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'Tis a mad world at Hogsdon': Leisure, Licence and the Exoticism of Suburban Space in Early Jacobean London

**Peter Howell
(St. Mary's University College, UK)**

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To all Trauellers.

YOu that weare out your liues and weary your bodies, in Discouery of strange Countries, (bee it for pleasure or profite) Rig out a Fleet, and make a Voiage to an Iland which could neuer be found out by the Portugals, Spaniards, or Hollanders, but only (and that now of late) by Englishmen. The name of it is Pimlyco, Here haue I drawne a large Map of it: by this Chart, may you in a few houres, and with little or no winde, ariue in the very mouth of the Hauen. Some that haue trauelled thither, affirme it to be a part of the Continent, but the better sort of Navigators say, it is an Iland: full of people it is, and they are very wilde, the women beeing able to endure more, and to doe better Seruice than the men. Diuers are of opinion, that it is an enchanted Iland, and haunted with strange Spirits; for the people there, once euey Moone, are either starke mad, or else loose their owne shapes, and are transformed into Beasts, yet within twelue houres, recouer their wittes and shapes againe.

(Pimlyco; or Runne Red Cap, Tis a mad world at Hogsdon London: 1609)

<1>It will perhaps come as a surprise that the exotic location being described here is none other than the Pimlyco public house in Hoxton, east London. One could take a similar journey today and walk due north from the City of London through the bars and art galleries of Hoxton Square to the Arden Estate, a collection of tenement blocks typical of the social housing built by the London County Council in the mid-twentieth century and now managed by the London Borough of Hackney. Shakespeariana abounds in the names of the streets and buildings here (Hathaway House, Cordelia House, Regan Way, The Macbeth public house), presumably in tribute to the dramatic associations of the area just to the south, Shoreditch, where the pioneering Theatre stood from 1576 until 1598, as did the Curtain from 1577 to 1622, or to the Britannia Theatre, which stood on Hoxton Street until 1900. Hoxton Street was perhaps chosen for its very ordinariness by director Waler Stern as the location of the 1997 music video for the Verve's 'Bitter Sweet Symphony'. But there is also an alleyway of not more than 100 yards, whose name, Pimlico Walk, although unmarked in the alley itself but still surviving

in the Geographers' A-Z map, is a trace of the position of the notorious Pimlyco public house during the first decade of the seventeenth century. A tiny line on the maps of the Arden Estate there shows the position of the walk, and a plaque on Arden House marks the approximate place where, in the most famous incident associated with the pub, Ben Jonson killed Gabriel Spence in a duel. Hoxton Street, which runs due north from Old Street, was until the late sixteenth century called Pimlico Lane, on which stood a line of cottages parallel to the Roman Ermine Street, now Kingsland Road.

<2>The subject of this essay is a fascinating 'medley' poem, *Pimlyco; or, Runne Red-Cap*, published as a pamphlet in 1609, written in praise of this tavern, its ale and, as the pamphlet's subtitle has it, the 'mad world at Hogsdon'. [1] How did this short walk from the City come to be figured as such an epic – or mock-epic – journey, and how did it imply such bodily, social and spiritual transport? Of course, many City workers make a similar journey today, in one sense from the regulated sphere of finance to the disorderly bars, clubs and warehouses of Shoreditch, but in another sense from the chaos of deregulated finance to a world that finds a different kind of order. One should not, however, now as much as in 1609, make the mistake of thinking that moving out of the City is to move to a utopian space of equality and license; on the contrary, just as in the twentieth-century such areas are being colonised and commodified by intellectual and financial speculators – cultural capital is converted to real capital – so the Pimlyco tavern was a commercial enterprise, as capable of converting its fame to profit and monopolisation as any Shoreditch property developer.

<3>Construing raucous suburbs (now the inner city) as a propinquitous but exotic other is a common strategy – one might think here of the de Quincey's 'terrae incognitae' (53), Roy Porter's 'exotic nation' of the East End (117), or some of the 'Shoreditch Maps', the last of which represent the area variously as Manhattan, as a Concorde destination and as a land of fabulous beasts. In an era before mass immigration, the exoticism presented in Pimlyco must have had a different resonance. One explanation, explored below, is that the name 'Pimlyco' is in fact derived from a place name in America, perhaps the first example of the old country taking its cue from the new, and illustrative of the way in which Europe was, almost from the beginning of the colonial project, infected with America as much as the other way round. Following a short description of the work, the main part of this essay will be an analysis of the ways in which the poem mobilises various types of imagery to represent the margins of London, or what Mullaney calls those 'places of horrid spectacle...but also sanctuary and incontinent pleasure' (39). This imagery of spatial and cultural marginality relates closely to the material conditions of life in the northeastern extramural suburbs of Hoxton, Shoreditch, Moorfields and Clerkenwell and hence gives an insight into the early modern imagining of the city and its suburbs. Further, I will argue that much of this pamphlet is concerned with the debates about the New World, contemporary with the transatlantic expeditions to set up Jamestown, and reflective of the failed Roanoke project almost a generation before, that are today most familiar to us in interpreting *The Tempest*. Finally, a claim will be advanced that *Pimlyco* is a minor but important source text for that play, or alternatively, that even though this proposition cannot be proven, *Pimlyco* adds significantly to our understanding of the ways in which, two years after the publication of this poem, Shakespeare transplanted the New World into the Old, about a mile south of Hoxton at Blackfriars and Bankside.

