the British Institute of Florence 1917-2017

IASEMS

The Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies

Humour in Shakespeare's Arcadia

Selected Papers
from the "Shakespeare and his Contemporaries"
Graduate Conference
Florence, 23 April 2015

Edited by Roberta Mullini and Maria Elisa Montironi

THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FLORENCE

THE ITALIAN ASSOCIATION
OF SHAKESPEAREAN AND EARLY MODERN STUDIES

Humour
in
Shakespeare's Arcadia

Selected Papers
from the "Shakespeare and his Contemporaries"
Graduate Conference
Florence, 23 April 2015

edited by
Roberta Mullini and Maria Elisa Montironi

The British Institute of Florence
2017

Humour in Shakespeare's Arcadia. Selected Papers from the "Shakespeare and his Contemporaries" Graduate Conference. Florence, 23 April 2015 / edited by Roberta Mullini and Maria Elisa Montironi – Firenze: The British Institute of Florence, 2017.

ISBN (online) 978-88-907244-4-2
http://www.britishinstitute.it/it/biblioteca/biblioteca-harold-acton/events-at-the-harold-acton-library

Graphic design by Roberta Mullini

Front cover:
Will Sommers, by Francis Delaram, active 1615-1624 [Public domain], via Wikimedia at the site https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Sommers#/media/File:WillSommers_engraving_300dpi.jpg..

Back cover:
Four figures contemplate the inscription on a tomb in Arcadia. Etching by Etienne Picart after Nicolas Poussin, 1653. Wellcome Library, London.

This publication has been double blind peer reviewed.

Published by The British Institute of Florence
Lungarno Guicciardini, 9, 50125 Firenze, Italy
http://www.britishinstitute.it/it/

Contents

Acknowledgements

First of all we wish to thank the Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies for offering us the opportunity to edit this book. Our gratitude also goes to the British Institute of Florence and its Director Julia Race for hosting the 2015 Graduate Conference, during which the papers selected for this collection and other contributions were delivered. It was a very pleasurable occasion for young and … less young scholars to meet in the elegant Harold Acton Library on the bank of the Arno. Special thanks go to Luca Baratta for allowing us to use the template he had developed for the 2014 proceedings, to Jeanne Clegg for her reading of part of the introduction, and to Alyson Price for the care shown in the copy-editing of the articles. We are also grateful to Alessandro Zanarini for his help in the graphic design of the two covers.

Roberta Mullini and Maria Elisa Montironi

Roberta Mullini and Maria Elisa Montironi

Introduction

> But now that I haue taught men to be sory, I wil ate[m]pt again to make them mery, and shewe what learned men saie concernyng laughter, in delityng the hearers whe[n] tyme and place shall best require.
> (Thomas Wilson, *The Art of Rhetorique*, fol. 74r)

1. Theory and Practice of the Comic in Early Modern Times

The IASEMS Graduate Conference, held at the British Institute of Florence on 23 April 2015, was entitled – like its predecessors – "Shakespeare and his Contemporaries" and subtitled "Humour in Shakespeare's Arcadia: Gender, Genre and Wordplay in Early Modern Comedy". In spite of Shakespeare featuring twice – in both title and subtitle – it is significant that only two (and a half) papers out of the twelve listed in the programme actually dealt with Shakespeare (either his language generally speaking, or his plays).[1] Evidently most conveners were

[1] The 2015 Graduate Conference was enlivened by the participation of a large number of young scholars, but contrary to previous editions when Italy was the most widely represented country, on this occasion foreign speakers coming from various European countries were the majority (they were from France, England, Poland, Scotland and Ulster).

Published by The British Institute of Florence
ISBN (online) 978-88-907244-4-2

attracted by the more specific terms in the subtitle and by the wider domain opened up by the phrase 'his contemporaries'. This means that the general theme of 'humour' inflected according to the categories listed was accepted as stimulating and as encompassing various research fields.[2]

The general convergence in favour of the 'sunny' side of the term 'Arcadia' was certainly due to the presence of the rich subtitle of the conference, focussing on 'humour' and 'comedy', with some of their possible declensions. As a consequence, all papers read in Florence avoided talking about the dystopian meaning connected to the phrase 'Et in Arcadia ego' which Nicolas Poussin inscribed in his picture *Les Bergers d'Arcadie* (The Arcadian Shepherds, 1637-38) to remind his public of the presence of Death even in the prelapsarian happiness and joyful world of Arcadia. Indeed, during the conference the *memento mori* function of Poussin's inscription was totally ignored, while all speakers concentrated on the festive, joyous and playful aspects of a positively idyllic reality (even when satire, court life and wordplay were at stake).[3] Nevertheless, the editors have decided to use an engraving from Poussin's painting for the back cover, whereas the front cover hosts a portrait of Will Sommers, Henry VIII's fool, i.e. the image of a professional of jests, worldplay, and humour.

[2] The first section of this introduction is by Roberta Mullini, the second by Maria Elisa Montironi.

[3] The Arcadian world of pastoral poetry was also unmentioned during the conference, certainly because of the emphasis on humour and comedy (for a study of the influence of Iacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* on English culture see Alessandra Petrina, "Iacopo Sannazaro and the Creation of a Poetic Canon in Early Modern England", *Parole Rubate / Purloined Letters* 14:4 (2016): 95-118).

But what is 'humour'? As a word, in early modern times it was not used to define a person or a thing provoking laughter, since it was strictly connected to Galenic medicine and its theory of the four humours governing the body. In their glossary of Shakespeare's words, David and Ben Crystal do not include any meaning which might link the word 'humour' to the comic sphere.[4] It is self-evident, of course, that the term used for the IASEMS conference draws on and finds its sense in our modern and contemporary culture, after Bergson, Pirandello, Freud, Bakhtin and many others. Inside the broad category of modern *humour*, in fact, we find puns, mirth, laughter, wordplay, comedy. Rhetoricians and philosophers have studied laughter in particular, but whether we define it as Hobbes's 'sudden glory', or Freud's 'the effect of comic pleasure', or modify it by adjectives such as Meredith's 'thoughtful', Bergson's 'punitive' and 'corrective', Bakhtin's 'festive' and 'carnivalesque', or Pirandello's 'bitter' when connected to 'the feeling of the opposite', the object 'laughter' seems to resist any single definition and, on the contrary, solicits ever alert and mindful speculation.[5]

---

[4] David Crystal & Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words. A Glossary & Language Companion* (London: Penguin, 2002).

[5] See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968); Henri Bergson, *Le rire. Essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris, 1900. *Laughter. An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell, Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2014); Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten* (Vienna, 1905. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious,* trans. J. Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. VIII, London: Hogarth Press, 1955); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651. ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); George Meredith, *An Essay on Comedy and the Use of the Comic Spirit* (London: Constable, 1897); Luigi Pirandello, *L'umorismo* (Lan-

Even if not called *humour* by early modern thinkers, the various nuances of the comic were certainly well known to and discussed by them via the teaching and the examples of classical rhetoric, and writers practiced it in their works (both narrative, poetry and drama). It is true that, as Manfred Pfister claims, 'there was no original and incisive theory of the comic in Elizabethan England', but there was what he calls 'a rich, subtly differentiated, and heated debate about laughter, an "argument of laughter"'.[6] It therefore seems worth outlining some early modern English theoretical and practical stances on laughter. In his *Art of Rhetorique* (1553), for example, Thomas Wilson entitles one chapter "Of delityng the hearers, and stirryng them to laughter", and summarises Cicero's advice to orators 'concerning pleasaunt talke' and the ways to move somebody to laughter.[7] More than thirty years later in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham appears to be less ready to accept the inducement of laughter as one of the purposes of art (the word *laughter* occurs only five times in his treatise). Although he accepts that 'to vtter conceits infamous & vicious or ridiculous and foolish [...] in merry matters (not vnhonest) being vsed for mans solace and recreation [...] may be well allowed for [...] Poesie is a pleasant maner of vtteraunce varying from the ordinarie of purpose to re-

---

ciano: Carabba, 1908. *On Humour*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

[6] Manfred Pfister, "'An Argument of Laughter': Cultures of Laughter and the Theater in Early Modern England", in *German Shakespeare Studies at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Christa Johnson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 42-67, 43.

[7] Thomas Wilson, *The arte of rhetorique* (London, Richardus Graftonus typographus Regius, 1553). Quotations are drawn from fols. 74r-75v and fol. 74v, respectively (from EEBO: *Early English Books Online*).

fresh the mynde by the eares delight',[8] when discussing the infringement of (courtly) decorum rules in speech and language, he writes:

> Now haue ye other vicious manners of speech, but sometimes and in some cases tollerable, and chiefly to the intent to mooue laughter, and to make sport, or to giue it some prety strange grace, and is when we vse such wordes as may be drawen to a foule and vnshamefast sence [...] we call it the vnshamefast or figure of foule speech, which our courtly maker shall in any case shunne, least of a Poet he become a Buffon or rayling companion, the Latines called him *Scurra*.[9]

What is interesting is that, so 'late' in the sixteenth century, Puttenham's point of view on the comic sounds very near to the dictates of many prologues to mid-century (and earlier) interludes, and to the practice actually followed in their scripts.

The twenty-eight lines of the prologue of *Roister Doister*, a play attributed to Nicholas Udall (1553), are often quoted because, together with the longer "Prologue" to *Jacke Jugeler* (attributable to Udall as well), they exalt the function of 'mirth' when pastime is 'used in an honest fashion' (l. 7) and 'mixed with vertue in decent comlynesse' (l. 12).[10] It is clear from the content of the prologue that *Roister Doister* is to be a comedy in the line of the

[8] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Printed by Richard Field, 1589), 18 (from EEBO).
[9] Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, 212.
[10] *Roister Doister* is quoted from the text published in *Four Tudor Comedies*, ed. William Tydeman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984). I dealt with *Roister Doister* in my article "Laughter and Honest Mirthe in *Roister Doister* and Vincenzo Maggi's *De ridiculis*", *Theta*: *Tudor Theatre. For Laughs (?)*, n. 6, ed. Roberta Mullini, 129-42.

classics, which are explicitly introduced here under the names of Plautus and Terence (l. 19).

The *Roister Doister* prologue includes some concepts which are to be found also in *Jacke Jugeler*, expanding on the earlier play's deployment of the classical tenet about the usefulness of pastime as a relief from labour, and turning it into a full-blown form of therapy through mirth:[11]

> [...] Myrth prologeth lyfe, and causeth health.
> Mirth recreates our spirits and voydeth pensivenesse,
> Mirth increaseth amitie, not hindring our wealth,
> (*Roister Doister*, ll. 8-10)

Nothing new in this elaboration of the classical Horatian and Ciceronian theory (and, further back, of Aristotelian principles enunciated in the book of *Ethics)* about the necessity of relief from labour and study by means of recreation and pastime. The "Prologue" to *Jacke Jugeler* devotes even more lines to the subject:

> 'Emongs thy carfull busines use sume time mirth and joye

[11] William Shakespeare must have been familiar with this concept when he dealt with the therapeutic function of mirth in the Induction 2 to *The Taming of the Shrew* (in *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988):

> MESSENGER. Your honour's players, hearing your amendment,
> Are come to play a pleasant comedy;
> For so your doctors hold it very meet,
> Seeing too much sadness hath congeal'd your blood,
> And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy.
> Therefore they thought it good you hear a play
> And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
> Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.
> (Induction 2, 125-32)

> That no bodilye worke thy wytts breke or noye.'
> For the mynd, saith he, in serius matter occupied
> If it have not sum quiet mirthe and recreation
> Interchaungeablie admixed, must niddes be sone weried
> And, as who should saye, tried through continual operacion
> Of labour and busines without relaxacion;
> Therfor intermix honest mirth in such wise
> That your strength may be refreshid and to labour suffise.
> (ll. 13-21)[12]

In this prologue the idea of laughter appears explicitly in line 62, which declares that the interlude 'shall fortune too make you laugh well'. The purpose of the play is thus clearly shown and the words 'mirth', 'pastime', 'joy', 'recreation', 'pleasure', and 'relaxation' are united in a vast paradigm connected to laughter.

Right from the very beginning of the "Prologue" to *Roister Doister* particular stress is laid on the modern corrective needed to mend old Latin 'mirth', by making it go hand in hand with 'modestie' (l. 2), and be totally cleansed of 'all scurrilitie / Avoiding such mirth wherin is abuse' (ll. 4-5). It is this type of mirth (of laughter) that, as the actor pronouncing the prologue says, 'we intende to use, avoidyng all blame' (l. 14), thus showing that the humanist playwright has well understood Desiderius Erasmus's teaching as set out in the treatise *De*

[12] For the possible attribution of *Jacke Jugeler* to Nicholas Udall cf. *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, ed. Marie Axton (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), 15-24, and Roberta Mullini, "At Work with Young Actors and Old Structures: 'Certen plaies made by Nicholas Udall & their incydentes'", in *Formes teatrals de la tradiciò medieval*, ed. Francesc Massip (Barcelona: Institut del Teatre, 1996), 437-43. The 'he' referred to in l. 15 is Cato the Wise, to whom – erroneously – some Latin lines previously quoted are attributed. Quotations of *Jacke Jugeler* are drawn from Axton's volume.

ratione studii (1511).[13] After commending some Greek authors (among whom the first is Aristophanes) as examples for the youth, Erasmus rhetorically asks:

> Rursum inter Latinos quis utilior loquendi auctor quam Terentius? purus, tersis, & quotidiano sermoni proximus, tum ipso quoque argumenti genere jucundus adolescentiae. Huic si quis aliquot selectas Plauti comoedias putet addendas, *quae vacent obscoenitate*, equidem nihil repugno.[14]
>
> [Which author is most useful [to learn] to speak than Terence? pure, clear and the nearest to everyday speech and pleasant to the youth because of the very type of his issues. In case somebody thinks it fit to add some of Plautus' comedies, *those that are free from obscenity*, I have nothing against it.]

Terence is preferred to Plautus, but the latter, too, is considered commendable once his works have been cleansed of obscenity. The "Prologue" to *Roister Doister*, therefore, offers itself as a guarantee of purity, as it were, a witness that those Plautus and Terence referred to in line 19 (their *Miles* and *Eunuchus* respectively are in fact both sources for *Roister Doister*) have undergone a process of purification from scurrility and possible offensiveness. At the same time, the "Prologue" states that laughter is still there, since it is possible for a text to provoke laughter even without sacrificing modesty.

---

[13] In 1534 Udall, very probably before starting writing plays, printed his *Floures for Latine Spekinge*, a collection of dialogues from Terence, to be used in schools to teach Latin to young pupils.
[14] Desiderius Erasmus, *De ratione studii*, in *Opera omnia* (in decem tomos distincta. Cura et impensis Petri Vander, Lugduni Batavorum, 1703-1706), 1, col. 521 D. The italics in the text and the following translation are mine.

To leave mid-sixteenth century dramatic practice aside and return to theorists, one cannot help mentioning Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1595), especially because Sidney tackles the subject of laughter exclusively in connection with theatre and drama, thus in the context of public rather than private entertainment, i.e. in contexts involving both mass recreation and, possibly, education. Besides condemning the theatre of his own time (up to his death in 1590) as made of 'mungrell Tragy-comedie[s]', Sidney censures the playwrights' use of laughter: 'our Comedians, thinke there is no delight without laughter, which is very wrong, for though laughter may come with delight, yet commeth it not of delight: as though delight should be the cause of laughter, but well may one thing breed both together'.[15] One must add, however, that Sidney takes a very modern attitude in speaking against uncharitable and chauvinistic laughter: 'what is it to make folkes gape at a wretched Begger, or a beggerly Clowne? or against lawe of hospitallity, to iest at straungers, because they speake not English so well as wee doe?'.[16]

So far nothing has been said about the psychology and the physiology of laughter, two other topics much debated in early modern times (and later). Suffice it to mention that they were dealt with by philosophers and by physicians, among them Timothie Bright in his *Treatise of Melancholie* (1586). Here Bright explains the function of the diaphragm in the process of expressing pain and laughter, and adds:

> a man that hath receaued a displeasure of his enemy, and assured howe he may be euen with him, will laugh,

[15] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: Printed for Henry Olbey, 1595), fol. K2v (from EEBO).
[16] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie*, fol. K3r.

> though he haue indignation at the displeasure, vpon hope of requittance: whereof riseth a certaine ioye mixed with griefe, that forceth out a Sardonian, bitter laughter, short, and ouertaken with more griefe, which with vapor and spirit, through that dilatation of the hart, silleth the cheekes, and causeth their muscles to be withdrawne to their heads, shew their teeth, and fashion the countenance into that kind of grinning which is apparant in laughter.[17]

It is interesting to note that soon after the quoted passage, Bright mentions Laurent Joubert, author of the famous *Traité du Ris* (1579): 'If you desire to knowe more of this merie gesture, I referre you to a treatise of laughter, written by Laurence Ioubert of Mountpellier, a Philosopher, and Phisitian, in my iudgement not inferiour to any of this age.'[18] What is surprising is that when Bright had his work printed, Joubert's treatise had not yet been translated into English. The English physician must therefore have seen and read (and perhaps drawn on) the volume in French, at least enough to confirm his own notions about the physiology of laughter and its ambivalence, a coexistence of opposites deriving from the fact that 'la chose ridicule nous donne plaisir et tristesse' [the ridicule gives us pleasure and sadness].[19]

---

[17] Timothie Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, dwelling in the Black-Friers. 1586), 152 (from EEBO).

[18] Timothie Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, 152.

[19] Laurent Joubert, *Traité du Ris* (Paris: Nicolas Chesnsau, 1579), 87. On this work, see Gregory de Rocker, "Le rire au temps de la Renaissance: le *Traité du Ris* de Laurent Joubert", *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 56:3, 1978, 629-40; see also Madeleine Lazard, "Le thérapeutique par le rire dans la médicine du XVIe siècle", in *Littérature et Pathologie,* ed. Max Milner (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1989), 13-27. Joubert's text

Obviously this is not the place to deal at length with the various theories of the comic and of laughter. I have here merely tried to show how rich the discussion of these issues was in early modern times (not to mention subsequent developments in the seventeenth century and afterwards).[20] The subtitle to the conference, "Gender, Genre, and Wordplay in Early Modern Comedy", actually focuses on some social, historical and linguistic territories in which theories and practices of the comic were at work in the period and into which the authors delved in order to investigate relationships between literary genres, gendered discourses, witty language and puns. All this ranging from a very early actualisation of comedy in the first decades of the sixteenth century, to Elizabethan and Shakespearean drama, to fool literature, to Scottish court poetry.

Before presenting the individual papers, let me add a final remark. It is very probable that, had the second book of Aristotle's *Poetics* survived, discussions about comedy, the comic, the ridicule and laughter would have developed differently. At least in early modern times scholars and theorists would have published exhaustive

---

is available at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k50676w/f118.image.r= (accessed 4 May 2016). For Robert Burton's attitude towards laughter and its physiology mixed with melancholy, see Pfister, "An Argument of Laughter", 44-45.

[20] Beside the classic *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* by Marvin T. Herrick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950), for a recent analysis of these aspects see Jan Walsh Hokenson, *The Idea of Comedy: History. Theory, Critique* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006) and Murray Roston, *The Comic Mode in English Literature from the Middle Ages to Today* (London: Continuum, 2011). About the discussion of jesting see Chris Holcomb, *Mirth Making. The Rhetorical Discourse on Jesting in Early Modern England* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

treatises on these topics parallel to those Julius Caesar Scaliger, for example, wrote on tragedy (*Poetices Libri Septem*, 1561). In other words they would have tried to merge Evanthius (*De fabula*) and Donatus (*De comoedia et tragoedia*) with *the* philosopher, Aristotle himself. Actually, in the end somebody did 'find' this second book:

> Come avevamo promesso, trattiamo ora della commedia (nonché della satira e del mimo) e di come suscitando il piacere del ridicolo essa pervenga alla purificazione di tale passione [...]. Definiremo dunque di quale tipo di azioni sia mimesi la commedia, quindi esamineremo i modi in cui la commedia suscita il riso, e questi modi sono i fatti e l'eloquio. Mostreremo come il ridicolo dei fatti nasca dalla assimilazione del migliore al peggiore, dal sorprendere ingannando, dall'impossibile e dalla violazione delle leggi di natura, dall'irrilevante e dall'inconseguente, dall'abbassamento dei personaggi, dall'uso delle pantomime buffonesche e volgari, dalla disarmonia, dalla scelta delle cose meno degne. Mostreremo quindi come il ridicolo dell'eloquio nasca dagli equivoci tra parole simili per cose diverse e diverse per cose simili, dalla garrulità e dalla ripetizione, dai giochi di parole, dai diminutivi, dagli errori di pronuncia e dai barbarismi […]
>
> [As we promised we will now deal with comedy (as well as with satire and mime) and see how, in inspiring the pleasure of the ridiculous, it arrives at the purification of that passion [...]. We will then define the type of actions of which comedy is the mimesis, then we will examine the means by which comedy excites laughter, and these means are actions and speech. We will show how the ridiculousness of action is born from the likening of the best to the worst and vice versa, from arousing surprise through deceit, from the impossible, from the violation of the laws of nature, from the irrelevant and the inconsequent, from the debasing of the charac-

> ters, from the use of comical and vulgar pantomime, from disharmony, from the choice of the least worthy things. We will then show how the ridiculousness of speech is born from the misunderstandings of similar words for different things and different words for similar things, from garrulity and repetitions, from play on words, from diminutives, from errors of pronunciation, and from barbarisms.][21]

However, this discovery cannot but remain wishful thinking…

2. The Chapters

This collection opens with Roberta Mullini's investigation into the often dismissed political potential of John Heywood's comedy in *The Play of the Wether*. Besides illustrating the play's implicit topical references to Henry VIII's politics and the social problems of his kingdom, to his secret marriage with Anne Boleyn, and to the abuses of the Catholic Church of the time, Mullini captivatingly reveals how these radical stances are enhanced by the intense interaction between dramatic action and audience, through an analysis of *The Play of the Wether* as drama in performance.

The social criticism resulting from comedy is also the main point of Rebecca Agar's essay. While recognizing the anonymous *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* as a play in its own right – and not as a mere source-play for Shakespeare's Henriad –, Agar interestingly considers how the interplay between the comic scenes in the text,

[21] Umberto Eco, *Il nome della rosa* (Milano: Bompiani, 1980), 471-72 (*The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver, New York: Warner Books, 1984, 569).

apparently disjointed from the rest, and the solemn historical events of the plot discloses the playwright's challenging representation of social hierarchy and his critical depiction of the nobility. Irony, satire, parody, popular entertainments and the figure of the clown (meant as a 'natural fool') provided the playwright of *Famous Victories* with safe prudential strategies to criticize the aristocracy as indirectly as effectively.

Similarly, Allison L. Steenson examines the tensions between the poet-King James VI of Scotland and the court poet Alexander Montgomerie, through an attentive analysis of four commendatory sonnets, imbued with irony, written by the Scottish poet to eulogize the future James I of England's *Essayes of a Prentise in the Art of Poesie*. Indeed the four sonnets are well-designed praising pieces, composed in a high style and characterized by regular rhyme patterns, numerous rhetorical devices, classical allusions and complex phrasing and wording, but also by a skillful use of irony, which is revealing. In Steenson's scrutiny, these praising poems definitely reveal the religious, political and personal conflicts between King James and Montgomerie, the first a loyal Protestant, the second a Catholic sympathizer (even accused of being engaged in Catholic plots to seize the throne), possibly involved in a homoerotic relationship.

Robert Armin's *Foole upon Foole* is the focus of Maria Elisa Montironi's contribution. After a reflection upon the links between the themes of eating and drinking and the fool tradition, the paper provides a study of the still uncharted occurrence and function of food and drink in the famous work by Shakespeare's leading comedian after 1599. In the conclusion, the essay gives evidence of the incidence of similar rhetorical devices in the plays in which Armin acted as a successful comic performer, where food is, simultaneously, a tool for characterization,

a symbol of the fools' celebration of life, a feature of the fools' linguistic wit, and a witty figurative device to convey socially challenging messages.

The socially combative role of humour is underlined also in Charlène Cruxent's essay on the comic, insulting and manipulative potential of nicknames in Shakespeare's plays. The paper shows the humorous side of Shakespearean nicknames, while classifying them according to their qualities, and underlines their social function, considering other sixteenth-century works too, such as Alciato's book of emblems. Being scornful and derisive of people's physical but also behavioural imperfections, nicknames in Shakespeare are shown by Cruxent as satirical tools to stigmatize threatening figures of Elizabethan society. Sometimes, however, nicknames are created by the characters themselves, and their function is different: they are useful strategies to gain a new identity and thus overcome contingent difficulties. Thus, both off stage and on stage, nicknames are much more than simple comical tools, since they shape the public identity of a person.

