deliberately immoderate fashion: “Avaunt, avaunt, avoid, Mephistophilus! Shall Sim Eyre learn to speak of you, Lady Madgy? Vanish, Mother Miniver-Cap, vanish! Go, trip and go, meddle with your partlets and your pishery-pashery, your flews and your whirligigs! Go, rub, out of mine alley! Sim Eyre knows how to speak to a pope, to Sultan Soliman, to Tamburlaine an he were here. And shall I melt, shall I droop before my sovereign? No! Come, my Lady Madgy; follow me, Hans; about your business, my frolic freebooters. Firk, frisk about, and about, and about, for the honour of mad Simon Eyre, Lord Mayor of London” (XX.54–65). As with many of Eyre’s utterances, this outburst is overdetermined by the range of its possible connotations. Eyre here betrays his misogyny, as he belittles the feminine marks of his wife’s dress to undermine her attempt to advise him, while also anachronistically displaying his theatrical know-how as he shows himself to be an admirer of Marlowe. Most important for my purposes here, however, is Eyre’s assertion of himself as a substantive figure, one who will not “melt” in the king’s presence. Refusing to “droop” before the king, Eyre asserts his integrity as a subject of history. When he does get to meet the king, Eyre indeed flouts Margery’s call for moderation. As he tells the king, pointing to his wife: “Mark this old wench, my King. I danced the shaking of the sheets with her six-and-thirty years ago, and yet I hope to get two or three young Lord Mayors ere I die. I am lusty still, Sim Eyre still” (XXI.29–32). Eyre boasts of his sexual prowess and frames his ability to procreate in the language of dynastic continuity, insisting on his own fitness for reproduction: to reproduce himself biologically and for himself to be reproduced in representation.

Eyre further announces himself to be a subject fit for sanctimonious remembrance when he envisions how aspiring craftsmen will memorialize him: “And prentices shall pray for Simon Eyre” (XVII.58). Eyre perhaps even suggests the potential for his person to be enacted. This can be seen in the catch phrase he repeats, with some variation, six times during the play: “Prince am I none, yet am I princely born,” an expression that Dekker adapts from Deloney’s The Gentle Craft, where it appears as a title-page maxim. In The Gentle Craft the phrase emerges in two
Historicity in Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*

places. In the first instance, a Persian general responds to insults about his father’s trade by assuring his enemies that “thou shalt understand that a Shoemakers son is a Prince born”; in the second instance, another character affirms the truth of this saying when a son is born to a prince who is disguised as a shoemaker. Dekker thus takes the phrase but divorces it from its original context, and in this detachment the words accrue different connotations. Dekker indeed transforms the phrase he finds in Deloney for Eyre somewhat cryptically—in the words of one critic, it appears an example of “equivocation.” In four of the exclamations, the syntax is “Prince am I none, yet am I princely born” (e.g., XXI.35–6), while in one he substitutes “nobly” for “princely.” The lines suggest the performativity of social personas, the ability and agency to “act” nobly, even if one is not born into nobility. Eyre understands himself as capable of manipulating his reception to others. When Margery warns him he must “put on gravity” to attain high office (perhaps much as he “put on” the alderman’s disguise) Eyre again upbraids his wife with an assertion of control over his persona: “Peace, Madgy; a fig for gravity. When I go to Guildhall in my scarlet gown I’ll look as demurely as a saint, and speak as gravely as a Justice of Peace; but now I am here at Old Ford . . . I’ll be merry . . . prince am I none, yet am I princely born!” (XI.10–9).

Beyond expressing mastery over his own social performances, Eyre uses this maxim to assert his own “representability.” Though not a prince, Eyre cuts a figure that is “princely,” and is worthy of being “born” as princes are. “Born” can then be read in the sense it is used in *As You Like It* when Touchstone, wishing to encourage the appearance of more sophistication from his lover, admonishes Audrey to “bear your body more seeming.” Eyre speaks some version of the expression “Prince am I none, yet am I princely born” twice in the presence of the king, as if to directly emphasize this fact in front of the play’s reigning monarch figure. Eyre suggests his posture to be princelike, and thus hints at his own potential to “craft” himself as material for representation on stage or by other means. His catch phrase is perhaps another instance of the “proleptic propriety” Kastan ascribes to Eyre’s rise to prominence.