The Pamphlet and its Text

<4>*Pimlyco* is in several parts, comprising a verse incantation, a prose introduction and a lengthy verse description of a journey to Hoxton across the surrounding fields, with details of the speaker's experiences there. This last contains two excerpts from Skelton's 'The Tunning of Elynor Rummyng' (c. 1550), as the speaker supposedly opens his book to read. This medley form is not unusual in the popular literature of the time; the poem also forms part of the genre of the 'wagering journey', in which the protagonist goes on a journey, usually with some kind of challenge, often going out to the suburbs of London, and consisting of a variety of different voices and registers. [2] In such writing, elements of pastoral, epic, bathetic urban satire and travel narrative combine in medlies whose form is as unruly as their subject matter. As Lawrence Manley has argued, there is a 'decomposition and recomposition' at work here, with a 'highly self-conscious sense of the materiality of discursive practices' that mangles and rebuilds established discursive models, and profits opportunistically from the incompleteness of urban social organisation and moralisation thereon (300-1). One way of seeing them, then, is as the perfect post-structuralist text: parasitic on other texts, constantly reiterative, formally and imagistically promiscuous, playing in the gaps left by other discourses, and – perhaps – ultimately destructive of any single authoritative voice.

<5>The first section of *Pimlyco*, a kind of incantation, takes the form of a commission to one Tom Norman, as the 'Foreman of Pimlyco Jury', charging him to enquire 'what kindles that fire...that burnes with such fury' (i-ix). The conceit changes towards the end to that of a journey (xxv-xxx), which introduces the prose section, addressed 'To all Travellers' and instructs the reader to, 'Rig out a Fleet, and make a Voiage to an Iland which could never be found out by the Portugals, Spaniards, or Hollanders, but only (and that now of late) by Englishmen' (3). The description that follows references quite closely the reports coming back from America concerning the Jamestown project, and also, two decades earlier, the unsuccessful attempt to establish a colony at Roanoke; these aspects will be considered in detail below. After this introduction, the main part of the poem begins, with a pastoral description of the spring morning. The speaker has risen early and walks out into the fields, specifically Moorfields, where he sees a number of lovers at play (1-86). The direction of the narrative then changes as the speaker pleases to linger there, and finds by chance a book by Skelton. The first part of 'The Tunning of Elynor Rymming' is then quoted in full, which consists of a long description of the grotesque but sexual body of this bar wench (87-172). The description is a foretaste of the revelry to come, as the speaker looks up from his book and sees the crowds of people heading towards Hoxton. Wondering what it is that draws them there, the speaker moves along with them, where he surveys the scene in wonder, as all ranks and types are mixed together, and the jugs of ale flow freely (173-222). The speaker asks, in what is probably an ironical parody of the third canto of Dante's 'Inferno', a number of people what makes people behave like this, and he receives the reply concerning the ale:

Tis Pimlyco –
My Friend, Tis Pimlyco (hee cryde)
And no worde could I get beside. (228-30)

The speaker affects incredulity and scorn, but only for a short time; soon he too reasons:

Yet since in Hogsdon all ran mad,
I played the Mad-man too, and had
My Jug brought in...(253-5)

<6>The physiological symptoms are predictable, and the speaker decides to write 'verses in Pimlyco's high Prayse' (259); but first he turns to Skelton again, in order 'With those mad times to weigh our times' (263-4). The second and the third parts of 'The Tunning of Elynor Ruming' are then quoted in full, consisting mainly of the description of her ale (269-406). After that, the speaker begins in earnest to praise Pimlyco ale: other more famous liquors are compared unfavourably; a long list of degrees and professions is given, all of whom are said to be united in Pimlyco; and, in a parodic incantation, the Pimlyconian muse is set up to surpass those of Helicon (409-28). All classes and nations are brought with 'not one foule word', and 'Dutch French and Scot/All are one in a Pimlyco Pot' (483-4). Imagery consists predominantly of comparisons to the mad, the theatrical, the military and the nautical, all of which, as will be discussed below, have a specific material connection to Hoxton and its environs. Soon the Pimlyconians threaten the municipal organisation of the city, as they replace the series of water conduits (that fed the City from the northerly Islington and Shoreditch) with beer pipes:

(O, if you wish that Trades should thriue,)
With lowd voyce to the Citie speake
That she her conduit-heads should breake
And onely build One Conduite Head
At Pimlyco, that through Pipes of Lead
That pretious Streame may be convayed
And Crafts-men so at home be stayd. (662-8)

<7>Finally, the speaker describes how Pimlyco has monopolised the local tavern trade, with a new conceit concerning the Christianisation of the Mediterranean; there are other 'Aley Islands' that have been taken by the Christians/Pimlyconians, like Malta, Tripoly and the Turk. Presumably these are references to local taverns, as are the 'New Found Land' and the 'Ship of Hull' that have been subdued by the Pimlyconians (675-714). The puzzling reference in the last ten lines to 'Red Cap', and which provides the subtitle of the whole pamphlet, is presumably to the name of a tavern that the Pimlyco has eclipsed, but there may be more covert meanings to it, which can be considered more fully below.

