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“Come Aloft, Jack-little-ape!”: Race and Dance  
in The Spanish Gypsy

A Gypsy woman dances the Morris on the green with a human-sized baboon: such is the vision offered to spectators in act 3 scene 5 of Shakespeare and Fletcher’s play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613).<sup>1</sup> As countrymen and countrywomen led by the local schoolmaster rehearse a Morris for Duke Theseus, they realize that they are one woman short: the countryman dressed as a Baboon has no female partner to dance with. Enter the jailer’s daughter who, jilted, has turned mad, and the company quickly decides to recruit her. “Schoolmaster: And are you mad, good woman? Daughter: I would be sorry else. Give me your hand. Schoolmaster: Why? Daughter: I can tell your fortune. (*She looks at his hand.*) You are a fool” (3.5.78–80).<sup>2</sup> By offering to perform palmistry, the jailer’s daughter presents herself, albeit briefly, as a figure that an early modern audience would immediately have recognized as a Gypsy woman. Since the term “Gypsy” served earlier in the play to reject romantic suitors,<sup>3</sup> the

My gratitude goes to Jean E. Howard for her insightful suggestions and comments on this piece, and to the three anonymous reviewers at *ELR* whose feedback helped me strengthen this essay in every possible way.

1. In this essay, I use the term “Gypsy” in keeping with its early modern usage. I save the term “Roma” for moments when I refer to the real-life ethnic group to which this racial slur was affixed.

2. Quotations from *The Two Noble Kinsmen* excerpted from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford, 2016). My reading of this scene is focused on Gypsiness specifically. For excellent accounts of the Africanist discourse in the same scene, see Sujata Iyengar, “Moorish Dancing in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 20 (2007), 85–107, and Dennis A. Britton, “From the *Knight’s Tale* to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*: Rethinking Race, Class and Whiteness in Romance,” *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 6 (2015), 64–78.

3. Emilia, having to choose between the eponymous two noble kinsmen, uses the term “Gypsy” to reject Arcite: “Palamon, thou art alone / And only beautiful [. . .] O Love, this only / From this hour is complexion. Lie there, Arcite. / Thou art a changeling to him, a mere gypsy, / And this the noble body” (4.2.37–45).

jailer's daughter's Gypsy act actually answers the schoolmaster's question: rejection has made her mad, indeed. What the schoolmaster hears in her Gypsy act, however, more than pain, is the promise of professional dance skills, and he enrolls her in the troupe, for the greatest delight of the Duke's court.

The fugitive vision of a mock-Gypsy woman dancing on the green with a mock-baboon points out, via an associative logic, the existence of subterranean connections between Gypsiness, performance, dance, animality, and the English countryside in the early modern period: it is those connections that I offer to bring to the surface in this essay. To do so, I will focus on a play that explicitly articulated and consolidated those connections about a decade after *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and I will use it as a window into the racial landscape of Jacobean and Caroline England. That play is *The Spanish Gypsie*, a dramatization of Cervantes' sensation novella *La gitanilla*, co-written by Thomas Middleton, William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, licensed for The Queen of Bohemia's Men at the Phoenix theater in July 1623, and performed at Whitehall on November 5, 1623.

With this case study, I home in on a hitherto understudied dimension of racial impersonation on stage: movement. This play deploys a complex, or braided, choreographic language around its Gypsy characters. Mobilizing an Anglicizing choreographic discourse that had been in vogue on stage for years, *The Spanish Gypsie* whitens its Roma characters, thereby highlighting the performers' own whiteness, and that whitening brings out, by contrast, another strand of choreographic discourse deployed around those very white bodies: a strand of animalizing "antic" dances. Borrowing from Erica Fudge the idea that animalization is a technique of disempowerment and exclusion from property ownership, I read the kinetic deployment of this technique around Gypsy characters, and, in the wake of *The Spanish Gypsie*, around stage Blackamoors, as a powerful mode of racialization. Dance, I argue here, is a communicative modality that could perform racializing work on the early modern stage, and that racializing work entailed downgrading non-white people in the zoological hierarchy long before the development in the Enlightenment of the racist taxonomic systems with which we usually associate such downgradings. *The Spanish Gypsie* premiered that embodied technique of racialization, marking a turn in the history of racecraft on the early modern English stage.

My approach to the racialization of Roma people on the early modern stage is relational, to use critical race theorist David Theo Goldberg's concept. A relational account, rather than performing a simple "compare and contrast" analysis, "reveals through indicating how effects are brought about as a result of historical, political, or economic, legal or cultural links, the one acting upon the other . . . A relational account connects materially and affectively, causally and implicatively."<sup>4</sup> Scholars of early modern England have increasingly taken up the task of studying racialization processes comparatively and relationally, yet their focus has primarily landed on Jews, Moors, and the Irish—Roma people have remained marginal figures in those attempts.<sup>5</sup> Those who have approached Gypsies relationally have done so by bringing them in conversation with stage Blackmoors through the lens of shared cosmetics, since Gypsies were often performed in brownface—most famously in Ben Jonson's masque *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*<sup>6</sup>—and Roma people were accused time and again of blackening their own skin on purpose across early modern Europe.<sup>7</sup> Affording forms of kinetic blackface, dance, I aim to show, is another productive lens for thinking about the racialization of Gypsies, Blackamoors, and other ethnic groups relationally in the early modern period. With this

4. David Theo Goldberg, "The Comparative and the Relational: Meditations on Racial Methods," in *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, ed. Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas (Chichester, 2011), 357–68 (361–62). While Goldberg's relational method was originally meant to reshape the study of race in comparative literature—that is, within a framework involving different cultures—I am interested here in applying it to different ethnic groups within one given culture.

5. A relational approach to early modern race studies informs, for instance, Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, Eng., 2004); Emily Weissbourd, "Transnational Genealogies: Jews, Blacks and Moors in Early Modern English and Spanish Literature, 1547–1642" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011); Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Color in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, 2005); Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (London, 2000); and Hugh Mackay, "Lust's Dominion and the Readmission of the Jews," *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008), 542–67.

6. Accounts of early modern blackface and brownface, such as Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500–1800* (New York, 2005), often mention *Gypsies Metamorphosed* in passing for the cosmetic information it provides. The most in-depth relational reading of Gypsy brownface and African blackface in early modern English theater currently available is Andrea Stevens, "Mastering Masques of Blackness: Jonson's 'Masque of Blackness', The Windsor text of 'The Gypsies Metamorphosed', and Brome's 'The English Moor,'" *ELH* 39 (2009), 396–426.

7. This belief was pervasive across early modern Europe. See for instance the Flemish botanist Rembert Dodoens' *Historie of Plants*, which states that the "Marrishe, or water horehound" is often called "the Egyptians' herbe, bycause the rogues and runnugates, which call themselves Egyptians do colour themselves blacke with this herbe": *A nieuwe herball, or historie of plantes* (1578), 257.

relational approach, the present essay contributes to the development of the fledgling field of early modern Roma studies.<sup>8</sup>

A relational account requires, in particular, a careful examination of what is unique to the process of racialization affecting a specific ethnic group, and what is connected, portable, recyclable in that process. This analytical logic informs the structure of this essay. Indeed, I first bring to light what is unique to English Roma people in the dances of *The Spanish Gypsy*, by showing how the moral, cosmetic, ethnic, and ultimately choreographic whitening of the Gypsy characters in this play reflects a dominant belief in Jacobean and Caroline societies that, under their costume, Gypsies were just English people, both on stage and off stage. In that sense, *The Spanish Gypsy* upheld a choreographic tradition that had been in use on stage for years in ways that highlighted the whiteness and Englishness of its performers. The mobilization of that choreographic tradition only made more salient, by contrast, *The Spanish Gypsy*'s innovative deployment of an animalizing choreographic discourse, which downgraded Roma people in the Great Chain of being. Finally, I bring to light the relational logic of early modern theatrical racecraft by tracing the extension of that new animalizing choreographic device to another ethnic group that was undergoing intense racialization in Jacobean and Caroline cultures, Blackamoors, in the repertory of *The Queen of Bohemia's Men* from 1623 to the closures of theaters in 1642. My hope, ultimately, is that, by exploring the hitherto understudied involvement of animalizing dances in the early modern English cultural mechanics of racialization, this essay might create more intersections between early modern race studies and dance studies, and also contribute, via early modern animal studies, to closing the gap that has been growing between early modern race studies and early modern ecocriticism.

