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"Take the fool away": Reimagining Malvolio as The Anti-Clown in William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers a new theoretical and practical approach to understanding unconventional methods of laughter-making in early modern English theatre. It establishes theatrical emotional reciprocity through French philosopher Michel Foucault's theory on heterotopia and argue that theatre audience and their projections play a role in fostering a relationship between theatregoers and actors on stage. Further, this paper examines embodied communication on stage that allow for a new kind of laughter-making where the characters become the joke, instead of merely performing a comedic act. The success of this alternative method of humour-creation is facilitated through mirror neurons in the brain where mirror neurons are activated when the subject observes others' actions. Using the character of Malvolio from *Twelfth Night* as a case study, this paper coins the term "anti-clown" to discuss characters that demonstrate this alternative process to laughter-making and argue that this method expands the role of the clown beyond that of simple comedic providers.

KEYWORDS

Twelfth Night, Malvolio, anti-clown, clowning, mirror neurons, heterotopia, audience empathy.

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1. Introduction

Transgression of social class gets its time in the limelight in William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as ambitious Malvolio attempts to (unsuccessfully) move up the social ladder by trying to marry Olivia, his employer. This transgression is met with mixed reception both within the imaginary world of the drama and the real world of the audience. Malvolio is cruelly made fun of for his ambition on stage by the other characters, and yet he is considered a role model for the young men watching him in the playhouse at the Inn's Court, according to the journal of John Manningham, the diarist whose writing is an important primary source in early modern studies. This differential treatment of a transgressive character onstage and offstage can be explained, I argue, by an application of spatial theory, specifically Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia. *Twelfth Night* creates within the playhouse distinctive heterotopic spaces that allow the audience to participate in heterotopic illusion. I further argue for a new way to understand audience empathy in heterotopic illusions through examining Malvolio as an "anti-clown" figure, a term I coin here to describe a new type of clown figure in which dramatic irony and embodied humour are pushed to their limits in order to establish empathy between the character on stage and the audience. By using theories adapted from cognitive science, especially theories on the function of mirror neurons in generating empathy as explored by Jackie Watson and Bruce R. Smith, and in analyzing Malvolio as a clown that undermines stereotypical depictions of the clown figure, I argue that anti-clowning plays a crucial role in creating audience empathy in the playhouse.

2. Heterotopia on the Stage

Using twentieth-century philosophical and theoretical frameworks, including Foucault's heterotopia, early modern dramatic scholars revisit the theatre as a place of political, philosophical, and economic change in Elizabethan and Jacobean stages. As a spatial theory, heterotopia provides an explanation on how imaginary and real spaces are shaped by cultural projections, and how these two distinct spaces interact with each other. Andrew Hiscock, in an exploration of how spatial awareness permeates early modern drama, identifies the mutability of spatial theories in application to various plays (*The Uses of This World)*. From discussions of cultural belonging in *Hamlet* to examination of spatial alienation of Barabas in Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Hiscock presents case studies of spatial theories to understand the cultural and social shifts that occur in early modern England as these experiences are reflected on the stage. Likewise, the concept of theatre as a heterotopia has been used to describe sociocultural observations—such as gender relations—as reflections of reality, as seen in Adrien Kiernander's analyses of heterotopia in Alma de Groen's play, *The Rivers of China,* where the city of Sydney is reimagined as a place where men played a subservient role to women, a set up

that establishes the city as geographically "familiar but estranged" (Kiernander, 8). From Hiscock to Kiernander, we see that the application of spatial theory to explore otherness on stage is commonly used; however, such applications tend to focus on geographical, economical, or political representations on the stage, rather than focusing on the effect of heterotopia on audience empathy. Application of spatial theory is critical to understand the early modern stage, especially when the stage is presenting acts of social transgressions, as is the case with Malvolio. The theory of heterotopia—especially the heterotopia of illusion—can be mapped onto the discrepancy between what kinds of characters are celebrated off-stage or onstage and the varying way in which these characters are received by their respective audiences. This application then allows us to better understand audience empathy and identification with characters onstage.