Images of the Suburbs: Urban Pastoral, Theatre, Madness, Colonisation

<8>Conceptualising the liberties and suburbs of early modern London as liminal spaces of refuge, of festivity, of criminality and of cruelty has now become a critical and historical commonplace. Discussion of the capital's extramural precincts is dominated by the location of the theatres there, in Clerkenwell, Southwark and, of most relevance here, in Shoreditch. Broadly speaking, the view of the suburbs as utopian spaces of freedom from class distinction and religious ideology, a view that largely resulted from the modern cultural prestige of the Shakespearean theatre, and which was mainly formulated by literary critics, has been shown to contradict the historical evidence gleaned from piecing together records from the Corporation, parishes, national government, the courts and other sources. Ian Archer points out that the suburbs as by-

words for pollution, lack of government and licence has 'passed into historical orthodoxy', which needs to be challenged (134; see also Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability in Elizabethan London*). The early modern period was undoubtedly one of change in the suburbs – in 1560 three-quarters of the population of the metropolis lived in the City, while in 1700 only a quarter did – but there is also, so Archer argues in 'Government in Early Modern London', evidence of the imposition of order by parish, County and especially crown authorities. It is the case that much of the rhetoric about the suburbs came from City authorities and those connected to them, and possible that it was often self-serving; by overstating the 'problem' the Corporation could legitimately argue for an extension of its powers (135). From a different disciplinary perspective, literary and cultural criticism in the tradition of cultural anthropology has identified apparent freedoms as being sophisticated re-workings of ideology and power; this in fact is the predominant impulse of the New Historicist criticism of early modern culture. Largely in response to the work of Foucault and Lefebvre, London's suburbs are sometimes referred to as 'heterotopias' (Foucault 46-49; Lefebvre). In an essay of geographical relevance to the current subject, on Heywood's city-comedy *The Wise of Woman of Hoxton* (first perf. ?1601-4), Daniel Gibson points to the potential of the brothel (where the play is largely set), the suburb and the theatre to act as models for the production of 'some measure of justice and social stability when the established systems of authority fall short' (390-416). The moralistic rhetoric of those who railed against the suburbs is recycled as a defence of the bawdy traditions of the brothel and theatre; brothels had, in fact, formerly not been marginalised, but had been 'a part of the ancient landscape of the city, functioning under the ideological sanction of a long line of authorities', and been able to reconcile ferment and dissent with stability (393). So the activities of Hoxton are at once progressive and forward-looking, and traditionalist and conservative. A sense of nostalgia for a former time is an impression one often gets from those writing about Hoxton in the first decade of the seventeenth century, as in the mention of 'days of Pimlico and Eye-bright' in *The Alchemist* (V.ii.66), and in this context the pamphlet *Pimlyco* appears something of an afterthought, even though the stock of the tavern is still estimated highly by the end of the poem. Certainly, the status of the suburbs outside Bishopsgate – Shoreditch and Hoxton – as something of a 'quartier latin' waned in the late 1590s (Greenblatt 290), particularly with the removal of the Shoreditch Theatre to Bankside, and, as will be seen, much of the latter half of the poem is concerned with the market rivalries between the leisure attractions remaining to the north-east of the City, as demand dwindled, or the better demographic shifted, in favour of Bankside.

<9>The following analysis of *Pimlyco* is intended to add to our understanding of the conceptualisation of suburban space and of the cultural poetics of marginality, during the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods. As will become clear, the text is extremely promiscuous in the imagery it employs to describe the kind of marginality to be found at Pimlyco. Many of these conceits can be seen as attempts to understand what is happening at Hoxton and particularly to impose a kind of alternative and ironical order on the chaotic crowd; the pamphlet starts with an incantation to Tom Norman, the foreman of the Pimlyco jury, and this judicial imagery is amplified via mention of 'Constables and Captaines' (586), to comprehending a full military campaign. In particular, the word 'shot' – payment for victuals at a tavern – is exploited, so that Pimlyco is variously a town at war or a castle, with its armies of patrons to defend it. In what follows, I shall review four distinctive tropes in the poem that provide a structure for the kind of alterity and marginality being described at Hoxton and that relate closely

to the material conditions of the northeastern suburbs – Moorfields, Shoreditch and Hoxton – beyond Moorgate and and Bishopsgate. These are: nature and urban pastoral, madness, the theatre and colonisation.

<10>The first of these starts on the journey to Hoxton across Moorfields, which is populated by amorous couples, each of which attends to itself, but together they make a harmonious, artful whole:

They grac'd the fields, the fields them grac'd,
For tho none were in order plac'de,
But sat (as Flowers in Gardens grow)
Thinly, which makes the brauer show.
Yet (like so many in one Roome,)
All seem'd to weaue within a loome,
Some curious piece whose beautie stands,
On the rare Skill of sundry hands. (62-8)

The crowd is connected to nature – the women getting a 'green gown', that is, losing their chastity – in a symbiotic relationship; they grace the fields, but the fields grace (and possibly disgrace) them. The conceit develops: it is like a garden, and finally like a woven artefact made by many people. The description of the spring morning has been conventionally pastoral; the speaker has risen early and walks out into the fields at a time when 'all Birds hold their Weddings'. It is clear, however, that this is not quite pastoral as usually understood, because of the intrusion of far more urban images of the Spring:

Trees that of late (like wasted Heyres,
Or like old men, dryed up with cares,)
Stood poorely, now looke fresh and gréene,
As Banck-rupts new set up agen. (1-4)

<11>This then is an urban re-writing of pastoral; the rhythms of the seasons mirror the rhythms of capital venture. The pun on 'Heyres' (meaning both young trees left standing during coppicing, and 'heirs') underlines this intersection of the urban and the pastoral. There follows a description of 'a yonker and his lasse...wrestling on the grasse' (51-2), and as the speaker walks, more and more such couples are seen. Sexual freedom is associated with this space outside the City, yet the City is not really left behind, as its buildings become part of a landscape beautified by the morning sun. The journey, as has been said, is a real one; the speaker is walking across Moorfields, and makes the sight into an artistic composition ('A Frame...mine eyes did draw'), as he surveys 'the thousand Steeples, Turrets and Towers...on Hills of Gould', and 'upon the Left and on the Right/ Two Towns (like Citties)' – Hoxton and Islington – that 'fed the Sight/with pleasure and admiration'(70-83). London sits, then, harmoniously in its natural setting, and the suburbs are, obviously enough, a hinge between the town and country for its inhabitants.