“AND THIS SHALL CONTINUE FOR EVER”

Eyre’s ability to claim vigorously for himself a place of importance is complemented and expanded by his, and his fellows’,
efforts to mark a place for the middling sort in historical memory. Through these self-consciously historicizing efforts, the play deepens its commitment to cultivating a critical awareness of historical knowledge by presenting history making as a process. For, aside from investing Eyre with the ambition to be “historical,” Dekker infuses *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* with an emphasis on the movement of time and the place of the middling sort within that movement. This emphasis on time is easily overlooked in examining the play. Larger issues of subject matter or protagonist aside, that *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* has not registered with most scholars as invested in telling a historical narrative is perhaps best explained by its title. The play’s turn toward “holiday,” and more broadly toward social ritual and festivity, suggests timelessness. Indeed, as many critics have argued, from both an idealistic and more skeptical standpoint, the conclusion of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* appears to dissolve its various conflicts into an ahistorical harmony, a dissolution emblematized by the king’s declaration, upon arriving at the shoemaker’s feast with which the play ends, that “Where there is much love, all discord ends” (XXI.121). However, the play more pointedly asserts that holiday and festivity do not deny time and its contingencies, but rather take place in time amid contingency. For instance, Hammon, a hapless, would-be suitor, implores Jane, whose husband is off fighting in the war, to “leave work a little while. Let’s play” (XII.30). Jane, struggling to survive the absence of her husband, reminds her suitor “I cannot live by keeping holiday” (XII.31). When Hammon offers “I'll pay you for the time which shall be lost,” he commodifies holiday time as underwritten by the economics of the real (XII.32). Hodge echoes this sentiment when he tells the cordwainers “Ply your work today—we loitered yesterday” (XIII.2–3). *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* traces a movement in and out of festive time and “real” time that suggests they are interdependent rather than antithetical, showing a keen sense of temporality operative in the play.

The play both begins and ends with rituals of feasting, but in both instances the feasting is framed by particular circumstances that betray an awareness of the movement of time. In the opening scene, Oately the Lord Mayor is commended by the Earl of Lincoln for having “sundry times / Feasted myself and many courtiers more,” (I.1–2) hospitality that is part of Oatley’s obligation as mayor, a position that, the play makes clear, changes yearly, and that Oatley is soon to give up. In the play’s final scene, the king and his entourage happily eat with the shoemakers. The king declares “Come, lords, a while let’s revel it at home,” but the operative
phrase “a while” indicates the intrusion of impending danger, for as the king goes on to say, “When all our sports and banquetings are done, / Wars must right wrongs which Frenchmen have begun” (XXI.195–6). The king and his lords mingle with apprentices and artisans in the festive moment of Eyre’s shoemaker’s holiday, but they do so en route to war with France. In this play, ritual and festivity do not displace or deny the outside world, but at best serve as buffers that are fragile and temporary, and are never fully innocent of the demands of historical time.

*The Shoemaker’s Holiday* represents festive time as implicated in history, but perhaps more importantly, the play makes clear that holidays have histories. Late in the play, flush with his new office of mayor, Eyre recalls an earlier promise to one day feast the apprentices of London, and does so by calling for a ceremony to be associated with an already established, recurring holiday. Eyre declares, “I have procured that upon every Shrove Tuesday, at the sound of the pancake bell, my fine dapper Assyrian lads shall clap up their shop windows and away. This is the day, and this day they shall do’t, they shall do’t” (XVII.52–6). Firk works off his master Eyre’s “procurement” when he re-signifies the holiday by establishing a tradition to honor the folk saint Hugh, a mythical patron of shoemakers, as a subset of Shrove Tuesday. He joyfully declares: “[E]very Shrove Tuesday is our year of jubilee; and when the pancake bell rings, we are as free as my Lord Mayor. We may shut up our shops and make holiday. I’ll have it called ‘Saint Hugh’s Holiday’” (XVIII.221–5). Hodge responds to Firk’s pronouncement by saying “And this shall continue for ever” (line 227). Hodge signifies Firk’s enthusiastic declaration as a point of origin, calling attention to the motion to inaugurate “Saint Hugh’s Holiday” as a unique moment in time. The origination of the holiday thus becomes a marker of temporal distance, a move by which the play pronounces itself as separated from the present moment of its enactment.33