In the preface of his 1967 publication *The Order of Things*, Foucault coins the term heterotopia as a response to a passage from Jorge Luis Borges' short story, where a "certain Chinese encyclopaedia" describes the categorization of animals:

> Animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) etcetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (xv)

The existence of "(h) included in the present classification" and "(l) etcetera" within the same category points to the possibility of a space consisting of individual fragments that simultaneously contradict and reflect each other. Foucault considers this possibility a "disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the heteroclite" (*Order of Things,* xvii). To Foucault, heterotopias are spaces, real or imaginary, where multiple fragmented and contradictory possibilities co-exist and influence each other. Heterotopias can also be objects, as shown by Foucault's example of a mirror to discuss the qualities of a heterotopia: "the mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 24). Just as the physical quality of the mirror allows it to function as a reflective surface, the nature of heterotopia allows it to function as a reflective site for real and unreal representations; it is a site where intrinsically contradictory ideas and presences co-exist. The theatre, when viewed as a heterotopia, becomes the mirror that Foucault invokes: in the same space and time, it becomes both a site of realistic reflection—manufactured by mimetic modes of

acting and staging—and a site of unreal representation, where a playwright's imagination is the only limit to what can be placed onstage.

3. Heterotopic Illusions in *Twelfth Night*

Foucault has multiple guiding principles for heterotopia, but the one principle that is most pertinent to this paper's discussion is that heterotopias can fall under two categories: one of illusion and one of compensation (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 27). The heterotopia of illusion is to "expose every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 27). It is this heterotopia of illusion that I map onto the dramatic treatment of Malvolio. The early establishment of the heterotopia of illusion in *Twelfth Night* is through the hostile treatments Malvolio receives from his dramatic counterparts. Sir Toby despises Malvolio because of Malvolio's puritanical attitude towards fun and festivity, as seen in Sir Toby's chastisement of Malvolio: "Art any more than a steward? Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (2.3.106–08).[1] Sir Toby also dislikes Malvolio for thinking he can marry Olivia and become Sir Toby's "kinsman" (2.5.52). Sir Toby's attitude towards Malvolio is one of detestation (and vice-versa), but it greatly contrasts with how the audience sees Malvolio. In John Manningham's diary, he identifies the focus of the play for him, and other young men in the audience, as the following:

> A good practice in it to make the steward believe his lady-widow was in love with him, by counterfeiting a letter as from his lady, in general terms telling him what she liked best in him and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his apparel etc. and then, when he came to practice, making him believe they took him to be mad. (Manningham, 18)

Manningham's focus on Malvolio's role as a steward and not on his ambitions or anti-festivity is a sign of understanding his own social class and Malvolio's position as an employee. "The focus is immediately on 'the steward', the ambitious man—perhaps young—who aims to marry well and who, in order to succeed in life, expects to have to shape his appearance and behaviour to match the requirements of those in authority," writes Jackie Watson, extrapolating from Manningham's diary his singular focus on Malvolio's stewardship of Olivia's household (235). The "good practice" that Manningham references in his diary can also be read as a practical joke that Sir Toby, Maria, Feste, and Sir Andrew play on Malvolio. This joke is (as I will later argue) a part of the anti-clowning that Malvolio participates in to establish audience empathy. Sir Toby and the festive group's negative feelings towards Malvolio is contrasted against the positive, perhaps even idolizing energy from audience members of the Inns of Court off-stage. Positive

[1] *Twelfth Night, or What You Will,* eds. Roger Warren and Stanley Wells (Oxford, Clarendon Press), parenthetical references are to act, scene, and line of this edition.

reception of Malvolio extends beyond the Inns of Court audience, as seen from Charles I's reference to *Twelfth Night* as Malvolio's play in his copy of the Second Folio (Marcus, 54). I suggest that the Inns of Court's audience's projection of their own illusion onto the stage can explain the creation of this heterotopia of illusion. This projection of heterotopic illusion from the audience creates a pathway for reciprocal connections between the character on stage and the audience, especially through what I define as the anti-clown figure that Malvolio is channeling through his actions on stage.