## II

### "Gypsies, but no tanned ones"

In *The Spanish Gypsy*, Middleton, Rowley, Dekker, and Ford drew on two Cervantean *novelas* for source materials: they used elements from *La fuerza de la sangre* to build a tragicomic main plot focused on rape, repentance, and redemption through marriage, and they used *La gitana* for

8. Of particular promise for the fledgling field of early modern Roma studies is Sydnee Wagner, "Outlandish People: Gypsies, Race, and Fantasies of National Identity in Early Modern England" (PhD diss., CUNY, 2020).

their subplot.<sup>9</sup> In that subplot, a young aristocrat, Don Juan, falls in love with an exceptionally beautiful, witty, and gifted Gypsy woman, and asks her to marry him despite their class difference. Preciosa accepts on condition that Don Juan turns Gypsy for two years and proves himself worthy during that period of apprenticeship. He accepts, goes through the initiation process, receives a Gypsy name, Andrew, and is betrothed to Preciosa. A little later, a certain lady, Cardochia, makes advances at him; the faithful Andrew declines her favors, and, out of spite, she frames him for a theft he did not commit. A brawl ensues, during which Andrew kills one of Cardochia's admirers in self-defense. This adds a murder charge to his case. Preciosa pleads for her fiancé's life, but the Corregidor, Don Fernando, remains inflexible until the "Mother of Gypsies" reveals Andrew's true identity to Don Fernando, as well as the true identity of all the Gypsies in her troupe: she herself actually is Don Fernando's sister, who, years ago, followed her husband, the disgraced Alvarez, into the internal exile of counterfeit Gypsiness. As she did so, the old woman continues, she took her baby niece with her, Preciosa—or, rather, Don Fernando's long-lost daughter, Constanza. Don Fernando is overwhelmed with joy. Everybody's true identity is restored; all is forgiven; Don Juan and Constanza get married.

While the arc of this subplot is relatively faithful to the novella, the reader familiar with Cervantes' story will notice a couple of departures, which all converge towards the same end: whitening the Gypsies. First, unlike in the novella where little Preciosa was kidnapped by Gypsies, in the play, Preciosa was raised, albeit in disguise, by her aunt, who, given the fact that Preciosa's mother had died long before, was the designated person to mother the baby girl in an early modern society. The aunt fulfilled her duty by taking Constanza with her. The same sense of duty informs those Gypsies' code of ethics, starkly contradicting early modern stereotypes:

Father The arts of *Cocoquismo* and *Germania*, used by our Spanish picaros—I mean filching, foisting, nimming, lifting—we defy. None in our college shall study 'em; such graduates we degrade.

Antonio I am glad Spain has an honest company. [. . .]

9. In her introduction to the play, Suzanne Gossett notes that the authorial crew also sampled details, names, and proverbs from Mateo Alemán's popular picaresque novel *Guzman de Alfarache*, translated into English in 1622 by James Mabbe: *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford, 2007), 1724. On the adaptation of Spanish source texts in this play, see Barbara Fuchs, *The Poetics of Piracy: Emulating Spain in English Literature* (Philadelphia, 2013), 70–73.

Father Be not English Gypsies, in whose company a man's not sure of the ears of his head, they so pilfer! No such angling; what you pull to land, catch fair. There is no iron so foul but may be gilded, and our Gypsy profession (how base soever in show) may acquire commendations.

Carlo Gypsies, and yet pick no pockets?

Father Infamous and roguish! So handle your webs that they never come to be woven in the loom of justice. Take anything that's given you (purses, knives, handkerchiefs, rosaries, tweezers, any toy, any money); refuse not a maravedi, a blank. Feather by feather birds build nests; grain pecked up after grain makes pullen fat [. . .] None be sluttish, none thievish, none lazy; all bees, no drones, and our hives shall yield us honey. (2.1.13–69)<sup>10</sup>

The “Father of Gypsies,” that is, Alvarez in disguise, goes to great lengths not simply to exculpate his Gypsies from pervasive suspicions of theft, but to make their hard work ethic recognizable to an audience in 1623 London, through the running metaphor of the beehive (although, of course, by contrasting his own Spanish crew with “English Gypsies” who “pilfer” consummately, Alvarez simultaneously undoes and reinforces anti-Roma prejudices). If Father’s guidelines whiten Gypsies morally, a second departure whitens them cosmetically: just before delineating his troupe’s code of ethics, Father makes a point of describing his beehive as “Gypsies, but no tanned ones; no red-ochre rascals umbered with soot and bacon as the English Gypsies are” (2.1.6–8). Relinquishing the traditional technique of brownface, the play’s cast whitened Gypsies, going against the grain of spectators’ expectations.<sup>11</sup> This cosmetic whitening rendered visually the Gypsies’ moral whitening.

The third departure from the Cervantean source occurs when the queen bee herself, Preciosa, is whitened in the scene where her true identity is revealed. Indeed, Cervantes himself had drawn for that scene upon the spectacular anagnorisis scene of Heliodorus’ ancient romance,

10. All quotations from *The Spanish Gypsie* taken from *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford, 2007).

11. Most famously, in Ben Jonson’s *Gypsies Metamorphos’d*, Gypsies were performed by aristocrats in brownface: “what dy’d our faces was an ointment / Made, and layd on by Mr. Woolfes appointment / The court Lycanthropos”: *Masques of Difference: Four Court Masques by Ben Jonson*, ed. Kristen McDermott (Manchester, 2007), 204. Except for *Beggars’ Bush*, all the Gypsy plays preceding *The Spanish Gypsie* contain direct or indirect stage directions stipulating that the Gypsy parts be performed in brownface or blackface.

*Aethiopika*, or *The Ethiopian Story*, which had become extremely popular all across Europe starting in the 1560s and influenced both novels and drama throughout the early modern period.<sup>12</sup> Because the *Aethiopika* tells the story of Charicleia, a princess who is simultaneously white-skinned and Ethiopian, Cervantes' revelation scene cunningly connected Preciosa, a white woman formerly thought to be a Gypsy, to a heroine whose physical whiteness itself is eventually revealed as a form of Africanness. Doing so, Cervantes was casting doubt on the reliability of whiteness as an indicator of ethnicity, thereby subverting the restoration of racial legibility that seems to mark his novella's happy ending at *prima facie*. The 1623 English play, however, does away with such ambiguities and severs all potential links between Constanza and the African continent, whether it be Egypt (from where Gypsies were first believed to originate) or Ethiopia. The whitening process climaxes with the erasure of Gypsiness: ultimately, there is not a single Gypsy to be seen in the fictional world of this play, but only Spanish *Gadjos* (the Romani term to refer to someone who is not ethnically Roma or does not live in Roma culture) with English values in disguise. The English play whitens Gypsies morally, physically, and ethnically, to the point of disappearance.

## III

*Dancing Gypsiness*

The whitening of Gypsies in *The Spanish Gypsie* is indicative of larger societal views on Gypsies in the late Jacobean period. Noticing the absence of "new legislation on Gypsies in the seventeenth century, and [the] diminishing inclination to enforce the Tudor statutes," David Cressy points out a general decrease of anxieties around Gypsies in Stuart societies.<sup>13</sup> Examining the evolution of the Tudor legal statutes themselves might give us the key to understand this decrease of anxieties. Promulgated some twenty years after the first documented appearances of Roma people in Scotland and in England, the first "Egyptian Act" of 1531 treated

12. For an analysis of Heliodorus' relevance to Cervantes' novella, see Eric D. Mayer, "Cervantes, Heliodorus, and the Novelty of *La Gitanilla*," *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 33 (2013), 97–117. For a discussion of the influence of Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story* in French and English theatrical cultures see my own essay "'Everyone Breeds in His Own Image': Staging the *Aethiopica* across the Channel," *Renaissance Drama* 44 (2016), 157–85.

13. David Cressy, "Trouble with the Gypsies in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 59 (2016), 45–70 (66). My account of Tudor legal statutes regarding Gypsies is heavily indebted to Cressy's work.