Roberta Mullini

The Play [not only] *of the Wether*: Gender, Genre, and Wordplay in a Very Early Modern Comedy

0. For a Polemical Introduction

It is true, as some critics have said very recently, that for a long time John Heywood (ca. 1497-ca. 1580) was not taken into consideration by scholars discussing the development of sixteenth-century English drama, but I would like to stress that Heywoodian studies have not just begun, but started well before the end of the twentieth century when scholars devoted their attention to the so-called 'pre-Shakespearean' theatre and drama. Peter Happé's and Richard Axton's studies and Axton & Happé's critical edition of the plays have helped deepen the knowledge of Heywood's dramatic achievement, especially in an intercultural perspective, highlighting the playwright's plural 'French connections', the multifaceted layers of meaning and the theatrical complexity of his texts.[1]

[1] In Italy Agostino Lombardo was certainly the first who studied late medieval and early modern English drama, editing that precious anthology entitled *Teatro inglese del Medio Evo e del Rinascimento* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1963), which also includes the prose translation of the *Play of the Wether* by Marcello Pagnini. By Agostino Lombardo see also *Il dramma pre-shakespeariano* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1957). As for studies focusing on John Heywood far earlier than the present time, which sometimes are not even acknowledged, see in particular "Royal Throne, Royal Bed: John Heywood and Spectacle", *Medieval English Theatre* 16

Published by The British Institute of Florence
ISBN (online) 978-88-907244-4-2

Excuses for not investigating Heywood's plays, i.e. that the latter did not have any followers, did not open the path to other writers, and did not anticipate the Elizabethan theatrical 'revolution', were also adduced in the past.[2] But, once again, I consider these allegations (which evidently shed a negative shadow on the playwright) totally void of historical awareness, since – just to mention only a tiny detail – between Heywood's time and the Elizabethan theatre there was the Reformation with its often-changing fronts. Furthermore, the deep and wide cultural changes deriving from all this and from the definitive establish-

---

(1994): 66-76, and "Narrative and Lying in the Plays of John Heywood", *Theta 2: Tudor Theatre. Narrative and Drama* (Bern: Peter Lang**,** 1995**),** 43-56 by Richard Axton; "Spectacle in Bale and Heywood" (*Medieval English Theatre* 16 (1994): 51-65, and "Staging Folly in the Early Sixteenth Century: Heywood, Lindsay, and Others", in *Fools and Folly*, ed. Clifford Davidson (EDAM Monograph Series 22, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 73-111, by Peter Happé. Axton and Happé are the editors of *The Plays of John Heywood* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), from which all subsequent quotations of *The Play of the Wether* will be drawn. On various occasions I have also studied Heywood's works, from *La scena della memoria: intertestualità nel teatro Tudor* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1988), to "Why *A Play of Love* in 1534 London? John Heywood and Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano*: An Intertextual and Intercultural Hypothesis", *Linguæ &*, 2 (2006): 19-32. See also Howard B. Norland, "*Johan Johan*", in *Drama in Early Tudor Britain 1485-1558* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 255-66.

[2] C. S. Lewis's attitude towards pre-Elizabethan literature represents the twentieth century's most influential approach to early sixteenth-century British culture. Lewis's words about the Elizabethans – 'Then, in the last quarter of the century, the unpredictable happens. With startling suddenness we ascend. Fantasy, conceit, paradox, colour, incantation return. Youth returns.', *English Literature of the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 146 – determined many dismissive judgments about previous artists, or even their total neglect.

ment of the Tudor monarchy under the hegemony of a sovereign striving to build a modern European state, while defending the latter's religious, social, and political identity, must of course be evaluated as engines of swift changes and impressive developments which were completely unpredictable and unforeseeable in Heywood's times.

At present Heywoodian studies have greatly improved, due mainly to the writings and activities of Greg Walker, who with his wide competence in early modern history and literature has definitely assessed Tudor drama in its own right within its own cultural milieu, especially by reading dramatic production well inside the historical and cultural boundaries of the times.[3] This research has somewhat compelled all theatre historians to recognise Heywood's originality and well-deserved centrality in English drama, of course in Heywood's own times and in the pre-Reformation Henrician court. However, and here is another 'but' of mine, present criticism still tends to ignore many previous and independent studies which – nevertheless – had already focussed on some of the issues now signalled as new and ice-breaking.

To end my polemics and to pass to my specific topic, I just add that the words Thomas Betteridge writes at the end of his 2011 study on John Heywood's *The Play of the Wether* when observing that the apparent simplicity of the play is highly deceitful – 'Underneath this surface, however, is a play fully conscious of the dark side of courtly life; of a world in which politics, reform, violence,

[3] By Greg Walker see *Plays of Persuasion. Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1991); *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), and *Writing under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

and desire jostled each other in a dangerous and potentially explosive mix.' – are certainly very important,[4] but they summarise a long line of criticism, starting at least from David Bevington, who as early as 1968 wrote that Heywood 'dared to speak of political matters before his royal master'.[5] Therefore, my contribution to the analysis of this interlude will necessarily mention what has been at the core of recent criticism, i.e. the topicality and polemical allusions to Henry VIII's politics, but it will privilege those textual and performance-oriented features which better reveal the comedy, the wordplay and the satire in the text, also from a gender perspective.

1. Introduction to the Play and John Heywood

John Heywood, born very probably in Coventry around the end of the fifteenth century, was a singer and an instrumentalist at Henry VIII's court in the early 1520s. He married Thomas More's niece, the daughter of one of More's sisters and of John Rastell the printer. William Rastell, who trod his father's steps as a printer himself and printed Heywood's plays, was – therefore – his brother-in-law. Heywood was a Catholic, and such he remained, even if the reason for his staying in England after the execution of Thomas More and under all the subsequent monarchs is a moot issue. In 1564, when Elizabeth's positions against recusants became stricter, he fled to the Low Countries, where he died in 1578. His son

[4] Thomas Betteridge, "John Heywood and Court Drama", in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature 1485-1603,* ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 170-86, 184.
[5] David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 64.

Jasper, the translator of some Senecan plays in the 1560s, became a Jesuit, and his daughter Elizabeth was the mother of John Donne the poet. Heywood wrote six plays before the Act of Supremacy (1534), even if not exactly datable, while afterwards he published collections of proverbs and epigrams which made him famous.[6]

The Play of the Wether, whose complete title reads *A new and a very mery enterlude of all maner wethers*, was published by William Rastell in 1533, and again three more times during the sixteenth century.[7] Its plot, writes Pamela King in a very recent article on the text, 'is linear and deceptively inconsequential. In a single act of 1254 lines, a series of petitioners present themselves to Jupiter, seeking to arrange for weather best suited to their needs'.[8] The lack of a plot proper, however, is compensated by the richness of debate, by the liveliness and pertness of the language, by the variety of speakers and linguistic registers, and by the energy of stage action. Some years ago Greg Walker and Thomas Betteridge gave life to a project which brought scholars, professional actors and audiences

[6] On Heywood's biography see, among others, Arthur William Reed, *Early Tudor Drama* (London: Methuen, 1969 [1926]), Nicoletta Caputo, "John Heywood", in *The Literary Encyclopedia* (First published 20 October 2001 [http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=2122, accessed 9 February 2016]), and Peter Happé, "Heywood, John (*b.* 1496/7, *d.* in or after 1578)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Oct. 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13183 (accessed 7 January 2016). By Nicoletta Caputo see also *'Playing with Power': gli interludi Tudor e i percorsi della Riforma* (Napoli: Liguori, 1998).

[7] See Axton and Happé, *The Plays*, 287.

[8] Pamela King, "John Heywood, *The Play of the Weather*", in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 207-23, 207.

together to scrutinise the surface (but also hidden) power of the play: in fact it was staged in the Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace in 2009, therefore in a place very similar to the original location, by trying to adhere to a supposed original staging production as far as possible.[9]

There are ten characters in the play, as the list of the players' names states in Rastell's edition: 'Jupiter, a god / Mery Reporte, the vyce / The Gentylman / The Merchaunt / The Ranger / The Water Myller / The Wynde Myller / The Gentylwoman / The Launder / A Boy, the lest that can play.' The presence of such characters can be attributed to Heywood's love of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, with their social values condensed in stereotypical – but paradoxically highly individualised – figures.[10] Apart from the first two names, the others reveal that no specific person is meant, but social and professional types, so as to give rise to a parade of estates, and to possible class conflicts. Two characters deserve special attention for their theatrical relevance: Mery Reporte, because he is the first Vice character so labelled in English drama, and the Boy, since what the text says about him as an actor ('the lest that can play') lets one surmise that a children's group performed the play. According to Axton and Happé, 'Some of the actors would be boys available, through Heywood's connections as a musician, from St Paul's and the Chapel Royal'.[11]

---

[9] See http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/ (accessed 20 April 2015).

[10] Apart from *Johan Johan*, a farce of French origin, and the debate *Wit and Witless*, where characters have proper names, all Heywood's plays show social types (a Pardoner, a Friar, a Poticary, a Pedler…), or even characters with allegorical names (in *A Play of Love*), such as Lover not Loved, Lover Loved, Loved not Loving, and No Lover nor Loved.

[11] Axton & Happé, *The Plays*, 27.

Mery Reporte has not the sinister and mischievous traits of later Vices, nevertheless he already impersonates a Vice's ability in wordplay, bawdy language, and performance, and such a character's skill in manoeuvring the plot, albeit a thin one like this. He is no petitioner for the weather, on the contrary he succeeds in being hired by Jupiter as a mediator between the god's authority and the suitors. Actually, Mery Reporte's 'is the largest part in the play […] engaging in repartee with them [the suitors] and with the audience'.[12]

The various petitioners ask Jupiter for the weather best suited to their individual activities, the boy included, who asks for abundant snow 'to make my snow ballys' (l. 1015). But not all of them are admitted to the god's presence, and therefore some can only plead to Mery Reporte, with whom they engage in lively and witty exchanges. At the end of the play, all suitors gather in front of Jupiter, waiting for his decision, but nothing happens and the weather will remain as changeable as ever, in order not to privilege anyone. Furthermore, Jupiter also reproaches his suitors for their selfish requests:

> Myche better have we now devysed for ye all
> Then ye all can perceyve or coude desyre.
> Eche of you sewd to have contynuall
> Suche wether as his crafte onely doth requyre.
> All wethers in all places yf men all tymes myght hyer,
> Who could lyve by other? What is this neglygens
> Us to attempt in such inconvenyens? (ll. 1183-89)

[12] King, "John Heywood", 207.

2. Overt and Implicit Topics

Often put aside as non-controversial and 'safe' plays (such as could not – and did not want to – deal with dangerous topics or propose radical solutions to the themes dealt within them), Heywood's plays have on the contrary shown to be indirectly topical and to tread on very dangerous ground. In fact, the times of composition were highly risky and the issues of his works could not refrain from including allusions and implicit judgments connected to contemporary problems. Save that Heywood's positive thinking, still and always on the side of a soothing and tolerant solution, never opens to revolutionary and radical positions. The major example of this attitude of his, in my opinion, is the conclusion of *The Foure PP* (printed in 1544, but certainly written earlier, probably in the late 1520s), where the four protagonists (a Pedler, a Poticary, a Palmer, and a Pardoner) discuss pilgrimages, relics, the cult of the saints, pardons, and other religious issues at stake all over Europe in the first decades of the sixteenth century, that is, of the abuses of the Catholic Church and of the real need for religious reforms, only to conclude that everything must be compassed 'In the fayth of hys [God's] churche universall' (l. 1234). This means that the aberrations discussed and exposed so far along the whole play must be forsaken, forgotten and forgiven, without any extreme reform. Heywood, even if aware of the degeneration of certain facets of Catholicism, did not take sides with the Reformation, as hinted at above, so that in his plays he touches on some problems by ridiculing and exposing sinners, but does not accept overt revolt.

In *The Play of the Wether* there is also a unifying ending, a comedic embrace which leaves things unchanged, so that Greg Walker has included this play

among those Tudor 'conservative drama[s]'[13] which did try to persuade Henry VIII of the necessity for changes in his political, religious and personal behaviour, but only through complete indirectness, thus running the risk – as happened – of resulting ineffective.[14] Walker writes: 'The drama that he [Heywood] produced, chiefly in *The Play of the Wether* but also in other interludes produced at roughly the same time, observed contemporary politics through a glass that he himself termed 'merry', a mode in which folly and wisdom are mingled in a wry, mischievous form of truth telling designed both to tickle the wit and prick the conscience of the King.'[15]

Walker, after examining the political situation of the late 1520s, affirms that a Henrician court 'audience would have required little explanation of such allusions',[16] especially those concerning a king's need of real authority over his own subjects and over a turbulent and divided parliament. In other words, to a Tudor audience Jupiter would have been a transparent mask for Henry himself, and the apparently innocuous meteorological theme of the play something strictly connected to the politics of the kingdom.

But, if Jupiter is Henry, everything said by, to and about the former becomes readable as referring to the latter. This is why many hints in the play are considered to be connected to Henry's person and his family, espe-

[13] Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, 133.
[14] Heywood's advice against contention was not rejected by the king, but it was to encounter enormous difficulties (and defeat) when tackling events: had things gone differently, the playwright's suggestions of reconciliation and harmony might have been successful (about this see Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, esp. 114-16).
[15] Walker, *Writing under Tyranny*, 25.
[16] Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, 163.

cially to his divorce from Queen Katherine and the secret marriage with Anne Boleyn. Viewed in this light, Mery Reporte's denying the Gentylwoman's access to Jupiter because the god is busy 'makynge of a new moone' (l. 795) is now generally interpreted as an oblique reference to Anne's pregnancy, while Katherine is adumbrated in the 'old moones' that are 'leake, they can holde no water.' (l. 799). Jupiter is even mocked by his crier, and so is – obliquely, once again – Henry by Heywood (as a playwright, but very probably also as the actor performing Mery Reporte). For example, the effect of the 'new moon' on the god is to 'make a thing spryng more in this while / Then a old moone' (ll. 808-09), with a paradoxically overt and covered mocking hint at Henry's sexual prowess.[17]

The royal divorce, though, is not the only hot issue at stake. The general politics of the monarchy is debated, especially if – behind the assembly of the gods of which Jupiter speaks in his initial oration – one reads the parliamentary assembly meeting to discuss Henry's royal supremacy,[18] so that, according to Axton & Happé, *The Play of the Wether* is Heywood's 'most politically audacious' play.[19] Besides cheering his audience, then, Heywood plays on topical aspects, while advising Henry – given the ending of the play – 'to restore the *status quo ante*, allowing all sides to assume that they have got what they wanted, albeit if only for some of the time'.[20]

[17] While Walker dates the play 1529-30 (*Writing under Tyranny*, 100), Axton & Happé consider Shrovetide 1533 as a possible date of performance, if not of composition. In this light, therefore, the hints to the divorce affair are even subtler and more to the point.
[18] Walker, *Writing under Tyranny*, 113-19.
[19] Axton and Happé, *The Plays*, 52
[20] Walker, *Writing under Tyranny*, 118.

Apart from trying to counsel Henry about state and personal affairs, though, the play also shows – and this in an overt manner – a satirical attitude towards the various social estates represented in the text. Therefore, the Gentylman's requests for 'wether pleasaunt / Drye and not mysty, the wynde calme and styll' (ll. 273-74) because he likes to go hunting are opposed to the Ranger's, who would like to have 'good rage of blustryng and blowynge' (l. 425), rough winds and storms able to furnish him with fallen wood. The Water Myller, in the same way, desires plenty of rain so that his mill can work properly while he often has 'No water […] to grynde at any stynt' (l. 446), whereas the Wynd Myller asks Jupiter for windy weather, in order for his own trade to prosper. And the Gentylwoman would like to have 'wether close and temperate, / No sonne shyne, no frost, nor no wynde to blow.' (ll. 830-31) to protect her skin from tanning and, above all, to facilitate her leisure and strolls, whereas the Launder pleads for windy and sunny weather, the meteorological conditions fit to dry her own laundry. The Merchaunt, in his turn, would like the weather to be 'Stormy nor mysty, the wynde measurable' (l. 366), so that his whole social class can work safely for 'the benefyte proclaimed in general' (l. 363), i.e. the advantage of the common weal and general prosperity. The claims of all characters then, the little boy's included, are presented as contrasting and highly debatable in themselves, each showing a noticeable dose of social and class selfishness. Consequently, Heywood also uses his play to introduce issues of social relevance such as the – at those times – still much discussed distinction between gentleness and nobility (the main topic of the homonymous interlude attributed to John Rastell but to which Heywood himself might have greatly contributed), the praise of merchandising seen as a trade absolutely necessary to

modern society (and especially so in Great Britain, so heavily dependent on foreign goods), and the attack on the profitless leisure and luxury of the gentry in contrast to the hard conditions of the lower classes. The playwright deals with all this while making his characters speak, that is, he also uses the play text as an arena for public debates.

3. Genre

The problem connected to the definition of Heywood's dramatic production as plays or debates has a very long history, together with the discussion about their being interludes or plays. The topic has been studied by various critics, myself included, who have tried to see the differences, for example, in the original titles of Heywood's five printed texts (*Witty and Witless* – a real debate with no plot and scarce action – has survived in manuscript form only). Of these five only those deriving from French sources (*Johan Johan* and *The Pardoner and Frere*) are simply called 'a play', or – better – 'a mery play', whereas the three others have the word 'play' in the title, and 'enterlude' in the subtitle. Does this distinction have any meaning? Or was Heywood just trying to make his own readers understand that a play *was* an interlude, and vice versa? One must keep in mind, actually, that the differences in theatrical subgenres were not clear at the time yet (they will strive to become so in the following decades, even if *Apius and Virginia*, presenting tragic and doleful events and published in 1575, still has a very ambiguous and uncertain subtitle: it is called 'A new Tragicall Comedie', thus showing that certain labels were still uncertain and unreliable). At least till late in the sixteenth century the two words 'play' and 'interlude'

were interchangeable, and many Tudor censorial acts against vagrants, among whom actors are included,[21] mention as trespassers the 'common players' of 'plays, enterludes, comodyes, tragedies or shewes', in order to be sure that *all* actors were included, independently of the type and name of what they performed.[22] Furthermore, the division of one sub-genre from another is something belonging to the final decades of the century, while earlier it was mostly a question of textual length rather than subject matter, interludes being made of 1000 lines on average, usually in one continuous act. The fact that Latin and classical terminology started to be used well far in the century must also be kept in mind (for example it is in *Respublica*, 1553, attributed to Nicholas Udall, that one can find the first instance of the word 'actor' for the Germanic one 'player').

Beyond this definitional problem, what is more relevant for Heywood's plays is the derogatory label of 'debates' often stuck on them, to convey the idea that they are dull disquisitions and disputations. Far from this, in my opinion: all Heywood's dramatic texts (in its own way, *Witty and Witless* itself), while staging different points of view brought forth by various characters, at the same time try to abandon the somewhat frozen formula of academic and philosophic debates, or even of Erasmian dialogues, in order not only to gain liveliness, achieve dramatic consistency and coherence able to make spectators think, but also to make them merry. Hey-

[21] On beggary in Tudor times, see Paola Pugliatti, *Beggary and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

[22] "Order of the Common Council of London in Restraint of Dramatic Exhibitions, Dec. 6, 1574", in *The English Drama and Stage under the Tudor and Stuart Princes 1543-1664*, ed. W.C. Hazlitt (London: Roxburghe Library, 1869; repr. New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), 27-31, 29.

wood's 'plays of mind', on their way to make 'the transition to comedy',[23] gradually succeed in becoming pleasant theatrical pieces, because their author shows all his skill in animating what might also be dealt with in a rather deadening intellectual treatise in dialogic form: that is, he turns his ideas into lively characters and, moreover, he enlivens them with all the theatrical tools at his disposal (voice, music, costume, gestures: more generally speaking, with stage action), including a cognizant use of mimetic dialogue.[24]

4. Comedy, Wordplay, and Satire

Drawing on a then long dramatic tradition (especially on Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres*, c. 1497), Heywood has his most talkative character, Mery Reporte, come out of the audience to answer Jupiter's request for a 'cryer' (l. 97), willingly offering to spread the god's proclamations to his subjects. Mery Reporte enters addressing a member of the audience (possibly a torch bearer near one of the doors of the screens in a noble Tudor hall), with: 'Brother holde up your torche a lyttel hyer!' (l. 98), thus showing that the performance takes place indoors, in the evening. Early Tudor drama often features a rich interaction along the external axis of theat-

[23] Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 108.
[24] For these aspects, see Roberta Mullini, *Mad merry Heywood. La drammaturgia di John Heywood tra testi e riflessioni critiche* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1997), 53-92, and "Dialogue and Debate in John Heywood's Plays: *Witty and Witless*, *A Play of Love*, and *The Play of the Weather*", *Theta: Tudor Theatre. Convention et Théâtre*, n. 4 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998), 11-26.

rical communication, with characters speaking straight to the spectators, and members of the audience breaking what is now called 'the fourth wall'. Not to interfere with the dramatic consistency, however, no real spectator is allowed to disrupt the action; those who are, are actors positioned among the audience. This atmosphere of collaboration between stage and audience is certainly favoured by the performance occurring in a relatively small indoor place, but also serves to enhance the global awareness of a shared experience, of the close relationship between dramatic action and its external addressee, besides adding a precise metatheatrical flavour (something of which Elizabethan drama will also become well aware).

At the beginning of the play an argument starts between the newcomer and the god: in fact, the latter does not seem to like such a servant, since 'Thou arte no mete man in our bysynes / For thyne apparence ys of to mych lyghtnes' (ll. 113-14). Mery Reporte's employment has to be negotiated, but in the long run Jupiter offers him the job 'consyderynge thyne indyfferency' (l. 161), because the young man has declared not to care for any type of weather:

> Son lyght, mone light, ster light, twy light, torch light,
> Cold, hete, moyst, drye, hayle, rayne, frost, snow,
> (lightning, thunder,
> Cloudy, mysty, windy, fayre, fowle, above hed or under,
> Temperate or dystemperate – what ever yt be. (ll. 156-59)

After Jupiter withdraws to wait for suitors, Mery Reporte begins talking to the audience once again, but this time with a long speech listing all the places he has visited in his life. This *routine*, held together by alliteration of geographical names, comes from afar, it being first used by Satan in the mystery play episodes of Christ's temptation

when the devil offers Christ all possible lands. However, before starting his list, Mery Reporte reproaches the spectators for not paying due homage to him (a god's servant!). His manners are very familiar, and his language is colloquial and jocularly offensive:

> Avaunte, carterly keytyfs, avaunt!
> Why, ye drunken horesons, wyll yt not be?
> By your faith, have ye nother cap nor kne?
> Not one of you that wyll make curtsy
> To me that am squyre for goddess precious body,
> Regarde ye nothynge myne authoryte? (ll. 187-92)

Such a language will be his major trait in the rest of the play, i.e. in the exchanges with Jupiter's suitors, in what could be called 'Heywood's satire of the three estates', to borrow the title of Sir David Lindsay's Scottish play (1540-1554), they being represented by the gentry (the Gentylman and the Gentylwoman), the labourers (the Ranger and the Launder), and the tradesmen (the Marchaunt, the Water Myller and the Winde Myller).

When the first suitor, the Gentylman, arrives, preceded by the sound of horns, Mery Reporte invites him to say 'what be ye in dede' (l. 231), and at the gentleman's answer 'Forsoth, good frende, I am a gentylman', Mery Reporte comments sarcastically 'A goodly occupacyon, by Seynt Anne! / On my faith your mashyp hath a mery lyfe.' (ll. 232-34). Soon afterwards, mentioning the hunting sounds accompanying the man, he asks: 'who maketh al these hornes, your self or your wife?' (l. 235), with a sexual innuendo created very simply by the semantics of 'horn' as a sign of cuckoldry, in this case both passive and active, so to say. The Gentlyman is admitted to Jupiter, and so is the next comer, the Merchaunt: in this way the text signals the social acceptability of both classes, while all the other suitors will be denied direct access to the

god's throne (including the Gentylwoman, but this aspect – besides introducing a gender divide – is also purposely used to play on Henry VIII's divorce problems as mentioned above).

In order to obtain a sort of weather fit for his business, the Merchaunt extols his activities by introducing such words (and themes) which show how the medieval theological condemnation of *mercatores* has changed.[25] Now merchants do not gain their living by *turpe lucrum* (that is, with no real and active labour, but simply buying and selling goods): the new world made of geographical discoveries, of closer cultural, economic and political interconnectedness between countries has made money and merchandise traffic a cornerstone of development. In the Merchaunt's words:

> What were the surplysage of eche commodyte
> Whyche growth and encreaseth in every lande,
> Excepte exchaunge by such men as we be
> By wey of entercours that lyeth on our hande?
>
> We fraught from home thynges whereof there is plente
> And home we brynge such thynges as there be scant.
> (ll. 353-58)

Buying and selling is not overtly criticised either by Jupiter or by Mery Reporte, but the Merchaunt's request for such a weather that does not hinder 'our market' (l. 372) is not fulfilled in the end (like all the others').

[25] On the religious condemnation of *mercatores* see Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge. Temps, travail et culture en Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); *Time, Work, & Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980).

The inferior social status of the next comer (the Ranger), even though it forbids a direct talk to the god, allows this character to pronounce a lamentation against his poor living conditions. Actually he also complains on behalf of 'suche other mo / Rangers and kepers of certayne places / As forestes, parkes, purlews and chasys' (ll. 411-13) because of low wages and hard living. The weather he would like is the opposite of what the Gentylman has asked for. Therefore, although the text does not take the side of the lower class, it is significant that it includes this complaint (which echoes the shepherds' lamentations in the Towneley *Second Shepherds' Play*). Heywood even allows his Ranger to manifest the poor people's hidden and possibly explosive anger when he makes him say that, as a consequence of no positive change in the weather, 'I wolde hyer the devyll to runne thorow the wood / The rootes to turne up, the toppys to brynge under. / A myschyefe upon them and a wylde thunder!' (ll. 427-29). Perhaps the original audience laughed at the explosion of violence in the Ranger's words, nevertheless the playwright gives this character an opportunity for a socially legitimate claim.