4. The Clown and the Carnival

Before I discuss the anti-clown and its associations with Lent, I will first examine the tradition of the clown figure and trace its role in the carnivalesque reading of Shakespeare's plays. In his work, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*, David Wiles points to the medieval Vice character as the origin of the clown. Wiles' latest tracing of the appearance of a clown figure is to *Mankind,* an anonymous English play written in circa 1470 that features a character called Mischief. This character invents "new games for his companions, and the audience, to play," providing some relief to the intense drama that arises from medieval morality plays (Wiles, 1). "Mischief is at once the villain, whom the audience learn to shun, and the welcome game-maker who makes the play possible," Wiles writes, noting the different audience reactions to a clown in a dramatic production (2). From the beginning of the clown tradition there is a dichotomous treatment of the clown figure from the audience: they welcome him because he brings in laughter and games, but they also reject the clown because he is a Vice figure and a villainous character. Not only is the Vice "the principal comedian" that "dominates the play whenever he is physically present," but he also "has the power to juggle layers of reality" because of his real interactions with the audience in collection of funds for the troupe (Wiles, 2). Wiles notes that "there is no fixed boundary between actor and role," a lack of a fixed boundary that expands to include the relationship between role and audience. As such, clowning is integral to ensure the active participation of the audience (Wiles, 2). As drama evolves and adapts, so too does the role of the clown in drama. From the late medieval to the early modern period, the provincial clown that travelled around in the countryside to put on performances slowly gave way to the urban clown that performed in playhouses built for the purposes of entertainment (Wiles, 12). The clown figure becomes a household servant and a "social climber" that desires social mobility, a theme that Wiles points out early modern dramatists were "keen to explore" (4). Based on the performances of other plays that feature ambitious household servants such as Ithamore in *Jew of Malta*, playwrights such as Marlowe did explore such types of characters and the comedy they brought to the stage.

Actors who took on the clown role also redefined what it means to be a clown figure. One of the most famous clowns to have graced the stages of the early modern playhouses is Richard Tarlton, known for his ability to make people laugh just by poking his head out from behind the stage (Nashe, 188). Tarlton, according to Wiles, redefined the role of the clown by combining elements of the rustic clown to the urban setting (12). Tarlton's ability to make people laugh is well noted throughout primary materials discussing him on stage, from Thomas Nashe to the Queen herself.[2] The term clown then denotes both the type of actor that generates laughter from the audience, and the type of role within a dramatic production that provides comedic relief from the tension of the play.

As noted above, the clown figure and the theatre's festive associations are interconnected. Michael D. Bristol notes that the theatre tradition "objectified and recreated broadly dispersed traditions of collective life that were also represented and disseminated through anonymous festive manifestations such as Carnival" (3–4). Such connection then gives theatre the ability to be intensely critical of social and power structure, as during periods of festival and carnival, social orders are reversed, and power is "demystified" (Bristol, 4). With their connection to the disruptive tradition of carnival, clowns are given the freedom to create disruptions and to speak their minds on subjects that are considered taboo. This is demonstrated in *Twelfth Night* where Feste openly criticizes Olivia mourning her brother's death: "The more fool, Madonna, to mourn for your / brother's soul being in heaven. Take away the fool,/ gentlemen," (1.5.65–67). Feste undermines the power dynamic between him and his employer by making fun of her mourning and not giving her the traditional respect one would give to their employer. By using the tradition that gives rise to his role, he has the opportunity to create empathy with the audience who enjoys witnessing the upsetting of power roles in an employer/employee relationship. Through humour and wit, Feste establishes himself as a generator of laughter both for the characters on-stage and for the audience off-stage.