Gypsies as “strangers,” that is, aliens, to be systematically deported from the country. In 1554, a new law, while seeking to strengthen the Egyptian Act by punishing with death Gypsies who resisted or ignored removal orders, actually re-defined Gypsiness as a way of life rather than an ethnicity, as it spared from deportation those willing to abandon their Gypsy ways, settle down with a master, and behave like good Christians. In 1563, a new law reiterated those stipulations while extending punishment to anyone found in the company of Gypsies: most importantly those stipulations applied to “counterfeit Gypsies,” thereby reckoning with the troubling reality that many Gypsies were actually English-born, no “strangers,” and, as such, could not be deported under existing law. While it is interesting to notice, as David Cressy does, the gap that seems to have existed between increasingly harsher anti-Gypsy legal statutes and the increasingly pervasive inability or unwillingness of local English communities to implement those statutes, what the evolution of anti-Gypsy laws most strikingly evidences is a growing perception of Gypsiness as a performative identity that could be put on or off at will. Tellingly, by 1617, in *The Guide to Tongues*, John Minsheu defined Gypsies in the following terms: “Egyptians are in our Statutes and Lawes of England, a counterfeit kinde of roagues, that being English or Welsh people, accompanie themselves together, disguising themselves in strange roabes, blacking their faces and bodies, and framing to themselves an unknowen language, wander up and downe, and under pretense of telling of fortunes, curing diseases, and such like, abuse the ignorant common people, by stealing all that is not too hot, or too heauey for their carriage.”<sup>14</sup> The idea that such a striking and exotic-looking identity was entirely performative off stage must have made Gypsiness particularly titillating to represent on stage for theater-makers who had expertly used techniques of racial impersonation to represent Blackamoors, Jews, and Turks for decades. In that sense, I read the craze for Gypsy plays that seized the London theaters starting in the late 1610s not only as a topical response to the sensational arrest of several dozen Gypsies at Winchester, Hampshire, in 1616, but also as the culmination of a larger epistemological redefinition of Gypsy identity that had been brewing for over half a century.<sup>15</sup>

14. Qtd. in Bryan Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, 2002), 43.

15. Besides the Morris scene in *Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), the craze for Gypsy plays starts with Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, which was written for The King's Men. Although some, including John Jowett, have hypothesized that it could have been written as early as



Across early modern Europe, dance was perceived to be Gypsies' primary cultural marker and professional activity (besides stealing and fortunetelling): whether it be at aristocratic mansions, market fairs, or festivals, an early modern Gypsy typically got "his living by his tongue and legs" (3.2.69). This explains in part the Schoolmaster's decision to enroll the jailer's daughter in his dancing company after she performs palmistry in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Don Juan's reaction to Preciosa's command that he turn Gypsy for two years confirms this common perception: "Turn Gypsy! For two years! A capering trade, / And I in th'end may keep a dancing school, / Having served for't" (2.1.267–69). It stands to reason, then, that ambient doubts about the solidity of Gypsy identity expressed themselves through the medium of dance. Most Gypsy plays produced starting 1618 include dances, and *The Spanish Gypsie* is no exception. I see the inclusion of scenes where Gypsies perform traditional English folk dances in *The Spanish Gypsie* as an expression of the pervasive English suspicion that many Gypsies were actually Englishmen in disguise—an expression of their essential Englishness.

Indeed, the play whitens Gypsies choreographically during the initiation scene where Don Juan becomes a "new brother of our order" (4.1.55) and is betrothed to Preciosa. One would expect this scene where Alvarez's crew performs Gypsiness for the neophyte Don Juan to foreground dances specific to Roma culture: yet what they perform is mostly traditional English folk dances, as we can guess from the song that accompanies their dance:

Brave Don, cast your eyes  
On our Gypsy fashions:

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1614, the importance of the 1616 arrest at Winchester makes me side with those who suggest a slightly posterior start date for the play. *More Dissemblers Beyond Women* was followed by Barten Holyday's university drama *Technogamia*, first created by the students of Christ Church, Oxford, in 1618 and performed at court in August 1621. It is believed that Ben Jonson had a hand in Barten Holyday's play. Then Ben Jonson's own masque, *Gypsies Metamorphos'd*, was performed in three different aristocratic settings throughout the year 1621; it was followed by Philip Massinger and John Fletcher's *Beggars' Bush*, performed at court in December 1622 and probably on the commercial stage during the months before, and then by Middleton, Rowley, Dekker, and Ford's *The Spanish Gypsie*. *More Dissemblers Beyond Women* was then revived in 1623 as part of the craze for Gypsy plays. In 1641, Richard Brome, who had been Ben Jonson's secretary in his youth, channeled *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd* in his extremely popular play *The Jovial Crew*. This list is not exhaustive in that it does not include lost plays, and it only includes Gypsy plays that feature dance acts. It should still give an idea of how fashionable Gypsy themes were on stage during the 1613–1623 decade.

In our antic hay-de-guys  
 We go beyond all nations.  
 Plump Dutch  
 At us grutch;  
 So do English,  
 So do French.  
 He that lopes  
 On the ropes  
 Show me such another wrench. (4.1.86–95)

The “hay-de-guy” to which Sancho’s song alludes was a mixed-gender rustic chain dance in vogue in early modern England, which relied on symmetry, hand-giving, and choreographic patterns that displaced dancers only to return them to their point of origin. Coming at the close of the conversion and betrothal ceremony, this dance conveyed to the audience the idea that Don Juan has just been harmoniously integrated into a new society, for as Ingrid Brainard explains:

For dancers of the high Renaissance, handing symbolized love, and the chain itself, besides being a means for changing partners and for intermingling participants in a dance, had a cosmological significance that was understood by all informed spectators and dancers present at a ball in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century: it symbolized the Great Chain of Being, an image of the hierarchy underlying all natural things . . . Choreographers of the Renaissance were fully aware of the philosophical and existential implications of the Hey and therefore used it frequently as the final figure in their dances. Whatever the implied or actual dramatic events, competitions, or love conflicts that had occurred in the preceding passages of a given choreography, the chain at the end was the sign of peace, order, and harmony restored.<sup>16</sup>

Andrew might have become a member of a new society, but that society uses the same cultural forms as English society to represent itself. In the same song, the Gypsies describe themselves as exceeding English companies like Sisley Peadle’s that got licenses from the Master of Revels to perform rope-dancing and acrobatics all over the country (“he who lopes

16. Ingrid Brainard, “Hey,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance* (Oxford, 2005).

on the ropes show me such another wrench”).<sup>17</sup> Alvarez’s crew is, indeed, “a country company of strolls” (2.1.215), performing for large popular audiences at inns (2.1.76–81) or select audiences at aristocratic mansions such as the Corregidor’s. Allusions to English folk dances continue, as, to the tune of Sancho’s song, the Gypsies dance through the streets to reach the Corregidor’s mansion:

Trip it, Gypsies, trip it fine,  
 Show tricks and lofty capers!  
 At threading needles we repine,  
 And leaping over rapiers [. . .]

Over high ways, over low,  
 And over stones and gravel  
 Though we trip it on the toe  
 And thus for silver travel,  
 Though our dances waste our backs,  
 At night fat capons mend ’em [. . .]

O that all the world were mad!  
 Then should we have fine dancing.  
 Hobby-horses would be had  
 And brave girls keep a-prancing [. . .]  
*Exeunt [dancing].* (3.1.107–38)

To the sound of “fifes and drums” (3.2.87), Sancho alludes to English folk dances such as “threading the needle,” a pattern common to many chain dances across Europe, which mimics the children’s game of “thread-needle”: the leading dancer repeatedly goes under the arch formed by the arms of two dancers at the opposite end of the chain until all dancers are immobilized.<sup>18</sup> Sancho’s song also evokes “leaping over rapiers,” a common move in the all-male sword dances that were popular throughout the country, especially in the Northeast, and often performed by dancers with blackened faces.<sup>19</sup> “Repining” at those, however, Sancho seems to

17. Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Eng., 2010), 346.

18. Lisbet Torp, “Chain and Round Dances,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*.

19. “The long-sword dance is performed in and around Yorkshire by six or eight men wearing quasi-military or uniform costumes decked with rosettes and ribbons . . . figures include ‘over your own sword’ (each dancer hops over his sword in turn), ‘over your neighbor’s sword,’ and ‘single

contrast them with a dance his heart truly longs for: Morris dancing. Indeed, the information that the middle stanza gives us about the dances performed by the Gypsy hive—"we trip it on the toe" and "our dances waste our backs"—aligns those dances with what early modern French dance scholar Thoinot Arbeau called the *Morisque* in 1596.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the allusion to the "hobby-horses" that were part of May games Morris dances is unmistakable, and his placing them within the framework of "a world gone mad" evokes Carnival festivities. Although this evocation takes place in the conditional mood, stage directions signal that the crew danced while Sancho sang: it is likely that the dancers sketched gestures proper to each of the dances Sancho mentions (thread-needle, sword dance, versions of the Morris) as he mentioned them.

Hay-de-guys, hobby-horses, and sword dances unambiguously belong to the world of English folklore; the participation of the play's Gypsy characters in English folk dances signals not only the *Gadjo* identity of Alvarez's crew on stage, but the suspected English identity of most "counterfeit Gypsies" off stage. Indeed, simply put, in early modern performance culture, and I will explore this idea in depth shortly, you were what you danced. Invoking English folklore, *The Spanish Gypsie* did not innovate, as most of the Gypsy plays that preceded this play had their Gypsies perform English dances: bransles and country dances in Ben Jonson's masque, Morris dancing in virtually any other Gypsy play of the period.