The next petitioners are the two millers, who also lament the damage to their respective jobs caused by the weather. Of course the Wynd Myller would like more wind and no rain; on the contrary the Water Myller would like to have rain and no wind. They are the first couple (the second will be the two women later in the play) who start a debate on their respective trades, ending up in a real fight. The excited long dialogue between the two men uses the second person plural pronouns at first (ll. 506-671), also playing compliments to the interlocutor with such forms as 'Syr' and 'by your licens', but then it passes to the familiar (but also disparaging) second person singular pronoun 'thou' (ll. 672-709) and to

open offences (the Water Myller says to the Wynd Myller: 'In boste of thy gryste thou arte wyse as a calfe!', l. 693). It is at this point that Mery Reporte brings the quarrel to an end: 'Stop, folysh knaves', he exclaims (l. 710). Before the two millers leave the playing place, Mery Reporte starts a prolonged scatological and sexual wordplay, talking first of his wife's two mills 'The one for wynde, the other for water' (l. 724), then of his own 'water myll' (l. 739) and his 'pecking' activity (ll. 746-51). The sexual meaning is evident and played upon till Mery Reporte, underlining his fatigue in satisfying a sexually voracious wife, declares that she is ready 'to have a new myller' if he fails (l. 753).

Another sexual wordplay is used soon afterwards by Mery Reporte when the Gentylwoman arrives. It is a special wordplay, because it does not work on the semantic level, on the contrary it is simply connected to language use on the one hand, and to pronunciation speed and pauses in performance on the other.[26] The lady is timidly entering the crowded hall 'where so mych people is' (l. 767) and doubts how to reach Jupiter: 'I know not how to passe in to the god now.' (l. 768), she says. The prompt words spoken by Mery Reporte are: 'No, but ye know how he may passe into you' (l. 769). All is built on two prepositions, written and/or pronounced separately or together, and the wordplay is done.

As mentioned above, the explanation of Jupiter's refusal to admit the Gentylwoman to his royal presence is the most topical moment of the *Play of the Wether* because here Anne Boleyn's pregnancy and the divorce from Queen Katherine are hinted at, but so are also the doubts about Henry's sexual vigour, when Mery Reporte

[26] When reading the play, one has to ponder a little on the possible rendition of the printed words in performance.

observes that Jupiter/Henry 'goth to worke even boldely! / I thynke hym wyse ynough, for he loketh oldely.' (ll. 812-13). Henry was born in 1491 and, accepting the hypothesis of 1533 for the writing/performance of the play, he was now 42, not far from old age, given that at the time the life expectancy of the average man was 45. One can easily imagine how dangerous a topic all this might be; nevertheless, under the mask of comedy Heywood launched his darts, in the same way as Touchstone in *As You Like It*, who, in the Duke's words, 'uses his folly like a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit' (V.iv.105-06).[27]

5. Gender Issues

With the introduction of the lady, new themes are also introduced, especially connected to gender issues, even if some of the previous topics still linger in the air, since after the arrival of the Launder the audience will be the onlookers of a bitter, but delightful new class-conflict between gentry and labourers. The Gentylwoman presents herself by boasting of her beauty:

> I am a woman right fayre, as ye se,
> In no creature more beauty then in me is,
> And syns I am fayre, fayre wolde I kepe me. (ll. 819-21)

According to the early modern ideal of female beauty, tanning was absolutely to be avoided and therefore the lady asks to have 'No sonne shyne' (l. 831). In her following lines the lady explains how she spends her time:

[27] Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is quoted from the Arden edition, ed. Agnes Latham (London: Methuen, 1975).

> One parte of the day for our apparellynge,
> Another parte for eatynge and drynkynge,
> And all the reste in streets to be walkynge,
> Or in the house to passe time with talking. (ll. 837-41)

To Mery Reporte's question 'When serve ye God?' she actually does not give any answer, but claims her modesty (of course, that modesty which so far has not restrained her from praising her own beauty): 'Who bosteth in vertue are but daws.', she says (l. 842). She also explains how she spends the night: 'In dansynge and syngynge / Tyll mydnyght and then fall to slepynge.' (ll. 844-45). Mery Reporte does not comment on these words, but through the abrupt arrival of the Launder, after a short song, Heywood shows how skilful he is in the construction of the play. It is exactly by juxtaposing these two characters that moral and social remarks emerge, even without an onstage commentator.

There is some funny flirting between Mery Reporte and the Gentylwoman, but when the young man is denied the kiss he would like to have from the lady and adds 'I never desired to kys you before', here the Launder bursts in with 'Why, have ye always kyst her behynde?' (l. 868). The romantic words of love are suddenly lowered to colloquial and bawdy language, once again helped by wordplay, this time between two adverbs. Mery Reporte, in effect the champion of bawdy innuendoes in the whole play, accepts the challenge and retorts: 'To whom dost thou speke, foule hore, canst thou tell?' (l. 872), using words that add the pronoun shift to the degrading semantics (from 'you' for the lady, to 'thou' for the laundress). Seen in the perspective of the play's structure, the Launder is the Ranger's female counterpart, both for her colourful language and her social class, thus contributing to enhance the criticism of the gentry's idleness, quite a

topical issue in drama since at least Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrece*. In fact, the Launder complains that she and her like 'for them [gentlewomen] dayly toyle and labour' (l. 881).

The ensuing pronoun quarrel taking place in the following debate between the two women is quite interesting. Here, as already seen in the case of the two millers, the antagonists fight using reciprocal accusations and second person singular pronouns, in a crescendo which is worth quoting at length:

> GENTYLWOMAN
> I thynke yt better that thou envy me
> Then I sholde stande at rewarde of thy pytte.
> It is the guyse of such grose queynes as thou art
> Wyth such as I am evermore to thwart,
> Bycause that no beauty ye can obtayne,
> Therfore ye have us that be fayre in dysdayne.
>
> LAUNDER
> When I was as yonge as thou art now
> I was wythin lyttel as fayre as thou
> And so might have kept me yf I hadde wolde
> And as derely my youth I might have solde
> As the tryckest and fayrest of you all.
> But I feared parels that after might fall,
> Wherfore some besynes I dyd me provide
> Lest vyce might entre on every side,
> Whyche hath fre entre where ydylnesse doth reyne.
> (ll. 898-912)

The Launder's attack on gentlewomen's (but more generally, on the gentry's) idleness rises up to the condemnation of a life spent exclusively in dancing, singing, eating, drinking and 'apparelling', since 'nought of all this doth thyne owne labour get. / For haddest thou nothyng but of thyne own travayle, / Thou myghtest go as naked

as my nayle.' (ll. 919-21). At the back of this moral position one could also hear Thomas More's educational tenets about his own daughters' upbringing, as it clearly transpires from a letter to his eldest daughter Margaret: 'I assure you that, rather than allow my children to be idle and slothful, I would make a sacrifice of wealth, and bid adieu to other cares and business, to attend to my children and my family'.[28] Or from *Utopia* itself: 'There is a great number of noblemen among you that are themselves as idle as drones, that subsist on other men's labour, on the labour of their tenants, whom, to raise their revenues, they pare to the quick'.[29]

The Launder's bawdy language is not inferior to Mery Reporte's, especially after the Gentylwoman has left the playing area. She apostrophises Jupiter's servant with the following words:

> By the mas, knave, I wold I had both thy stones
> In my purs yf thou medyl not indifferently
> That both our maters in yssew may be lyckly. (ll. 955-57)

But she receives only a mocking answer, albeit rhetorically complex, from Mery Reporte. The latter's misogynic touch is anyway felt in the way he deals with both women: he courts the Gentylwoman, but he would be ready to pass her to Jupiter 'yf yt be your [the god's] pleasure to mary' (l. 782), and calls the Launder with no sweeter name than 'hore' and, just before her exit, 'monster' (l. 971).

---

[28] Letter to Margaret, in Saint Thomas More, *Selected Letters*, ed. Elizabeth Frances Rogers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967 [1961]), 109.

[29] This translation of *Utopia* is by Gilbert Burnet, 1684. (Project Gutenberg http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2130/2130-h/2130-h.htm, accessed 7 February 2015).

6. Conclusions

I would like to conclude my analysis of *The Play of the Wether* with some remarks about the role of the audience in the play. The interaction between dramatic action and audience is inscribed in the text from the beginning when Jupiter, after speaking for about ninety lines, declares that he (actually a royal 'we' in the god's words) wants a messenger chosen 'here amongest all ye / Wherfore eche man avaunce and we shall se / Whyche of you is moste mete to be our cryer' (ll. 95-97). The deictics of these lines clearly point to the occasion of the performance, to the hall ('here') where the performance takes place, to this specific audience ('you'). It is a close relationship later reinforced by the play and by some characters in particular (mostly by Mery Reporte, as seen above). There were men and women in the audience, a detail retrievable from an original stage direction: when informing Jupiter of the Gentylman's arrival, Mery Reporte explains to the god that the newcomer is a hunter who 'wolde hunte a sow or twine out of this sorte' (l. 249), a speech soon followed by '*Here he poynteth to the women*'. This stage direction does not only prescribe the actor's gesture, but also lets us know that female spectators were present, or – better – that very probably a sector of the public was formed only by ladies ('the women' to be pointed to were not just scattered in the hall, but very probably sat in a certain 'female' area). Mery Reporte's joke is loaded, in my opinion, with the misogyny which has already been highlighted as an aspect of this character, even if 'sow' might be interpreted not only as 'an adult female pig', but also as 'an adult female of certain other species' (a she-bear, for example, i.e. a possible game for the Gentylman's hunt). Apart from this, though, the information in the text has brought the *équipe* work-

ing at the 'Staging the Henrician Court' project to separate their spectators into men and women, thus helping a contemporary audience taste the flavour of the play also from this estranged standpoint. So much so that Claire Shuttleworth, a member of that audience, reported:

> Dividing up the audience into men and women during the performance was such an unusual experience for a 21st century audience – there are few situations today (in western society at least) where we split up like this, in such a formal way – its effect was to make you very aware of your gendered identity through the performance from looking at – and being looked back at by – the opposite sex the whole way through the performance.[30]

In this way the spectators themselves became part of the show, intrigued by both the play and by this new 'performing' role of theirs. This is also another relevant aspect of *The Play of the Wether*, too easily and too often dismissed as a 'pre-Shakespearean' play 'with no plot', with thin and flat types instead of individuals as protagonists, written by a playwright who remained without followers. Nevertheless '*The Play of the Wether* is also a politically engaged piece of drama whose arguments are at times potentially radical and dangerous',[31] a play full of 'myrth and game',[32] of fresh jokes, of body (and bawdy) language, that is, of comedy.

---

[30] From http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/audience.html, accessed 6 February 2015.

[31] From http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/index.html, accessed 6 February 2015.

[32] This phrase is repeated at least twice in Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres* (II, l. 23 and l. 890). The quote is taken from *The Plays of Henry Medwall*, ed. Alan H. Nelson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1980).

Rebecca Agar

Behind the Laughter: The Use of 'Low Comedy' in *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*

Despite its cultural significance, the anonymous *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (1598) has received very little critical attention. Academics have often dismissed the play as an inferior work and only refer to it in passing as a source of inspiration for William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Parts One* and *Two* and *Henry V*. For example, Irving Ribner in *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, an extremely influential work in the study of early modern history plays, describes the text as dramatically 'formless and incoherent and, in general, worthless'.[1] It is this critical tradition that has granted *Famous Victories* a legacy as a mere 'source play' that was transformed under Shakespeare's genius into the masterpiece that is his *Henriad*. However, *Famous Victories* is far from 'worthless' and exists as a landmark text in its own right. This essay will examine the 'episodic' and 'medley' nature of *Famous Victories* that has been criticised in the past and will demonstrate how this structure and tone are used within the text to provide a critical approach to Elizabethan social ideologies. In recent years the work of Larry S. Champion, Janet Clare, Karen Oberer and Louise Nichols have begun to defend the literary worth of *Famous Victories* with their essays appearing in

[1] Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (1965; reprt., Abington: Routledge, 2005), 69.

Published by The British Institute of Florence
ISBN (online) 978-88-907244-4-2

various journals or in collected editions such as *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies* or *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583-1603*, which both seek to bring more attention to lesser known works outside of the traditional canon. My argument will build upon the examples of social commentary that these critics have identified within these comedic scenes and will provide new examples. In doing so I will suggest that the relationship between these comic scenes and the serious political moments creates a more sophisticated structure than has been previously identified and demonstrates a greater complexity in the playwright's representation of social hierarchy. In particular I will focus on *Famous Victories*' use of popular entertainments and comedy within this emergent genre and how their juxtaposition with serious historical scenes allowed these propagandist 'popular' entertainments, such as the king-commoner ballad tradition, to be repurposed to offer a critique of the nobility instead.

The play has survived to the present day in two quarto editions: one published in 1598 by Thomas Creede and a second reprint by Bernard Alsop in 1617; however, recorded performances of *Famous Victories* date much earlier. Known to have been performed by The Queen's Men, an audience account from the collection *Tarlton's Jests* (1638), provides some performance details,

> At the Bull in Bishopsgate was a play of Henry the fift, wherein the iudge was to take a box on the ear and because he was absent that should take the blow, Tarlton himselfe, ever forward to please, tooke upon him to play the same judge, besides his own part of the

> clowne: and Knel then playing Henry the fift, hit Tarlton a sounde boxe indeed.[2]

The two actors this account refers to are William Knell and Richard Tarlton who both belonged to the Queen's Men. This information thus dates the play between 1583, when the company was first established, and 1587, the year of William Knell's premature death.[3] These parameters are vital as the dates confirm that *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* was the first English history play to be performed on the public stage over its nearest competitor *Edmund Ironside* which is thought to have been written in 1588.[4]

Signifying the birth of such a prominent genre, *Famous Victories* thus becomes an extremely important work which made history accessible to the common people.[5] The history of England was primarily recorded and

---

[2] Anon., *Tarlton's Jests*, ed. John Haviland (London: 1638), sig. C2v.

[3] "Tarlton, Richard (d. 1588), *actor and clown*," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed June 22, 2015, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26971.

[4] Eleanore Boswell notes that the manuscript of *Edmond Ironside* is difficult to date, however, most agree with Eric Sam's date of 1588. Eleanore Boswell, "Introduction," in *Edmond Ironside*, ed. Eleanore Boswell (New York: Malone Society Reprints, 1927), vi; Eric Sams, "Introduction," in *Shakespeare's Edmund Ironside: The Lost Play*, ed. Eric Sams (Aldershot: Wildwood House Ltd, 1986), 5.

[5] The common people, or popular characters, that I refer to in this article are those who comprise the fourth and final tier, the labourer class, of Thomas Smith's description of the commonwealth in *De republica Anglorum* (1583). Excluding vagrants, masterless men and women from his model of society he instead describes this bottom tier of labourers to be those who '*haue no voice* nor authoritie in our common wealth, and no account is made of them

read in high quality chronicles texts, such as the works of Raphael Holinshed and Edward Hall, however, the need for literacy skills and the high cost of these books made it unfeasible for those of the lower social tiers to acquire these works. These texts rarely concerned themselves with the stories of the lower classes and, where they did appear, it was often as a rebellious mob that posed a dangerous threat. These chronicles represented an exclusive history in every sense, however, *Famous Victories* allowed an audience to witness a depiction of history which included the everyday lives of popular characters, at the low cost of a penny. Ralf Hertel notes that access to such a history was extremely important for the people and not merely for the purposes of representation. Hertel observes that the history play

> shows how the state works, anatomizes it, and exposes its web of entangled interests and strategic plots – and thus turns politics into something which is no longer divinely ordained and represented by God's royal representative on earth but which can, and must be, negotiated. Thus it makes it possible to criticise monarchy and other forms of political structures […][6]

By presenting the history of the state, and demonstrating how each level of society is affected by the actions of the court, *Famous Victories* was thus able to offer a critique of the injustices caused by this system. However, critical commentary of social hierarchies had to retain a level of subtlety out of necessity. It must be remembered that the players who performed this play relied on the nobility for

---

but onelie to be ruled, not to rule other'. Thomas Smith, *De republica Anglorum* (London: 1583), sig. D2v.

[6] Ralf Hertel, *Staging England in the Elizabethan History Play* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 27.

continued support and patronage, allowing higher social tiers an element of control in what was represented on the stage. In addition to this, the ever present threat of censorship ensured that art and literature did not issue a direct challenge to the dominant ideologies of the time. It was through the use of comedy that *Famous Victories* was able to question societal structures without directly discussing these grievances on the stage.

Throughout Henry V's scenes, comic wordplay and wit are shrewdly used to highlight the nobility's problematic relationship with the common people. The first scene of *Famous Victories* is heavy with satire as the young prince disguises his appearance and robs two of his father's carriers. When he next encounters them without his disguise he listens to their tale of the theft before declaring:

> Well, stand up and get you gone,
> And looke that you speake not a word of it,
> For if there be, sownes ile hang you and all your kin.
> *Exit Purseuant*
> Now sirs, how like you this?
> Was not this bravely done?
> For now the vilaines dare not speake a word of it,
> I haue so feared them with words.[7]

A heavy irony hangs over Prince Henry's question, '[w]as not this bravely done?', that is nearly comical: threatening those he has power over is perhaps his most dishonourable act in *Famous Victories*. It is this great difference between word and reality, through the play on the word 'brave', that forces the audience to consider how cowardly such an action truly is. As the first scene

[7] Anon., *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, (London: 1598), sig. A3r.

in a play that promises 'famous victories', this introduction is a ridiculous one as the hero of the tale complains that the robbery of his subjects was unsuccessful. Whilst providing a humorous and entertaining start to the play, this also demonstrates that the deeds of the nobility do not always correlate with their heroic representation in history books.

The comedy of wit also appears in the second half of the play, once the young prince has been crowned king. Henry V and the Dauphin both use comic word play and jests in their first political negotiation where the French prince makes a gift of tennis balls for a new king 'more fitter for a Tennis Court / Then a field, and more fitter for a Carpet then the Camp'. Henry V identifies the humorous verbal comparisons and responds with a new set by stating 'that in steed of balles of leather, / We wil tosse him balles of brasse and yron'.[8] The use of witty wordplay in such a serious negotiation, particularly one that results in the declaration of war, and the use of sporting imagery suggest that the nobility make light of war, using it as a means to defend their pride all while literally 'toying' with men's lives. Such commentary is further highlighted by the fact that this interaction interrupts the Archbishop's advice on claiming France,

> Then my good Lord, as it hath bene alwaies knowne,
> That Scotland hath bene in league with France,
> By a sort of pensions which yearly come from thence,
> I thinke it therefore best to conquere Scotland,
> And then I think that you may go more easily into
> (France:
> And this is all that I can say, My good Lord.[9]

[8] Ibid., sig D3v.
[9] Ibid., sig. D2r.

The Archbishop's speech is completely devoid of comedy or wordplay as he instead offers a serious, tactical discussion on the practicalities of invasion. The Archbishop calls for careful consideration and strategy that will benefit the country in the long term; however, the jests of the King and the Dauphin introduce a tonal shift that suggests the act of war has been transformed into a game. These metaphors are also carried onto the battlefield, for example, when Henry V expresses his juvenile disappointment at the Dauphin's absence from the field:

> Why then he doth me great iniurie,
> I thought that he and I shuld haue plaied at tennis
> (togither,
> Therefore I haue brought tennis balles for him,
> But other maner of ones then he sent me.[10]

While such critiques on the king's role as a thief, the bias of privilege and his harmful impact on the lives of the common man are to be found in Henry V's scenes, it is in fact in the 'low scenes' that the most biting commentary is to be found, disguised by a thin veil of 'low' humour.

The episodic nature of *Famous Victories* has sparked much critical complaint. Madeleine Doran stated that the play represented a 'stringing together of events in mere temporal succession', James Shapiro claimed it to be 'more a series of skits than a coherent play' and Irving Ribner states that the play is poorly structured:

> Interspersed with this historical matter drawn from Holinshed's version of Hall, there are many scenes of pure comic buffoonery, obviously designed for Tarleton, with no real relation to what little plot there is. As

[10] Ibid., sig. E3r.

> drama the play is *formless and incoherent* and, in general, worthless.[11]

Ribner's opinion completely dismisses the critical and dramatic worth of such a play, evoking Philip Sidney's infamous disgust at the 'mingling of kings and clowns'. As such, for Ribner, the comic scenes provide mere entertainment with no bearing on the main action of the play, thus creating such an 'incoherent' work. However, this suggests that Ribner has overlooked the complexities that *Famous Victories*' overall structure offers.

The comic scenes of the popular characters both reinforce and respond to the drama of the nobility.[12] The sentencing of the thief in scene four carries a specific purpose and is not merely a diversion or simple entertainment. As Peter Burke notes, the process of a trial was familiar to those of the lower classes as 'mock trials' were regularly performed as part of popular culture. He continues, '[t]he audience knew the structure of a trial or

[11] Madeleine Doran, *Endeavours of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), 295; James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 87; Ribner, *The English History Play*, 69.

[12] It must be noted that the term 'popular' in this context is a controversial one and that this particular definition has been contested in the past. Peter Burke introduces the third edition of his seminal text, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978; repr., Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), with a note that '[t]he notion of the 'popular' has long remained problematic' and dedicates a chapter to its elusive nature, noting that genuinely 'popular voices' are rare and, even where they do occur, they survive time through second hand accounts. While the term 'popular' is used in this essay to denote characters, entertainments and objects associated with the 'labourer class' it must be noted that this does not necessarily mean that these were created or enjoyed exclusively by the lower social tiers.

a litany, they knew what was coming next and so they could concentrate on the message'.[13] The trial within *Famous Victories* would be a familiar system, even to the labourers who would be able to follow the procedural structure and anticipate each upcoming step. These procedures, however, become the target of ridicule in *Famous Victories* when the thief makes a mockery of the trial by refusing to give his name to the Lord Chief Justice.

> CLERKE. What is thy name?
> THEEFE. My name was knowne before I came here,
> And shall be when I am gone, I warrant you.
> JUSTICE: I, I think so, but we will know it better before thou go.
> DER. Sownes and you do but send to the next Iaile,
> We are sure to know his name,
> For this is not the first prison he hath bene in, ile (warrant you.
> CLERKE. What is thy name?
> THEEFE. What need you to aske, and haue it in writing.
> CLERKE. Is not thy name Cutbert Cutter?
> THEEFE. What the Diuell need you ask, and know it so well.[14]

In this example, the thief demonstrates that he is able to disrupt the methodical procedures of the trial by refusing to participate and state his name. However, through the thief's ultimate refusal to answer, the clerk is forced to reveal that the question was ultimately redundant as the thief's name was already known. By refusing to comply with procedure, the thief demonstrates the unnecessary nature of the question, as the information is already

[13] Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 171-72.
[14] Anon., *Famous Victories*, sig. B2v.

known, and by stalling the trial in this way, he reveals that it is ridiculous to blindly follow procedure to the letter in spite of common sense.

In a similar way, the comedic antics of John Cobler and Dericke as they are pressed into the army pokes fun at Henry V's hasty declaration of war. Karen Oberer notes that this conscription scene leads the audience to doubt the men who comprise the English army in this battle:

> What are a cobbler, a pewterer, and a clown doing amidst serious battle? Why is the Captain so intent on pressing a shoemaker into service (D4v)? This act of conscription implies desperation on the part of the English forces. Perhaps Henry's victory is not as certain as the play's reference to providence suggests.[15]

Oberer notes that the presence of these comic character types leads to a serious critique of England's army. As Henry V declared war in such rash haste, there is little time to strategize and prepare his forces for the battle. While this demonstrates Henry V's passion for rule and pride in his country, this moment of English patriotism is immediately followed by a comic scene of cowardly soldiers who are completely unprepared for war. As John Cobler begs to stay at home, he is interrupted by Dericke. The stage directions in this scene are sparse and provide no information concerning the costumes of the actors, however Cobler's wife provides some clues about the ridiculous nature of Dericke's apparel when she states:

---

[15] Karen Oberer, "Appropriations of the Popular Tradition in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*," in *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583-1603*, ed. Helen Ostovich et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 171-82, 172.

> Ile tell you, come ye cloghead,
> What do you with my potlid? heare you,
> Will you haue it rapt about your pate?
> *She beateth him with her potlid.*[16]

Appearing eager for the fight and armed with a woman's potlid for a shield – it is also to be imagined that his costume in this scene may contain other makeshift weapons or armour – Dericke becomes a laughable parody of a soldier that signifies how unprepared the English are for war. During the slapstick attack of Cobler's wife he is unable to defend himself at which point he informs the Captain that he should '[p]resse her for a souldier, I warrant you, / She will do as much good as her husband and I too'.[17] The fact that Dericke suggests a woman would be a fitter soldier than either himself or her husband is a more striking demonstration of how ill-equipped the English side is than Henry V's later cold, technical discussion of the armies, where he states '[t]hey are a hundred thousand, / And we fortie thousand, ten to one'.[18] As the play's audience already know the outcome of the action, the urgency and threat of the situation dissolves; however, through the addition of what may at first appear to be a comic scene, the threat is made real once more, as the dramatist allows the audience to connect to two likeable characters who demonstrate just how slim the chance of English victory truly is.

Similar scenes of this nature were to later be found in the *Henriad* where the nobility also plays with men's lives. Henry V also uses the sporting tennis imagery in his negotiations with France in the opening scene of *Henry V* and in *1 Henry IV* the old knight Falstaff thinks

[16] Anon., *Famous Victories*, sig. D4v.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.: sig. E4r.

so little of the lives of his soldiers that he enlists only the weak and sick in order to line his pockets with gold, dismissing them as 'fuel for powder' that will 'fill a pit as well as better' (4.2.58-59).[19] This theme of the ill-suited soldier is repeated in *2 Henry IV* where the soldiers Falstaff enrols are merely dismissed as 'spare men' (3.2.246) and in *Henry V* the characters of the Hostess's tavern set off cheerfully for the wars and instead find themselves berated by their captains as they attempt to hide from battle longing only for ale instead of glory (3.2.10-11).[20] Paola Pugliatti notes in her study of Shakespeare's history plays, *Shakespeare the Historian*, that the comedy of the two *Henry IV* plays in particular is tied to the subversive characters of Eastcheap meaning that when this comedy reappears once more in *Henry V*, it is in direct contention with the 'submissive' comedy of Fluellen. Pugliatti further observes that

> Almost up to the end of *2 Henry IV*, the comic plot agreed with, and was supported by, the Prince. In *Henry V*, again, we have agreement between comedy (the 'new' comedy, this time) and Henry. Here, however, the King's support has, so to speak, defaced comedy, drawing it into a conformist sphere of action. What remains of the old, subversive comedy does not even touch the King. […] while non-conformist comedy has been polluted by pathos and melancholy and eventually marginalised, what remains is a loyalist

[19] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part One*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd edition, ed. Julia Reidhead (1997; reprt., London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 1239.
[20] Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part Two*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1373; Shakespeare, *Henry V*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1504.