<12>The next group of images by which the marginality of Hoxton is represented has to do with madness. The patrons of Pimlyco, including the speaker, are described several times in the poem as 'mad'; indeed, the title describes the whole of Hoxton as 'a mad world'. The association of Hoxton with madness was to take on a greater resonance later

in the sixteenth century, as the private asylums sprung up in the area as a kind of archipelago off continental Bedlam, but in 1609 the main routes up to Hoxton – via Moorfields or Bishopsgate – would pass in full view of the original Bethlem Hospital (on the site of what is now Liverpool St. Station), and it could probably be seen from the vantage point of Hoxton. In parallel to any number of early modern representations of madness, Pimlyco's madness is construed as a temporary state; the prose introduction states: 'the people there, once euery Moone, are either starke mad, or else loose their owne shapes, and are transformed into Beasts, yet within twelue houres, recouer their wittes and shapes againe' (3). Clearly 'mad' can be understood as a synonym for 'drunk', and, further, the state of madness is a kind of performance necessary to fit in with this mad world, but also productive of a creativity that mixes authenticity with mock-heroic bathos:

Yet since in Hogsdon all ran mad,
I playde the Mad-man too, and had
My Iug brought in; a draught or twaine
Made such hot boyling in my braine,
That (faster then their Pots were hide)
From my Inuention were bigilde
Verses in Pimlyco's high prayse,
Pimlyco crownde my head with bayes. (253-60)

<13>There is obvious evidence of the much-chronicled 'easy familiarity' – both linguistic and in actual practice – that existed between madness and civilisation. More specifically, the proximity of the Bethhem Hospital and related houses to Hoxton gives cause for reflection on the spectacle of madness, or frenzied enthusiasm, as a ritualised practice and performance as opposed to its modern representations. As Ken Jackson states, public visitation of Bethlem Hospital appears to have started after 1598 as a means of generating income, in order to compensate for funds lost following the Poor Law Reforms of that year (16). But Jackson goes on to argue that the perversity – one could better say 'cruelty' – of this kind of spectacle to modern sensibilities depends on 'a distinction between the modern representational stage as we know it and other ritual practices involving spectacle' (17). In other words, our distaste for such spectacle depends on a distinction between pure entertainment and other kinds of seeing that would involve impulses like charity and medicine. In the late 1590s, the Shakespearean theatre attempted literally to set itself apart from the spectacle of the mad by leaving Shoreditch for Bankside (29), leaving behind the less prestigious Curtain, and, I wish to argue, the ritualised, spectacular madness as described in *Pimlyco*.

<14>Just as the author of *Pimlyco* appropriates Hoxton's proximity to Bedlam as a way of understanding what happens there, so he uses its even greater proximity to the theatres of Shoreditch and Clerkenwell: The Curtain, The Fortune and the Red Bull. The scene at Pimlyco is likened explicitly to a theatre:

Amazde I stood to see a Crowd
Of Ciuill Throats stretched out so lowd:
(As at a New-play) all the Roomes
Did swarme with Gentiles mix'd with Groomes.
So that I truly thought, all These
Came to see Shore, or Pericles,

And that (to haue themselues well plac'd)
Thus brought they victualls... (209-17)

As at a theatre, a loud and enthusiastic crowd, composed of a variety of classes, is packed in tightly, to the extent that they bring their own refreshments in order not to lose their places. The two plays mentioned – Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* and Heywood's two-part *Edward IV* (of which Jane Shore is the heroine) – were being performed at The Globe and the Curtain respectively in 1608-9. The reference to Jane Shore is particularly apposite; the libertinous daughter of the City, who rose to be Edward IV's mistress, and is represented in the play, and in Holinshed's *Chronicles* as being buried in 'Shores Ditch', providing a spurious etymology for that suburb. Earlier in the poem, there is a probable but confusing reference to the figure of Gower, who speaks the Prologue to Shakespeare's *Pericles*. The poet Skelton, the author of 'The Tunning of Elynor Ruming', extracts from which are included in the poem, is introduced ironically as an unworthy poet laureate or someone who usurpingly takes the voice of the times,

Much like to Some in these our daies,
That (as bold Prologues do to Players,)
With Garlonds haue their Fore-heads bound,
Yet onely empty Sculles are crownde. (99-102)

Skelton is chosen ahead of Lydgate, Chaucer and 'learned Gower'; yet Gower in Shakespeare's *Pericles* usurps the action of the play and attempts to provide commentary on, and structure for, the events of the play. Although Gower says that the tale 'hath been sung at festivals,/ On ember-eves and holy-ales' (Prologue 5-6), it is in fact Skelton who becomes the voice of this carnivalesque drama, rather than the more austere Gower.