In *Twelfth Night,* Feste and the comic group of Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria allegorize the carnival, a period of time when order and boundaries are put aside to entertain jesting and laughter. Ronald Knowles seminal work on the carnivalesque reading of Shakespeare characterises the chaos of carnival:

> Carnival turns the world upside down. Hierarchies are reversed and suspended. Clothes are worn back to front. Comic crownings and uncrownings take place. Fools become kings, lords of misrule preside, boy bishops are elected, and so on. Bawdy is the outspoken language of the lower body, and sacred parody dethrones the hieratic. Carnival

[2] See Nashe, 188. Also see Duncan-Jones, 20.

> folk-laughter is egalitarian, and derision, not death, is the great leveller. (Knowles, "Introductions", 6).

The carnival and the clown figure go hand-in-hand in their performance of festivity on stage. Feste upsets the social dynamic within the play in his clowning much like the carnival tradition. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's preoccupation with consumption of liquor and bawdy jokes—"Accost , Sir Andrew, accost"—mirrors the lack of regard for propriety of carnival (1.3.45). On the surface, *Twelfth Night* is a performance of the carnivalesque. However, such a simplistic reading of the play restricts the potential of clowning (or, as I will later argue, anti-clowning) from other characters. It is not only Carnival that can upset social and political order, but also Lent, which through the figure of the anti-clown can function as a disruptor of power structures.

5. The Anti-Clown and Lent[3]

The anti-clown figure's departure from the original clown character comes from a subversion of the type of comedy deployed to connect with the audience, and the resistance of playing the role of comedic relief for the main plot of the play. In comparison to Feste's obvious clowning with his costumes and wordplay, Malvolio as the anti-clown figure deploys a sense of austerity and sobriety so seriously implemented that it is unintentionally comedic and yet equally as critical of the inherent social order as the original clown figure. The anti-clown, unlike the clown counterpart, asserts social order and propriety. Yet because they come from the same tradition, the anti-clown, in their assertion of social order, exposes and disrupts the power dynamics of the play.

Malvolio's anti-clowning is found partly in the production of his fantasies, and the embodiment of such fantasies on the stage. Unlike Feste's traditional form of clowning, where he deploys wordplay and wit as part of his clowning purposes, Malvolio the anti-clown reasserts comedy through embodiment. We hear of this embodied comedy second hand from Maria, who notes, "He has been yonder I' the sun practicing / behaviour to his own shadow this half-hour. Observe him, for the love of mockery," (2.5.14–16). The audience is asked to participate in this comedic moment through the invitation to "Observe him", and Malvolio's pretensions thus become mutually entertaining for Maria and the audience. Malvolio's performance here is comedic in a manner similar to a clown performing a jig to an audience, only this time, Malvolio's "practicing behaviour" is to his own shadow. There is no intended audience for such an act, yet it is still indirectly placed in the spotlight by Maria. Such indirect and unintentional humour is as effective in eliciting laugher from the audience as the traditional clowning that

[3] Lent is a 40-day period in the Christian tradition when preparations are made to reflection on Jesus' resurrection. Believers would fast, practice almsgiving, and adhere by strict behaviour regulations during Lent.

Feste performs, as heard in the audiences' laughter in live productions of *Twelfth Night*.[4] Malvolio continues to build his fantasy in earnest: "To be Count Malvolio!/ … / Having been three months married to her, / sitting in my state— /… / Calling my officers about me, in my branched velvet gown, having come for a day-bed where I have left Olivia sleeping," (2.5.32, 41–42, 44–46). This is an example of Malvolio's anti-clown act, where he points out the underlying power structure within the play—the dynamic between a Count and his "officers"—while making the audience laugh along. He uses the language of embodiment, "*sitting* in my state," and in many instances of live productions, the actor playing Malvolio actually sits down while saying these lines. Unlike Feste's clowning, where he uses jokes and wordplay for a comedic effect, Malvolio's anti-clowning is done by him *embodying* the joke. The difference between a clown and an anti-clown is in their intentions: the former intentionally makes fun of and criticizes a social structure to disrupt it, using words and wit for comedic effect, while the latter criticizes that same structure with their affirmation and belief in it, creating comedy by embodying the joke and becoming it.