> form of national comedy, incongruous because fully 'authorised'.[21]

Henry V is a nearly mythological tale about the achievement of national glory and as such there is little room for the transgressive elements of the previous plays. Falstaff dies after speaking out against the dangers of drink and women, Bardolph is hanged for thievery and Pistol is beaten by Captain Fluellen. While *Henry V* contains some subversive comedy at first, it becomes increasingly muted as the play continues until it is finally critiqued through the character of the Boy. Pugliatti continues, 'the Boy's speech (an uncompromised speech, since it comes from 'one of us') contributes to the drifting and drowning of those who do not side explicitly with heroism and do not labour for a glorious victory'.[22] Moments such as these, ultimately silence these rebellious characters. Whilst popular characters may be allowed a voice at the beginning of the play their rebellious humour is ultimately contained and silenced by the play's end which sees a return to norms and re-establishes a separation between 'high' and 'low' characters as Henry V removes himself from their world.

In *Famous Victories*, however, a connection is forged between both the high and low characters that remains for the duration of the play. The conscription scene offers a particularly effective example where Dericke's enthusiasm for the battlefield of France, despite his laughable lack of preparation, reflects Henry V's same eagerness despite his disadvantage. This is not the only similarity between the two characters. Once the prince renounces

[21] Paola Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996), 146-47.
[22] Ibid., 148.

his jests and aims to reform, the comedic satire becomes greatly reduced in his scenes, however, as this occurs, Dericke becomes more prominent in the play and begins to mirror the young king, bringing his actions into the 'low scenes' where they may be safely critiqued. This first occurs in scene five where Dericke and John recreate the moment Prince Henry struck the judge, with Dericke himself playing the prince. Under the humorous context of the scene – recreating a slap to allow him the excuse of striking John Cobbler – the two note that if they had struck an official they would have been hanged immediately, not arrested, thus demonstrating the privilege that the nobility enjoys. In recreating the scene, the two demonstrate that the only safe way they may copy the prince's actions is by performing the act on each other, thus demonstrating the bias which Janet Clare observes when she states that '[t]he message is unequivocal: there is one law for the powerful, another for the powerless: the king is a law unto himself'.[23]

This connection between high and low continues throughout the play as each action of Henry V is repeated by the popular characters in the scene that follows. When Henry IV and Prince Henry reconcile their relationship, the scene is followed by a mock reconciliation between Dericke and John, when Henry V eagerly longs for war, Dericke enthusiastically joins the captain in the very next scene and, as Oberer notes, the two share similar ambitions for France. 'The viewers would likely recognise the same outrage that King Henry feels; however, the viewers would likely recognise a comic connection between the underlying personal motivations of King Henry's venge-

[23] Janet Clare, "Medley History: *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* to *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Survey* 63 (2010), 102-13, 106.

fulness and of Dericke's greed'.[24] Certainly, Henry V invades for his own selfish motivation; he thinks only of gaining land in France, whilst Dericke considers the prizes that might be scavenged from the battlefield. The ending of the play offers this juxtaposition of scenes as Dericke tricks a French soldier into surrender and begins to steal shoes and clothing from the dead men, while Henry V uses manipulative tricks to secure a better deal in his political negotiations with the French king. Louise Nichols notes the structuring of these scenes has a particular message:

> The honourable victories and all its advantages that Henry has won for his country is brought down from the idealistic to the realistic with this dishonourable treatment of those who died in battle […] Once again, the comic material opens a gap between heroism and selfish opportunism.[25]

However, what is particularly important to note is that this comparison, of each man taking from injured France, is not a levelling moment; there is glory in Henry V's promised return to England with a desirable bride, while Dericke and John invite judgement from the audience as they are forced to sneak back home, albeit with the pleasures of stolen cake and drink. Each takes full advantage of the wounded country and its people; however, only one set of acts will be remembered in the history books, despite the fact that, as the play demonstrates,

---

[24] Oberer, "Popular Culture," 176.

[25] Louise Nichols, "'My name was known before I came': The Heroic Identity of the Prince in *The Famous Victories of Henry V*," in *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Helen Ostovich et al. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 154-75, 169.

there is very little difference between the actions of these men at all.

It is particularly significant that the part of Dericke was played by Tarlton the clown because, as noted by Maya Marthur and Mildred E. Davis, the figure of the clown was often used to ridicule, and simultaneously neutralise, the threat of peasant uprising.[26] Such clowns, as Robert Hornback observes, played the role of the 'natural fool', rather than the 'artificial wit' that would become popular in the Jacobean era. Hornback notes that the innocent fool was 'a butt who was generally laughed at for mental deficiencies'.[27] By using a 'natural fool' as the leader or spokesperson for a peasant rebellion, the audience is encouraged to laugh at his mistakes, and associate such foolishness with the complaints of the common man. Tarlton was famous for playing the 'innocent fool', thus attracting the laughter of the audience towards himself; however, as Tarlton mirrors the actions of Henry V throughout the play he also directs ridicule towards the higher classes by proxy. Larry S. Champion notes that '[t]he clown Dericke, for another, is a walking parody of aristocratic disdain in his first appearance'.[28] Champion refers to the moment when Dericke takes offence at being named a clown, replying '[a]m I Clowne? Sownes,

[26] Maya Marthur, "An Attack of the Clowns: Comedy, Vagrancy, and the Elizabethan History Play," *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 7.1 (2007), 33-54, 35; Mildred E. Davis, "The Serious Use of Comedy in Some Elizabethan Drama" (MA diss., Queen's University Belfast, 1986): 60.

[27] Robert Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), 151.

[28] Larry S. Champion, "'What Prerogatives Meanes': Perspective and Political Ideology in *The Famous Victories of Henry V*," *South Atlantic Review* 53.4 (1988), 1-19, 9.

maisters, / Do Clownes go in silke apparell?'[29] As a poor carrier it is unlikely that Dericke would be wearing silk at all, thus his reply invites mockery of his elitism; however, this parody is not merely confined to Dericke's introduction; it is instead the very essence of his character.

Before *Famous Victories*, representations of historical kings appeared in fictional ballads that romanticised the king-commoner encounter as a mutually beneficial one, where each was able to learn from the other and finally agree that the simple life was best, before the King would bestow a generous gift on his host and return to his duty.[30] As Rochelle Smith notes, the tradition was largely propagandistic and provided a means to characterise the king as a figure of patience and generosity who sacrifices the joy of a simple life for his greater duty to the people.[31] In particular she notes that Henry V's disguise subplot, where the king dons Erpingham's cloak to assume the role of a commoner and speak with his men, owes a great debt to this tradition.[32] Instead, Smith observes Thomas William's refusal to enter into the illusion that all of mankind is level, and praises this approach to

[29] Anon., *Famous Victories*, sig. A4r.

[30] For examples of ballads that contain this particular trope see: "King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tamworth," in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child, 5 vols. (1882-92; reprt. New York: Folklore Press, 1956), 5:67-75; "A Tale of King Edward and the Shepherd," in *Ancient Metrical Tales: Printed Chiefly for Original Sources*, ed. Charles Henry Hartshorne (London: W. Pickering, 1829), 35-80; "King Henry II and the Miller of Mansfield," in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, ed. Thomas Percy, 3 vols. (1765; reprt. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1885), 3:178-88.

[31] Rochelle Smith, "King Commoner Encounters in the Popular Ballad, Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare," *Studies in English Literature* 50.2 (2010), 301-36, 302.

[32] Ibid., 324.

the king-commoner encounter as 'less idealized and [a] more serious exploration of the motif'.[33] However, Shakespeare's treatment of the traditional trope still adheres to its main ideological function. Not only does it safely offer the king as a man of the people in a way that is less transgressive than his original actions with Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*, but he is also shown to be merciful when he spares the life of Williams who had spoken treason against him and awards him a glove full of crowns.

This traditional plot, however, is parodied in *Famous Victories* when Dericke resigns from his occupation as a carrier and decides to stay with John and his wife. At this point Dericke has already begun to mirror the actions of the prince and established an air of aristocratic parody in his introduction, allowing him to act as proxy for a member of the nobility. Throughout this brief subplot, the comedy is provided by the misunderstandings that are created by the clash of cultures between John and Dericke. When Dericke first announces his intention to stay with John, he soon demonstrates his ignorance of the common man's difficult life:

> DER. Ile dwell with thee and be a Cobler.
> IOH. With me, alasse I am not able to keepe thee,
> Why, thou wilt eat me out of doors.
> DER. Oh Iohn, no Iohn, I am none of these great slouching fellowes, that deuoure these great pieces of beefe and brewes, alasse a trifle serves me, a Woodcocke, a (Chicken,
> or a Capons leg, or any such little thing serues me.
> IOH. a Capon, why man, I cannot get a Capon once a yeare, except it be at Christmas, at some other mans house, for we Coblers be glad of a dish of rootes.[34]

[33] Ibid., 325.
[34] Anon., *Famous Victories*, sig. B4v.

The ridicule that the 'innocent fool' exhibits is turned upon the ignorance of the nobility, highlighting the great disparity between the classes: Dericke's idea of a simple life involves more food than the Cobbler could ever expect to see in a year. 'The simple life' that is romanticised in the ballad traditions is destroyed, instead replaced by the Cobbler's harsh reality, that he must eat poorly and have very little to spare, whilst, the scene ridicules the social unawareness of the higher classes in this matter.

This parody continues into scene seven after Dericke has received the hospitality of the cobbler and his wife:

> That she cald me in to dinner.
> Iohn, marke the tale wel Iohn, and when I was set,
> She brought me a dish of rootes, and a piece of barrel (butter
> therein: and she is a verie knaue,
> And thou a drab if thou take her part.[35]

In this example, Dericke takes offence when he is served the very food John promised to provide. As well as deriving more humour from the ignorance of the higher classes, this also continues the parody of the idealised king-commoner encounter. Such ballads followed a very formulaic structure that the audience would have been familiar with. An essential part of the tale is where the subject plays host to the king, and provides some humble food before a second feast is revealed with richer food and often poached cuts of the king's own venison. John Cobler fails to provide a second richer feast, because such a tradition is unrealistic, however, Dericke's reaction to the meagre meal suggests that, similar to the ballads, he considered the promise of roots only a humble

[35] Ibid., sig. C3v.

show before the true dinner would be revealed. The scene, and short subplot, concludes with a final display of Dericke's obliviousness to the realities of other classes when he refuses John's peace offering and instead states '[t]hen ile go home before, and breake all the glasse / windows'.[36] Dericke's threat is particularly humorous because, once again, he has overestimated the luxury that a cobbler can afford. Glass windows were expensive and as such were rarely seen in houses, with wooden shutters being used instead. As has been previously established in the play, the cobbler is unable to afford chicken, so the threat falls humorously flat because the cobbler will have no glass windows for Dericke to break.

In conclusion, the 'low humour' of *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* contains clear social commentary which could not be stated in the more political scenes of the nobility. Whilst academics have criticised the play for its seemingly random selection of historic events and comic scenes, they fail to understand the work as a whole. *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* is a more inclusive and accessible history for the lower tiers of society and its episodic nature allows for a critique of social hierarchy and unrealistic, propagandist ballads in the comedy of Dericke and John. While the playwright was unable to criticise the aristocracy directly, through the use of clowning, mirroring and parody he was able to transpose the actions of the nobility into the 'low comic' scenes where they could be safely critiqued. The figure of the king could not be questioned, but the lowly clown could.

[36] Ibid.

Allison L. Steenson

The 'Register of Fame': Authority and Irony in Alexander Montgomerie's Sonnets "In Prais of the Kings Vranie"

This paper considers four sonnets written by the Scottish poet Alexander Montgomerie (early 1550s? - 1598) [1] praising James VI and I's poetic work *The Essayes of a Prentise in the Art of Poesie* (Edinburgh, 1584).[2]

1. The context

The pervasiveness of patronage culture in the period meant that occasional compositions, and particularly commendatory poems such as the ones under scrutiny, were central to what Remien terms 'the Jacobean economy of

[1] For an account of the life and works, see Ronald D.S. Jack, *Alexander Montgomerie* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985) and Roderick J. Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland* (Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005). For the text of the sonnets "In Prais of the Kings Vranie" see David J. Parkinson, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poems* (Edinburgh: STS, 2000), 105-06.

[2] James I, *The Essayes of a Prentise, in the Diuine Art of Poesie* (Edinburgh: Vautrollier, 1584, STC 14373). *EEBO*, accessed 8 July, 2015: http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99844758. For a modern edition, see James Craigie, *Poems of James VI* (Edinburgh: Blackwood,1955-58), 1-96.

Published by The British Institute of Florence
ISBN (online) 978-88-907244-4-2

flattery'.[3] The relationship between monarchic power and poets was based on the exchange of legitimisation (literary or political or both, as in the case of James's poetry) for some type of reward (monetary compensation, political protection, advancement etc.).[4] In a literary culture 'devoted largely to the struggle for patronage', occasional compositions came to embody the ironies and ambiguities underlying a rigidly and hierarchically organised society, and to enact the tensions between political and literary authority and between patrons and poets.[5] This is especially evident in the case of Renaissance Scotland, where a dearth of literary patronage on the part of noble

[3] Peter Remien, "Jonson's Universal Parasite: Patronage and Embodied Critique in 'To Penshurst'", *Studies in Philology* 111 (2014): 255-81, 264, 256.

[4] For a discussion of patronage and literature, see Amy Juhala, 'Shifts and Continuities in the Scottish Royal Court 1580-1603', in *James VI and I, Literature and Scotland: Tides of Change, 1567-1625*, ed. David J. Parkinson (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 1-26, 24-25; see also Chapter 1 of her thesis: *The Household and Court of King James VI of Scotland, 1567-1603* (Phd Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2000). Jane Rickard in her *Authorship and Authority, The Writings of James VI and I* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, 12) remarks on how 'language represented power' (Rickard is in turn quoting from: Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, 'Politics of Discourse: Introduction', in *Politics of Discourse*, eds. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 1-20). On the subject of courtly literary discourse, see also: Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment. The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-53. For the 'contract of patronage' see Remien, "Jonson's Universal Parasite", 269.

[5] The quotation is from Remien, "Jonson's Universal Parasite", 258. See also Robert C. Evans, "Frozen Maneuvers: Ben Jonson's Epigrams to Robert Cecil", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* (1987): 115-40, 116.

families left the monopoly on the literary representation of power to the Edinburgh court. The debate on the relationship between authority and literature in the courtly environment has only recently included James VI and I, who is unique in his dual role as both published author and monarch.[6] To this can be added that the comparatively informal environment of the Scottish court, which saw both the King and his retainers engaged in poetic exchanges, was especially favourable to the exercise of wit, irony and a degree of competition.[7] The aim of this paper is to use the irony in Montgomerie's four sonnets "In Prais of Vranie", along with the context provided by the para-textual material in James's 1584 *Essayes*, to investigate the tensions between the poet-King and the court poet Montgomerie in the light of such a social environment.

Around 1584, at the time the four sonnets were written, Montgomerie was at the height of his poetic career as James's official court poet and friend. As tangible proof of his role, the King addressed him around that time as his 'maister poete' and as his 'belovit Sanders' in his ironic 'Admonition'.[8] James VI had only recently come into full power and the beginning of his

[6] In particular, by Rickard's *Authorship and Authority* and her article "From Scotland to England: The Poetic Strategies of James VI and I", *Renaissance Forum* 7 (2004): 1-12. See also: Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, "'Enregistrate Speech': Stratagems of Monarchic Writing in the Work of James VI and I", in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, eds. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2002), 37-58.

[7] See Rickard, "Poetic Strategies of James VI", 26, and Juhala, "Shifts and Continuities", 3-9.

[8] James's "Admonition to his maister poete", dating back to around 1584, is printed in James Craigie, *The Poems of James VI of Scotland* (Edinburgh: STS, 1958), 120-29.

personal rule marks a new era for Scottish poetry.[9] In a short time, from the early 1580s to the beginning of the 1590s, Scottish literature underwent a process of development that rapidly brought it 'into the mainstream of European culture'.[10] The main agent behind this self-conscious cultural enterprise was the so-called 'Castalian band', a small group of poets and musicians active in Edinburgh and gravitating around (and including) the young King.[11] Their poetic practices found expression in James's short treatise *Reulis and Cautelis of Scottis Poesie*, published in the *Essayes* and long considered the 'manifesto' of the new tendencies in Scottish poetry.[12] Montgomerie, with his talent and his enduring relation to his erstwhile patron, the French-born royal favourite

[9] See Helena Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry of the Court of Scotland under King James VI* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 79.

[10] Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 39.

[11] For a classic study on the group see Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry*. The Castalian band is thought today to have been a wider, less rigidly organised poetic and social phenomenon; see for instance Theo van Heijnsbergen, "Coteries, Commendatory Verse and Jacobean Poetics: William Fowler's *Trivmphs of Petrarke* and its Castalian Circles", in *James VI and I, Literature and Scotland: Tides of Change, 1567-1625*, ed. David J. Parkinson, 45-64. In addition to that, modern scholars have disputed Shire's 'highly speculative' (Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 75) reconstruction of events. See in particular Priscilla Bawcutt, "James VI's Castalian Band: A Modern Myth", *Scottish Historical Review*, 80 (2001): 251-59.

[12] For a modern edition, see Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards and Joseph Marshall, eds., *King James VI and I: Selected Writings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 21-48. For the use of the word 'manifesto' to refer to *Reulis*, see for instance Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry*, 98, and Ronald D.S. Jack, *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,1972), 54.

Esmeé Stewart, had a pivotal role in inspiring the literary efforts of the courtly coterie in a modern European sense.[13] The sudden literary development during the Jacobean Renaissance was made possible also by the extensive practice of translation and imitation from Continental authors, as befitted a literary culture that saw imitation of worthy models as a practical means of improving one's own expressive powers.[14] Accordingly, the 'band' engaged in translations and re-elaborations from the modern canon, as well as in the production of verse imitating French and Italian models. The Castalians' poetic *corpus* includes versions of du Bartas, whose religious Petrarchist poetry James admired, Desportes, whose sonnets were re-elaborated by John Stewart of Baldynneis in his collection, Ronsard, whose amorous sonnets were in turn translated by Montgomerie, and many others. Castalian poets also imitate and translate from the Italian: Petrarch's *Triumphs* were partially translated by William Fowler, as was Machiavelli's *Prince*, while Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is the source of Baldynneis' *Roland*, via the mediation of Desportes.[15] The practice of the sonnet, 'the most Renaissance of all forms' had a privileged role in this

[13] See Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry*, 85, 95; Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 7; Jack, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 42.

[14] See Robert Crawford, *Scotland's Books: A History of Scottish Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 115-63. On Castalian translations, see Derrick J. McClure, "Translation and Transcreation in the Castalian Period", *Studies in Scottish Literature* 26 (1991): 185-98.

[15] See Sarah M. Dunnigan, "Reformation and Renaissance", in *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, eds. Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 41-55, 47. See Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, xxi, xv-xxiii.

environment.[16] Castalian poets are also the authors of a substantial sonnet *corpus*, which includes a good number of occasional poems, some of which addressed by members of the coterie to one another.[17] Of the rich and short-lived output of translations, imitations and sonnets aimed at 'bolstering the image of Scottish cultural achievement abroad',[18] James's *Essayes* is the first published product. Five prefatory sonnets praising the author, written by the members of the 'band', introduce the *Essayes*: by Thomas and Robert Hudson, by an unidentified M.W., by William Fowler and by Montgomerie himself.[19] More sonnets by James preface single works in the collection; although the name of the author does not appear anywhere in the text, a prefatory 'Acrostichon' spells out 'JACOBVS SEXTVS'. The volume is, as suggested by the title, a miscellany of 'poetic exercises', containing verse translations (from modern, classical and biblical sources, respectively du Bartas, Lucan and Psalm CIV) as well as original poetry

[16] As has been recently termed by Crawford, *Scotland's Books*, 151.

[17] A fitting example are the five sonnets by Montgomerie to Robert Hudson, to which is appended a sonnet by Christian Lindesay, arguably the only female poet in the group. For the text of these sonnets and an analysis of the circumstances, see respectively: Parkinson, *Poems*, 112-15, and Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 174-80.

[18] Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 39.

[19] James I, *Essayes*, sig. ii-iiij. First lines in order of appearance run as follows: 'If Martiall deeds, and practise of the pen' (T.H., Thomas Hudson); 'The glorious Grekis in stately style do praise' (R.H., Robert Hudson); 'The mightie father of the Muses nyne' (M.W., Master William Cockburn?); 'When as my minde exemed was from caire' (M.W. F., Master William Fowler), 'Can goldin Titan shyning bright at morne' (A.M., Alexander Montgomerie). For a modern edition, see Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 1-5.

and a short treatise on verse (the afore-mentioned *Reulis*). The presence of such a normative work as the *Reulis* and the nature of the prefatory section have encouraged a reading of the *Essayes* as a self-conscious exercise in the construction and representation of the royal persona. The results contain an element of irony, due to James's dual role as a poet and patron/rule-giver: in the *Essayes*, the literate monarch both legitimised poetic activity (through a poetic manual with a programmatic title) and received legitimisation by other poets (implying the absence of an inherent right to literary authority).[20] The conflict between different forms of authority and the ironic effects that ensue will constitute the subject of the rest of this paper.

2. *The texts*

The four sonnets at stake, one of which ('Can goldin Titan', sonnet III) is printed in the *Essayes*, can be found in the Ker MS, written out consecutively on ff. 63*r* to 64*r*; on f. 63, the group is assigned the title 'In prais of the Kings Vranie'.[21] David Parkinson, author of the most recent edition of the poet's works, considers Ker a

[20] Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 36, 13.

[21] Edinburgh, University Library, MS De.3.70 (sometimes called 'Drummond MS'). On the bottom of f. 63*r* (under the general title "In prais of the Kings Vranie Son."), sonnet 1: "Bellonas sone, of Mars the chosen child"; on f. 63*v*: sonnet 2: "Of Titans harp sith thou intones the strings", sonnet 3: "Can goldin Titan shyning bright at morne"; on f. 64*r*, sonnet 4: "As bright Apollo staineth every star". A detailed analysis of the group, highlighting the irony beneath the aureate language, can be found in Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 103-05. All quotations reproduce the original spelling of the source text, in the edition quoted in the footnote.

reliable witness for Montgomerie's texts, as the MS appears to have originated close to the author's own times and social circumstances.[22] The arrangement and title are due to the scribe, although what we see in Ker could well be the authorial arrangement, as pointed out by Roderick Lyall in his detailed study of the poet.[23] The four sonnets are consistent in their style, function and imagery. All four are elegant commendatory pieces, written in a high style based on complex phraseology and rhetorical devices (repetition of rhetorical questions, parallelisms, extended similes etc.) and replete with erudition. Their images derive from classical sources (mainly connected with the myths of Apollo), as conforms to their function of praising a powerful patron while displaying the author's knowledge and taste.[24] All of the sonnets are in the same rhyme scheme, three interlaced quatrains plus couplet, running ABAB BCBC CDCD EE, characteristic of Scottish sonnets in this period.[25] Such consistency in style, tone and content suggests that the poems could have constituted an extended comparison, as suggested by Lyall: in his view, the several repetitions and small variations of set *motifs* reinforce the cohesion of the supposed sequence. [26] Another possibility is that the poems might instead represent four alternative versions of the same poem,

[22] Parkinson, *Poems*, 2.
[23] Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 102.
[24] For the use of classical *tòpoi* in poetry to enhance a poet's 'social power', see Evans, "Frozen Maneuvers",117.
[25] For Shire's description of the Castalian band, see *Song, Dance and Poetry*, 96. The description is referred to by, among others, Crawford (*Scotland's Books*, 151), Jack (*Italian Influence*, 54-89) and by Sarah M. Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry at the Courts of Mary Queen of Scots and James VI* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 69-80.
[26] Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 102-03.

which would explain what might look as excessive repetition. I will refer specifically to sonnets I, III and IV, quoted in full below. [27]

I.
Bellonas sone, of Mars the chosen Chyld,
Minerva's wit and Mercuris golding tung,
Apollo's light that Ignorance exyld,
From Jove ingendrit and from Pallas sprung,
Thy Vranie o second Psalmist sung,
Triumphis ouer Death in Register of fame;
Quharfor thy Trophee trimlie sall be hung
With laurell grene Eterniȝing thy Name
Bot euen as Phoebus shyning does ashame
Diana with hir boroude beimis and blind
So vhen I preis thy praysis to proclame
Thy weightie words maks myne appeir bot wind.
ȝit, (worthy Prince) thou wald tak in gude pairt
My will for weill. I want bot only arte.

III.
Can goldin Titan shyning brigth at morne
For light of Torches cast a gritter shau?
Can thunder reird the higher for a horne?
Cracks Cannouns louder thoght a Cok suld crau?
Can our waik brethis help Boreas to blau?
Can Candle lou give fyr a griter heet?
Can quhytest Suanis more quhyter mak the snau?
Can Virgins Teirs augment the Winters weit?
Helps pyping Pan Apollo's Musik sueet?
Can fontans smal the Ocean sea incres?
No: they augment the griter nocht a quheet
Bot they thame selfis appeir to grou the les.
So (peirles Prince) thy Cunning maks the knoune.
Ours helps not thyn. We steinȝie bot our aune.