Beyond establishing a general sense of historicity operative in the play, though, Firk’s pronouncement of holiday, like his master’s, proposes to mold temporality through a marking of the calendar.34 Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, usually dated as contemporaneous with *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, features its own moment of holiday remaking, in that instance by a king, that has a curious resonance with Dekker’s play. It is unclear which play was first, or the full extent to which Dekker and Shakespeare were responding to each other, but *Henry V* and *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* have many parallels, and their dual interest in holiday is worth
examining here. In the famous St. Crispin’s Day speech before Agincourt, Shakespeare’s King Henry exhorts his troops through reference to the feast day on which the battle will take place, the feast of the brothers Crispin and Crispianus (IV.iii.18–67). \(^{35}\) According to legend, Crispin and Crispianus were Roman brothers who worked as shoemakers while preaching the Gospel in Gaul, and became the formally canonized patron saints of shoemakers and tanners after they were martyred for their faith. Deloney uses these names in *The Gentle Craft*, and, drawing on elements of Caxton’s *The Golden Legend* and other sources, transforms their story of brutal martyrdom to a romance set mostly in Roman Britain, but shoemaking remains an important aspect of their story. \(^{36}\) At the height of Henry’s move toward asserting his imperial power as both legitimate English and French king, he invokes and seeks to re-signify a feast day dedicated to a pair of artisan patron saints that had recently been even more directly associated with tradesmen through Deloney’s novel.

Alison A. Chapman, in an excellent article on shoemakers in early modern literature, has noted a tendency to depict members of the “gentle craft” as claiming the right to declare holidays. Chapman reads Henry’s use of Crispin and Crispianus in his oration as an indication of a struggle in *Henry V* between a kingly prerogative to dictate holidays, and the traditional right of shoemakers to do so. \(^{37}\) As Chapman argues, Henry’s invocation of Crispin and Crispianus is an act of appropriation, through which he “imaginatively recreates” the holiday, a move that has implications for the class-inflected sense of time and history in *Henry V*. \(^{38}\) Henry employs the feast of Crispin and Crispianus as a mnemonic through which he can teach his auditors how to construct, maintain, and reflect on historical narratives. As many commentators have pointed out, Henry’s exclusive commitment to his own social class is never in question, and the “brotherhood” he promises his common soldiers is clearly a fantasy. \(^{39}\) His rhetoric, though, powerfully engages some notion of Agincourt as a historical project that is communal, both in how the battle will be fought, and how it will be remembered and retold. More than simply claiming his right to intervene in a particular festal observance, Henry is modeling a method for initiating historical narratives.

Eyre and Firk likewise draw on holiday making as a form of historical narration, although from a different perspective and for different ends than Henry. For Eyre and Firk, declaring holiday bears on their own experience of time. Holiday differentiates
work time from non-work time, a distinction that was taking on the protocapitalist idea of the modern work week in urban, early modern England. When Henry cryptically claims that he and his soldiers are “warriors for the working-day” (Henry V, IV.iii.109), defined against “gentlemen in England, now a-bed” (line 64) and, presumably, Westmoreland’s men “[t]hat do no work to-day” (line 17), he is imposing an idealized description of solidarity that would obliterate class difference and privilege martial action in a king’s cause above all other forms of labor or, especially, leisure. Eyre and Firk find a means of self-definition through recognizing the importance of trade-oriented feast days to those who labor as precisely occasions to do no work, both for the respite it provides artisans and apprentices and the reflection on the cultural significance of their work that it allows. Henry V, then, generalizes the feast of Crispin and Crispianus, figures who implicitly resonate in The Shoemaker’s Holiday. While Henry’s use of the day might draw rhetorical power from its association with common artisans, by the time Henry is done with it, the day is to be remembered as about a great battle of conquest, with both national and imperial implications starring “Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter” (line 53). Eyre and Firk seek instead to specify their own experiences within the creation of an artisan holiday. Eyre’s revamped Shrove Tuesday and Firk’s St. Hugh’s Holiday open space for a calendric recognition of the artisan’s earned leisure. They negotiate a place for rightful otium in history.