<15>Just as the topos of madness is more than simply a metaphor in *Pimlyco*, so comparisons to the stage contain a description of actual practice as well as an abstract way of thinking about it. It has been well documented that the 'invention' of the purpose-built theatre – of which the first was a few hundred yards down the road from Hoxton, in Shoreditch – involved something of a rupture in thinking about dramatic representation. The strolling players, street pageants and theatrical displays of power of the Middle Ages were a part of life and not separated off from it, not representational, in the way that it is in the architecture of the theatre (see Mullaney 9-11 and 47-9, and his claim that performance moves from being 'interstitial' to 'incontinent'). The conceptual rupture was realised more as a gradual transition in actual practice, as vagrant players were illegalised and moved into the makeshift theatres of the inn yards during the sixteenth century, and indeed as audiences at the new theatres failed to observe the sanctity of the division between proscenium and stalls. In *Pimlyco*, we see that the drama that unfolds is both representational spectacle and a kind of ritual street theatre, so encompasses both theatrical modes. Such a combination suggests possibilities of self-reinvention and, surprisingly, reform. As has already been seen, the speaker starts by observing the action – first, the lovers on Moorfields, then the 'mad' drunkenness at Hoxton – but he then decides to join in: 'Since in Hogsdon all ran mad, / I playde the Mad-man too...' (253-4); similarly, a 'reverend man' he asks about the scene (in parody of the third canto of Dante's 'Inferno') 'came but to behold That Play'/ And not to act himself that Vice', but instead himself 'Tolde all the dronken Misteries' (245-8). Clearly, the practice of play acting lends itself well to the kind of shape-shifting and levelling

being described at Hoxton; in a comment that lends itself to comparison with the action of *The Tempest*, it is said that 'the people there...are either stark made, or else lose their shapes' (3). Further on, a large number of professions and nations are listed – 'All Sexes, all Degrées, all Nations, All men of Arts or Occupations' – with the conclusion, 'They kisse like brothers, Dutch, French, Scot, / Are all One in a Pimlyco Pot' (475-84). So what they are doing is performing a kind of street or community drama, in licentious parody of the sacred mystery plays, that harks back to a system of, as Mullaney has it, interstitial dramatic ritual, or 'liberties within the actual world' (48).

<16>Yet such a system, we know, was in the process of being replaced by the purpose-built theatres. Further, the more successful theatres had moved to Bankside; in the northeastern suburbs, the theatres that remained limped on, but the most successful drama was being produced across the river. James Burbage, and later his son Richard, the owners of The Theatre at Shoreditch, had had protracted legal wrangles concerning the lease on the land on which the Theatre stood (Smith). We know also that behaviour around the Shoreditch theatres attracted the attention of the Privy Council in 1597; in a letter of 28 July to the Justices of Middlesex, it noted the 'verie great disorders committed in the common playhouses', and instructed that 'those play houses built only for such purposes should be plucked downe, namlie the Curtayne and the Theatre nere to Shoreditch' (Chambers iv, 397). In fact, they first tried to move to Blackfriars, perhaps, so Gurr suggests, as a means of going upmarket. But the residents objected, more or less forcing Richard Burbage and his associates to develop the Globe (Gurr 45-7). So what was left in the northeastern suburbs was the vestige of a former age, that age before the separation of audience from actor, before the formalisation of mimetic dramatic representation. Towards the end of Pimlyco, the speaker claims that the success of this tavern and its ale has not only monopolised the drinks trade, but has severely damaged the business of the nearby theatres: 'Each afternoone thy House being full, / Makes Fortune [in Finsbury]blind, or Gelds The Bull [in Clerkenwell]' (575-6). This comment comes after a curious section in which the speaker thinks of advising the 'Pimlyconian Brewer' to 'Build thy House round with Galleries, / Like to a Play-house' (565-6) in order to make more money, presumably by charging an entrance fee. But he then decides that to advise this would be 'To haue a Christian wrong his neighbour' (574); the current business model, which includes failure to charge for many of the orders, draws enough people from other places of entertainment. It is possible that the author has in mind here ideas similar to those expressed by Stow in the part of the Survey pertaining to Moorfields, Shoreditch and Hoxton (74-9). Stow details the draining of the area and the attempts to conserve the ancient practices of archery and similar worthy pastimes there, but bemoans the recent enclosure of these fields for gardens and 'banqueting houses like banqueroutes [bankrupts], bearing great shew and little worth', which are like 'Midsomer Pageantes...not so much for use or profite, as for shewe and pleasure, bewraying the vanity of mens mindes' (II, 78). As Mullaney points out, Stow does not include theatres in such criticism of the purely pleasurable, perhaps suggesting that the theatres have attained some of the respectability they had previously lacked because of this relatively new division between entertainment (the visceral, the libidinal) and representation (the mimetic, the instructional, the civic) (Mullaney 46; see also Jackson 29-33).