Morris dancing, despite its undeniable association with English folklore, introduced some cultural ambiguity. As Barbara Ravelhofer puts it, "the musical sound [of the Morris] evoked the countryside, but also more remote, exotic locations."<sup>21</sup> All across Europe, the *Morisque*, or Morris, was "extremely vigorous and spectacular, that entailed jumps, caprioles, and breathtakingly virtuosic acrobatics,"<sup>22</sup> and a term that early modern travel writers often used to describe the dances that they saw

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over' (the dancers file over a sword held as a hurdle)": John Forrest, "Sword Dance," in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*.

20. "Originally, *Morisque* dancers tapped their feet, but they found it too painful, so now they tap their heels instead, and save their toes": Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie* (Lengres, 1596), 94–95. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from French into English are my own.

21. Barbara Ravelhofer, "Burlesque Ballet, a Ballad and a Banquet in Ben Jonson's 'The Gypsies Metamorphos'd' (1621)," *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 25 (2007), 144–55 (146).

22. Margaret McGowan, *La Danse à la Renaissance: sources livresques et albums d'images* (Paris, 2012), 39.

people perform in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>23</sup> The old debate surrounding the origins of Morris dancing has dogged early modern scholarship to this day: was it a remnant of old English traditions born in the countryside? Or an imported Spanish dance of Moorish (and sub-Saharan) origins, *la moresca*? And if the answer is ‘both’, how did cultural and choreographic syncretism operate? That debate started in the early modern period itself.<sup>24</sup> It is not my ambition here to settle the debate, but to use it productively. Indeed, I want to suggest that this very ambiguity, this oscillation between Englishness and a Hispanicized form of Moorishness, made Morris dancing the perfect dance for Gypsies specifically to perform. In a culture where you were what you danced, Morris dancing expressed choreographically the identity of a population group that the English read as simultaneously “strange,” exotic, connected to Africa, and yet, profoundly English. Favoring Morris dancing over other English folk dances, Sancho foregrounds the cultural ambiguity of Gypsies. The ambiguity of Morris dancing bridges the divide in *The Spanish Gyspie* between the strand of choreographic discourse in vogue that whitens, or Anglicizes Gypsies, and a more original strand of choreographic discourse that animalizes them, and thereby racializes them.

## IV

## “Antics they have”

The animalization of Gypsies by choreographic means to which I will turn shortly must be understood in the larger framework of the animalizing poetics that the play deploys around its queen bee and best performer. Introduced first as a “creature” (1.5.99), Preciosa is described as a “little ape” that “gets money by the sackful” (1.5.115) as soon as her

23. In his *Cosmographie Universelle*, André Thevet comments on the “frisky dancing” of sub-Saharan women from Senegal, and adds that he is “not surprized that in France we call several dances *mauresques*, considering all the monkeying around that they contain”: André Thevet, *Cosmographie Universelle, Tome premier* (Paris, 1575), 94.

24. For an in-depth exploration of this debate from its early modern origins, see John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing, 1438–1750*, vol. 5 (Toronto, 1999). The debate is still alive, to a large part, due to the internal variety of early modern Morris dancing, as the term referred to a wide array of choreographies and performance practices: for instance, Thoinot Arbeau tells us that “*la morisque*” was performed in blackface, while William Kempe, the most famous Morris dancer in Elizabethan England, did not use blackface. For a more detailed exploration of the variations among versions of the Morris just in England, see Marsh, *Music and Society*, 350–52.

performing skills as a singer and a dancer are mentioned.<sup>25</sup> Alluding to the songs she has memorized for performance, Preciosa calls herself “a parrot” (2.1.96), and when she mentions the various offers she has received from enamored male spectators, an elephant: “as little as I am, I have been taken for an elephant, castles and lordships offered to be set upon me” (2.1.85–87). The image of the elephant recurs when Soto and Sancho, having decided to turn Gypsy themselves, announce “we will show such tricks and such rare gambols / As shall put down the elephant and camels” (2.2.178–79). The Gypsies compare themselves to the animals used in the entertainment industry of early modern England. They allude to bear-baiting, dog fighting, and ape acts, and contrast their own merry freedom with the plight of the animals involved in those. Their acts, by contrast, feature “No blind bears / Shedding tears / For a collier’s whipping, / Apes nor dogs / Quick as frogs / Over cudgels skipping” (4.1.100–05). When Alvarez states “We’ll entertain no mountebanking stroll, / No piper, fiddler, tumbler through small hoops, / No ape-carrier, baboon-bearer; / We must have nothing stale, trivial, or base” (2.1.18–21), what he means is that the Gypsies themselves fulfill the role of performing animals: “we no camels have to show / No elephants with grout head— / We can dance” (4.1.96–98). The play’s Gypsies perceive themselves, rightly so, as competing with those animal entertainers for spectators’ attention and money.<sup>26</sup>

Thus Preciosa describes her own performance as the act of a virtuosic trained animal:

Yes, father, I will play the changeling:  
 I’ll change myself into a thousand shapes  
 To court our brave spectators; I’ll change my postures  
 Into a thousand different variations  
 To draw even ladies’ eyes to follow mine. (2.1.106–10)

And yet, Preciosa seems to resent that same rhetoric when it is deployed around her by *Gadjos*:

25. On the presence and meaning of apes and monkeys in early modern London both onstage and offstage, see Jean E. Howard, “Beatrice’s Monkey: Staging Exotica in Early Modern London Comedy,” in *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, ed. Jyotsna G. Singh (Chichester, 2009), 325–39.

26. Besides entertainment animals, the Protean Preciosa is compared to “a fly” and “a pigeon” (2.1.129–30), a “little musk-cat” (3.1.89), and “a mutton” (4.1.18). The Father of Gypsies had, earlier on, compared his crew at large to “bees,” “birds,” “pullen.”

- Sancho Is this the little ape does the fine tricks?  
 Preciosa 'Come aloft, Jack-little-ape!  
 Sancho Would my jack might come aloft! Please you to set the  
 watermill with the ivory cogs in't a-grinding my hand-  
 ful of purging comfits.  
*[He offers her comfits]*  
 Soto My master desires to have you loose from your company.  
 Preciosa Am I a pigeon, think you, to be caught with cumin  
 seeds? A fly to glue my wings to sweetmeats, and so be  
 ta'en?  
 Sancho *[to Father]* When do your gambols begin?  
 Father Not till we ha' dined.  
 Sancho 'Sfoot! Then your bellies will be so full, you'll be able to do  
 nothing.—Soto, prithee, set a good face on't, for I cannot,  
 and give the little monkey that letter. (2.1.122–36)

Sancho (still a *Gadjo* at this point) calls Preciosa a trick-performing ape. By hurling back at him what Gary Taylor identifies as the usual early modern ape-trainer's command for his monkey to start performing ("Come aloft, jackanapes!"), Preciosa points out his cavalier mode of address, all the more cavalier, since, applied to a woman, "ape" or "monkey" was a sexual slur.<sup>27</sup> This scene fits a larger pattern: when non-white women are racialized in early modern English drama, their racialization usually doubles as sexualization. As the obtuse Sancho keeps treating her like a pet, offering to feed her little treats ("comfits"), she comments on the inappropriateness of a treatment that simultaneously animalizes and sexualizes her, and she snaps back ("Am I a pigeon? A fly?"). Preciosa knows that utterances endowed with a specific meaning within her community acquire a different value in the mouths of outsiders. She can talk about herself as if she were a performing animal, and so can her putative father, but *Gadjos* do not get to call her "little ape." Preciosa's keenness on policing the border between insiders and outsiders that determines who is allowed to use the animalizing rhetoric suggests that the rhetoric in question is embedded in distinctly racial power dynamics.

27. As George Steevens noted long ago, both in George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie* (1589) and in Thomas Dekker's play *Blurt Master Constable, or The Spaniard's Nightwalk* (1602), women are described as, among other things, "an angel at church," a diabolical creature in the kitchen, and "an ape in the bed" (emphasis mine): George Steevens, ed., *Othello*, in *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, vol. 19 (1813), 314.