While Henry envisions his army as workers by associating them with the “working day,” Firk describes his fellow cordwainers as warriors. On route to the Shrove Tuesday feast, he tells his friends “I’ll lead you to victuals, my brave soldiers. Follow your captain. O brave!” (XVIII.191–2). Firk parodies the ambitions of warriors and instead promises his men something more tangible than glory, “victuals.” Firk thus balances his marking of St. Hugh’s day as commemoration with attention to a more immediate and material set of desires, the leisure, eating, and drinking that seem here less ritualistic than the “flowing cups” (Henry V, IV.iii.55) of the Crispin’s Day vigil Henry imagines in his speech. The Shoemaker’s Holiday presents moments that indicate origins and transition, forms of measuring the passage of time. Eyre creates space for himself within the historical imagination of the play through his “crafted” performative persona and role-playing, just as he and Firk do for their fellow artisans in purporting to re-invest Shrove Tuesday with renewed meaning. Middling-sort figures in The Shoemaker’s Holiday thus create a
place for themselves in historical time. I will conclude this essay by arguing that this move is mirrored by the actual performance of this play on the popular stage.

**DEKKER’S “PECULIAR ANACHRONISM”**

First performed at Henslowe’s Rose Theatre in Southwark, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* is defined by the lively invocation of its urban setting. This is not surprising considering Dekker’s lifelong, intimate fascination with London. Dekker’s penchant for local settings and middling-sort protagonists in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* is part of a larger pattern in his works, which are fundamentally oriented toward London and its inhabitants. In the prose narrative *A Rod for Runaways*, Dekker writes that London is the “Mother of my life, Nurse of my being,” while elsewhere he again addresses the city in maternal terms, writing “from thy womb received I my being, from thy breasts my nourishment.” Dekker depicts London as giving life, while his portrait of how human agents shape the city’s places and institutions in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* gives London citizens a complementary role. As Firk says to his men, “Let’s march together for the honour of Saint Hugh to the great new hall in Gracious Street corner, which our master the new Lord Mayor hath built” (XVIII.197–200, emphasis added). In addition to Eyre’s and Firk’s declarations about the Shrove Tuesday holiday and the “great new hall,” Leaden Hall, a landmark in London later mentioned prominently by Stow and others, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* offers to explain derivation of the hall’s name (XXI.132–4) and the establishing of a leather market there (XXI.160–2). Here and elsewhere within Dekker’s prolific literary output, London is figured in a state of symbiosis with its inhabitants.

Dekker presents London itself as historical. And yet, while such resonance between the play’s sense of place and the site of its performance on the edges of the city implies an immediate affiliation between *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*’s content and its London audience, I would argue that this sense of immediacy is challenged throughout by Dekker’s indulgence in a kind of temporal bricolage. It is precisely through this bricolage that the play cultivates a critical consciousness of the idea of history. For the play’s citation of its London locales juxtaposes the fifteenth-century city of Simon Eyre and the late sixteenth-century city of the Rose Theatre, producing a jarring historicity. As much as it is a familiar environment that is being evoked in performance, London and its past is heightened for audiences as an object to
be contemplated. Rather than making the city’s past seem more immediate or readable to playgoers, the occasional presence of marks of the contemporary city among the marks of the past that the play evokes creates an extraordinary set of disparities.

In scripting *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*’s urban history, Dekker drew on related but distinct sources for plotting, character names, locales and general sequence of events.\(^{43}\) The name of “Oatley,” the Lord Mayor when the play begins, for instance, is derived not from Deloney but from Stow’s *Survey of London*.\(^{44}\) Meanwhile, the play makes mention of several locales contemporary with Dekker that were not contemporary with Eyre’s London, including “Old Change,” mentioned at IX.51, a reference to the outdated Royal Exchange building that became “Old” only in the later 1560s.\(^{45}\) Through his attention on the one hand to a careful historicization of figures such as Oatley and his willingness on the other to juxtapose the past he cultivates with the geography of late-Elizabethan London, Dekker presents what W. K. Chandler has referred to as a “peculiar anachronism.”\(^{46}\) Chandler, who some seventy years ago laid the groundwork for considering *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* as invested in historical exposition, identified thirty-five separate London-area place names in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, almost triple the number found in Deloney’s *The Gentle Craft*. Of those thirty-five locales and place names, several of the most prominent refer to landmarks that were contemporary only with Dekker, or are referred to in the play according to later sixteenth-century connotations.\(^{47}\) The play is infused with other anachronisms, from its mention of tobacco and firearms to its references to sixteenth-century stage plays. The moments of origin offered compete with these pervasive anachronisms to, in the words of one astute assessment, “simultaneously . . . suggest the past and the present.”\(^{48}\)