<17>Pimlyco beer, the tavern and its gardens may, then, appear in this poem to be winning the commercial battle against theatres and other taverns for punters, but the war is perhaps going against it, in that it is part of ritualistic street drama that is on the

wane, and also because it is in the wrong part of town; perhaps the two go together. Lovewit in *The Alchemist*, first performed in 1610, is able to compare the scene at his house to the crowds going 'to a second Hogsden/ In days of Eye-bright and Pimlico' (V.ii.18-19; 'Eye-bright' is mentioned as a rival tavern that has seen better days in *Pimlyco* 695). Nonetheless, in the final section of the poem, which becomes rather repetitive and is possibly the weakest part, this commercial war is described as a series of battles between forces associated with different parts of the Mediterranean, a conceit suggested by many of the taverns' names (The Jew of Malta, the Turk etc.), and which of course takes up the metaphor from near the start of *Pimlyco* as an 'Aley island' to be discovered and colonised. For all the celebration of social and sexual licence, of familiarity between the classes, of – so to speak – liberty without the Walls, the predominant note on which the poem ends is in the language of commercial and colonial monopolisation. As with modern Hoxton, so with the early modern: cultural capital is converted to real capital, to valuable real estate for commercial ventures. When the final 'rival' is vanquished – the 'Red Cap' of the title, 'nam'd last, that once wert best' (708) – Pimlyco appears to dominate the entertainment scene of the northeastern suburbs. Mother Red Cap was a figure in folklore, an elderly woman usually represented as a curmudgeonly innkeeper, and there was at least one inn in north London by that name in the early seventeenth century ('Mother Red Cap'). There may also be an encoded meaning here; the phrase 'runne red cap' appears near the end of Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601-2), the last play of the so-called 'Poetomachia' – or the war of the theatres – in dismissing the character Asinius Bubo (Dekker 316). This character has been identified as Michael Drayton (Dekker 400-1, n.280), who wrote a now-lost play for Henslowe's company called 'Mother Red Cap' in 1597 (see 'Mother Red Cap'). The theatres mentioned as having been emptied by the success of *Pimlyco* were associated with the Admiral's Men and with Worcester's Men (*The Fortune and the Red Bull* respectively); *Pimlyco* could therefore in the end be little more than an intervention in the continuing campaign to market and commoditise leisure.

<18>The final trope around which the description of Hoxton is organised is the one that we started with: Pimlyco as exotic island. The sources for this set of imagery are documents concerning the two attempts to establish a permanent English colony in America: the failed colony of Roanoke (1584-8) and the ultimately successful Jamestown, to which the first expedition was in 1606. As with appropriations of madness and drama, *Pimlyco's* use of this material is more than just metaphor, and in the final part of this essay it will be argued that the tavern and the poem have a material connection to the new world colonies and are a minor source for *The Tempest*. The most sustained use of the rhetoric of the New World and colonisation is in the prose introduction, quoted partially at the start of this essay. It is prefigured in the last lines of the verse incantation, in which an order is given to 'hoyst then up your Sayle, sir, / For Pimlyco Ale, sir' (xxv-vi); those who 'embark' are to be marked with a 'copper seale' (xxviii) – possibly a reference to the practices of branding on board ships, but also with reference to the authority given to 'Tom Norman' as the foreman, and with a pun on 'copper' to mean 'cup-bearers' – and get on board 'Pimlyco noses', synecdochically meaning 'ships'.

<19>The prose section on the 'island' of Pimlyco (3-5) contains a great many features analogous to the accounts of the New World surrounding the Roanoke and the Jamestown expeditions: it is found 'now of late' only by Englishmen, rather than the Dutch, the Spanish and the Portuguese; there is a question as to whether it is part of the

Continent or an island, a problem that Raleigh encountered on his first arrival at what turned out to be Roanoke Island (Haklyut 728); and it is an 'enchanted, island, and haunted with strange Spirits'.^[3]

<20>There is a 'hot Climate', making the people 'subject to infection', and the disease of 'the Stagers' is obviously caused by drinking. Of particular interest here are three further aspects of the description: first, its enchantment changes people's state, albeit temporarily: 'the people there, once euery Moone, are either starke mad, or else loose their owne shapes, and are transformed into Beasts, yet within twelue houres, recouer their wittes and shapes againe.' They are also ill-disciplined: 'The Gouvernour of the Iland hath much adoe to keepe himselfe vpright, so that he is compelled to giue those that are vnder him, often times very Hard measure' (4). There is a resonance here particularly with reports of the Roanoke colony, where the governor Ralph Lane was often unable to keep his subjects in line, and also, if one sees the Pimlyconians not as colonists but as natives, with Strachey's 'True Repertory'. Finally, there is a kind of inventory of the produce to be had on the island, which reads like a smaller version of Hariot's and Raleigh's inventories of the natural resources to be had in Virginia; just as Hariot's and Raleigh's accounts can perhaps best be seen as a piece of propaganda for the new colony, so *Pimlyco* can be seen as an advertisement for the pleasures of Hoxton and its famous alehouse.^[4]

<21>Colonial and nautical images are to an extent dropped in the main part of the poem, in favour the images of madness, theatre and the military; but they turn up here and there in different forms. The crowd is brought to the island by a 'Spring-Tide', and at the end of the poem there is an envoy in which, 'Our weary Muse (here) leapes to Shore, On these rough Seas she Sayles no more' (l.711-2), 'Shore' here punning on Shoreditch, one of the ways back into the City, via Bishopsgate. Further, the military imagery, usually of armies, becomes sometimes a sea battle, and towards the end the competition between the alehouses is figured not as a conflict in America, but predominantly in the Mediterranean, as suggested by the names of the other taverns: the Turk, the Malta and the Tripoli. Unfortunately, the *Register of Victuallers* for this part of extramural London has been lost, so it is not possible to identify the taverns mentioned. The point is, however, clear; competition for shares of the market in the leisure of the suburbs is figured overseas conquest, sometimes in New World and sometimes in the Old.