[27] For the texts, see Parkinson, *Poems*, 105-06.

IV.
As bright Apollo staineth euiry star
With goldin rayis vhen he begins to ryse,
Quhais glorious glance ȝit stoutly skaillis the skyis
Quhen with a wink we wonder vhair they war
(Befor his face for feir they faid so far)
And vanishis auay in such a wayis
That in thair spheirs thay dar not interpryse
For to appeir lyk Planeits as they ar,
Or as the Phoenix, with her fedrum fair,
Excels all foulis in diverse hevinly heuis,
Quhais Natur, contrare Natur sho reneuis,
As ONLIE but Companione or compare,
So, Quintessenst of Kings, vhen thou Compylis,
Thou stanis my Versis with thy staitly stylis.

These sonnets embed several repetitive elements. 'As bright Apollo' is a long comparison between the King and Montgomerie, built around the image of the light from Apollo (a personification of the Sun and an image of James) obscuring the light of lesser objects. The same image also forms the poetic core (the 'conceit') behind "Can goldin Titan"[28] made explicit in l. 12, despite the use of a different rhetorical device (repeated questions instead of an extended simile). A similar conceit (*i.e.* lesser things appearing still smaller in the presence of a greater thing) is also central to the third quatrain of "Bellonas sone". "As bright Apollo" shares with "Can goldin Titan" the use of the verb 'to stain', employed in sonnet IV as the verbal equivalent of the extended metaphor and in III as the answer to the series of rhetorical questions. In both sonnets the verb is inserted in the same prominent positions (in both sonnets at the close in l. 14, as well as in l. 1 of "As bright Apollo"), signifying its

[28] Another name for Apollo.

centrality to the poems' rhetorical structure.[29] Another cue to these sonnets representing variations on the same *motif* is found in l. 13. In all three sonnets in this line, the apostrophe (in the variants of 'worthy Prince', 'peirles Prince', and finally 'quintessenst of Kings', the latter adjective a verbal metaphor for the uniqueness of James's talents)[30] is inserted in the same metrical position between first and second foot, in a series of plain iambic feet.

The occasion for composition is represented by James VI's *Essayes*, as confirmed by the presence of "Can goldin Titan" among the prefatory lyrics. The title in Ker however alludes to only one section of the *Essayes*, *i.e.* James's partial translation of Salluste du Bartas' *L'Uranie*, published in du Bartas' 1574 collection *La Muse Chrestienne*.[31] The title (translated by James as 'Vranie, or Heavenly Mvse') marks the French *Uranie* as the manifesto of (Protestant) Christian Petrarchism.[32] Since James's translation represents the most substantial text in the *Essayes* (and the most prestigious, given the

[29] 'To stain(e): transf. Of anything: To outstrip, outshine, eclipse (another) in some respect'. See *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (*DSL*), online edition (http://www.dsl.ac.uk/), *s.v.*

[30] For the term 'quintessence' and its ties to alchemic and philosophic fields in contemporary usage, see *DSL* (listing this sonnet among occurrences) *s.v.*

[31] For James and du Bartas, see Jane Rickard, "The Cultural Politics of Translation: King James VI and I, du Bartas and Joshua Sylvester", in *James VI and I, Literature and Scotland: Tides of Change, 1567-1625*, ed. David J. Parkinson, 99-118.

[32] James I, *Essayes*, sig. D. Urania's name was commonly invoked in relation to sacred (as opposed to sensual) poetry; in this neo-platonic sense, it is used by du Bartas and James. See Gillian Sargent, "Reading as Moral Investment in James VI's *Essayes of a Prentice*", in *James VI and I, Literature and Scotland: Tides of Change, 1567-1625*, ed. David J. Parkinson, 83-98, 88. See also James Craigie, *Thomas Hudson's Historie of Judith* (Edinburgh: STS, 1941), xxvi-xxvii.

considerable European renown of du Bartas),[33] it is plausible that the scribe in Ker is using the term to refer to the whole work (in a synecdoche: 'the King's *Vranie*' for 'the King's *Essayes*'). It is also possible, though, that the title reflects the original circumstances of composition. As Lyall suggests, on the grounds that the translation of Protestant poetry would have been deemed a suitable pastime for the King in his 'Ruthven captivity', James could have completed the work on du Bartas already between August 1582 and 1583.[34] If he is right, the text of "Can goldin Titan" in Ker might represent an earlier version of the poem, written when James's translation was still recent and revised specifically for publication in the *Essayes* of 1584. Such a revision could be behind the differences in l. 13 in the two versions (a relevant position, as it belongs to the final couplet), from 'So peirles Prince! thy cunning maks the knoune' (Ker) to 'So (worthy Prince) thy works sall mak the knawin' (*Essayes*). The exchange of 'cunning' with 'works' as the reason for James's fame might be a reference to the King's *published* work, while the shift from 'mak' to 'sall mak' could hint at the wider circulation achieved by works in print.[35]

The five sonnets in the *Essayes* by members of the 'Castalian band' testify to the stylistic coherence displayed by Castalian poets and to the degree of communal effort that went into providing James's published *début* with poetic endorsement. Like the four sonnets "In prais

[33] Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, xxiii.
[34] Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 99.
[35] *Cf.* the version of this sonnet reported in Parkinson, *Poems*, 106 (who in turn is transcribing from Ker) with the version in the *Essayes*, sig. iiij (printed in Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 5). On James's expectation for the widening of audience afforded by print, see Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 19.

of Vranie", these sonnets are in an 'interlaced scheme' (ABAB BCBC CDCD EE) and make a massive use of strikingly similar mythological references and key-images. The poetic core is connected with the image of Apollo, who is mentioned in some form in all sonnets in the *Essayes* but Fowler's (which however focuses on the connected image of the Muses), and in all four sonnets by Montgomerie. The sonnet by the court musician Thomas Hudson ("If Martiall deeds, and practise of the pen") resonates with Montgomerie's "Bellonas sone" in linking the King simultaneously with the seemingly antithetical values of scholarly pursuit (Minerva) and martial prowess (Mars/Bellona). [36] This lends weight to the hypothesis that Montgomerie and his fellow poets were trying out different combinations in advance of the *Essayes*' publication, and that "Can goldin Titan" was chosen because it was consonant with the other prefatory lyrics. The following pages will develop this point, suggesting with Lyall that one of the sonnets "In prais of Vranie" was not intended for printing, but rather as an elaborate private joke. As will be seen, the nature of the irony in Montgomerie's sonnet "Of Titans harp" is a testimony to the tensions that underpin the rhetoric of patronage and praise, as well as to Montgomerie's zest for irony. As a group, the sonnets "In prais of Vranie" inherently embed an ironic element: their high mannerist style, with its elaborate syntactic patterning and erudite mythological references, seemingly pays homage to James as an educated patron and lofty poet. At the same time, the poems display Montgomerie's poetic and rhetoric abilities at their fullest, thus effectively overshadowing the admittedly inferior poetry by James

[36] For the text, see Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 1.

printed in the same volume.[37] "Of Titans harp" (sonnet II in Ker) in particular seems to employ specific ironic strategies, to which I will now turn to describe them in some detail. The sonnet reads as follows:

II.
Of Titans harp, sith thou intones the strings,
Of ambrose and of nectar so thou feeds,
Not only vther poets thou outsprings,
Bot vhylis also thy very self excedes;
Transporting thee as ravishd, vhen thou redes
Thyn awin inventione, wondering at thy wit.
Quhat mervell than, thoght our fordullit hedes
And blunter branis be mare amaisd at it;
To sie thy ȝeirs and age, vhilks thou hes ȝit,
Inferiour far to thy so grave ingyne;
Quha haȝard at so hihg a mark, and hit,
In English, as this Vranie of thyne:
Quharfor thy name, O Prince! Eternall ringis,
Quais muse not Jove, bot grit Jehova singis.

In this sonnet, the final couplet seems to offer a further 'turn of the screw' to the *motif* of 'praise of James in classical terms', presenting the image of a King not only classically educated, but also especially devoted to religious poetry (resonating in this with the final couplet of Fowler's sonnet in the *Essayes* beginning 'When as my mynde').[38] L. 14 embeds one of Montgomerie's favourite devices, alliteration connecting the main ideas in the line (in this case 'Jove' and 'Jehova', personifying

[37] This is the sonnet termed by Lyall an 'insult disguised as panegyric'. For a detailed discussion of the irony in these sonnets, see Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 102-03.

[38] Compare with Fowler's final couplet 'Tell how of *Iove*, of Mars, but more of *God* / The gloire and grace he hath proclaimed abrod'. For the text, see Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 4.

respectively profane and religious poetry). The tone of the sonnet is as declamatory as can be expected, and the extravagant praise and excessive use of mythological images (the hallmark of Renaissance mannerism and a staple feature of encomiastic poetry) are common to all the sonnets prefacing the *Essayes*. This sonnet seems to push the praise into almost comical exaggeration. In the first quatrain, the King is portrayed as picking up the instrument of Phoebus (Titan, or Apollo) and nourishing himself with the food of gods, the 'ambrose and nectar' (l. 2) which were traditionally forbidden to mortals.[39] These first lines, suggesting a degree of arrogance on James's part, could contain an allusion to what Shire describes as the Castalian practice of assuming poetical aliases modelled on classical sources, in which context James apparently chose for himself the name of 'Apollo', god of poetry.[40] More concretely, the pervasive 'sun' imagery in the *Essayes* has a political undertone, implying the representation of the King as the absolute centre of the court (and by extension of the world). James is at the centre of this 'microcosm', attended to, as Apollo by the Muses, by 'Castalian' poets who sing his praises.[41] In a context where power is so clearly centralised, the irony expressed in the first two quatrains of "Of Titans harp" acquires a sneering quality. The second

[39] See *OED*, *s.v.* 'ambrosia'.

[40] For Shire's description of the 'Castalian game' and on the equation between Apollo/James, and Castalian poets /Muses, see *Song, Dance and Poetry*, 95-97. The name conventionally used for the coterie is itself an apollonian reference, to the *fons Castalia* as a dwelling of the muses. However, there is no evidence for the name being used by the poets themselves: see the convincing case presented by Bawcutt, "The Castalian Band: A Modern Myth". Here the term is merely retained for convenience.

[41] Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 39.

quatrain develops the concept expressed in l. 4 in a literal way, presenting us with a poet-King who exceeds himself. By making poetic exaggeration literal, Montgomerie lets the absurdity in the panegyric emerge and the result is an effective demotion of the poem's object from lofty to mildly ludicrous.[42] The effect is compounded by the seemingly complimentary hendiadys in l. 9 ('thy ȝeirs and age'); in a prominent position at the beginning of the final quatrain, the line highlights 'Apollo's' young age (James was barely eighteen when the *Essayes* were printed) and implicitly draws attention to his lack of experience. All together, these lines conjure up a picture of James as a self-absorbed, inexperienced poet, in sharp contrast to the lofty praise the poem displays, and very far from the apollonian imagery employed in the *Essayes*' prefatory lyrics. An additional ironic feature in Montgomerie's sonnets 'In prais of Vranie' can be detected in the adoption of specific rhymes and rhyme-pairs from James's own sonnets. The arrangement of rhymes in Montgomerie's "Bellonas sone" (quoted in full above) mirrors James's own in a way that can hardly be attributed to mere coincidence. James's introductory sonnet in the *Essayes* reads as follows:

> Sonnet of the Authour to the Reader
>
> Sen for zour sake I wryte upon zour airt, 1
> Apollo, Pan, and ze ô Musis nyne,
> And thou, ô Mercure, for to help thy part
> I do implore, sen thou by thy ingyne,
> Nixt efter Pan had found the quhissil, syne 5
> Thou did perfyte, that quhilk he bot espyt.

[42] On another poet introducing satire in a panegyric, see Remien, "Jonson's Universal Parasite", 272.

And efter that made Argus for to tyne,
(quha kepit Io) all his windois by it.
Concurre ze Gods, it can not be denyit:
sen in zour airt of Poësie I wryte.
Auld birds to learn by teiching it is tryit:
Sic docens discam gif ze help to dyte.
Then Reidar sie of nature thou have pairt,
Syne laikis thou nocht, bot heir to reid the airt.[43]

James's sonnet contains a reference to the musical instrument of a god (Mercury's 'qhissil' in l. 5) which he proceeds to appropriate, similarly to what happens at the beginning of "Of Titans harp", suggesting again some kind of exchange between the two poets. The image of the author as it emerges from this sonnet seems to lend credibility to the portrayal of James in "Of Titans harp" as a rather arrogant young Apollo. Instead of humbly invoking some supernatural being (as would become the self-styled apprentice in the craft of 'making') the King here seems to demand from the gods of poetry such poetic powers as are his birth right (see in particular l. 9, 'Concurre ze Gods, *it can not be denyit*'). As for rhymes, in 'Sen for zour sake' there is an attempt at a difficult rhyme (espyit : by it : denyit : tryit in ll. 6, 8, 9 and 11), involving feminine endings (unstressed supernumerary syllables at the end of iambic pentameter lines). Thus, the rhyme involves both syllable 10 and 11 in each line. Despite the fact that these lines do testify to a degree of poetic deftness on the part of young James (feminine endings being a quaint device and one favoured in the writing of sonnets), the rhymes themselves are all predictable, involving verbs (in their Scots ending -it) and a pronoun. In the last two quatrains in "Of Titans harp", Montgomerie employs the same rhyme in the same lines

[43] James I, *Essayes*, sig. Kiiij.

(ll. 6, 8, 9 and 11). Unlike James though, Montgomerie abandons the metrical artifice of the feminine rhyme, which would have provided him with cheap rhyme-words. His lines all scan as plain pentameters, and consequently his rhyming positions are all stressed and, interestingly, occupied by different word categories (wit : it : Yit : hit , two verbs, a pronoun and an adverbial), a task admittedly more difficult than the lining up of verb endings. We can suppose with some degree of authority that the poets in James's circle would have been aware of this kind of stylistic quotation-game. In the Castalian environment, where some evidence exists for communal reading and public commenting of poems within the group, Montgomerie's use of James's rhymes can be considered intentionally ironic.[44]

Other points of contact between the two poets' sonnets related to the *Essayes* point in the direction of Montgomerie intentionally referencing the work of his patron with ironic intentions. The rhyming pair 'part : art' in the final couplet of "Bellonas sone", for instance, is also employed by James in "Sen for zour saik", where it is used in both ll. 1 : 3 and 13 : 14, in the two main positions in a sonnet as beginning- and end-rhyme (and reversed in an attempt at *variatio*). The rhyme-pair involves the key-concept of 'art' (*i.e.* poetic skill), that underlies much of

[44] Brady quotes a similar exchange, in which Jonson appropriates rhymes from James' poetry in order to be ironic. See Jennifer Brady, "Jonson's 'To King James': Plain Speaking in the 'Epigrammes' and the 'Conversations'", *Studies in Philology* 82 (1985): 380-98, 391. On the dimension of communal authorship among the Castalians, see for instance Dunnigan, who talks of a Jacobean 'collaborative coterie context' (*Eros and Poetry*, 83). Bawcutt, however, claims such assumptions are not supported by practical evidence (Priscilla Bawcutt, "The Authorship of James VI and I's *Amatoria*: The Manuscript Evidence", *English Manuscript Studies, c. 1450-1700* 15 (2009): 219-36.

the poetry in *Essayes* starting from the word-choices in the title ('essays'= 'proofs of skill', and 'prentice'= 'one who is learning a craft'). In Montgomerie's sonnet the rhyme-pair is the same (ll. 13 : 14), but the meaning is reversed to convey the poet's utter lack of ability (a form of the common modesty *tòpos*), in open contradiction with the display of poetic skill the stratagem affords.[45] According to several scholars, Montgomerie is to be regarded as the 'master' to which James is 'apprenticed' (*i.e.* the relation is one of official poetic tutorship, where the term 'apprentice' implies actual subordination) and the *Essayes* are the result of a combined effort of tutor and student.[46] If this was the case, Montgomerie's choice of words describing James 'wondering at his own wit' (almost comically surprised by his own genius, l. 6 in "Of Titans harp") may overshadow a claim to poetic recognition on the part of the poet. Moreover, Montgomerie's irony in the sonnets "In prais of Vranie" becomes even more poignant if we consider the more experienced poet as invested of a kind of authority 'different from the political' over his patron, on account of his literary competence.[47] This situation put Montgomerie in an uncomfortable position. Poetically, the self-styled 'apprentice' was subordinated to Montgomerie, while politically the same apprentice was also Montgomerie's all-powerful patron, and one that the poet could not afford to offend. The final couplet in Montgomerie's "Bellonas sone" (an appeal to James 'to take in good part' the poet's attempts at exag-

[45] For Jonson using 'modesty as a means of self-assertion', see Evans, "Frozen Maneuvers", 124.

[46] As suggested by George Stevenson, *Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, Edinburgh: STS, 1910, 198 and quoted by Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 51. See also Jack, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 7.

[47] Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 46.

geration and implicitly his mockery) can be read as a sign of the poet's uncomfortable compromise between conflicting claims.

3. *Conclusions*

Such an appeal was likely not merely rhetorical: as Parkinson reminds us in his introduction, mockery of the great could be a dangerous thing in sixteenth-century Scotland, even though invective poetry had a strong tradition and a wide circulation, exemplified by the contemporary literary production.[48] As can be inferred from the titles of two sonnets in his collection ("That he wrote not aganste the Madins of Edinburgh" and "The Poets Apologie to the Kirk of Edinburgh") Montgomerie himself occasionally thought he had put himself at risk of retaliation, and consequently felt the need to defend himself in verse.[49] As a poet, Montgomerie indulged frequently in irony, sarcasm and mockery. His 'Flytyng' against Patrick Hume of Polwarth, a rival poet, is part of a formalised exchange of invective in verse.[50] The 'Flytyng' seems to have been Montgomerie's original passport to court patronage and literary success and was often mentioned by James in their exchanges, as evidence that even such heavy-handed jokes were not out of place at court around the time the *Essayes* were pub-

[48] Parkinson, *Poems*, 8, reminds us how there was a concrete risk of having one's witticism taken seriously and of accusations of 'libell' or worse.
[49] See Parkinson, *Poems*, 131.
[50] For an overview, see Sally Mapstone, "Invective as Poetic: The Cultural Contexts of Polwarth and Montgomerie's Flyting", *Scottish Literary Journal* 26 (1999): 18-40. For the text, see Parkinson, *Poems*, 141-75.

lished.[51] In Montgomerie's relationship with the monarch, in particular, mockery and irony formed part of a friendly exchange, as proved by the existence of a piece such as the "Admonition".[52]

Nonetheless, such friendly relationship was complicated not only by the interplay between literary and political authority that has been highlighted above, but also by several other (personal, political, religious) factors. First, Montgomerie's reliance on the Crown is a good example of the economics of patronage, where poetic talent is exchanged for financial security or personal advancement. Despite being James's dependant, Montgomerie was never fully under the control of the King's poetic or political authority, and often trespassed on both counts, for instance with overly political verse, against which James had explicitly cautioned in his *Reulis*.[53] Secondly, the King and Montgomerie were on opposing sides regarding their religious beliefs and consequently their political allegiances. The King was a staunch Protestant, while Montgomerie's extended family continued to harbor Catholic and Marian sympathies through the Earl of Eglinton, and the poet himself almost certainly

[51] For the 'Flytyng' as the start Montgomerie's career, see the accounts by Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 75, and Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry*, 80.

[52] See Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*, 131 and Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry*, 97.

[53] Jack describes Montgomerie as 'rebellious to James' *Reulis*'; see Ronald D.S. Jack, "Petrarch and the Scottish Renaissance Sonnet", in *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 Years*, eds. Martin McLaughlin and Letizia Panizza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 263. Dunnigan also agrees that the poet 'transgresses against James in writing overly political verse' (*Eros and Poetry*, 142).

converted to Catholicism early in his life.[54] Montgomerie's allegiance to Esmeé Stewart, his first patron, pulled him in the same direction, and the poet has been suspected by contemporaries and moderns alike of being implicated in various Catholic plots.[55] To complicate matters further, the relationship between James and Montgomerie could also have had homoerotic overtones, that might have played a part in the King's early favoring of Montgomerie and, as some scholars have alleged, left visible traces in both poets' production.[56] Over the course of time, the combined effect of these differences seems to have strained the relationship between the monarch and the poet. In the latter half of the 1580s, when the chronic political instability of James's reign meant that a Catholic plot to seize the throne was a very real threat, the King's tolerance for open dissent was possibly at its lowest point.

The peculiar nature of the Scottish literary *milieu*, located somewhere between the public space of the court and the private dimension of the poetic brotherhood, hypothetically allowed poets like Montgomerie more freedom of wit, while at the same time making it more difficult to tell irony from trespassing. The greatest of Castalian poets died around 1598 financially destitute and in disgrace with his King and country, although James did not refuse to pay posthumous homage to his once-friend. It was only through his personal intervention that the poet's body could receive burial in Protestant ground.

---

[54] On the family network of Montgomerie, see Parkinson, *Poems*, 12; on his conversion to Catholicism, see Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 51-53.

[55] For an example of such plots, see Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry*, 85; Jack, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 5; and Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 84-86.

[56] Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*, 125-48.

The King's sonnet on Montgomerie's death is, as far as we know, the only public commemoration of his passing, and the only tribute produced inside the poetic 'band' he had once led.[57]

[57] On the death of Montgomerie, see Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie*, 192, and John Durkan, "The Date of Montgomerie's Death", *Innes Review* 34 (1983): 91-92. The sonnet, titled by its editors "An epithaphe for Montgomerie", begins 'What drousie sleepe doth syle your eyes allace' and is printed in Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 107-08.

Maria Elisa Montironi

Food Imagery in Robert Armin's *Foole upon Foole*

1. Introduction

Links between the themes of eating and drinking and the fool tradition are well established, as is the importance of food imagery in the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, due to a growing interest in culinary art in this period. In line with these fields of research, this paper aims to uncover the role of food and drink in the descriptions of fools and their jests by Robert Armin, and examines the presence of the same patterns of food imagery on the Renaissance stage. More precisely, this paper offers an investigation of the still-unexplored function of food in Armin's *Foole upon Foole*, and provides evidence of the occurrence of similar rhetorical devices in works produced by the companies that Armin joined as a successful comic actor, with particular attention to the Chamberlain's Men after 1599.[1]

Foole upon Foole is a jest book first published in 1600 under the pseudonym 'Clonnico de Curtanio Snuffe' (Snuff the Clown of the Curtain Theatre). Critics agree that this is the pen name of Robert Armin (1568-1615), a skilled author of popular prose and verse works,

[1] On this topic see James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005).

Published by The British Institute of Florence
ISBN (online) 978-88-907244-4-2

playwright, also known as 'Tarlton's adopted son',[2] or as the Lord Chamberlain's (later King's) Men's comic actor – that is, Shakespeare's leading comedian after William Kemp left the company in 1599.[3] In 1605 a slightly different version of *Foole upon Foole* was published, this time under the pseudonym 'Clonnico del Mondo Snuffe' (Snuff, the World's Clown – a reference to the Globe Theatre, where Armin was then working). Three years later, another edition appeared with the new title *A Nest of Ninnies*, under the author's real name.[4] This new version was intended as a 'philosophy of folly',[5] in which Armin added a dialogical framework to the previous text, with the introduction of the characters of the moralizing

[2] James Halliwell-Phillipps (James Orchard ed.), *Tarlton's Jests: And News out of Purgatory* (London: Shakespeare Society, 1844), 22. This work claims that Armin became Richard Tarlton's apprentice and that he was artistically adopted by the Queen's jester.

[3] On Armin's life and career see Charles S. Felver, "Robert Armin, Shakespeare's Fool: a Biographical Essay," *Kent State University Bulletin* (1961): 1-82; David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 136-63; Roberta Mullini, "'Pardon my folly in writing of folly': les ouvrages sur la folie de Robert Armin," in *Littérature et pathologie*, ed. Max Milner (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1989), 245-54; Chris Sutcliffe, "Robert Armin: Apprentice Goldsmith," *Notes and Queries* (1994): 503-4; Chris Sutcliffe, "The Canon of Robert Armin's Work: An Addition," *Notes and Queries* (1996): 171-75; Chris Sutcliffe, "Kempe and Armin: the Management of Change," *Theatre Notebook* (1996): 122-34; Alice Equestri, "*The Italian Taylor and His Boy* or what Armin did to Straparola," *Renaissance Studies* (2015): 1-20.

[4] On the differences between the two versions, see Roberta Mullini, "'These sixe parts of folly': Robert Armin's Moralising Anatomy of Fools' Jests'," *Theta XI, Théâtre Tudor* (2013): 23-40, 27-30.

[5] Ibid., 26.

philosopher, Sotto, and his *patient*, the World. Some new speeches, and a sophisticated epigraph belonging to humanist studies upon folly – 'Stultorum plena sunt omnia' – were also inserted.[6] This seems to be a direct reference, also present in the other versions, to the complexity of distinguishing between wit and folly, given the countless features shared by these two categories. An inscription appearing at the end of the first edition of *Foole upon Foole*, for instance, reads: 'Noli altum sapere', which can be interpreted as 'do not be proud', and suggests at once that one should neither be overconfident of one's wisdom nor avoid folly in life.

Robert Armin was well acquainted with both the sophisticated European Renaissance tradition of fool's literature and popular English folklore about fools. Moreover, while touring England as an actor, he is likely to have had first-hand experience of 'natural fools' (people with mental disabilities), as well as of those practised in the art of playing the fool intentionally in order to entertain (the so-called 'artificial fools'). For these reasons, Armin was able to provide the reader of his *Foole upon Foole* with portrayals of six different examples of fools and their jesting anecdotes.[7] These stories serve to blur the boundaries between wisdom and folly, and from the beginning of the book, Armin informs the reader that they are about the fools' 'lives, humours and behaviours, with their want of wit in their shew of wisdom', and specifies that 'tis no wonder for [him] to set downe

[6] 'All things are full of fools', from Marcus Tullius Cicero's *Ad familiares*: IX, 22, 4.

