

turn: 'Recreacion feele; feele Comfort fre, | Feele Quicknes here, feale Strength to the' (251-2). On the allegorical level he is being made aware of the psychological influx of these qualities (one after the other in a causal sequence?); on the medical level, he is being asked to offer his hand to each one in turn to show that he is capable physically of obeying a command. They might be rubbing them with various stimulants, as prescribed by the handbooks, though presumably not seizing the opportunity to push pins under his fingernails, which was also recommended; but again, it sounds more as if they are encouraging Wit to fit his various perceptions together ('feel that ye see') into a coherent consciousness (his 'common sense'). At each stage, as recommended today, they reassure him (one of the paramedics is Comfort): they point out that they bring help (233, 240), that they are his friends (244), and that what they are doing will make him feel better ('for thy consolacion' as a refrain); and they familiarise him with their names (245-6, 251-2), which also identify them to the audience.

Finally they decide he has recovered his senses sufficiently to be lifted back onto his feet again. This is possibly clinically premature, but the resuscitated subjects in saints' lives tend to walk sheepishly out of the death chamber behind the saint to bear witness to the miracle, as St Peter roused Dorcas to lift her up and present her alive to 'the saints and widows' (Acts 9:41). They have succeeded in restoring Wit to his wits, or at least overtly to the three which are most relevant to honest recreation and, at second hand, to learning. Smell and taste might be a bit suspect in this context, so no hartshorn or aqua vitae, or even sternutatory pepper.

At this point some critics have been tempted to identify Honest Recreation theatrically with the Quack Doctor.<sup>61</sup> Even if we shake off the image of the eighteenth-century Doctor of the Mummers Play, here is surely another promising contemporary candidate, both in real life and as a theatrical stereotype?

There were in the Middle Ages real itinerant medical practitioners with a dubious reputation, male and female, who specialised in selling medicines, pulling teeth, and treating a range of ailments. They were later to be labelled *quacksalvers*, *mountebanks*, and *charlatans*.<sup>62</sup> They moved from town to town, set up their stalls, stages, or benches (hence *mountebank*, literally 'climb on a bench'), and attracted attention with a market trader's patter (*ciarlatani* — 'those with the gift of the gab'), and other theatrical tricks. Poets and playwrights were intrigued and impressed by their rhetorical skills, and tried their hand at creating their own