*The Shoemaker’s Holiday* calls attention to itself as a narrative of pastness and inflicts disruption on that narrative, conferring a historicity on the city of London and its inhabitants that is improbably both diachronic and synchronic. Of course, one could argue that these disparities are minor or insignificant details of the play. In part, such disparities can be dismissed as conventional in a period where anachronism was common and acceptable in historical representation. But an emerging awareness of and sensitivity to anachronism has also been identified in this period as a hallmark of a new historical consciousness. We cannot assume outright that audiences would be uninterested in or unresponsive to such temporal disjunctions.\(^{49}\)
This does not mean, however, that we should think that anachronisms would detract from theatergoers’ ability to enjoy the pleasures of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*. But it is possible to imagine that audiences could draw from the chronological incongruities the play presents a heightened awareness that to think historically necessarily involves the meeting of separate time frames. Phyllis Rackin, in her important book *Stages of History*, in fact argues that anachronism in history plays produces “a kind of alienation effect,” which reminds audiences of the “mediation implicit in the bodies of the actors.” Dramatizing this “mediation” brings the temporal particularity of performance into play. Stage plays take place under the pressure of time before a live audience. This creates an emphasis on the eventness of the performance. Such eventness carries a particular charge when performing the past, for the ephemeral nature of theater becomes a means of pointing to the presentness, and potential transience, of all of history making. The “peculiar anachronism” of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* characterizes history making as an event, and thus links the idea of history to dramatic production.

The eventness of history making comes forth through the primary instruments of the play’s performance, as Rackin puts it, the “bodies of the players.” These bodies ground history not merely in the performative present, the urban moment of a London stage play, but also in the milieu of the theater industry. Walter Cohen has suggested that the Renaissance popular stage was an “artisanal” theater, and as such can never fully mask its status as a place where those of the middling sort ply/play a trade. Indeed, as Stephen Orgel and others have pointed out, players in the period were often affiliated with particular trade guilds. In the instance of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, this affiliation perhaps had the effect of blurring the line between actor and role even further than in the case of the normal “alienation effect” Rackin proposes.

In thinking about the place of the artisan laborer in the play, David Scott Kastan has argued that *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* attempts to conceal the sundry social frictions to which it alludes, while also attempting to conceal that its own form—that is, its status as a species of dramatic *playing*—is work. In contrast, I read Dekker’s play as self-consciously revealing itself to be work through the metatheatrical effect of its reference to the time and place of the Elizabethan commercial stage. Dekker’s Simon Eyre works to create history in the play, while this Simon Eyre and his environment are created on stage by players who are part of the
working Elizabethan theatrical scene, a fact that is emphasized through the play’s conscious citation of its present tense locale. Indeed, in my reading of the play, the production and dissemination of history on the stage is itself revealed to be a form of middling-sort labor. The play attempts to historicize the city and its inhabitants, but in doing so reveals inevitably that historicization is always contained by the present in which it unfolds. By opening itself out onto its contemporary moment, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* demonstrates that history is a construct of the now, a narrative form that is subject to appropriation along a range of topics, and which can be adopted, shaped, and promoted in performance by voices and bodies “from below.”

While I’m sympathetic with the political position that would laud that as an inspiring development, it would be naive to reduce *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* to a mere piece of celebratory literature on London and its citizens. Rather, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* gives audiences an awareness of the complications involved in having a past. Dekker achieves this in part by hinting at Eyre’s checkered status as a historical “hero,” and also by exploiting theater as a form, namely its ontology of disappearance. A play always has a clear expiration, and this subjection to temporality is heightened when the performance seeks to suggest past moments and people, things which are also always threatened with fading to oblivion. A dialectic between absence and presence and past and present defines the aesthetics of performing history. The play indicates the irrecoverable distance of history by demonstrating that the past is unintelligible without the lens of the present to bring it into focus. It simultaneously demonstrates that the pleasures involved in piecing a history together are not defeated, but rather enabled, by this palpable sense of distance. Historical memory emerges in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* through initiating acts that must be persistently invoked in order to be sustained, and it is in the persistent invocations that Eyre, Firk, and the others display the wonderful verbal energy that drives the play.