Hoxton, *Pimlyco* and *The Tempest*

<22>As has been seen, *Pimlyco* is a text steeped in the cultures of the northeastern suburbs and transforms in a complex way those discourses that lie readily to hand there: madness, urban pastoral, ritualistic and theatrical drama, and colonisation. All of these have certain similarities with *The Tempest*, probably first performed two years after the publication of *Pimlyco*, and it is the relative importance of these analogous elements that I wish now to evaluate. It has first to be said that there is no conclusive textual evidence that Shakespeare had either read *Pimlyco* and used it in *The Tempest*, or had in reality been to the tavern, though the second is likely knowing as we do that it was frequented by those involved with the nearby theatres in Shoreditch, as evidenced by the duel between Jonson and Spenser in 1598. Indeed, Shakespeare had lived in Bishopsgate and Shoreditch during the 1590s. In addition, *Pimlyco* is, as we have seen, intimately concerned with the rivalries between the theatres and the associated 'Poetomachia'. However, there are a large number of analogies between *Pimlyco* – the pamphlet and

the place as we imagine it to have been – and Shakespeare’s last complete play, which taken together form a convincing body of evidence that these texts about Hoxton influenced the writing of the play. At the very least, *Pimlyco* provides some clues on how to read *The Tempest* historically in terms of the early Jacobean metropolis.

<23>The following are some of the elements of *Pimlyco* that are analogous at the level of plot to *The Tempest*: Hoxton, like Caliban’s island, is an enchanted isle, where people change their states temporarily; such changes of state include apparent madness, real drunkenness, being soothed by the beauties of nature and being subjected to spectacles, including music, that can be experienced both as harmonious beauty and fearful sights and sounds. The lord of the misrule has difficulty in keeping order, but is ultimately successful in redemptively bringing people together. The references to travel and the New World, in both *Pimlyco* and *The Tempest*, suggest the possibility of redemption and change, before a return is made to the Old World, or the City; the wondrous isle of Pimlyco, like Caliban’s island, and America itself, offers a fresh space for personal transformation, even though the Old World problems of power and order gradually become apparent. Shakespeare and the author of *Pimlyco* are not simply using some of the same accounts of the New World (Hariot, Strachey, etc.), but are imagining them in similar ways, too. Most crucially, perhaps, the enchanted isle, based heavily on descriptions of the New World, is relocated in the London suburbs (the place of the theatres, still Shoreditch as much as Bankside) and also in the Mediterranean. This last point solves the main difficulty in the postcolonial reading of *The Tempest*, viz. that Caliban’s island is placed explicitly in the Mediterranean; Shakespeare already had a precedent for this double-placement in the account of the tavern at Hoxton.

<24>But there is more evidence to link Pimlyco materially to America and to Shakespeare’s last play. The puzzlingly Italianate place-name ‘Pimlico’ (referring to the part of London immediately to the south west of Westminster) has long been recognised as deriving in some way from the alehouse in Hoxton (e.g. Brewer). Richard Coates has recently argued, in an essay on the derivation of the name ‘Pimlico’, that this name is cognate with Pamlico Sound, now off North Carolina, which receives the Pamlico River (now known as the Tar-Pamlico), and takes its name from the native American people Pamticough. If this is the case, then Pimlico is the ‘first American Placename in England’ (Coates 213-227). Pamlico Sound is bounded to the north by Roanoke island, and Coates surmises that one of the original settlers of 1585, many of whom were taken back to England by Drake’s fleet in 1586, was nicknamed ‘Pimlico’, or a variant, and set up an alehouse in Hoxton. Some of the specifics of this article are highly speculative; in particular, Coates suggests that the ‘Ben Pimlico’ mentioned occasionally in contemporary texts, was one of two ‘Bennets’ that came back from Roanoke. [5] However, such specificity is not needed in order for a more general association between the Virginian colony and the Hoxton alehouse to be probable. Attention to colonial imagery of *Pimlyco* suggests the likelihood of such an association, and, as Coates points out, the date of the (lost) pamphlet *Newes From Hogsdon* (1598), chimes with the renewal of interest in the American colony on Raleigh’s return from Guiana in 1596. That the lost colony should be in the mind of a writer during the more intense coverage of the Jamestown expeditions from 1606 is also to be expected. Coates points out a few more pieces of circumstantial evidence: there is a ‘Virginia Row’ 200 yards to the south east of the Pimlyco alehouse marked on John Rocque’s London map of 1747; and that, although tobacco is not mentioned in *Pimlyco*, one of Lovewit’s neighbours in *The Alchemist*, says that tobacco-men have been seen at his house, to which another comments, ‘Another

Pimlico!' (V.i.12-13), suggesting that the place is linked with the drug brought back by Raleigh and the escapees from Roanoke in 1586.

<25>Taken together, the evidence is persuasive that there is a connection between the Pimlico alehouse and America, certainly in the minds of Londoners, and possibly a personal one in the figure of Ben Pimlico. Such a connection suggests that the colonial imagery of Pimlico is more than simply metaphorical, but is woven into the material fabric of everyday life. Further, it suggests that the relationship between the Old and New Worlds was already one of exchange on all levels, and that England was not simply looking to export settlers and import resources, but was also importing the concept of a different world, if not to the centre of its capital, then to its suburbs. Again, this must inform our understanding of how *The Tempest* deals with source material related to the New World; 'America' is in the Mediterranean, but it is also in a place not one mile from the city's walls, slightly beyond that symbolic line of demarcation, but certainly not a month's journey by sea.