Those racial dynamics are particularly palpable in the choreographic version of the rhetoric of animalization. The choreographic discourse of animalization has a rich vocabulary in *The Spanish Gypsie*. Besides “frisking” (3.2.58), “tumbling” (3.2.60), “spinning their tops” and “wrenching” (3.1.77 and 4.1.95) like English rope-dancers, the Gypsies make “gam-bols” (2.1.132, 225; 2.2.178), and “caper” (3.2.58)—two terms whose etymology reveals an animalistic origin, referring respectively to a horse and a kid’s leap. Another dance that Sancho, now turned Gypsy, alludes to is the mixed gender Canary dance: “To a banquet there must be wine. Fortune’s a scurvy whore, if she makes not my head sound like a rattle and my heels dance the Canaries” (4.2.95–97). Sancho, always on the lookout for good cheer and wine, is playing here with the polysemy of the word “Canary” which refers both to a dance and a type of wine: his pun connects that dance with the disinhibition that comes with wine consumption.<sup>28</sup> Since the play ends with a wedding and thus, presumably, a banquet, in the Corregidor’s mansion, it is quite possible that, when the soon-to-be-ex-Gypsies, led by the very same Sancho, dance and “shake [their] hands and [their] heels” (5.3.109) in celebration of said wedding, what they dance is a Canary. While the “rattle” evokes the sounds of the bells attached to the legs of Morris dancers, associating “Canary dance” with Gypsy bodies is not innocuous. Indeed, the canary dance allegedly came from the Canary Islands whose inhabitants were represented as black, and where Iberians first experimented with sugar plantations in the fifteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Julia Sutton and Pamela Jones describe it as “as a fiery wooing dance, marked by rapid heel-and-toe stamps, by noisy sliding steps with which the partners alternately advance and retreat.”<sup>30</sup> Music and dance theorist Marin Mersenne comments in 1636 that, “Canary dance is very difficult and only danced by those who know it well and are light-footed. It entails several kinds of foot beats . . . half-caprioles, halfspins, and other turns both in the air and on the ground.”<sup>31</sup> One of those footbeats was the “*rus de vache*”—literally, “the cow’s kick”—an extremely rare step consisting in raising one foot laterally, instead of forwards or backwards (as was

28. The same pun was already evoked at the end of Sancho’s “dance song” in act 3 scene 2 (3.1.131–37).

29. See for instance the illustration showing a man from Tenerife in Leo Africanus’ *Historical description de l’Afrique, tierce partie du monde . . . Tome second de l’Afrique* (Lyon, 1556), 406.

30. Julia Sutton and Pamela Jones, “Canary,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*.

31. Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle, contenant la théorie et la pratique de la musique* (Paris, 1636), 174.



the norm in baroque dance). According to Arbeau, this step was only used for the *canarie*. For him, *canarie* “moves are lively, and yet, they are strange, odd, and smack of savagery . . . You will learn them from those who know them, and you can invent new ones yourself.”<sup>32</sup> With this direction, Arbeau encouraged European dancers to unleash their imagination and to incorporate into the vocabulary of *canarie* whatever they fantasized as “savage” gestures. The “savagery” that characterizes the Canary dance performed in *The Spanish Gypsie* also seems to inform the moment in Middleton’s *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (c.1615), when Gypsies exit “with a strange-wild-fashioned dance to the oboes and cornett” (4.2.278)—a moment that might, of course, have itself drawn some inspiration from the baboonizing Morris dance scene in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

The animalizing dimension at work in gestures specific to the Canary or in the gambols and the capers performed by Gypsies in the play crystallizes in the term “antics” that Soto uses to describe the crew’s dances: “Antics they have, and Gypsy-masquing” (3.2.62). Lexicons from the period all highlight the centrality of visual culture to the early modern understanding of “antiques.”<sup>33</sup> Antics are gargoyles “pulling faces and making gestures” [“*varios vultus et gestus exprimunt*”] in John Baret’s *An Alveary or Triple Dictionary, in English, Latin, and French* (1574); an “anticke-work” is “a worke in painting or carving, of divers shapes of beasts, birds, flowers, &c. unperfectlie mixt and made one out of another” in John Bullokar’s *An English Expositor* (1616), and “a term in painting, or Carving, it being a disorderly mixture of divers shapes of men, birds” in Edward Phillips’ *The New World of English Words* (1658). In 1612, Master of Arts Henry Peacham wrote the most elaborate of extant definition of “antiques”: “The form of it is a general and (as I may say) unnaturall or unorderly composition for delight’s sake, of men, beasts, birds, fishes, flowres, etc without (as we say) rime or reason, for the greater variety you shew in your invention, the more you please [. . .] You may, if you list, draw naked boys riding and playing with their paper-mils or bubble-shels upon goates, eagles, dolphins, etc, the bones of a ram’s head hung with streams of beads and ribands, Satyres, Trytons, Apes, and Cornucopias, Dogs yoakt etc., drawing cucumbers, cherries, and any kind of wild trail or vinet after your own

32. Arbeau, 95.

33. Those lexical entries were retrieved through the remarkable website “Lexicons of Early Modern English,” ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press and University of Toronto Library: <http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/>.

invention, with a thousand such more idle toys, so that herein you cannot be too fantastical.”<sup>34</sup> Defined as delightful composition where the borders between humans, animals, and vegetables become porous, “antics” are relevant to body language, denoting the hybridization of human body language with animal forms. Indeed, in early modern lexicons, when the noun or adjective forms of “antiques” do not refer to visual culture, they usually refer to the domain of embodied performance. “Anticke” is a synonym for “disguised” in both Edmund Coote’s *The English School-master* (1596) and in Robert Cawdrey’s *A Table Alphabetical* (1604). The term is used to define a “mascarade” as “an anticke dance of disguised persons” in John Wilkins’ *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668); to define the “Pimpompert” dance as “a kind of antick dance wherein three hit each other on the bum with one of their feet” in Edward Phillips’ *The New World of English Words* (1658); and to define the “Mattachin” dance as “an antick or morrice dance” in Elisha Coles’s *An English Dictionary* (1677).

Thus, “antics” form a concept that moves between visual culture and performance culture, as is perhaps best exemplified in the juxtaposition of both domains in the definition given in B. E.’s *New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew* (1699): “Antics: little Images on Stone, on the out side of old Churches. Antick postures or dresses, such as are odd, ridiculous and singular, the habits and motions of Fools, Zanies, or Merry-andrews, of Mountebanks, with Ribbands, mismatched colours and Feathers.” This seeming inseparability of visual culture and the culture of embodied performance suggests that the definition of antics provided in the former domain has traction in the latter: Peacham’s description of “antics” can help us understand the “antics” deployed in the realm of choreographic performance, where they are notoriously ill-defined. What emerges from this multimodal definition is the notion of antics as a choreographic principle encouraging performers to unleash their imagination and animalize their own body language. As Sancho’s allusion to “our antic hay-de-guys” (4.1.88) suggests, “antics” were not restricted to explicitly “savage” dances like the Canary: the “antic” choreographic principle could function as an add-on and graft itself onto any of the dances that the Gypsy crew performed in the play, distorting standard dance

34. Henry Peacham, *The Gentleman’s Exercise, or an exquisite practice, as well for drawing all manner of Beasts in their true portraiture* (1612), 39–45.

moves by degree and animalizing human body language to create kinetic antics in the spectators' eyes.

Antics constituted a powerful technique of racialization on the early modern stage, to the extent that movements were routinely essentialized in a culture that believed, in the words of late seventeenth-century French dance theorist Claude-François Ménéstrier, that "ballet expresses movements that painting and sculpture cannot, and doing so, it expresses the very nature of things and the soul's habits, which can only be apprehended by the senses through those movements."<sup>35</sup> You were what you danced in early modern performance culture in the sense that dance moves were supposed to express both one's inner truth and one's place in the world. Consequently, Renaissance dancing treatises across Europe often insisted on decorum, restricting the type of movements that suited dancers based on gender and class; decorum determined "who danced with whom, the order of the dancing, what dances should be performed in public, and those allowed for private entertainment."<sup>36</sup> Thoinot Arbeau too reads dance as a communicative modality: "Dance is, in way, a silent rhetoric, in which the orator can speak with his movements, without a word, and still be understood by the spectators."<sup>37</sup> In the case of antics, what dance communicated was the animalistic nature of the dancer's "soul's habits," the dancer's liminal status between human and animal. Tellingly, besides racial others, in the early modern English dramatic repertoire, antics were primarily performed by two types of creatures whose liminality was obvious: devils and baboons.<sup>38</sup> Expressing an essential hybridity, antics downgraded their humanoid performers in the Great Chain of Being.

35. Claude-François Ménéstrier, *Des ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre* (Paris 1682), 41. For an exploration of this belief both in humanist writings and in the writings of dance masters, see Jennifer Nevile, *The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Bloomington, 2004), 91–92.

36. Margaret McGowan, *Dance in the Renaissance: European Fashion, French Obsession* (New Haven, 2008), 21. In practice there seems to have been much more porosity than treatises suggest, so that, as Christopher Marsh eloquently puts it, "dance simultaneously revealed and concealed the major dividing lines within English culture and society" (*Music and Society*, 389).