Definately establishing the historicity of London or of a citizen class is a project beyond the scope of what any single play can do. *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* does participate in such a project, though, and further participates in a more general dialogue with spectators, who come away from this play with a sense that understanding the familiar as historical involves more than just learning that a building or a custom is old. Apprehending historicity in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, whether it be the historicity of a mayor, a street, a profession, or a holiday, involves also recogniz-
ing history as an invigorating form of labor that, as seen when the actor playing Eyre assiduously cultivates his own historical status, takes continual work to take continued effect.

NOTES


2 “Middling sort” is an approximate, early modern equivalent of “middle class” or “bourgeoisie,” usually preferred in early modern scholarship to those later terms because of its use in the period. It is by no means a precise or unequivocally accurate term. This results in large part from the confusion over social positions unleashed by nascent capitalism and the decline of feudalism, a confusion that features so prominently in the literature of the period. See Keith Wrightson’s survey on “the language of sorts,” “‘Sorts of People’ in Tudor and Stuart England,” in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550–1800*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks, Themes in Focus (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 28–51. Wrightson points out that the term “middling sort” seems to have originated in an urban context. See also Wrightson, *English Society: 1580–1680* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 17–38 for a survey of the period’s complex field of social positions in which some version of a “second” or “middle” class is emergent. Although *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* resists easy application of such terms because Simon Eyre’s own financial status alters radically through the course of the play, moving him up within the various layers of the bloated middle station, for my purposes here, I use the term “middling sort” in line with *An Apology of the City of London*, an anonymous appendix to John Stow’s *Survey of London* (1603). *An Apology* asserts that “three sorts may be considered, either in respect of their wealth or number” and goes on to describe the second “sort” as “retailers and all artificers” who exist between the very wealthy and the poor. The anonymous author notes that “in number they of the middle place be first, and do far exceed both the rest,” in *The Survey of London*, ed. H. B. Wheatley, new introduction by Valerie Pearl, Everyman Classics (London: Dent, 1987), pp. 482–97, 492. I use “citizen” to refer both to the technical designation conferred on members of guilds, and more generally to describe the merchant-tradesmen milieu. For more insight into the difficulties involved in labeling classes with any precision in this period, see Wrightson, “Estates, Degrees, and Sorts in Tudor and Stuart England,” *History Today* 37, 22 (January 1987): 17–22.

3 Irving Ribner refers to *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* in his classic study of the English history play, only to then banish it from the genre. He labels it a “historical romance,” and warns against confusing such works with those having any real “historical purpose[.]” *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 270. As an exception to this generalization about how *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* is normally classified, see Simon Morgan-Russell’s excellent article “‘How Far Is It, My Lord, To Berkeley Now?’: English Chronicle History and the Rise of the London
City Comedy,” *EIRC* 27, 2 (Winter 2001): 245–62. Morgan-Russell says that Thomas Dekker’s play can “be classified without much equivocation as [a] ‘chronicle history’” (p. 253), but goes on to argue convincingly that the play, through its attention to topography and physical structures (a topic I will explore later in this essay) in fact helps to signal a transition from the popular history play genre to the London city comedy. Morgan-Russell points also to Brian Gibbons, who in *Jacobean City Comedy* also calls The Shoemaker’s Holiday a “chronicle play” (p. 254). See Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 2d edn. (London and New York: Methuen, 1980), p. 1.

4 “Thomas Blundeville’s The True Order and Methode of Wryting and Reading Hystories (1574),” edited and with an introduction by Hugh G. Dick, reprinted in *HLQ* 3, 2 (January 1940): 149–70, 159.


11 Similarly, Jean E. Howard has argued that Thomas Heywood’s Edward IV, which like The Shoemaker’s Holiday was probably first written and performed in 1599, is an example of a history play that “intertwines the history of the nation with the history of London, inscribing on the urban landscape the names of those whom he [Heywood] deems her citizen heroes.” See “Other Englands: The View From the Non-Shakespearean History Play,” in *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1999), pp. 135–53, 149.