While the clown figure can stand separate from the narrative of the play, the anti-clown is confined to the play, therefore making the unintentional criticism from the anti-clown even more effective. As Bristol notes, "Feste, like all fools, is in a situation of enhanced understanding because he has experienced the 'other side.' In addition to his role within the narrative, he is also a chorus who stands outside it and draws attention to what the other characters do not 'know'" (Bristol, 141). Feste is introduced to the audience by Maria, who notes his absence and return to the household at the beginning of the play: "Nay, either tell me where thou hast been or I will / not open my lips so wide as a bristle may enter in way of / thy excuse. My lady will hang thee for thy absence" (1.5.1–3). On the contrary, Malvolio's presence within the household is fixed due to his role as steward of the house, and this omnipresence in the house is highlighted when he interrupts Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's late-night partying (2.3.81). This interruption of festivities mirrors the effect of Lent. As the calendrical period of festivities end after the Twelve Nights, the period of Lent, and the restriction and fasting that comes with it, begins. By having Malvolio interrupt the party, Shakespeare effectively gives Malvolio an association with Lent, and thereby associates the anti-clown figure with Lent. Despite the fact that both types of clown acts result in audience laughter, the figure of the clown is seen as one of festival and carnival, while the anti-clown, with its firm belief in social order and structure, is strongly associated with the restrictive, anti-festive period of Lent. The anti-clown's association to Lent leads to its lack of

[4] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night,* directed by Tim Carrol (2012; London: Globe on Screen), 1:12:51. Hereafter cited parenthetically Globe 2012 with timestamps in recording. *Twelfth Night,* directed by Simon Godwin (2017: London: National Theatre), 1:03:32. Hereafter cited parenthetically NT 2017 with timestamps in recording.

popularity, which causes its existence to be overshadowed by the festive clown. The anti-clown can generate laughter as much as a clown can, but because of the anti-clown's subversive form of humour through embodiment, he does not register to the audience as a type of clown. This lack of recognition brings us to the main question that summarizes Ralph Berry's article on the audience's participation in act 2 scene 5 of *Twelfth Night*: how can the audience enjoy the comedy of *Twelfth Night* while they are ridden by the guilt they feel for laughing at Malvolio making a fool out of himself? (112) Since Malvolio is not recognized as a type of clown, he becomes a victim to the comic group's practical jokes. However, in recognizing Malvolio as the anti-clown, we see that he serves a comedic function in criticizing the social structure he exists in; laughing at him is the intended effect, because he embodies the joke.

6. Malvolio as the Anti-Clown and Heterotopic Illusions

Malvolio's peak anti-clowning act occurs when he embodies the heterotopic illusions he creates, where he achieves the title of Count through marriage to Olivia. Similar to many young, learned men of his time, Malvolio wishes to capitalize on his proximity to nobles and social elites, afforded to him through his education (Smith, "Introductions", 2). Malvolio, by tapping into these illusions, exposes the "group of similarly educated men, often of middling rank, with the ambition to marry well and to secure preferment" in the real space of the playhouse (Watson, 226). Malvolio plays out how he, in his illusory identity as Count Malvolio, would change the way he interacts with people and environment around him, in what I argue is an act of anti-clowning:

> And then to have the humour of state and—
> After a *demure travel of regard*, *telling them I know my place, as I would they should do theirs*—to ask for my kinsman Toby
> ………………………………
> Seven of my people with an obedient start
> Make out for him. *I frown the while, and perchance*
> *Wind up my watch, or play with my—some rich jewel*.
> Toby approaches; curtsies there to me. (2.5.49–52, 55–58; emphasis added)

The description of how Malvolio will uphold himself, with a "demure travel of regard" while fiddling with his accessories, is part of the illusion that Shakespeare is drawing for the audience in this heterotopia on the stage (Globe 2012, 1:15:52–1:16:02.). It is also, as I have established in the section above, an element of anti-clowning. In creating this illusion, Malvolio reaffirms the social dynamics that initially subjected him to the role of stewardship in the first place. The

embodiment of the illusion ("I frown the while") is Malvolio's anti-clown act in *Twelfth Night.* The interconnectedness of the heterotopic illusion and the anti-clown act is evident in *Twelfth Night,* but as I previously argued, the anti-clown act can take any form of embodiment that indirectly criticizes the political, economical, and societal structures of the play. It is in the embodiment of other identities that we find the anti-clown.