37. Arbeau, 6.

38. Allusions to apes' love for dancing are ubiquitous, from the proverb "to lead apes in Hell" (meaning, to die a virgin), to casual references such as "Tis now full-Moone, Apes daunce in such a night" in Robert Anton, *The Philosopher's Satyrs* (1616), 66, or "at Full Moone Apes dancing the Canaries" in William Vaughan, *The soules exercise in the daily contemplation of our Saviours birth, life, passion, and Resurrection* (1641), 113. Dancing apes were also a standard fixture of early modern descriptions of the Apocalypse.

The first strand of choreographic discourse deployed around Gypsy characters in *The Spanish Gypsie*, that is, the whitening Anglicizing folk dances, does not undermine the discourse of animalizing antics as much as it enhances them. English folk dances, by whitening Gypsy characters, do not only echo contemporary suspicions about the “real” ethnic identity of English Roma people off stage: they also highlight the Englishness and the whiteness of the professional actors performing the play. The thespian aspirations of Alvarez’s fictional crew of mock-Gypsies increase their proximity to the professional actors playing that crew on the London stage. Indeed, no longer content to perform acrobatics and dances, Alvarez’s crew wishes to become a full-blown acting company. We see them take concrete steps to that end: they recruit a (mock-) Italian playwright (3.1.54–72), they perform for the Corregidor a “merry tragedy” “extempore,” that is, in the fashion of the *commedia dell’arte* (4.2.38–50), and they convince the Corregidor, himself a theater enthusiast, to license them as an acting company (3.2.219–32). What the play’s spectators saw on stage was real professional actors performing white people who counterfeited by necessity a crew of Gypsy entertainers aspiring to become professional actors. This layered approach to performative identity never lets spectators forget about the real actors’ presence and their whiteness, which provides the bedrock of the play’s racial performances. By underlining the Gypsies’ whiteness and reminding spectators of the actors’ whiteness, the Anglicizing strand of the play’s choreographic discourse embeds the play’s conditions of performance and renders more visible the inauthenticity of the animalizing antics.

Inauthenticity was indeed at the core of early modern antics. Antics were always performed by white dancers. For instance, Arbeau defines the *canarie* dance as inauthentic: “Some say this dance is commonly in use in the Canary islands, but others, whose opinion I share, argue that this dance was born from a ballet composed for a masquerade in which the dancers were disguised as kings and queens of Mauretania, or as some savages, with feathers dyed in various colors.”<sup>39</sup> The eminent early modern dance scholar himself suspects that this antic-like dance was not created by Africans or “savages,” but by French people playing Africans and “savages.” Baboonizing antics were never authentically African or Gypsy, but always European in provenance. This does not mean, however, that antic dances did not shape Europeans’ perceptions of real exotic others: to

39. Arbeau, 95.

understand how those racializing dynamics functioned, we can think analogically about another better-known inauthentic racializing technique of performance: early modern blackface. It is now commonly accepted, that, when they watched parts performed in blackface early modern theater-goers never lost sight of the whiteness of the performer, due in part to the obsession of dramatic poetics with the materiality of blackface cosmetics. Thus spectators could, in the words of Arthur Little, “witness the work, the staginess of whiteness” during performances where whiteness invented itself in the public eye as the human norm and ideal susceptible to denigration in the material, physiological, moral, intellectual, linguistic, and spiritual senses of the term.<sup>40</sup> Reading antics as kinetic blackface reveals how that technique of performance could, over time, help define white body language as an ideal norm susceptible to denigration, and white bodies as bodies able to temporarily borrow the trappings of ethnic difference without losing their original quality. Blackface, as inauthentic as it was, participated in the shaping of cultural conceptions about authentic whiteness and blackness. For instance, the reliance of blackface on a demonizing rhetoric that it did not initiate but spectacularly appropriated ensured the spread and continuance of the demonization of black people well after the early modern period.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the reliance of choreographic antics on an animalizing rhetoric that they did not initiate but spectacularly appropriated, could help shape the image of antic-dancing racial others as animalized in popular culture in the long run. In performance, antics often interacted with blackface: the playwrights’ rare decision *not* to use blackface in *The Spanish Gypsy* only makes the ideological operations of antics more salient by letting dance—in all of its inauthenticity—do more racializing work on its own.

## V

*Race, Humans, Animals*

My reading of the play’s animalization of its Gypsy characters departs from what James Knowles identifies as a general anxiety about the porosity of

40. Arthur Little, *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford, 2000), 98.

41. On the demonization of black characters on the early modern English stage, see primarily Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race: the Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge, 1987), 72–146, and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, Eng., 2005), 34–56.

the human-animal border in early modern entertainment culture. For Knowles, “if Renaissance humankind was deeply concerned with the ‘animal within’ and the possibility that humans might slip into animal form, the connection between acting and apish imitation exacerbates these uncertainties.”<sup>42</sup> Knowles convincingly shows how anxieties about a “postlapsarian trajectory of decay” and metamorphosis “towards the animal” in early modern England crystallized around the figure of the actor, given the connections between actors and apes—as both actors and apes were thought of as imitators, and both performed for money.<sup>43</sup> Along those lines, one could argue that Gypsies are baboonized in this play—to recuperate Knowles’ expressive coinage—because they were perceived as performers to the core. It may be so, but seeing how often the motif of baboonization was deployed on stage around racial others specifically, it is hard to believe that the baboonization of Gypsies in this play—and in other plays—should be disconnected from issues of race. In her refusal to let herself be baboonized by *Gadjos* specifically, *Preciosa* seems to agree.

A similar lack of engagement with racial issues can generally be found in the field of early modern animal studies, and early modern eco-criticism, of which it is a subset.<sup>44</sup> We are indebted to early modern animal studies for the realization, in the words of Karen Raber, that “the boundary that divides human from animal is neither fixed nor stable in this period, but is in the process of being established.”<sup>45</sup> Studies in that field have repeatedly pointed out the porosity between the categories of the human and the animal before the Cartesian turn reified the distinction between them. As Erica Fudge puts it, early modern animals “raised the specter of human limitation; they provoked unease about the distinct nature of humanity; they undid the boundaries between human and beast even as they appeared to cement them.”<sup>46</sup> Such porosity also

42. James Knowles, “‘Can ye not tell a man from a marmoset?': Apes and Others on the Early Modern Stage,” in *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, ed. Erica Fudge (Urbana, 2004), 138–63 (142).

43. Knowles, 139.

44. As Henry Turner trenchantly puts it, it is uncomfortable and yet urgent to ask, “why does race drop away from ecocritical and new materialist approaches to the posthuman?” Henry Turner, “Recent Studies in Tudor and Stuart Drama,” *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 58 (2018), 473–537 (480).

45. Karen Raber, *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture* (Philadelphia, 2013), 10.

46. Erica Fudge, “Introduction,” in *Renaissance Beasts*, 13.

extended to non-animals such as vegetal or even mineral creatures, which, like animals and humans, were, Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi explain, “ensouled forms of matter which, far from having discrete boundaries, are actually subject to necessary overlap.”<sup>47</sup> The point of maximal human-animal porosity on the animal side has repeatedly been identified as the figure of the ape, based on texts as early as Richard Jacobson’s *The Golden Trade* (1623) or Andrew Battell’s description of African gorillas in *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1625).<sup>48</sup> On the human side, however, fewer animal studies scholars have sought a point of maximal porosity: in its relation to the ape, the early modern human has most often been treated as a united seamless category.

My understanding of the racializing effect of baboonizing antics is indebted to Erica Fudge’s exceptional reckoning with the exclusionary mechanics attached to the early modern definition of humanity within what she calls “the discourse of reason.” In *Brutal Reasoning*, Fudge insightfully notes that, while reason was held to differentiate humans from animals, a number of humans were perceived as imperfectly rational; consequently, those people, namely, women, children, and Native Americans, were read as in-between humans and animals.<sup>49</sup> The linkage of women, children, and Native Americans with animals within the early modern discourse of reason had implications in the domain of power relations, Fudge continues, to the extent that animals imply a specific economy of possession: “An animal (like most women) does not have the right to own property; animals can only *be* property. Possession signifies control, and control is willed, and therefore available only to a human” (54). The pervasive

47. Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi, “Introduction,” in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature* (New York, 2012), 4.

48. Qtd. in Laura Brown, *Homeless Dogs & Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination* (Ithaca, 2010), 30–32. See also Susan Wiseman, “Monstrous Perfectibility: Ape-Human Transformations in Hobbes, Bulwer, Tyson,” in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Erica Fudge et al. (New York, 1999), 215–38.