16 More grimly, the play also suggests that the glorious potential for such narratives is only available to the nobility. Ralph, after all, does go fight in the wars, only to be permanently disabled and nearly loses his wife as a result of his absence.


18 In the late-Elizabethan era, the quasi-Ciceronian maxim that history is moral philosophy clothed in examples was still constantly invoked. Eyre’s amorality is thus also a threat to his status as a “hero” of history. Iterations of the ancient sentiment on the moral uses of history can be found in many sources. For a concise and thorough look at the status of history as moral agent, see Herschel Baker’s The Race of Time: Three Lectures on Renaissance Historiography (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), especially chapter 2, “The Use of History,” pp. 45–70. For an alternate, less skeptical reading of Dekker’s portrayal of Eyre’s involvement in the cargo scheme, see Alexander Leggatt, Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 17–20, in which Leggatt argues that Dekker “suppresses” Deloney’s explicit portrayal of Eyre’s unseemly business. Peter Mortenson, in his valuable article, “The Economics of Joy in The Shoemakers’ [sic] Holiday,” SEL 16, 2 (Spring 1976): 241–52, also reads around the matter of Eyre’s disguise as an alderman in the play, apparently feeling that because audiences only see Eyre rehearsing playing an alderman before his friends, Dekker represses the more explicit representation of Eyre’s business chicanery found in Deloney; see p. 248.


20 Firk also plays mischievously on the word “craft”; see, for instance, XVIII.154–5.


22 Paul S. Seaver, “Thomas Dekker’s The Shoemaker’s Holiday: The Artisanal World,” in The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London,
Historicity in Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*


25 Worden, p. 449.

26 Hunter, p. 6. The Revels editors gloss “huffcap” as “swaggering fellow” (XVIII.10n10).

27 For these instances of the phrase’s use, see Deloney, *The Gentle Craft*, pp. 100, 106.


30 For an idealistic reading, see Michael Manheim’s “The Construction of Dekker’s Remaking of the ‘princely born’ Phrase.”


32 Mortenson makes a similar point in “The Economics of Joy in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*,” p. 248, where he writes “Dekker creates the illusion of a bounteous world of festive comedy, but it is really commercial and competitive.”

33 By demonstrating the origins of Shrove Tuesday as apprentice and laborer holiday that is meant to celebrate and dignify the “gentle craft,” the play also shows a sense of pastness by marking its distance from contemporary connotations that could associate the day primarily with violence and rioting. See the note in Smallwood and Wells on Shrove Tuesday, XVII.48–55n48–55.


37 Chapman, 1468.
38 Ibid.
39 Quoted in introduction to The Shoemaker’s Holiday, pp. 1–70, 2.
40 The tradition that Simon Eyre erected Leaden Hall is anachronistic; he was responsible merely for renovating and enlarging it. See Bonahue Jr., p. 83n29.
41 Interestingly, new historicist critics have argued that the politically oriented history plays of Shakespeare and others helped audiences feel connected to an emergent concept of nationhood, and, according to a recent formulation of the emergence of national community, “one of the essential projects of nation-building has been to dismantle the historic primacy of urban citizenship and to replace it with the national.” At a moment proximate to the emergence of the nation-state concept in England, The Shoemaker’s Holiday can be said rather to have engendered in playgoers a sense of affiliation and identification with the urban community of London itself. For signal work on the history play and national community, see Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), as well as Peter Womack, “Imagining Communities: Theatres and the English Nation in the Sixteenth Century,” in Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing, ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 91–145. The quotation is from James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, “Cities and Citizenship,” Public Culture 8, 2 (Winter 1996): 187–204, 188.
43 See Shoemaker’s Holiday, p. 74n8.
46 See Chandler, “The Topography,” pp. 499–504, as well as the introduction to The Shoemaker’s Holiday, p. 25.
47 Introduction to The Shoemaker’s Holiday, p. 24.

53 I would suggest, further, that in making evident the middling-sort efforts behind dramatizing history, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* helps to reveal that the presentation of aristocratic-centered national histories is also driven by middling-sort labor—both imaginative and bodily.

54 I discuss the aesthetics and theoretical implications of performing history more extensively in my article “‘Unkind Division’: The Double Absence of Performing History in *1 Henry VI*,” *SQ* 55, 2 (Summer 2004): 119–47.