[7] In *A Nest of Ninnies*, Sotto gives allegorized readings of the actions of six fools, and links them with as many human weaknesses. This work bears, in fact, some typical features of the morality plays (see Mullini, "'These sixe parts of folly'").

fooles naturall, when wise men before theyle be unprofitable, will seeme fooles artificiall'.[8]

All the six fools were real people living in the sixteenth century, who were either domestic fools or fools supported by a court or charity. The author shows particular concern for the historical authenticity of his writing, providing accurate contextual information for his accounts. He mentions, for instance, the names of the places and people involved, gives (broad) chronological references, and sometimes even claims to be a witness to, or suggests that the reader will know of, the people and events he depicts. Despite Armin's efforts, however, some studies have found his facts to be not always reliable.[9]

The protagonists of the stories are identified in the title page in an impersonal way, that is, not by their proper names or nicknames, but by their particular physical or mental characteristics such as 'lean', 'merry', 'fat', 'flat', 'clean', and 'verry'. It is not until later in the text that they are revealed to be Jacke Oates, a 'flat foole naturall'; Leanard, a 'lean foole'; Will Sommers, 'a merry foole [...] the king's naturall jester'; Jemy Camber, a 'fatt foole naturall'; Jack Miller, 'a cleane foole'; and, finally, John of the Hospitall, 'a verry foole'. Although only three of the six are explicitly described as 'natural', most likely all

[8] Robert Armin, *Foole upon Foole* (London, 1600). Fac. Rpt. *The Collected Works of Robert Armin*. Introd. John P. Feather. 2 vols. (London-New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972, vol. 1), A2r. The following references to this book will be given within parentheses in the text together with the relevant signature (e.g. *FF*, A2r).

[9] See John Southworth, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court* (Stroud Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998).

those depicted were natural fools.[10] This makes *Foole upon Foole*, as Sarah Carpenter writes in her essay on the aesthetics and reception of natural fools in Tudor England, 'an invaluable source of information, not only about the fools and their behaviour, but about their relationship with those who patronized them, the ways spectators reacted to them and the responses that Armin solicits from his readers'.[11] Further, *Foole upon Foole* is an important resource to study the characterization of fools on stage. Armin himself borrowed from his work to build the fool figure in his play *The Two Maids of More-clacke*, and since research has demonstrated the collective nature of the production of early modern drama, the role of Armin in the production and composition of Shakespeare's plays can also be investigated.[12]

---

[10] There are doubts about the fact that Will Sommers was a natural fool, on this topic see Patrick McDonagh, *Idiocy. A Cultural History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 140-41. The work under scrutiny here shows interesting details in this sense: Will Sommers is represented as smart, having linguistic intelligence and wit. He can rely on the king's cooperation for his jests and he is called 'naturall jester' by Armin, not 'foole naturall', as for example Jack Oates is.

[11] Sarah Carpenter, "Laughing at Natural Fools," *Theta XI, Théâtre Tudor* (2013): 3-22, 7.

[12] See Henry Frederick Lippincott, "King Lear and the Fools of Robert Armin," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26, No. 3 (1975): 243-53; Roberta Mullini, *Corruttore di parole. Il fool nel teatro di Shakespeare* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1983); David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Bart Van Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Alice Equestri, "*Armine... thou art a foole and knaue": The Fools of Shakespeare's Romances* (PhD diss., University of Padua, 2014). On the theme of dramatic authorship from the perspective of performers see Nora Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), in particular pages 16-53; and Richard Preiss, *Clowning and Author-*

1.1 Food, Fools, and Carnivalesque Laughter

By happy coincidence the words 'food' and 'fool' differ by just one phoneme. This accidental linguistic match is not the only similarity between the two terms, which are often associated together in a thematic relationship. The link between fools and food is best explained through Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. When the well-known Russian scholar studied Rabelais' work and investigated the origins of laughter in medieval and Renaissance culture, he identified carnival as the main ritual of mirth, with inherited elements from ancient pagan festivities focused on the humorous aspects of life. During carnival there is a politically meaningful temporary suspension of rules and of social hierarchies and, simultaneously, a celebration of natural instincts and physical impulses.

Introducing her English translation of Bakhtin's work, Hélène Iswolsky describes carnival as 'people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter [...] a festive life'.[13] Folly, eating, and drinking are obviously crucial features of this limited, cheerful, 'revolutionary' time. Eating and drinking in particular are recognized by Bakhtin as 'the most significant manifestations of the grotesque body'.[14] They are metaphors of the human will to experience, control, and, ultimately, change the world. Consequently, fools' attitude towards food, which is free

ship in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[13] Hélène Iswolsky, introduction to Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 1-58, 8.

[14] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 281.

and excessive, is one of the main indicators of their being outside the rules and constraints of society.[15]

In the still medieval outlook of Sebastian Brant's 1494 *Narrenschiff* (as well as in *The Ship of Fools*, Barclay's English translation/adaptation, published in 1509),[16] which can be considered to be the first European example of folly literature, and thus, to some extent, Armin's model,[17] a strong association is shown to exist between fools and excessive eating and drinking. Of the sinners represented on the title page, for instance, one prominent figure is depicted as drinking immoderately (see Fig. 1). Gluttony is, however, often condemned in Barclay's version of Brant's work. Chapter One, in par-

[15] For an interesting study on the cultural roots of the links between gluttony and immorality see Susan E. Hill, *Eating to Excess: The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011).

[16] Brant's *Narrenshiff* (a didactic-satirical poem about folly, made up of a prologue and 112 chapters, each focused on a contemporary social evil and accompanied by a woodcut, probably by Albrecht Dürer) was first available in English in 1509 in two different versions simultaneously: one in verse and Chaucerian stanzas, composed by Alexander Barclay; the other in prose, written by Henry Watson. As Nigel Harris writes, 'neither of them could be described as translations of the German *Narrenshiff* [although] they contain imitations of the original woodcuts'. Nigel Harris, "Sebastian Brant," in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English*, ed. Olive Classe, Vol. 1 (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), 178-79, 178. Quotations will be drawn from Barclay's version since it was the more popular one in England in Armin's time. The woodcuts in the figures are taken from the same source: Alexander Barclay, *The Ship of Fools*, Vol. 1 (London: Henry Sotheran & Co, 1874).

[17] See Charles E. Herford, *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century* (Abingdon: Cambridge University Press, 1886), 375-77.

ticular, is entirely devoted to 'glotons and dronkardes',[18] who are described as morally evil: '[V]yle in goddes sight / [they] Shall hardly escape the weyght of pouertye' (see Fig. 2).[19] The same sins are condemned in the chapter 'Of the foly of Cokes, butlers, and other offycers of housholde',[20] where these servants are represented in another woodcut as working under the yoke of a fool, and described as:

> [N]at content amonge them selfe to spende
> Theyr maysters goodes in suche lyke glotony
> But also for other glotons they do sende
> And strange dronkardys to helpe out theyr vylany
> By whose helpe they may the vessellis make dry
> And he that hath way to drynke at eche worde
> Amonge these Caytyfs is worshyppyd as a lorde.[21]

Similarly, in the chapter entitled 'Of folysshe exchanges', it reads:

> What shall I say or of the maners wryte
> Of dronkardes or glotons Whiche without mesure
> Onely in theyr wombes set theyr hole delyte
> Corruptynge and chargynge them self beyonde nature
> So whan the body can nat suche rule indure
> Theyr lyfe they ende and oft by deth sodayne
> And for this labour rewardyd with hell payne.[22]

This work appears to provoke 'bitter laughter' at fools for didactic purposes, as folly, a threat to rationality, is

[18] Barclay, *The Ship of Fools*, 126.
[19] Ibid. The woodcut which accompanies this part depicts rude fools eating and drinking to excess.
[20] Ibid., Vol. 2, 90-94.
[21] Ibid., Vol. 2, 92.
[22] Ibid., Vol. 2, 141.

presented as a thoroughly deplorable thing. Whereas Erasmus, for instance, in his *Praise of Folly* (1511), shows a less binary and more sophisticated awareness of the complexity involved in discriminating between wisdom and foolishness, Brant's treatment of folly is overtly negative.[23] Also of significance is the so-called Grobian literature of the sixteenth century. These canonical texts of German origin were inspired by Brant's imaginary new Saint Grobian, who appears in the *Narrenschiff* chapter entitled 'Von groben Narren' (of Rough Fools). Here gluttony and bad table manners are used as tools of 'pre-Reformation clerical satire',[24] as well as hilarious *ex-negativo* examples for readers.[25]

Such a negative attitude towards folly does not, in fact, belong in Armin's Renaissance world, or at least not entirely. Indeed he ridicules those who want to appear irreprehensible (and despise laughter), ironically telling the reader about a demure woman who tried to reject fun:

> [B]ecause shee would not seeme too immodest with laughing, for such is the humour of many, that thinke to make all, when God knowes they marre all: so she,

[23] See Georges Minois, *Storia del riso e della derisione* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 2004 [2000]), 311. Erasmus' work has been available in English since 1549.

[24] Barbara Correll, *The End of Conduct: Grobianus and the Renaissance Text of the Subject* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 55. Friedrich Dedekind's *Grobianus und Grobiana, de morum simplicitate, libri tres* (1549), which can be considered the first example of Grobian literature, was translated into English in 1605.

[25] See Elisa Pontini, "Esskultur der Frühen Neuzeit: zum Grobianismus," in *Schöne Kunst und reiche Tafel: über die Bilder der Speisen in Literatur und Kunst*, eds. Sandra Abderhalden, Michael Dallapiazza, Lorenzo Macharis, Annette Simonis (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015), 99-114.

> straining herselfe, though inwardly she laughed heartily, gave out such an earnest of her modesty, that all the Table rung of it. Who is that? sayes one: not I, sayes another; but by her cheekes you might find guilty *Gilberto* [...] (*FF*, E1r.-E1v)

In the Renaissance tradition, folly and laughter are seen in a more positive light as providing a balance between rationality and idealism. Folly is even praised as a good perspective from which to reflect upon life. From this point of view, fools may be deemed wiser than 'ordinary' people. The shift in attitude towards folly can be detected, for instance, in Hieronymus Bosch's *Ship of Fools* (c. 1500, see Fig. 3), inspired by Brant's work of the same title, which depicts monks and nuns unrestrainedly and extravagantly eating and drinking, while, ironically, the only character wearing motley is set apart from the others, humbly sipping from a bowl, in quiet indifference to what is happening on the ship.

As demonstrated below, food in Armin's *Foole upon Foole* is both a carnivalesque force and a moralizing symbol. It is presented as an inevitable component of the life and the language of fools, be they devilish, innocent, or wise; to be laughed at or with.

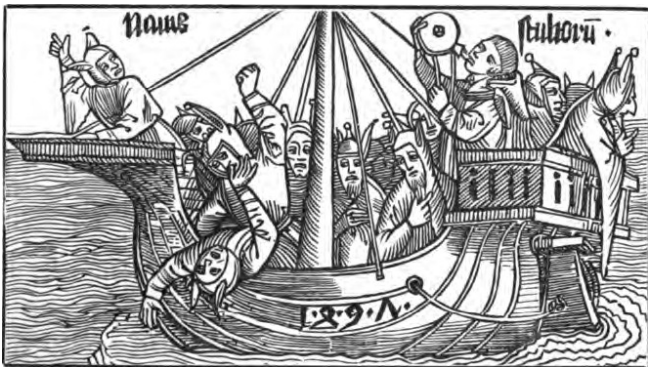


Fig. 1: Alexander Barclay, *The Ship of Fools*, 1509 (London: Sotheran & Co., 1874, frontispiece)

Fig. 2: Alexander Barclay, "Of Glotons and Dronkardes", 1509 (from *The Ship of Fools*, London: Sotheran & Co., 1874, 92)

Fig. 3: Hieronymus Bosh, *The Ship of Fools*, c. 1500[26]

[26] © 2011 Musée du Louvre / Martine Beck-Coppola: http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/ship-fools-or-satire-debauched-revelers (accessed 20 September 2016).

2. 'To feed their own minds, and the gazers eyes': Occurrence, Significance, and Function of the Food of Fools

2.1 Food in *Foole upon Foole*: Paratextual Elements

In order to explain the differences between natural and artificial fools, Robert Armin writes:

> Naturall fooles are prone to selfe conseit,
> Fooles artificiall, with their wits lay waite
> To make themselues fooles, likeing their disgusies,
> To feede their owne mindes, and the gazers eyes.
> (*FF*, B2r)

The above quote not only calls attention to the wit of artificial fools, but also draws an interesting metaphoric parallel between nutrition and the role of the fool. Stretching this idea further, it is possible to identify a link between the metaphoric use of food and drink and different connotations of nourishment, such as 'food' for thought, in the world of fools.

Allusions to eating and drinking are present throughout *Foole upon Foole*, including the paratext. For instance, the opening dedication to the printer and binder is phrased as a toast: 'To the Printer health, to the Binder wealth: and to both, both', ending with: 'So hoping all will be well, I drinke to thee in a cruse of pure bottle Ale, I prethee pledge me' (*FF*, A2r). This dedication to drinking perfectly sets the scene for the topsy-turvy world of fools. It also presents the book from the start, not only as a collection of stories about a succession of different fools, but also as a treatise upon the fool, written by a fool. The opening dedication also includes a metaphor linked to food production. It opens with: 'Perfect Printer or imperfect Sower, the one I desire, but the other not

require' (ibid.), and includes a sort of epigraph of rhyming lines with a biblical flavour: 'He that made me doth perswade thee,[27] to print pure, / With increase of care to work fayre, and to sow sure' (*FF*, A2r). It thus seems an entreaty to the printer not only to take care with his task of printing, but also to 'sow', or promote the book well.

There are more numerous and more explicit references to food and drink in *A Nest of Ninnies* than in *Foole upon Foole*. The rhetorical *captatio benevolentiae* strategy (aimed at gaining the reader's goodwill), employed as a remedy for possible dislike of the book in the dedication to 'the generous Gentlemen of Oxenford, Cambridge, and the Innes of Court', reads: '[A]n universitie fire in the Winter, and a Temple pot may warme good licour, in which you may drink to me'.[28] Food- and drink-related metaphors and similes are also used extensively in the framed dialogues between Sotto and the World in order to make metatextual references or to help to explain abstract concepts. From the beginning, Sotto uses food-related metaphors to help to explain to the World – who is ill because of her life of debauchery, which includes 'noone banquets' (ibid.) – that his accounts are not toned down: '[L]ooke for such entertainement as my folly fits you with, that is, *sharp sauce* with *bitter dyet*; no *sweetnes* at al, for that were to *mingle*

[27] 'He that made me' is a common phrase in the Bible, as for example in John 5:11: 'He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk'. From now on, quotations from the Bible are from the King James Version (*The Holy Bible*, London: Robert Barker, 1611).

[28] Robert Armin, *A Nest of Ninnies* (London, 1608). Fac. Rpt. *The Collected Works of Robert Armin*. Introd. John P. Feather, A2v. The following references to this book will be given within parentheses in the text together with the relevant signature (e.g. *NN*, A2v).

your pils with sugar' (*NN*, A3v, my italics). Additionally, he introduces the six fools as follows: 'where were they nursed in folly? fed with the flottin milke of nicetie and wantonnesse [...] farre from the rellish of right breede; and it is hard that the taste of one apple should distaste the whole lumpe of this defused Chaios'. To these words, the World reacts 'queasie stomackt, as one fed with the earth's nectar and delicates with the remembrance of her owne appetite' (*NN*, A3v). These metaphors seem clearly to present the stories and characters of the text as food to be devoured, but they also relate to nurture.

All this is brought together in Armin's words in the *Conclusio*, where numerous food- and drink-related allusions are made, primarily with a metatextual function, but also in order to convey an important social message:

> Thus, gentlemen as the kinde hostess salutes her guests, saying You see your cheere and you are welcome, so say I. It may bee you like it not. I am sorrier, you will say these *sallets were ill drest*, like enough, but *good stomacks digest anything, and that it was a dry feast*: the Cinnick bad not the world so much as *drinck*: true, a worldling right, who as the word is, *Drinck* before you goe, sets the cart before the horse and sayes, goe before you *drinke*, why may he not in his cell? his betters will. I haue seene it in Gentlemens Cellers, but I cry you mercy, there I think it is *drinck* till you cannot goe. (*NN*, G4v, my italics)

Thus, as has been suggested before, references to food and drink are used to comment not only on the aesthetics of the text, but also on the questionable moral life of 'gentlemen', who may think themselves superior to fools, but may very often not be.

2.2 Food in *Foole upon Foole*: The Flat Fool, the Fat Fool, and the Lean Fool

While the themes of food and drinking may simply be hinted at or used as metaphors in the paratextual elements of Armin's work, they are pivotal to many of the stories of the six fools portrayed within the text. As far as the flat fool,[29] Jacke Oates, is concerned, the reader is both directly and indirectly told about Jacke's love of drinking (above all) and eating from the introductory description: 'His underlip so big t'might sweepe amanger: / [...] when a drunke, still as a laught and Iearde, / You would smile to see the foole suck in his beard. / […] Big was his belly' (*FF*, A3r).

The first episode of Jacke Oates's life does not revolve around food, but there is nonetheless a reference to the convivial value of drinking: '[Y]our drinke Sir knave made them friends' (*FF*, A4r). In the episode 'How a Ministrell became a foole artificiall, and had Jack Oates his reward for his labour' (*FF*, A4v), references to food are used to describe the context of the story from a chronological and social point of view. The anecdote takes place at Christmas, 'when brawne is in season' (ibid.), in the rich house of a gallant knight, 'where Boefe, Beer and Bread was no niggard Amongst all the pleasures provided' (*FF*, B1r). Furthermore, there is in this story a hilarious moment supplied by a food-themed punch line, when Oates tells the knight and all the people in the room 'that a Country wench in the Hall had eaten

[29] In *The Honest Hore* (1604) by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, Fustigo is called by George a 'flat fool' (3.1.115), punning with the different meanings of 'flat', that is 1) brainless and 2) downright. See Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds., *Thomas Middleton. The Collected Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 305.

Garlicke, and there was seventeene men poisoned with kissing her' (*FF*, B1v). Renaissance people inherited from the Romans the idea that garlic could provide the eater with the forcefulness of the aggressive and bellicose Mars, but in this case the power to kill simply comes clearly from the smell emanated by this herb once digested.[30] Ironically enough, garlic, which was believed to be a remedy for a wide range of ailments, is here described as death-dealing.[31]

Another entirely food-based episode must be considered for the purpose of this paper: 'How Jacke Oates eate up a Quince Pye being of choyse provided for Sir William'. The cook in Jacke Oates's house, where the 'sumptuous Feast' is taking place, is asked by his lady 'to make her a Quince Pye of purpose for Sir Williams own eating'. It is stressed that this is a challenging task as the fruit is out of season. After searching for quinces in all the main towns, the lady sends her servants to Lincoln 'to buy up many Quinces ready preserved at Pothecaries, which he had, thogh with great cost' (*FF*, B2r).[32] To highlight the links between gluttony and fools, it seems important to report that, during the banquet, the flat fool

[30] See Silvia Malaguzzi (Brian Phillips trans.), *Food and Feating in Art* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 202.

[31] On the usage of garlic in medicine see Pulok K. Mukherjee, "Plant Products with Hypocholesterolemic Potentials", *Advances in Food and Nutrition Research,* 47 (2003): 277-323, esp. 318-20.

[32] For Renaissance recipes of quince cakes and preserved quinces see A.W., *A Book of Cookrye: Very necessary for all such as delight therin* (London: Edward Allde, 1591). The book is available at http://jducoeur.org/Cookbook/Cookrye.html (accessed 1 September 2016). On the use of distillation to preserve fruit and on the positive associative meanings of the techniques to prolong the life of food see Wendy Wall, "Distillation: Transformations in and out of the kitchen", in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare*, ed. Joan Fitzpatrick (London: Ashgate, 2010), 89-104, 97.

Jacke Oates does not eat nor drink, which surprises his knight a lot, because Jacke is fond of his 'licquor'. And since the fool states he has a 'payne' in his mouth, a 'barber'[33] is sent to check his health, but apparently there are no causes for his ache. The fool even refuses to walk and to lie down; he only wants to stand 'by the kitchen fire'. The real reason for this unusual behaviour is that 'his mouth hung for the Quince Pye' (*FF*, B2v).

Indeed, he is waiting for the pie to be ready, and when, after being drawn out of the oven, it is left unattended because additional sugar is needed, the flat fool steals it. However, as he makes away with it, the pie burns 'his belly', and he jumps into the broad moat of the garden in order to eat it (ibid.). After the theft is discovered the knight invites everybody to see what Jacke Oates is doing, and they 'laught, and ran to the windows, to see the jest' (*FF*, B3r). Indeed, what is offered to the guests is a real show:

> Jacke fedde and feeding greedly (more to anger the Cooke, then disapointe Sir William)[34] ever as he burnt his mouth with haste, dipt the Pye in the water to coole it: O Sayes the Cooke, it is Sir Williams owne Pye sirra: O saies Jacke hang thee and Sir Willy too I care not, it is mine now: save Sir William some cries one, save my Ladie some sayes another: by James not a bit sayes Jacke, and eate it up all, to the wonder of the beholders, who never knew him eate so much before, but drink ten times more: at length out comes Jacke dropping dry, and goes to get fire to dry him: the Knight and the rest

[33] 'Barber' stands here for barber-surgeon, that is a medical practitioner in Medieval and Renaissance England.

[34] At the beginning of the episode the reader is told that 'Jacke Oates could never abide the cooke, by reason that he would scalde him out of the Kitchen' (*FF*, B2r).

> all laught a good at the jest, not knowing how to mend it. (*FF*, B3r)

The cook, rather than Oates, is then sacked for impertinently blaming others for letting the fool enter the kitchen. The fool, 'knowing he had offended', in order to try to deflect the blame, 'tels a jest (for it was his manner so to doe) how a young man brake his Codpiece point and let all be seene that God sent him, or such fooleries' (ibid.). When asked why he wished to eat that particular pie, Oates tells Sir William that he is 'rich enough to buy more'. The knight, 'perceiving the fooles envie' (ibid.), then reinstates the cook. The fool is not, however, said to be punished for his misdeed as one would expect; on the contrary he is pardoned, not only because he is entertaining, but also because his antics have taught the knight the lesson that riches should be shared.

Hence the flat fool, albeit perhaps inadvertently, is shown while offering wise counsel to his lord. The *status quo* is ultimately restored, but only after Sir William is made aware of the possible consequences of major social differences, at least as far as the distribution of food is concerned. Indeed, from the outset of the chapter the reader is informed that Oates 'would feede the poore few fools are such, / Which made him to belou'd of poore and rich' (*FF*, A3v). A similar sense of wit and a concern for social equality is also to be found in the character of Will Sommers, Henry VIII's jester, who will be discussed later below.

The second fool described by Armin is the fat Jemy Camber, James VI's fool (until 1603). He is one of the most interesting characters in this collection of stories from the perspective of the study of food in literature. His size and the fact that '[t]o eat his meat he lov'd, and got by hap' (*FF*, B3v), make it clear that eating is his

passion. He also wears a very particular hat, with a pearl spoon on it, like one of the fools in Peter Bruegel's *The Fight between Carnival and Lent* (1559, see Fig. 4), who sports a less precious wooden spoon in his hat. Together with the 'rich and good' rings, which this fat fool wears on his big hands, and the 'chayne of Golde' on his neck, the pearl spoon may be a sign of his 'gentle bloud' and his belonging to a royal household (ibid.). Despite his love of food, however, not all his stories revolve entirely around this theme, but references to food are included in all his jests, and fun is often made of his obesity.

At the beginning of Camber's first story, the king calls two doctors to make his fool a 'tall little slender man'. Many remedies are tried, including 'the purging of the Sea', but 'Phisicke could not alter nature', and thus he remains looking like a 'S.Vincentes Turnip, thicke and round' (*FF*, B4r). Another jest tells of how, after Jemy has drunk wine with the king, butter is hidden under the saddle of 'this fat foole', tricking him into believing, despite the cool weather, that he has 'swet almost to death and never knew the reason' (*FF,* C1r). In another food-related episode Camber, after sleeping on an empty stomach, awakes to find 'meate [...] and a choppin of wine', which were secretly put there by the king's servants, but which he believes to be the product of a miracle proving that 'heaven was gentler then earth' (*FF*, C2r-v). Camber also washes his feet with beer and soaks them in butter in order to be ready for a race with the king's footman, during which the two rivals run 'as swift as a pudding would creepe' (*FF*, C2v). Finally, a 'mired drink' is used 'to cast him in a sleepe' (ibid.): under such 'ether', he is carried to the top of the hill and led to believe he has won the competition.

Fig. 4: Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
The Fight Between Carnival and Lent, 1559, detail.[35]

[35] Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna), ©KHM-Museumsverband, www.khm.at/de/object/320722549d/ (accessed 15 September 2016)

The only story entirely focused on his gluttony is 'How Jemy Camber gave five Crownes for a Sallet of an atchison price, which in our money is three farthings' (ibid.). The anecdote shows Camber, through his folly, losing all his money in return for a 'sallet'. The conclusion of the story is telling, for it reveals interesting information about Renaissance cuisine, as well as a king's affection for his fool:

> My fat foole goes home to eate his Sallet, and invites the King to a deere dish, and made him laugh hartily at the *jest*: the King calls for the Winiger to his Sallet, because his sweete meate should have sower sauce,[36] and perswaded him it was well bought, otherwise the foole had repented his bargaine, it was his manner to cry for his money againe, and without it all the Court could not quiet him. (*FF*, C1v, my italics)

The figure whose life anecdotes are most focused on the themes of food and eating is the lean fool, Leanard. Interestingly enough, he is also the fool most openly associated with vice, sin, and many devilish features, as the opening lines devoted to him demonstrate:

> He [is] lean as plagu'd with want:
> Yet giuen more unto swearing then they two [the fat and the flat fools].
> [...]
> Leane like to envy [...]