49. “Women were certainly human, but their humanity was perceived to be more fragile, and as such somehow closer to although always different from animals”: Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, 2006), 41. As Fudge also notes, “Despite being born in possession of a rational soul, then, infants are not yet fully human, insofar as human status can only be designated truly by the actions that evidence the possession of a rational soul” (48), and “A link was also made between the native peoples of the New World and animals. While the land was (logically) figured as a woman in need of masculine rule, the natives’ species status was somewhat more difficult to discern” (58).

rhetorical animalization of women correlates with their exclusion from property ownership in early modern society, and the rhetorical animalization of Native Americans permeated the Virginia Company's propaganda and the colonial theft of Indian land. The rhetoric of animalization performs ideological work by providing convenient justifications for uneven distributions of power when it is deployed around certain people. When those people are selected on the basis of ethnicity, critical race theory tells us, such ideological work constitutes race-making.

I wish to extend this insightful reading of the power dynamics of animalization to another two non-white population groups that were animalized on the Jacobean and Caroline stages: Gypsies and Blackamoors. Understood as a mechanism that excludes humans from property ownership, the relentless rhetorical and choreographic animalization affecting Gypsies in *The Spanish Gypsie* plays directly into pervasive early modern perceptions of Roma people as consummate thieves whose claim to property ownership was always already illegitimate. In that sense, animalization reinforces the accusations that formed the grounds upon which the Roma were criminalized, jailed, and sent to King's galleys as free manpower. Animalization, serving to legitimize or de-legitimize claims to property ownership in the interest of power, constituted a powerful and portable tool of racialization.

Since animalization is not only a mechanism to exclude some humans from the economy of property ownership but also a mechanism for integrating some humans into that economy *as* property, it is not surprising to see it applied to another group: early modern sub-Saharan Afro-descendants. Those who were traded as commodities across the Atlantic, while their stage counterparts would increasingly perform animalizing antic dances in the wake of *The Spanish Gypsie*. Simply put, slavery relies on a human's exclusion from self-ownership, and animalization provided some conceptual grounds for that exclusion. In an essay published in 2005, just one year before Fudge's *Brutal Reasoning*, Francesca Royster had already noted the animalization of Blackamoors in early modern English culture, or, to use her own phrase, the "racing of the human/animal divide in early modern England."<sup>50</sup> Focusing on the case study of dog imagery in *The White Devil*, Royster brings into relief the participation

50. Francesca Royster, "'Working like a Dog': African Labor and Racing the Human-Animal Divide in Early Modern England," in *Writing Race Across the Atlantic World, 1492-1763*, ed. Gary Taylor and Philip Beidler (New York, 2005), 113-34 (120).



of early modern drama in the animalization of Blackamoors, and the ways in which this canine animalization of blackness shaped interracial power relations between the play's characters. As Kim F. Hall remarks, while pointing out the cultural fantasies of association between Africans and apes that permeated travel writing, natural sciences, paintings, and maps—and drama—as early as the 1620s: “homologies between Africans and apes further enable a sense of the absolute difference between Africans and Europeans.”<sup>51</sup> A sense of absolute difference, troubled as it might have been by the realities of daily life, was the bedrock of the mass enslavement of Afro-diasporic people. Focusing on the choreographic version of animalization enables us to expand Hall's and Royster's incisive observations to a larger corpus of plays, performances, and cultural outlets.

## VI

“*Tis all the fashion*”

The deployment of animalizing dances around various ethnic groups in the wake of *The Spanish Gypsy* provides further evidence of the imbrication of those dances within the portable racial discourse of animalization. Indeed, such dances recur in the repertory of The Queen of Bohemia's Men, who created *The Spanish Gypsy* at the Phoenix during summer 1623. Besides the revival of *More Dissemblers Beyond Women* and its “strange-wild-fashioned [Gypsy] dance to the oboes and cornett” (4.4.278) by the King's Men in October 1623, I identify, among the surviving plays of The Queen of Bohemia's Men's repertory, at least Henry Shirley's *The Martyr'd Soldier* (revived 1623), Philip Massinger's *The Bondman* (1624), and Richard Brome's *The English Moor* (1637) as mobilizing the baboonizing dances premiered in *The Spanish Gypsy*.<sup>52</sup> This recurrence speaks to the popularity of racial antics, and to the importance of acting companies' performative memory in the dissemination of racializing techniques.

In *The Martyr'd Souldier*, Henry Shirley stages the persecution (and subsequent triumph) of North-African Christians at the hands of Genseric,

51. Kim F. Hall, “‘Troubling Doubles’: Apes, Africans, and Blackface in Mr. Moore's Revels,” in *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance*, ed. Joyce Green MacDonald (Madison and Teaneck, 1997), 120–44 (139–40).

52. Information on The Queen of Bohemia's Men 1622–1625 period was collected from Siobhan Keenan, *Acting Companies and their Plays in Shakespeare's London* (London, 2014), 11–52.

the pagan Germanic king who, in the fifth century CE, crossed the straits of Gibraltar and colonized parts of Numidia and Mauretania, thereby establishing the Vandal kingdom, with Carthage as its capital. Genseric and his heir, Henrick, mean the “generall sacrifice of Christians” (*Martyr’d Souldier*, B1V).<sup>53</sup> Henrick condemns to torture the vice-regent of Africa and eponymous martyred soldier, Bellizarius, when, inspired by the captive bishop of Carthage’s miracles, he converts to Christianity. After executing Bellizarius and unsuccessfully trying to rape his saintly wife, Victoria, Henrick is struck dead by the hand of God and succeeded by his better-natured brother, who, having turned Christian for the sake of his own beloved wife, commands all Vandals to convert.

“Antic” dances occur during the scene when King Henrick, facing Victoria’s refusal to pressure her husband into recanting, orders that she be raped publicly by “camel-drivers.” While Henrick calls those animal trainers “peasants,” various directions designate the same characters as “slaves” (*Martyr’d Souldier*, H1): clearly, Henrick uses the lower-class status of these men in order to add insult to injury for Victoria. This lower-class status probably manifested cosmetically, as there is precedent in the period for plays staging North African characters to contrast white-skinned North African aristocrats with blackfaced North-African servants.<sup>54</sup> In the colonial context of the early medieval Vandal kingdom, where Germanic colonizers ruled over colonized Moors, class and ethnic hierarchies overlapped, which makes it even more likely that The Queen of Bohemia’s Men performed Victoria as particularly pale, and the camel drivers in blackface. The first camel-driver himself highlights his own difference from the Vandals in the seemingly gratuitous comparisons he draws between himself and other racialized stock figures:

- King Henrick: . . . dragge her to some corner, ’tis our pleasure,  
Fall to thy businesse freely.
- 1 Camel driver: Not too freely neither; I fare hard, and drinke  
water, so doe the *Indians*; yet who fuller of Bas-  
tards? So doe the *Turkes*, yet who gets greater  
Logger-heads? come, wench, Ile teach thee  
how to cut up wild fowle. (*Martyr’d Souldier*, H1V)

53. All quotations excerpted from Henry Shirley, *The Martyr’d Souldier* (1638). The play was first performed at the Red Bull around 1618. I am interested here in the reasons for this play’s revival by The Queen of Bohemia’s Men in the wake of *The Spanish Gypsie*.

54. See for instance John Marston’s *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1606).

Lumping himself with “Indians” and “Turkes,” in virtue of some fantasized hyper-fertility, the dark and enslaved Moorish animal trainer threatens to rape a white Christian woman. But God intervenes, cuts the interracial rape scene short, and strikes the camel-driver mad, to the point that he “beate out his owne braines” (*Martyr’d Souldier*, H1v). The king calls for another camel-driver to fill in the dead man’s shoes—whom God strikes blind and deaf. The king finally calls for two Moorish slaves, and, for them, God has a special punishment: as soon as they see Victoria, the slaves, possessed, “*dance antiquely, and Exeunt*” (*Martyr’d Souldier*, H2).

Throughout this scene, the Vandal King and the Christian God engage in a duel by proxy, a fight mapped onto the body of the Moorish camel-drivers. While Henrick wants to use those non-white bodies to rape Victoria (a task he undertakes in person later in the play), God uses those bodies to point out Henrick’s spiritual infirmities, namely, his folly, his blindness, and his deafness to the divine command. In this type of proxy configuration, what the racially marked bodies of the camel-drivers perform reveals an inner truth, or a spiritual condition: the two slaves’ “antique dances” reveal the animal-like spiritual condition of the Christian-hating pagan king, his liminal position in the Great Chain of Being as less than human. In this proxy configuration, the target of God’s criticism is the pagan white Germanic king, yet the choreographic discourse of animalization is visually deployed around non-white bodies.