<26>There is one further set of evidence on which conjectures can reasonably be made that may help us to understand *Pimlico's* relationship to contemporary accounts of the New World and Shakespeare's use of this poem and other material in *The Tempest*. As has been seen, the subtitle 'Runne Redcap' is a quotation from Dekker's *Satiromastix*, where it appears to be used as a derogatory address to Michael Drayton, who co-authored a play, with Anthony Munday, called *Mother Red Cap*, for which Henslowe paid a total of £6 in 1597-8. This play is now lost, but there is a possible analogue for it in a poem, 'The Moone Calfe', published much later in a miscellaneous volume of 1627 (Drayton; see Hill Radcliffe). In this poem, three midwives (or 'Gossips') sit round drinking at the birth of hideous, deformed twins and decide each to tell an allegorical story, each guessing the meaning of the others'. Mother Red-Cap's story concerns a sinful island, where the only good man (termed a 'wizard') has prophesied a great tempest that will disturb the natural order of things. The storm comes to pass, and the 'wizard' shelters himself from the deluge in a 'Cave / In a huge Rock'. When the storm finishes, the man goes out and sees a 'Bedlam Nation' – a woman farrows piglets, someone has mistaken his neighbour for a horse, a man worships an ape, and the like. The 'Wizard' preaches repentance, but the islanders in fact blame him for their troubles, and he is forced to retreat, hermit-like, to his cave.

<27>It cannot be proven that Drayton's poem is an analogue for his earlier play, but it is a reasonable conjecture. Intriguingly, there are clear similarities between the plot of *Mother Redcap's* tale and that of *The Tempest*. In addition, the title of the poem, meaning congenital idiot, deformed animal or monster, is used several times by Stephano and Trinculo to address Caliban in acts II and III of *The Tempest*, and the deformed progeny is compared by one of the midwives to African issue: 'Affrike thats said, Mother of Monsters is / Let her but shew me such a one as this'. While the location of the island in Redcap's tale is explicitly not stated ('where this Ile is, that I cannot showe, / Let them enquire that have desire to knowe'), it is most often compared to Bedlam, and particularly to the disreputable pastimes of the suburbs:

...but in that continent
There was a noyse as if the Garden Beares,
And all the Dogs together by the eares,
And those of Bedlam had enlarged bin,

And to behold the Bayting had come in.
(Drayton, 1627. No page or line numbers)

Scenes of madness and the inversion of the natural and social order are thus transposed to the leisurely suburbs in this poem. We cannot unfortunately know what the relationship between Drayton's poem and his play might be, nor hence that between *Pimlyco* and Drayton's play. Yet there is a nexus of topographical imagery that links 'The Moone Calfe' to *Pimlyco*, and in turn to *The Tempest*: the journey, the storm, the tumultuous suburb as enchanted island, the lord who despite his magic cannot quite keep order and the conditional promise of change through the experiences possible there.

<28>It was not long before 'Pimlico' and Hoxton became respectable; they are mentioned as being a pleasant place of resort in a number of texts from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, so that by 1699 *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Centing Crew* described 'Pimlico' as a 'bowling green, of good report, at Hogsden' (133). As has been suggested, perhaps our poem *Pimlyco* is nostalgic in nature; that, despite its triumphalist tone towards the end, the real action had moved on from the ritualistic, drunken street drama to the purpose-built theatres, and especially those on Bankside. But whoever the author of the poem was, he has left us with a record of a suburban space, beyond the city limits, which is at times utopian – neither subject to distinctions between ranks, nor to commercial exploitation – but is at times suggestive of commercial, military and colonial monopolisation, and a madness that has to be cured by leaving the 'enchanted isle'. We also have a glimpse here of how Shakespeare might have worked the accounts of the New World from the Roanoke and Jamestown expeditions into a drama whose place is in America, in the Mediterranean, but more urgently in London's suburbs. If in the second act of *The Tempest* Gonzalo is right that he could be king of a kingless isle, and that Tunis was Carthage, then Tunis might as well be Virginia or Hoxton as well, with the mysterious 'Ben Pimlico', the Pimlyconian brewer, for its lawless lawgiver.

Notes

[1] Entered in the Stationers' Register for John Busby on 15 April 1609, and re-assigned to William Barley, with a now-lost ballad called *Ha with you to Pimlico* on 3 May (see ed. E. Archer 406, 408). [[^](#)]

[2] Cf. Kinde-Kit of Kingstone, *Westward for Smelts* (London: ?1603); *The Cobler of Canterburie* (London: 1608); Ferris, *The Most Dangerous and Memorable Adventure* (London: 1590); Richard Braithwaite, *Barnabees journall under the names of Mirtilus & Faustulus shadowed*. (London: 1638). See also H. V. Routh (318). [[^](#)]

[3] The two most influential reports of the New World, those by Hariot (1589) and by Strachey (1610) specifically deny such misconceptions about the islands of Roanoke and the Bermudas respectively, suggesting that this was in fact a common view of the islands at the time. [[^](#)]

[4] It could also be argued that the mention 'dyeing in graine' (l.xv) is a reference to one of the valuable resources mentioned by Hariot; see ed. Quinn, *The Raonoke Voyages* vol. 1, 334-5. [^]

[5] In fact there is scant evidence that such a person existed; the proposition rests on a discussion of the place name Pimlico by one E. F. Rimbault in *Notes and Queries*. 1st Series, Vol. I: 474, who quotes 'a rare (if not unique) tract now before me'. The tract is *Newes from Hogsdon* (1598), which purportedly mentions 'Ben Pimlico's nut browne [ale]'. Such a tract was entered in the *Stationer's Register* but is not now extant. [^]

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