[36] This kind of dressing and the taste for herbs, spices and sour flavours was typical of the refined cuisine of the time. On this topic see, among others, Gilly Lehmann, "At The Dramatists' Table: The Climax and Decline of a Mannerist Cuisine in England, 1580-1630", in *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 29 (2012): 13–29.

[...] one squint eye,[37]
And as he goes he holdes his necke awry:
One hand stands crooked[38] and the other right,
Big armes, small waste, his body light.

His knees sweld big, his legs are great,
His foote is long, good stomacke to his meate:
Behinde well made, in briefe all partes,
Fitly apply'd are unto his desertes.

He stoopes a little, and he bends his necke,
Ready and willing he is at ones becke:
Drinke he will ever, and indure much paine,
Being made of purpose long and leane.
[...]
Few takes delight in him or joyes,
He is so fraught with envy not with toyes:
Worke he will or anything hee'l doe,
But spoyle more in one day, then mend in two. (*FF*, C4r)

Armin thus stresses Leanard's physicality. He also, however, ascribes attributes similar to the devil's to this fool and associates him with the deadly sin of Envy.[39] Accordingly, his deeds are shown to be driven by envy as well as by his own 'wilfull will to goe forward in folly' (*FF*, D1r). Humour derives only from the fool's ridicule

[37] It seems important to underline that the adjective 'squint' is associated with both strabismus and ill-will.

[38] Here, as well, polysemy is present: the adjective 'crooked' means both to have an ill-formed body and to be dishonest.

[39] Suffice it to mention Christopher Marlowe's description of Envy in *Doctor Faustus*, published in 1604 but first performed in 1592: 'I am *lean* with seeing others eat' (Scene 7.122-4, my italics). *Doctor Faustus. A Text*, ed. Roma Gill (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).

(as is often the case with evil characters in medieval theatre).[40]

In the first episode the reader is told that once Leanard played 'at slide groate', a game of ill repute, after dinner, when his 'belly was full', without 'peeces or counters' (*FF*, C4v).[41] Although he plays alone, he is depicted as speaking vehemently to his imaginary rival, to the extent that one could think 'two swaggerers were swearing God from heaven' (ibid.).[42]

Leanard's insatiable appetite is described in an episode where his voracity leads him to commit robbery:

---

[40] See Charlotte Spivack, *The Comedy of Evil on Shakespeare's Stage* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1978).

[41] This game, which was prohibited by statute, is better known as 'shove-groat' and was invented in the reign of Henry VIII. See John Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities*. Vol. 2. (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1841), 259.

[42] Also Leanard's tendency to be alone, and the fact that he sleeps alone in his wheelbarrow using his broom as a pillow, can be linked to the features of Envy. In *Doctor Faustus* this vice states: 'O that there would come a famine through all the world, that all might die, and I live alone; then thou should'st see how fat I would be' (Marlowe, Scene 7.124-6). There are in this episode other clear hints at Leanard being devilish, for example when one is told that 'the prayer-bookes they flie into the fire' (*FF*, C4v), or when Leanard is described after the game as follows:

> [H]is pate broken his face scratcht, and legge out of joint, as a number say to this houre, that a is a play fellow for the devil, and in game thay cannot agree: but that is otherwise, for, in the great Hall, at the servingmens request hee will play by himselfe, if they will not play with him; and who so playes with him, though they play for nothing, and with nothing, al is one they must fal out [...] (*FF*, C4v-D1r)

The point made here is also confirmed by one of Sotto's comments in *A Nest of Ninnies*, where he describes the actions similar to Leanard's as 'thicke doings for the divel's dyet' (*NN*, C1v).

> This leane greedy foole having a stomack,[43] and seeing the butler out of the way, his appetite was such, as loath to tarry, breakes open the Dairy house, eates and spoyles new cheesecurdes, cheese-cakes, overthrows creame bowles, and having filled his belly, and knew he had done evill, gets him gone to Mansfield in Sherwood, as one fearefull to bee at home: the Maydes came home that morning from milking, and finding such a masaker of their Dairy, almost mad, thought a yeeres wages could not make amendes. (*FF*, D1r)

In another story, Leanard misinterprets his master's reference to 'goodness' in praise of a hawk as if it meant that it is 'farre better meate then a Turkey or a Swan'. He was thus 'very desirous to eate of the same: and unknown goes downe, and sodainely from the Pearch snatch the Hawke, and having wrong off her necke begins to besiedge that good morsel, but with so good a courage, that the fethers had almost choakt him' (*FF*, D2r). On discovering this, the gentleman at first would like to hang the fool, but after Leanard complains that the hawk was not so good as it had been said to be, he is 'enforced [...] to laugh at his simplicitie', and 'Being glad to make himself merry, jested on it ever after' (ibid.), assisted by a short rhyme written by a friend of his:

> Fooles feede without heede; vnhappy be their feeding,
> Whose heede being in such speed, attempted without (heeding:
> May they choke that prouoke, appetite by pleasure,
> When they eate forbidden meate, and feede so out of (measure. (ibid.)

[43] The Shakespearean use of the same expression and the witty punning on it by Launcelot in *The Merchant of Venice* are analysed in Mullini, *Corruttore di parole*, 153.

The episode is hilarious because the fool eats a bird without preparing it as foodstuff. Moreover, the hawk, as a bird of prey, was considered an undesirable meat by Renaissance dietary authors, eaten by uncivil and wild people.[44]

In *A Nest of Ninnies*, Sotto turns the behaviour of this fool into a food-themed allegory:

> By the third jest we observe a greedinesse in leane folly, that, so good a report come in their way, these eate up hawke feathers [and] all to put it by, though they choake in the deede. Heerupon comes in leane envy, swallowes fat bits, I mean honest manners, and makes them stirril of all good meanes, as the Lawyer the poore clyants plow pence, the cittie the country commodities, that under shew of leannesse they fat themselves to the ribs, good hold for flesh hookes at the generall waste. (*NN*, Er)

The last episode devoted to this fool focuses on his love of drinking which has dire consequences for him. Leanard is depicted trying to douse with beer a fire he has started in his beloved wheelbarrow,[45] making the situation worse, getting drunk, burning himself, and causing others to get burnt in the process.

2.3 Food in *Foole upon Foole*: the Clean Fool, the Merry Fool, and the Very Fool

A tale involving food is the first to be told about the stuttering clean fool, Jack Miller. One day he finds himself

[44] See Joan Fitzpatrick, "'I Must Eat My Dinner', Shakespeare's Foods: from Apples to Walrus", in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare*, ed. Joan Fitzpatrick, 127-43, 139-41.

[45] In his wheelbarrow he did everything, even 'set up meat for his belly' (*FF*, D2).

in a gentleman's house during a banquet. While a company of players is entertaining the guests, Jack is in the kitchen together with the boy actor of the company, who persuades him to steal the pies ready to be served. But the oven is still hot and Jack burns his head, hair, face and beard. Eventually, the player is unable to act for laughing. But this does not spoil the audience's recreation, because the story of Jack Miller and the sight of his burnt face is ultimately more hilarious than the play. Armin uses a drink-based simile to illustrate Miller's ridiculous countenance: '[He] lookt like the Pater of the Ale-fat' (*FF*, D3v).

After being singed in the oven, Jack Miller is called to another house to sing his song 'Dirries fayre', with ensuing mirth caused by his inability to pronounce the bilabial sounds [b] and [p]. In the last of Miller's anectodes this impediment is exploited by one of the gentlemen in the house, who has him speak words starting with these phonemes and referring to food:

> [N]oting his humour that b and p plagued him, bad him say this after him, which Jack said he would doe: Buy any flawre, *pasties, pudding pyes, plum pottage, or pescods*. O! it was death to Jack to doe it; but like a willing foole he fell to it. Buy any, buy any fla, flaw, *p p p pasties, and p p p pudding, p p p pyes, p p p &c.* And ever as hee hit the on word, hee would pat with his finger on the other hand, that more and more it would make a man burst with laughing almost to see his action: sometime he would be pronouncing one word, while one might goe to the doore and come againe. But euer after gentiles would request him to speake that, where before, Derryes fayre was all his song. (*FF*, E1r, my italics)[46]

[46] Later on Armin calls this jest 'the new speech of the pees' (ibid.), explaining that it became his most requested act.

The second of Miller's anecdotes also focuses on food, when he is asked to bring a new year present (a basket of almond butter) to a gentleman. After getting himself dirty and washing himself too fervently, however, he also manages to '[wash] his almond butter so long, that the butter was washt away' (*FF*, D4v).

The penultimate fool depicted by Armin is the famous Will Sommers. One of his witty riddles for the king includes dirty references to digestion:

> Now tel me saies Wil (if you can), what it is [that] being borne without life, head, nose, lip or eye, and yet runs terribly roaring throgh the world till it dyes: This is a wonder quoth the king, and no question, and I know it not. Why quoth Will it is a fart. At this the king laught hartily, and was exceeding merry. (*FF*, E4r)

Another suggests that hygiene connected to food might be a mark of character:[47]

> [W]hat is the cleanliest trade in the world? Mary, sayes the King, think a Comfetmaker, for he deales with nothing but pure ware, and is attyred cleane in white linnen when hee sels it. No Harry saies Will you are wide, what say you, then quoth the King: mary sayes Will I say a durt dauber: out on it, sayes the K[ing], that is the foulest, for hee is durty up to the elboes. I saies Wil, but then hee washes them cleane againe, and *eaets his meate cleanly enough*. I promise thee Wil saies the k[ing], thou hast a *pretty foolish wit*. (Ibid., my italics)

Sommers's humour is subtler than that of the other five fools. The above-mentioned riddle, for example, contains

[47] This story is interesting with respect to the Grobian literature tradition of the time, mentioned above.

the implicit message that having numerous faults of which you are conscious is better than having a few faults of which you are unconscious.

Like Jack Oates's story of the quince pie, Sommers's third tale shows food as a marker of wealth. The king and his jester are invited to dinner at Windsor with Cardinal Wolsey. A number of 'poore people' are just outside waiting 'to be *serued of alms*' and salute Will respectfully (*FF*, E4r, my italics). He is pleased with this and asks the king for 10 pounds in order to pay the cardinal's creditors. Although the cardinal swears not to be in any debt, Sommers insists and the king gives him the money. The jester returns, claiming to have paid the creditors, with the following witty exposition:

> [T]he King [asked who the creditors were:] the Bruer or the Bakere neyther Harry, sayes Will Sommers: but, cardinall, answere me in one thing.
>
> To whom dost thou owe thy soule? to God, quoth hee: to whom thy wealth? to the poore sayes hee: take thy forfeit Harry sayes the foole, open confession, open pennance: his head is thine, for to the poore at the gate I payed his debt, which hee yeeldes is due. (*FF*, E4v)[48]

This narrative is loaded with meaning, for the opposition between overeating and starving is used here as a parallel to social injustice. In *A Nest of Ninnies* Sotto gives a meaningful interpretation of this anecdote, to which the World reacts in anger:

[48] This anecdote can be compared to Romans 13:8-10: 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another [...] Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness [...] thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'.

> The third bids us charitably learne of simplicitie to pay our debts when the poore creditor cals for it, but tis a generall fault, and such who haue doores shut whereat the poore stand, shal find gates fast wher themselues may not enter, but especially we of the laity, for while the Pastor cherishes the soule, we seeke to starue the body, but lets be mindfull least decaying one we loose both. (*NN*, F4v-Gr)

Real and literary fools are usually licensed only to comment on reality, not to operate on it, but in this case Sommers's action is presented as efficacious.

In his final episode, Henry VIII's fool combines food with his wit to use as a 'weapon' with which to eliminate a rival jester:[49]

> [O]n a time, of purpose, Will Sommers watcht to disgrace him [the jester]: when he was jugling and jesting before the King, Will Sommers brings up a messe of milke and a manchet: Harry saies he lend me a spoone. Foole saies the jester use thy hand [...]: I sayes Will Sommers beastes will doe so, and beasts will bid others doe as they will doe themselues. Will, said the King, thou knowest I haue none: true Harry sayes hee I know that, therefore I aske thee, and I wold (but for dooing thee harme) thou hads no tongue to grant that foole his next suite, but I must eate my creame some way. The King, the jester, and all gathers about him to see him eate it. Wil begins thus to rime ouer his milk:
>
> This bit, Harry, I give to thee, and this next bit must
> (serue for me,
> Both which Ile eat apace.
> This bit Madam vnto you, and this bit I myself eate
> (now,
> And all the rest vpon thy face.

[49] He is described as a 'big man, of a great voyce, long black locks, and a verry big, round beard' (*FF*, E4v).

> Meaning the foole, in whose beard and head, the bread and milke was thicke sowne, and his eyes almost put out. (*FF*, E4v-F1r)

This food-based jest exemplifies the clever use of rhetoric made by fools and also conveys a sense of their expertise in the figurative use of words belonging to the culinary world.

The last funny, food-based episode in Armin's collection of stories involves John of the Hospital. Its similarity to the gags of Jacke Oates and the quince pie, and Jack Miller and the pies in the oven, identifies this 'action' of the unsuccessful theft of food as a comic *tòpos*. The son of a wealthy merchant calls John to dinner during Lent, 'when pease pottage bare great sway, and when euery pease must have his ease' (*FF*, F2r). A sexual allusion underlies the latter statement, since abstinence from sex was advised during Lent.[50] John sees a 'pease pottage on the fire' in the gentleman's kitchen and decides to steal some for his nurse. Pouring the pottage into his pocket he burns himself and runs away crying and shouting. The funniest thing 'was to see the folkes of the house, who, wondering what he ayled could not deuise what the matter was' (*FF*, F2r).

At the end of the text, Armin's tale again resorts to food-based imagery as the best method through which to convey a final message. An epigraph for John of the Hospital reads:

> Here vnder sleeps blew John, that giues
> Foode to feede wormes, yet he not liues:
> You that passe by, looke at his graue,
> And say yourselues the like must haue.

[50] See James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Wise men and fooles, all one end makes. (*FF*, F4r)

This gruesome finale nicely closes the narrative circle of *Foole upon Foole*, which begins with fools 'feeding minds and gazers eyes', and ends with them becoming the food for worms. This message demonstrates our ultimate equality, and is perhaps the very food for thought intended to be conveyed by the food- and drink-based words and actions of Armin's six fools. These stories may also have fed Armin's actorial practice and, consequently, the creativity of the scribal communities to which the actor belonged, such as the one led by Shakespeare. The use of food as a dramatic tool for characterization, food-based jests, and puns built on words belonging to the culinary domain both to add comic relief and to explain complex political and social concepts can be found in *Foole Upon Foole* as well as in those plays with characters played by Armin, as it will be shown in the following paragraph.

3. Food and Fools: from Armin's Treatises to the Stage

The role of Armin and his work in Shakespeare's dramatic production has been effectively proved, mainly as far as Shakespeare's fools are concerned.[51] Mullini recognises Armin's influence on Touchstone in *As You Like It*, Feste in *Twelfth Night*, and the Fool in *King Lear*, and states that these characters lend themselves, more than other comic characters in Shakespeare's plays, to a metadramatic and socio-historic description of the figure of the fool; this means that they also serve as a link to a work which offers a chronicle of the times, such as *Foole*

[51] See the bibliographical references given in note 12.

Upon Foole.[52] Recently, Alice Equestri has successfully investigated the relationships between Armin and fool-characters in Shakespeare's romances: Boult in *Pericles*, Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*, Cloten in *Cymbeline* and Caliban in *The Tempest*.[53] Besides, Nora Johnson and Richard Preiss have interestingly demonstrated the role of comic actors in the development of early modern authorship.[54] It seems thus appropriate to conjecture that Armin's use of food in relation to fools may have had a part in the work of those Renaissance scribal communities, to which the actor belonged, that produced the texts of the Golden Age of English theatre. Although the similarities in the use of food linked to fools in the treatises and to comic characters on stage are partly due to the fact that clowns and fools were traditionally associated with foodstuff,[55] and partly to the success of culinary art in that period, Armin's importance for Renaissance dramatic patterns of comic characterization and witty imagery can be nevertheless suggested by interesting evidence.

As discussed above in the paragraph devoted to the culinary references linked to fools and the carnivalesque dimension, food can be considered a 'prop' of comic figures. It is not by chance that the most famous clowns of the English Comedians, who wandered throughout

[52] Mullini, *Corruttore di parole*, 47-50.
[53] See Equestri, "*Armine... thou art a foole and knaue"*.
[54] See note 12.
[55] Some scholars state that the similarities between Armin's and Shakespeare's fools are due to the fact that they both 'drew upon a well-established tradition of "allowed fools"' (Leslie O'Dell, *Shakespearean Scholarship: A Guide for Actors and Students*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 146.

Northern Europe between the 1580s and the 1640s,[56] had names associated with food, such as Jan Posset[57] (played by Thomas Sacheville), Hans Stockfisch (played by John Spencer), and Pickelhering (played by Robert Reynolds).[58] Indeed one can find fools comically fond of food and mainly of alcoholic drinks in Armin's treatises, as shown above, and comic or amusing characters similarly interested in eating and drinking in plays performed by the companies to which Armin was affiliated, but also in those works tailored for other comic actors, such as William Kemp. Examples can be Falstaff, Stephano and Trinculo,[59] but even the aristocrat Menenius Agrippa (a role played by Armin) in *Coriolanus*, who describes himself explicitly as a '[…] humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine, with not a drop of allaying Tiber

[56] See Edmund K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), vol. 2, 272-92.

[57] *Posset* is the name of a British hot drink made of spiced milk and ale. See Wolfgang Weiß, *Shakespeare in Bayern* (Passau: Verlag Karl Stutz, 2008), 33. See also Eckehard Catholy, *Das deutsche Lustspiel: vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende der Barockzeit* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969), 120.

[58] Pickelherring is also mentioned in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. This character was so successful as to become the eponymous fool, whose kind of comicality can be traced back to Will Kemp and Thomas Sacheville. See John Alexander, "Will Kemp, Thomas Sacheville and the Pickelhering: A Consanguinity and Confluence of Three Early Modern Clown Personas", *Daphnis* 36 (2007): 463-86. See also Gerhart Hoffmeister, "The English Comedians in Germany," in *German Baroque Literature. The European Perspective*, ed. G Hoffmeister (New York: Ungar, 1983), 150-52.

[59] Although he is identified in the play as a jester, he does not show the typical features of court-fools. On this topic see Mullini, *Corruttore di parole*, 61.

in't' (2.1.47-49).[60] Nonetheless, the kind of food-based comicality and imagery offered by Armin on stage is distinctive.

Funny jokes on garlic smelling breath, similar to the one present in Jacke Oates's life, can be found in Shakespeare's texts and are very likely part of a wider popular comic tradition. However it seems interesting to note that amusing references to garlic appear, for the major part, in Shakespeare's plays performed after Armin's recruitment to the Lord Chamberlain's company. The most congenial example is in *The Winter's Tale*, when Dorcas tells the clown: 'Mopsa must be your mistress: marry, garlic, / To mend her kissing with!' (4.4.163-64). Again, in *Measure for Measure* garlic is employed to stigmatize a character in a humorous way: 'The Duke, I say to thee again, would eat mutton on Fridays. He's not past it; yet, and I say to thee, he would mouth with a beggar though she smelt brown bread and garlic […]' (3.2.173-77). Shakespeare here does not simply refer to garlic in a comic way, something which could also belong to a shared comic tradition as suggested above, but more interestingly uses Armin's comic pattern, which employs the kissing of a girl whose breath smells of garlic.

There are two previous occurrences of the word *garlic* in Shakespeare's entire dramatic corpus, namely in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and in *Henry IV, Part I*, both composed before Armin's arrival in the company. Of the two occurrences, only the first one, by Bottom, is humorous: 'And most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for

[60] My reference edition for Shakespeare's plays is Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan eds., *The Arden Shakespeare. Complete Works* (London: Arden, 2011).

we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is sweet comedy' (4.2.39-42).[61]

In addition to this use of foodstuff as a dramatic tool for straightforward characterization and comic relief, it seems more productive to note the presence of food-based jests on stage used by Armin for complex riddles, and by the whole company for a subtler kind of characterization as well as for building patterns of interpretation that affect the whole play, from the plot to its main themes.

One good evidence is in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (A Text), in which Robert Armin possibly played the comic role of Robin.[62] In a funny dialogue between Wagner and the Clown, the protagonist's decision to give his soul to the devil is subtly criticized by the humble, starving servant, who declares he would do the same only in exchange 'for a shoulder of mutton [...], well-roasted, and [with] good sauce', and would never accept a rare piece of meat if he had to 'pay so dear' (scene 4.11). Food is used, in this case, to create a sort of *mise en abyme* of the main plot and offer a moralizing allegory to the audience. This makes the role of the clown much more relevant than the one of a mere rustic buffoon. This punch line is nearer to those of the so

[61] In *Henry IV, Part I* the word *garlic* is not used to provide a comic note, but it is pronounced by Hotspur as a metaphor of a life of poverty: ' … I had rather live / With cheese and garlic in a windmill, far, / Than feed on cates and him talk to me / In any summer house in Christendom' (3.1.155-8). In *Coriolanus* there is another reference to garlic, uttered by Menenius Agrippa, who states sardonically: 'You have made good work, / You, and your apron-men; you that stood so much / Upon the voice of occupation and / The breath of garlic-eaters!' (4.6.97-100). Although here there is no direct link with Armin's use of garlic in *Foole Upon Foole*, one can recognise the symbolic use of this kind of food.

[62] See Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown,* 137.

called 'philosopher-fools' than to the stock character of the clown. Similarly, Scenes 6 and 8, in which humble Robin and Rafe try to use dark magic by stealing one of Doctor Faustus's books, operate as a foil and not only as a piece of comic relief. Robin wants to use supernatural power to let his friend drink hippocras, a spiced wine, for free till he is drunk. Moreover, when the Seven Deadly Sins appear in *Doctor Faustus*, the literary tradition which links the Medieval Vice to the Renaissance comic figures is made explicit, as is the cognate food imagery. Gluttony, in particular, states that Peter Pickled-Herring and Martin Martlemas-Beef are his godfathers and Mistress Margery March-Beer is his godmother. Lechery declares she 'loves an inch of raw mutton better than an ell of fried stockfish' (scene 5.27-28) and Envy, as reminded in the section devoted to Leanard, is described as a lean figure.

Also Touchstone in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* shows a masterful use of food imagery. When he enters the stage he is soon labelled as 'fool' and shortly after he explains how he learnt to make an oath, hinting at the liability of promises: '[I learnt o]f a certain knight that swore by his honour they were good pancakes, and swore by his honour the mustard was naught. Now I'll stand to it, the pancakes were naught and the mustard was good, and yet was not the knight forsworn' (1.2.61-65). Later on, speaking about the foolishness of lovers, Touchstone declares he once wooed a pea pod instead of his lover and then took two pods, gave them to her and 'said with weeping tears "Wear these for my sake"' (2.4.51). The comic arises from the silliness of his behaviour, but also from the phallic reference to the pea pod, which is also found in the stories of John of the Hospital. Interestingly enough, after his words, Rosalind states he is wiser than he thinks to be, underlying his wit. Touchstone's love for

food is also conveyed indirectly while the fool is speaking about how he likes a shepherd's life: 'As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach' (3.2.18-21). Other uses of food in allegories or metaphors, employed for characterization or for illustrating abstract concepts, include the following:

- 'Sweetest nut hath sourest rind, / Such a nut is Rosalind' (3.2.106-7), through which the girl's nature is described;
- 'Truly, thou art damn'd, like an ill roasted egg, all on one side' (3.2.35-6), to portray unmannerly Corin;
- 'No, truly, unless thou wert hard-favour'd; for honesty coupled to beauty is to have honey a sauce to sugar' (3.3.28-9); and 'Truly, and to cast away honesty upon a foul slut were to put good meat into an unclean dish' (3.3.33-4), to explain his funny ideas about women and love.

Also in *Twelfth Night* Feste is clearly described as a fond drinker and uses funny culinary metaphors: 'Apt, in good faith; very apt. Well, go thy way; if / Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria' (1.5.26-8). Later on, in the same scene, the following dialogue occurs between him and Olivia:

> OLIVIA: Go to, you're a dry fool; I'll no more of you:
> Besides, you grow dishonest.
> FESTE: Two faults, madonna, that drink and good counsel will amend: for give the dry fool drink, then is the fool not dry […]
> (*Twelfth Night*, 1.5.37-40)

It is undoubtedly in *King Lear* that the gustatory imagery can be found most eloquently and wisely used by the ex-

traordinary character of the Fool. He describes the king as 'a shelled peascod' (1.4.190) hinting at his loss of power both as an old man and as an abdicating king. Similarly, he uses the metaphor of the cracked egg in a famous riddle, to show to King Lear the foolishness of his behaviour:

> FOOL: Nuncle, give me an egg and I'll give thee two crowns.
> LEAR: What two crowns shall they be?
> FOOL: Why, after I have cut the egg i'the middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest the crown i'the middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away. (*King Lear,* 1.4.148-56)

More captivatingly, food images are used in this play to characterize positive and negative characters. Goneril and Regan, for example, are compared to eels that the cook cannot tame (2.2.314-18) and are described as insatiable. Their voracity is an emblem of their thirst for power, of their unnatural behaviour towards their father and of their sexual appetite.[63]

Through the use of food imagery in his riddles and puns, the wise Fool sets a pattern of interpretation fundamental for the whole play. In this, as well as in his rhetorical skills, he reminds Will Sommers, as described by Armin.[64] The merry fool denounces the unjust wide gap

[63] In *Pericles* Boult/Armin uses the metaphor of the awaken bed of eels to describe the persuaded 'lewdly inclined' (4.2.139-42).