The Queen of Bohemia’s Men also deployed the technique of baboonizing racial antics around Moors shortly after, in Philip Massinger’s *The Bondman*. The plot of Massinger’s play revolves around a slave rebellion in Syracuse during the failed Carthaginian attempt at invading the island, which was repelled by the Corinthian general Timoleon in 338 BCE. Longing for the time when bondage in Syracusan society followed a paternalistic model, “When Lords were styl’d fathers of Families, / And not imperious Masters” and when each “private house deriv’d / The perfect modell of a Common-wealth” (*Bondman*, H2), the slaves take advantage of their masters’ absence, while those are fighting the Carthaginians.<sup>55</sup> They take over the city, shake off their “heavy yokes” (*Bondman*, H2v), rape the masters’ wives and daughters, and perpetrate the same abuse that has been inflicted on them. When the masters come back, they defeat the slaves, and ultimately spare their lives in exchange for their submission.

55. All quotations excerpted from Philip Massinger, *The Bond-man, an Antient Storie* (1624).

Just like in *The Martyr'd Souldier*, slave characters in *The Bondman* are racialized. Although they are never called Blackamoors, the alignment of Syracusan slaves, the enemies from within, with the Carthaginian enemies from without suggests a shared Moorish identity. Onomastics confirms this: the lead female slave character is called Zanthia, and she shares that name with another Zanthia whose Moorishness is clearly stated in a later play by Massinger, *Believe as You List* (1631). In *The Parliament of Love*, written the same year as *The Bondman* but not published in the period, Massinger introduces yet another Moorish woman, whom he describes as having a “dark complexion” (*Parliament*, 172),<sup>56</sup> while declaring that people “of her country” typically have “thick lips” and “rough curl'd hair” (*Parliament*, 167). Thus Zanthia in *The Bondman* was likely to be performed in blackface, especially given the kinship between her name and that of the memorable black maid created by Webster in *The White Devil* a few years earlier, Zanche.

Reminding us of the first occurrence of this baboonizing choreographic device in *The Queen of Bohemia's Men's* repertoire, the antics that those Moorish characters perform throughout the play are explicitly called “Gypsy jiggies” in the epistle “From the Author's Friend to the Reader” that precedes *The Bondman* in the 1624 printed version. Moreover, when Marullo, the mutineers' leader (a white Theban lord in disguise using the situation for pursuing his love interest), incites slaves to rebellion and asks what they are ready to do to conquer their freedom, the foolish Graculo responds: “Doe any thing, / To burne a Church or two, and dance by the light on't, / Were but a May-game” (*Bondman*, E4v). Mentioning dance and May-games so close to each other, Graculo immediately evokes Morris dancing in the spectators' minds, and this evocation too is reminiscent of the tradition of Gypsy dances to which *The Spanish Gypsie* belongs.

The baboonizing dimension of those “Gypsy jiggies” becomes particularly visible once the Moorish slaves have taken control of the city and of all the white Syracusans who did not leave for the front. Graculo forces his ridiculous former master Asotus “to play an ore-growne Ape” (*Bondman*, G1r): he must dance “*in an Apes habit, with a chaine about his necke*” (*Bondman*, F3v). “Graculo: What for the Carthaginians? [*Asotus makes moppes.*] a good beast. / What for our selfe your Lord? [*Dances.*] exceeding

56. All quotations excerpted from *The Parliament of Love*, in *The Plays of Philip Massinger, from the Text of William Gifford*, ed. Francis Cunningham (London, 1868), 166–93.

well. / There's your reward. Not kisse your pawe? So, so, so" (*Bondman*, F4). Forcing Asotus to pull faces, dance anticks, and "caper, like an Ape" (*Bondman*, I4), Gracculo brings attention to the animalizing dimension of antics: this animalization is exerted against the white master, but only as part of carnivalesque role reversal. Thus, the scene highlights dance's participation in the animalizing discourse wielded against racial others. Meanwhile, Zanthia's former mistress, Corisca, who suffers the same fate as her stepson Asotus, is called a "Jane of Apes," a female jackanapes (*Bondman*, F4v). The power dynamics of those animalizing dances are spelled out for readers and spectators when the Moorish community celebrates the marriage of Poliphron with his former mistress and lover, Olympia, with a vengeful dance—"Gracculo: . . . I have thought of a most triumphant one [dance], which shall expresse, wee are Lords, and these our slaves" (*Bondman*, F4v). Unsurprisingly, the final crushing of the slaves' revolt is expressed choreographically, when the triumphant Timoleon asks Gracculo what he is ready to do to gain his master's pardon:

Gracculo:	O, I would dance [Capers.] As I were all air and fire.
Timoleon:	And ever be Obedient and humble?
Gracculo:	As his Spaniell, Though he kickt me for exercise; and the like I promise for all the rest.
Timoleon	Rise then, you have it. ( <i>Bondman</i> , L4v)

Gracculo performs the last dance of the play in a final act of submission to white power, participating in his own canine animalization, capering his way into survival and bondage.

The Queen of Bohemia's Men acting company had, in 1618, passed under the management of actor and theatrical impresario Christopher Beeston. To the extent that *The Spanish Gypsie*, *The Martyr'd Souldier*, and *The Bondman* were all produced under his stewardship, focusing on Beeston's trajectory might reveal further use of baboonizing dances in the Caroline period. In 1637, for instance, we find Richard Brome writing *The English Moor, or the Mock-Marriage*, a play that makes a spectacle of Moorish dancing and uses the classic tropes of baboonizing Gypsy dances, for Beeston's new company, The Queen Henrietta Maria's Men. Indeed, the ridiculous protagonist of the play, Quicksands, desirous to

host a private masque in his London house ominously declares “I have borrowed other Moors of Merchants / That trade in Barbary, whence I had mine own here, / And you shall see their way and skill in dancing” (4.4.2064–66).<sup>57</sup> During the masque itself, the leading Moor, the male “inductor,” plays a Gypsy—or, to be exact “an Aegyptian prophet” (4.5.2258)—by performing palmistry on some of Quicksands’ guests. Finally, when the male Moorish crew enters, “they dance an antique in which they use action of mockery and derision” (4.5.2281). Whether such recurrence was linked to Beeston’s own aesthetic and ideological inclinations, to the long-term inclusion of particularly gifted antics-dancers in his company, or both, from 1622 to the closing of theaters in 1642, the repertory of Christopher Beeston’s acting company played a crucial role in propagating the technique of baboonizing dances and in extending it to another ethnic group that was undergoing intense racialization in Jacobean and Caroline cultures at large: Blackamoors.

## VII

The enthusiasm for Gypsy plays survived the Interregnum. Gypsy plays flourished under the Restoration.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, “antics” as an animalizing technique of racialization were still routinely extended to various ethnic groups in Restoration theater, from Blackamoors dancing around a conspicuously Maypole-like palm tree in Elkanah Settle’s *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), to a train of Turks (including “Blacks”) dancing and “standing in antic postures” in Edward Ravenscroft’s *The Citizen Turn’d Gentleman* (1675),<sup>59</sup> and Virginia “Indians” dancing “Anticks” in Aphra Behn’s *The Widdow Ranter* (1689).<sup>60</sup> The racializing theatrical devices created during the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods only became more powerful and necessary in London theaters when the English colonial enterprise reached full swing.

57. All quotations excerpted from the Modern text of Richard Brome, *The English Moor, or the Mock-Marriage*, ed. Matthew Steggle, *Richard Brome Online* ([www.dhi.ac.uk/brome](http://www.dhi.ac.uk/brome)).

58. To mention but a few examples, *The Spanish Gypsie* was reprinted in 1661, Richard Brome’s *Jovial Crew*, premiered in 1641, was revived in 1661, 1669, and 1683, William Davenant’s *Playhouse to Be Let* (1663) includes a Gypsy dance in its last act, and—of course—the motif of Gypsies is central to Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* (1677).

59. Edward Ravenscroft, *Mamamouchi, or the Citizen Turn’d Gentleman* (1675), 58.

60. Aphra Behn, *The Widdow Ranter, or the History of Bacon in Virginia, a Tragicomedy* (1690), 14.

Although, as the archive of Restoration theater suggests, antic dances would never lose their portability and thus would remain infinitely extendable to various ethnic groups on a need basis, the repertory of *The Queen of Bohemia's Men* tells us a clear story about antics as a racializing technique—a story of Africanization. The rich history of Afro-diasporic dances in early modern Europe has a wide circum-Mediterranean and circum-Atlantic scope; it starts in the fifteenth century, and it follows multi-directional dynamics that ignored national borders. That story could not possibly fit into an essay. Thus, it was not my ambition here to account for the conceptual and practical inception of black dances in an early modern English culture that had been entangled with continental choreographic negotiations of blackness well before 1623. I hope, however, to have added a relational piece to the puzzle of early modern black dance history by bringing to light the role that Gypsy characters played in the elaboration by Jacobean and Caroline theater professionals of a specific racializing choreographic device that could and would immediately be repurposed to frame anyone caught in the processes of exclusion from ownership and self-ownership that moved early modern capitalism forward.

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