The climax of this heterotopia of illusion—the moment the audience is triggered into feeling empathy for Malvolio—happens at the moment Malvolio is on the edge of *being* the joke:

> 'Jove knows I love,
> But who?
> Lips do not move,
> No man must know.'
> 'No man must know.' What follows? The numbers
> altered. 'No man must know.' *If this should be thee,*
> *Malvolio*? (2.5.92–98; emphasis added.)

The audience, in this moment, is witnessing Malvolio's embodiment of a practical joke. This embodiment stems from a certain flexibility that allows Malvolio to pick up various identities, such as a Count, which are then presented to the audience as a subversion of power dynamics. David Ellis' comment on Malvolio's inflexibility and inadaptability as a source of comedy becomes short-sighted (121). As seen above, Malvolio has the flexibility and adaptability to be somebody else; he can "practice behaviour" that he witnesses from others, and he can project other identities onto himself (3.2.64–77). This flexibility is, I argue, a remnant from the clown figure from which the anti-clown is derived. Malvolio fulfills his role as the anti-clown by being adaptable to his environment, and it is this adaptability that builds the audience's empathy for him, especially the audience at the Inns of Court in 1602 watching *Twelfth Night* as part of their Candlemas revels.

Another form of Malvolio's anti-clowning through embodiment is from the way he changes his clothes and facial expression in an attempt to presume a different identity. We hear of his transformation second-hand from Maria and Sir Toby in act 3 scene 2, but the full effect of the behavioural change settles in full force when Olivia sees Malvolio's new version of himself. Upon being summoned, Malvolio greets Olivia: "Sweet lady, ho, ho!" (3.4.17) In the footnotes of their edition of the play, Warren and Wells indicate that "ho, ho!" also acts as a direction for Malvolio to smile and laugh.[5] A change of dress and demeanour are also signals of anti-clowning through embodiment, as Malvolio physically and behaviourally changes and morphs into the joke

[5] See *Twelfth Night,* 170, footnote regarding line 3.4.17.

played on him. In the play-text, the effect of the cross-garter and yellow stockings does not translate well through monochrome pages, but the 2012 original practice production of *Twelfth Night* emphasizes the comedic result of Malvolio's embodiment (Globe 2012, 1:46:46). While Olivia's rise in tone and emphasis at the end of delivering the line, "How now, Malvoli-oh" certainly add to the comedic effect of Malvolio's anti-clowning, the audience's laughter has already begun before Olivia starts saying her lines (Globe 2012, 1:46:54). Upon seeing Malvolio in his new garb, the audience breaks into laughter, and thus creates an opportunity for us to explore audience empathetic connections to theatrical representations.

7. Mirror Neurons and Audience Homogeneity in the Early Productions of *Twelfth Night*

As the stage is presenting Malvolio's anti-clowning, the audience is affected empathically by his embodied humour. This empathy is shown through not only John Manningham's well-known diary entry where he discusses watching *Twelfth Night* with fellow Inns of Court members, but also in the audiences' response in the live adaptations this paper previously mentioned. The empathy that audiences feel for Malvolio can be explained by the presence of mirror neuron, a discover Watson explores in her article on sensual language in *Twelfth Night* and its effect in triggering empathy. The discovery of mirror neurons in macaque monkeys in the 1990s and the suggestion of mirror neurons' presence in the human brain in the early 2000s present a new approach in considering how humans react to movements, and how such reactions are related to emotions (Watson, 227). Mirror neurons are activated when a person engages in action, but they also fire when the person observes similar action being done by another person (Rizzolatti, 419). When the human brain perceives action, whether it be "transitive" (physical movements that the brain can perceive), or "intransitive" (hidden movements that the brain cannot perceive), the brain is triggered by the action as if it had acted out those actions itself (Watson, 227).[6] This discovery is critical in dramatic studies, as it can be used to explain the intricate relationships between audience and actors on stage. This theory can also be deployed in understanding intra-audience effects. An audience member does not exist in isolation; their presence in the playhouse (whether contemporary or early modern) is inherently communal, and therefore an audience member's reaction can affect other audience members' perceptions as well as what they are seeing on stage. Recent scholarship by Bruce R. Smith applies mirror neurons in understanding the proportionality of "trans-body experiences" in theatre, and why such experiences are so significant to the audience. Smith notes the intricate relationship between witnessing and becoming in the context of the playhouse, as mediated by mirror neurons:

[6] See also Duncan.

> Recent experiments in neuroscience have demonstrated how so-called "mirror neurons" cause spectators to feel in their own bodies what they are witnessing in a virtual space, namely a space that presents itself as reality, and functions as reality, but is not itself real. Theatre stages are signal examples of such spaces. (Smith, "Framing Shakespeare's Senses", 31)

The existence of mirror neurons then bridges the gap between witnessing an actor's embodiment of certain roles and their emotions and the audience's reaction to witnessing this. Following this line of thought, performance viewing is not a passive consumption of the actor's talents; it is an active bodily experience that neurologically triggers somatic responses within the audience. As Watson notes, "while watching a play, members of the audience would have a stronger neural reaction to emotions they have already experienced'" (229). These strong neural reactions can include empathetic and physical responses, as noted by Rizzolatti and Craighero (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 107). In Rizzolatti's recent book compiling two decades' worth of mirror neuron research, he notes the existence of mirror neurons in areas of the brain that control responses such as laughter, fear, and disgust. From reviewing various human experiments, Rizzolatti proposes that mirror neurons, scattered throughout various regions of the brain, can trigger specific reactions that respond to what is being observed (Rizzolati and Sinigaglia, 123). One such reaction is laughter; a reaction that is of abundance in the audience of *Twelfth Night.* It is in this laughter that we see the audience's empathetic response towards Malvolio and his anti-clown act that embodies the joke of the play.

Informed by research on mirror neurons, we see that Malvolio's embodied act of anti-clowning takes on new importance: evoking empathy from the audience. While characters on-stage detest Malvolio for his social transgression, the audience off-stage feels a sense of empathy for him because they witness his *becoming* of a joke as the anti-clown. From the entries of Manningham's diary written immediately before and after watching *Twelfth Night*, we know that the audience which included Manningham was a crowd of ambitious young men who shared the same fear, anxiety, and hope as Malvolio. Manningham's diary consists mostly of gossip about the financial states of the young men around him, which we can interpret is the preoccupation of those in his social circle. In an entry three weeks before he went to see *Twelfth Night,* Manningham writes about a young man and his wife's financial state:

> Mr. Fr. Vane, a yong gent. Of great hope and forwardness, verry well affected in the country already, in soe much that the last parliament the country gave him the place of knight before Sr. H. Nevell; his possiblitie of lving by his wife verry much, shee beinge daughter and co-heir to Sr. Antony Mildmay; and thought hir mother will gibe hir all hir inheritance alsoe; the father worth 3,000ℓ. per annum, the mother's 1,200ℓ (13).

The established preoccupation with other young men's financial positions then points to a homogenous audience at the 1602 production of *Twelfth Night.* Their homogeneity stems from similar educational, professional, and financial aspirations. Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill, in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama: 1558-1642*, caution against establishing a "homogenic" audience, as the results can be reductive by grouping diverse individuals into one cluster, but I argue, as did Watson in her essay, that the 1602 audience gives us the best chance at understanding audience empathy because of their homogeneity (Low and Myhill, 10). The young men in the audience all went to the same school, received the type of education, and have similar if not identical career paths after their time at the Inns of Court (Watson, 226). Low and Myhill's argument, while understandably cautious, does not apply to the 1602 audience. As Watson notes:

> In terms of gender, age, social position, intellect, and transgressive instincts, then, the playgoers surrounding Manningham form as cohesive an in-group as a modern literary scholar can envisage in the early modern period. As sensory response is contingent on variables such as these as well as on historical period, this cohesion is important if one is to draw any substantive conclusions about their likely response to a staged play. (226–27)

The homogeneity of the 1602 audience lends itself to such grouping, and to not capitalize on this homogeneity out of caution for generalization will lead to a missed opportunity to study historical audience response to drama. In contrast, my analysis here does avoid the grouping of the contemporary audience. From live production recordings, the only factor that I can address is the collective response from the contemporary audience: their laughter at certain comedic moments in the play. This laughter is the physical manifestation of audience empathy that stems from the activation of mirror neurons, which are triggered by watching Malvolio's embodied anti -clowning on-stage.

Conclusion

The establishment of heterotopia within the dramatic world of *Twelfth Night* and the real world of the audience, both contemporary and historical, lead to the necessity of creating a new type of clown: the anti-clown. The contradictory notion of heterotopia makes it an ideal theoretical framework to consider the theatre, a space where, at any given moment, there are two distinct realities simultaneously in conversation with each other. The reality of the stage, created by the imagination of the playwright, and the projections of the audience based on their own perception of the world, are all reflected in and contained by the heterotopia of the theatre. Specifically, it is the heterotopia of illusion that this paper is concerned with, as it is an explanation for the widely differently way Malvolio is treated, onstage and offstage. In the dramatic world onstage, Malvolio is treated with disdain by the comic group, comprised of Sir

Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria, Feste, and Fabian, because of his interruptions in their merry-making and his ambition in wanting to transgress social boundaries by marrying Olivia. This negative treatment is contrasted by how the audience in the historical 1602 audience would have perceived a character like Malvolio. From analyzing John Manningham's diary entry where he recorded his thoughts on a "steward" in Malvolio's position, this paper extrapolates that there is an illusory projection from the audience towards Malvolio onstage. This projection creates a necessity to discuss the method through which audience empathy is established. I argue that by viewing Malvolio as a different type of clown, an anti-clown, we can further understand how audience members and characters onstage interact with each other in the heterotopia of illusion.

While stemming from the same type of Carnival tradition of misrule and subversion of social structures, the anti-clown departs from the clown in how the physical way their humour manifests. The social and economic questions that *Twelfth Night* poses set the perfect stage for Malvolio anti-clowning, and the practical jokes played on Malvolio—and his embodiment of those jokes—makes him the perfect textbook anti-clown. Unlike a typical clown character with its Carnival associations and affinity for misrule, the anti-clown is associated with Lent and the adherence to order and power structure. However, in its effect to reaffirm the power structure in which it exists, it calls to question the stability of such structures and undermines them. Such is the role of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night,* where his embodiment of the joke played upon him is a criticism of the social class system that confines him. The physical embodiment of being a joke sets the anti-clown apart from a typical clown; and it is in witnessing such physical transformation that the audience feels empathy for the anti-clown. The neurological mechanism that explains this phenomenon is the presence of mirror neurons in the brain. Mirror neurons are triggered by action is performed and when action is perceived. When action is perceived by the brain, the mirror neurons that resides in specific parts of the brain that control emotions and empathy are activated. Connecting this cognitive science perspective to Malvolio's anti-clowning elucidates the reasons behind the audience's responses to transgressive characters, bringing to light on the emotional effects of theatre and performance.

This paper demonstrates that an application of the anti-clown aids in the understanding of audience empathetic responses. The anti-clown can provide a different way to theorize about early modern drama and its effect on audiences, historical or contemporary. Likewise, the discovery of mirror neurons and its role in generating empathy is crucial in dramatic and performance studies. Awareness and application of this neurological phenomenon onto early modern dramatic studies gives us an opportunity to understand the empathetic and cognitive responses from the audience members, an often-overlooked topic in dramatic studies.

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