[64] For a sharp and detailed analysis of the linguistic patterns used to formulate enigmas and puns on words, both in Armin's Will Sommers and Shakespeare's Fool, see Mullini, *Corruttore di parole*, 128-29, 136-39, 142-49.

between the richness of the Cardinal and the poverty of the people outside his palace, and the Fool in *King Lear* underlines an analogous opposition between overeating and starving, highlighting the social injustice of this disparity also through the story of a king who, after a life of ease and plenty, is doomed to experience hunger and despair. This reading is enforced by the fact that King Lear was first staged before King James I at Christmastide in 1605, more precisely on St Stephen's night, which was traditionally devoted to giving alms to the poor.

Also in *Coriolanus* food is used as a political metaphor and a dramatic device for characterization. In particular, the opposition between nobles and plebeians in the play is presented through the imagery of food and digestion. The clash between those who eat too much and those who are starving, or in other words between predators and their prey is a central metaphor throughout the Roman tragedy. Suffice it to mention the following lines spoken by a plebeian and referred to the nobles: 'If the wars eat us not up, they will' (1.1.83-84),[65] and the famous 'belly speech' held by Menenius/Armin. He explains to the common people the importance of hierarchy in politics through a parable based on a parallelism between the role of aristocrats in Rome and the role of the stomach in the human body:

> There was a time when all the body's members
> Rebell'd against the belly, thus accused it:
> That only like a gulf it did remain

[65] We can find this symbolism in at least one play: *Coriolanus*. On this topic see Maria Elisa Montironi, "The Imagery of Food in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," in *Schöne Kunst und reiche Tafel: über die Bilder der Speisen in Literatur und Kunst*, eds. Sandra Abderhalden, Michael Dallapiazza, Lorenzo Macharis, Annette Simonis, 381-91.

> I' the midst' the body, idle and unactive,
> Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
> Like labour with the rest, where the other instruments
> Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
> And, mutually participate, did minister
> Unto the appetite and affection common
> Of the whole body. (*Coriolanus,* 1.1.95-104)

Coriolanus draws on the semantic field of food also to describe the rhetorical telling of the deeds of heroes, used as propaganda, which is paralleled to cooking with sauces.[66]

Finally, in *The Tempest* food is used, as in Armin's story of Leanard, for a 'natural fool', that is Caliban, a character that embodies disorder, sin and debauchery like the real lean fool. Apart from the fact that he is depicted while singing drunkenly, he is also described as revengeful towards his master and his weapon to avenge his and Trinculo's and Stephano's freedom is exactly his knowledge of how to get food and clean water in the island:

> I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;
> I'll fish for thee and get thee wood enough [...]
> I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;
> And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts;
> Show thee a jay's nest and instruct thee how
> To snare the nimble marmoset; I'll bring thee
> To clustering filberts and sometimes I'll get thee
> Young scamels from the rock.
> (*The Tempest,* 2.2.158-59; 165-70)
> [...]
> He shall drink nought but brine; for I'll not show him

[66] 'As if I lov'd my little should be *dieted /* In praises *sauc'd* with lies' (*Coriolanus*, 1.9.49–52 my italics). 'Thy valiantness was mine, thou *suck'st* it from me [...]' (ibid., 3.2.128 my italics). See Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, 153.

> Where the quick freshes are [...]
> (*The Tempest,* 3.2.65-66)

Furthermore, as demonstrated by Joan Fitzpatrick, Caliban's diet, made of raw fruit, vegetables, nut, honey, flesh, fish, fowl, birds and eggs was perceived by the early modern audience as politically, religiously and culturally threatening.[67]

In conclusion, food was central on the Renaissance stage, probably because it mirrored a wide social interest in the newly born culinary art and, consequently, it provided playwrights with catchy and easily graspable metaphors to explain abstract concepts. Nonetheless, there is evidence to state that the use of food imagery in the rhetoric of fools has deeper bases. The presence of food on stage to represent the fools' celebration of life, to express their linguistic wit and, through it, to convey socially challenging messages mainly in the plays where the actor/playwright Armin was involved can be considered as further interesting evidence of the collective production of early modern English drama: a theatre which enhanced collaboration among members of the company and considered authorial work as a collective process.

[67] See Fitzpatrick, "'I Must Eat My Dinner', Shakespeare's Foods: from Apples to Walrus".

Charlène Cruxent

‘You nickname virtue. “Vice” you should have spoke’. The Humouristic and Offensive Potential of Nicknames in Shakespeare’s Plays

1. Introduction

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), humour can be defined as ‘the quality of being amusing, the capacity to elicit laughter or amusement’.[1] When it comes to early modern literature, this capacity to elicit laughter was mainly achieved through language and plot, the humour deriving from characters and situations. Comedy could also be conveyed through verbal, visual or physical elements, in the case of plays that were performed in front of a live audience.

In this essay, an important device used to convey humour in William Shakespeare’s plays will be dealt with: characters’ names. Indeed, even if denominations seem to be present in his plays only for the sake of the plot, they are linguistic elements which can actually contain underlying meanings and be a rich source of information on the characters and their fictional environment. This is all the truer with the sub-category I will be focusing on: nicknames.

A nickname is, according to the *OED*, ‘a (usually

[1] ‘Humour’, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed August 27, 2013.

Published by The British Institute of Florence
ISBN (online) 978-88-907244-4-2

familiar or humorous) name which is given to a person, place, etc., as a supposedly appropriate replacement for or addition to the proper name'.[2] The term 'addition' here is to be emphasised since the noun 'nickname' originates from the Old English 'eaca' meaning 'an increase'.[3] Nicknames have the same function as names; they too are used for identification purposes. But those new labels might be considered more interesting because they are given in addition to the proper name, thus adding information and/or meaning to the original denomination of a character. On the other hand, nicknames can also completely replace proper names, leading a character to be re-named either with an affectionate appellation (pet name), or a scornful one (sobriquet).

This essay will also take into account certain proper names, those that authors such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Allen Kellogg regard as 'quasi nicknames'.[4] Bakhtin and Kellogg explain that because of their descriptive quality and elaborated etymology, some original denominations can have the same effect as nicknames.[5] Denominations which are original names and correspond to the definition of 'quasi nickname' will thus also be taken into account.

The aim of this paper is to study the possible role of nicknames as providers of humour. In order to do so, I shall first show that the humorous nature of nicknames is

---

[2] 'Nickname', *OED* Online, Oxford University Press, accessed August 27, 2013.

[3] 'Nickname', *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed August 27, 2013.

[4] Term coined by Allen B. Kellogg in 'Nicknames and Nonce-names in Shakespeare's Comedies', *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 3.1 (1955): 1-2.

[5] 'In other words, if a proper noun has a clear etymological meaning that characterises its owner, it is no longer a name, but a nickname': Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 459.

visible through the way in which they are coined. They are usually bestowed by a character's peer in an informal situation, and highlight the characteristic(s) of the re-named protagonist. Nicknames thus belong to the oral sphere, where no rules dictate the manner in which a new appellation should be created. It is a sphere where puns and sound associations are all present, leading to the elaboration of witty and funny new names. Yet, despite the amusing feature of nicknames, they can also be turned into abusive denominations and have a defamatory effect on a character. This aspect is all the more relevant as the Elizabethan audience would witness the act of re-naming off stage too.

Finally, this essay will underline the ironical process of nicknaming. A new appellation is bestowed in order to add meaning to the original proper name and to allow a more accurate identification of a character. However, some nicknames can be misleading, since re-naming someone could amount to changing the identity and the gender of a character.

2. *'What's in a [Nick]name ?': Formation and Use of a Humorous Linguistic Element*

To begin with, we shall see how nicknames are bestowed and the extent to which they play a critical role in triggering laughter. The new labels can be coined in different ways. In *Nicknames: Their Origins and Social Consequences*, Jane Morgan distinguishes between an internally and externally motivated formation,[6] those two

[6] Jane Morgan, Christopher O'Neill, and Rom Harré, *Nicknames: Their Origins and Social Consequences* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 38-42.

types of appellation being found in Shakespeare's works.

The internally motivated formation can be based on the original name, the latter being modified or distorted, or the new appellation is created according to sound associations and puns. As an illustration, one can notice the alliteration in the name of Simon Shadow (*2 Henry IV*, 3.2.124), a rhetorical process which is all the more apparent in Sir John Falstaff's words, 'Shadow will serve for summer', which he uses to tease his new recruit.[7] In a pub, Falstaff also seems to comment on the restlessness of one of his acolytes, which is due to alcohol consumption: 'Peace, good pint-pot; peace [...]' (*1 Henry IV*, 2.5.363).[8] Caliban's sobriquet 'Monsieur Monster' (*The Tempest*, 3.2.16) highlights his abnormality, the coinage of his new appellation being as unnatural as his existence since 'Monsieur Monster' is an oxymoron. The alliteration produced with the juxtaposition of the two terms highlights the absurdity of the appellation. The title 'monsieur' or sir implies a well-mannered man who cannot be a monster.[9]

The externally motivated formation is much more worthy of attention as the denomination is based on the addressee himself or events in his life. Those kinds of nicknames contain cultural connotations and information such as the place of a person in society and his occupation. It is the case with Master Smooth, who is humorously referred to as 'Master Smooth, the silkman' (*2 Henry IV*, 2.1.25), or Jane Nightwork, whose very name

[7] William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1997), 1342.
[8] William Shakespeare, *The History of Henry the Fourth*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1186.
[9] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3085.

reveals her activity as lady of the night (Ibid., 3.2.183).[10] One could also mention the appellation 'goodwife Keech' which denotes 'a lump of animal fat'. This can be seen as a comic comment for a butcher's wife (Ibid., 2.1.85).[11]

Moreover, most externally motivated nicknames consist in humorous comments on characters' personal features. This is what is called an aptonym, defined by the *OED* as 'a name regarded as (humorously) appropriate to a person's profession or personal characteristics'.[12] Master Abraham Slender seems to be the perfect example of an aptonym.[13] This character is a tall young man who is trying to woo Anne Page but without much success. He is deceived in the end because the woman he steals away is not the one he loves. His slenderness seems to be both a physical and a mental feature, and this appellation encapsulates the nature of the character. It is easy for the audience to make the connection between Abraham Slender and his uncle, Master Shallow. They are alike and Robert Shallow's nickname proves it:

> When 'a was naked, he was for all the world like a fork'd radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife. 'A was so forlorn that his dimensions to any thick sight were invisible. 'A was the very genius of famine; yet lecherous as a monkey, and the whores call'd him "mandrake". (*2 Henry IV*, 3.2.282-85)[14]

The sobriquet 'mandrake' refers to the plant with a

[10] Shakespeare, *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, 1319, 1343.
[11] Ibid., 1321 (note 8).
[12] 'Aptonym', *OED* Online, accessed June 25, 2015.
[13] William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1298.
[14] Shakespeare, *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1345.

forked fleshy root that can resemble a human body. Besides, the parallel between the root and the body had already been found in the early herbal *Hortus Sanitatis Minor* (see Figure 1).

Other nicknames are also coined after features of the body, thus corresponding to Ingrid Hjertstedt's definition of bahuvrihi naming, that is to say, appellations whose meanings follow the formula 'one who has ...'.[15] In *Anthony and Cleopatra*, the character called Domitius Enobarbus seems to be given such an epithet since his family name comes from the Latin 'Ahenobarbus', meaning red-beard.[16] As opposed to Domitius, Claudio, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, is defined by what he does not have. In order to draw attention to his friend's cowardice and lack of manliness, Benedick labels him 'My Lord Lackbeard' (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 5.1.182).[17] Besides, the use of nicknames is striking in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Re-naming their peers, the characters are trying to undermine or provoke them, such as Benedick calling Claudio 'Lord Lackbeard', and/or to make fun of them.

Through those different occurrences of nicknames and quasi nicknames, one can observe that new labels were coined according to the characteristics of a character whose original name did not reflect his/her particularity. Nonetheless, while the aim of an appellation is to reveal one's identity, it seems that it can also play a part in a conflict between two characters, and can be used to tease,

[15] Ingrid Hjertstedt, *Middle English Nicknames in the Lay Subsidy Rolls for Warwickshire* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 21.
[16] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Anthony and Cleopatra*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2629-707.
[17] William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1435.

not to say provoke. Nicknaming can be seen as a war, sometimes an unfair one, which creates casualties.

Fig. 1: *Hortus Sanitatis Minor* (Mainz: Peter Schoeffer, 1485). Courtesy of the Cincinnati Museum Centre.[18]

[18] Cincinnati Museum Centre, Cincinnati History Library and Archives 2005, accessed April 01, 2015.

3. *Nicknames and their Effects: Ironical Threats and Misleading Devices*

Nicknaming is a double-sided act, hence the comparison to war, which can backfire on the person who coined the term.[19] Indeed, when a character is not satisfied with his new denomination, he/she has the possibility to retaliate bestowing another scornful nickname to make fun of his/her fellow. This is the case in *Much Ado About Nothing*, a comedy in which Benedick and Beatrice are fighting a verbal war, one which reaches its climax through nicknames. Beatrice is the first to attack, asking a messenger in the very first act: 'I pray you, is Signor Mountanto returned from the wars, or no?' (1.1.25). The expression 'Mountanto' can be interpreted at different levels. 'Montant' designated a fencing technique which consisted in 'A blow or cut directed upwards' (*OED*). Knowing that, one may see Beatrice's question as an ironical way to criticise Benedick's skills in battle. A sexual innuendo may also be conveyed. Beatrice also implies that her fellow is actually a womaniser. Such an idea is supported by her claim that Benedick is 'a good soldier to a lady' (1.1.44). Signor Montanto does not let his sobriquet get him down, and defends himself coining what Allan Kellogg calls nonce-names, that is to say, denominations which usually contain a title (Lady/Lord, Monsieur/Madam) and a general concept or a common noun: 'What, my dear Lady Disdain!' (1.1.96), 'O God, sir, here's a dish I love not. I cannot endure my Lady Tongue' (2.1.238-39). 'My dear Lady Disdain' and 'my Lady Tongue' refer to Beatrice's insolence and glib

[19] See also Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin's definition of 'boomerang effect' in 'Des "mauvaises langues" dans *Richard III*', *Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* 49.1 (1999): 55-76.

tongue; they are nicknames which blur the limits between the proper name and the common noun.

Notwithstanding the apparent efficiency of this verbal war (Benedick acknowledges that Beatrice '[...] speaks poniards, and every word stabs', 2.1.216), the comedy finishes on a happy note with the two opponents' marriage to come. Nicknaming was just what Leontes calls a 'merry war' (1.1.53), a fight which allowed the two quick-witted characters to become closer while teasing each other.

If the audience only witnesses a 'merry war' in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the Princess of France in *Love's Labour's Lost* points out that nicknames can be real threats. She makes a bitter and ironical comment on what they can consist of. She says: 'You nickname virtue. "Vice" you should have spoke' (5.2.349), implying that the verb 'to nickname' actually means 'to misname'.[20] This quotation is worth noticing because it shows the downside of nicknames and their paradoxical aspects. A new label is bestowed on a character in order to allow a symbiosis between the characteristics of a person (either his physical or mental features) and his name, and to make the identification process easier. Nevertheless, some sobriquets do not correspond to a character's nature and can be misleading. In *2 Henry IV*, John Falstaff is recruiting soldiers and he interviews Francis Feeble and Peter Bullcalf. Given his denomination, Falstaff is expecting the character named Feeble to avoid going to war: he is 'a woman's tailor' (3.2.141), an expression which, according to Stephen Greenblatt, was a 'byword for effeminacy and cowardice'.[21] As for Bullcalf, his name

[20] William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 787.
[21] Shakespeare, *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1342.

suggests a good fighter, strong and determined to win. Still, it turns out that Francis is given the epithet 'courageous Feeble!' (3.2.147-48), because of his willingness to fight, while Peter Bullcalf pretends to have a cold so as to avoid being sent to war. He even tries to bribe Bardolph, the man in charge of recruiting with Falstaff. The oxymoron 'courageous Feeble!' shows how misleading the tailor's appellation is. What one expects from him when his name is uttered, 'Francis Feeble', a weak man, actually happens to be the complete opposite of what this future soldier is, a courageous person who is called 'Feeble'.

The two young men's quasi nicknames indicate that an appellation can be an aptonym and correspond to a character's attributes, but it can also describe a person in an ironical way, making the aptonym an antiphrasis. Bullcalf and Feeble are no isolated cases; one can find several occurrences of such names or nicknames consisting in antiphrasis and we might see a warning through those kinds of appellation.

The Feeble/Bullcalf example, although fictional, proves that appellations could be misleading and some sobriquets may have been given in such a way as to undermine a person. It is actually the case with a large number of Shakespeare's lower-class characters who appear to be stereotypical, if not satirical.

4. Nicknames and Social Implications: Genres and Genders

William Shakespeare was inspired by what he saw around him and the books he could read. One can imagine that the nicknames he mentioned in his works already existed before he wrote his plays. Some of them

might be labels he had heard in the streets or in taverns; or at least, his characters' names were coined on the same model as sixteenth-century English sobriquets.

Alciato's book of emblems explains that '[f]or every fault displayed in human behaviour a name arises to match' (see Figure 2),[22] which can lead us to consider some of Shakespeare's inventions as a testimony of the kind of person and their flaws which the playwright could witness around him in London and elsewhere.

[22] Chez Iean Richet Libraire, Paris. *Glasgow University Emblems Website*, Glasgow University, accessed June 01, 2015. Here follows the translation of the initial and final distichs of the text, lines 1-2 and 25-26 (f. 132r-132v), as given by the Glasgow site http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FALc096: 'It is an *old custom* for professors *to be given nicknames*. […] / For every *fault* displayed in human *behaviour a name arises to match*.' My italics.

EMBLEMATA. 132.

Doctorum agnomina.

EMBLEMA XCVI.

MORIS vetusti est, aliqua professoribus
Super adiici cognomina.
Faciles apertosque explicans tantum locos,
Canon vocatur Curtius.
Reuoluitur qui eodem, & iteratque nimis
Mæander, vt Parisius.
Obscurus & confusus, vt Picus fuit,
Labyrinthus appellabitur.
Nimis breuis, multa amputans, vt Claudius,
Mucronis agnomen feret.

Fig. 2: Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata / Les emblems*
('Emblema XCVI', f. 132r), 1584.
Courtesy of the University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

Giving nicknames to his characters may have been a way for the playwright to condemn the behaviour of some of his contemporaries who gave themselves over to alcohol or prostitutes, such as young 'Dizy' and 'Half-can' in *Measure for Measure* (4.3.10-15). Those quasi nicknames alone are redolent of alcohol abuse.[23] John Falstaff is not spared since he is re-named 'John Paunch' (*1 Henry IV*, 2.2.58) because of his gluttony.[24]

In *Measure for Measure*, Pompey ends up in prison where he has several cell-mates. The audience is thus introduced to 'Young Drop-hair' and 'Master Copperspur' whose denominations actually describe the symptoms of venereal disease.[25] Those two men are also known to spend a lot of time in Eastcheap, visiting Mistress Overdone's brothel.[26] The latter is given a nickname, 'Mistress Quickly', which may refer to how she conducts her business, going swiftly to bed with her customers ('lie quick'). Mistress Dorothy, one of the brothel owner's employees, is also re-baptised with the nickname 'Doll Tearsheet', which is a strikingly visual sobriquet.[27]

Alcohol consumers, brothel visitors, and prostitutes themselves are denigrated and their actions or occupations

---

[23] William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2070.

[24] Shakespeare, *The History of Henry the Fourth*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1174.

[25] Copperspur: 'Possibly a play on coppernose, a red nose caused by acne or heavy drinking with "spur" referring to the sexual organ'. J. Madison Davis, et A. Daniel Frankforter, *The Shakespeare Name Dictionary* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 107.

[26] Young Drop-hair: 'Premature baldness was a sign of syphilis'. Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 2070 (note 9).

[27] For further details on names and nicknames in Shakespeare's comedies, see Anne Barton's *The Names of Comedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

are denounced as harmful. In *Naming and Identity,* Richard Alford explains that '[a]busive nicknames are often used as an aspect of informal social control, calling attention to and sanctioning deviant behaviour with ridicule'.[28] Scornful nicknames could therefore be used to denounce the behaviour of some lower-class Elizabethans who are stereotyped in Shakespeare's plays. Nicknames thus have a highly satirical potential. Using them might have been a way for a playwright to use social satire to act upon noxious human behaviour, or possibly hold a mirror up to society. This may explain why one can find nicknames in Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, and history plays – the issues he wanted to stage were not genre-specific. Shakespeare might have preferred to inject satirical elements in his different plays instead of writing an openly satirical piece of work. What he did can be seen as an *avant-la-lettre* example of Alford's 'informal social control'. In other words, appellations are but details in a play; however the playwright can draw our attention to their importance by modifying them and using them on numerous occasions. They are not direct ways of preventing people from adopting critical or socially destructive moral stances, but watching a character being ridiculed through his epithet could have an exemplary nature for some, who did not necessarily wish to resemble such a character.[29]

Still, some characters take advantage of their new appellation, which helps them improve the situation in which they find themselves. Those nicknames are special

[28] Richard D. Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1988), 82.

[29] On the different roles of appellations, see also Fahrang Zabeeh's *What's in a name? An Inquiry into the Semantics and Pragmatics of Proper Names* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968).

because as opposed to all the occurrences we have mentioned so far, they are not created by one of the characters' fellows, but by the characters themselves.

In *Cymbeline*, Imogen finds herself in a tricky and dangerous situation. Her fiancé, Posthumus, orders his servant to kill her when he thinks he has proof that she has been unfaithful to him. Pisanio refuses to obey and advises Imogen to go to Posthumus's house in Italy to find out who tricked her lover. For her own security as she is travelling and to make sure she is not recognised, the servant tells her that she '[…] must forget to be a woman' (3.4.154) and travel as a man.[30] Imogen then changes her identity putting on the clothes that Pisanio had brought for her, and takes on the name 'Fidele', a nickname encapsulating the character's virtue. 'Thy name well fits thy faith, thy faith thy name' says a Roman general (4.3.383).

It is also to secure their journey through the forest of Arden, an unknown place, that Rosalind and Celia take on pseudonyms.[31] The term 'pseudonym' was not coined before the seventeenth century, but this practice already existed. In *The Means of Naming*, Stephen Wilson says that pseudonyms are 'modern forms of by-name. […] Such by-names were used by Catholic priests in 16th century England [to avoid detection]'.[32] He then adds: 'They are employed as a disguise, to avoid detection', which is the case for Rosalind who becomes 'Ganymede' and Celia who chooses to be re-named 'Aliena',

[30] William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline, King of Britain*, in *The Norton* Shakespeare, 3004.
[31] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1611-12.
[32] Stephen Wilson, *The Means of Naming: A Social and Cultural History of Personal Naming in Western Europe* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 288.

'Something that hath a reference to [her] state' (*As You Like It*, 1.3.121).[33]

In *Twelfth Night,* Viola loses the protection of her brother after a shipwreck. She thus tries to think of a solution to find shelter, and having heard about Duke Orsino's feelings for Olivia, she asks a favour of the captain who rescued her:

> Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
> For such disguise as haply shall become
> The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke:
> Thou shall present me as an eunuch to him
> (*Twelfth Night,* 1.2.49-52)

Viola plans to offer Orsino her help in wooing his beloved. In order to do so, the lady has no other choice but to change her sex because a woman would not be allowed to deal with men's love affairs, especially a duke's. '[A]ssuming a new name encourages a person to regard himself or herself as a new, or substantially changed, person, and others are encouraged to see this person as changed and to alter their expectations accordingly', asserts Richard Alford, thus explaining Viola's choice.[34] The stage directions at the beginning of Act 1, Scene 4 indicate that Viola enters the court 'in man's attire', and is then regarded as 'Cesario' by the other characters.

---

[33] 'Aliena, from Latin *aliena, alienus* meaning "foreign". The word *alienus* is also translated by "other".'
'Aliena', William Whitaker, *Words: Latin-to-English & English-to-Latin Dictionary*, http://www.archives.nd.edu/cgi-bin/wordz pl?keyword=aliena, accessed September 2013.

[34] Richard D. Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1988), 85.

Notwithstanding the different circumstances, both Imogen, Rosalind, and Viola have to alter their names for their situation to improve. In doing so, not only do they change their identity, but also their gender. The nicknames they take on allow them to 'transform' into men. Those occurrences of pseudonyms show once more the paradoxical aspect of the nickname which is supposed to play a decisive part in the process of identification, but actually misleads the characters who recognise one of their peers through his appellation.

5. 'The conclusion is victory. On whose side?'

The majority of evidence presented in this paper demonstrates that nicknames can be considered elements conveying humour. They are labels characters are free to coin for one of their peers in order to either tease or provoke him/her, emphasizing one of his/her physical or mental faults through amusing sound associations or comments on a part of their body. If one does not like one's new appellation, one can retaliate creating a sobriquet for his/her fellow, thus starting a 'merry war' between the two opponents. Alan Rey specifies that the term 'sobriquet' originates from the expression 'a blow under the chin', which suggests that the bestowal of such denominations implied bad intentions and an offensive act.[35] And this merry war can escalate, a character can insult one of his peers out of scorn, and sometimes even slander him/her if the nickname is actually misleading and does not correspond to the characteristics of the person re-named. The appellation is ironically used to

[35] 'Sobriquet', *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, Alan Rey et al. (Paris: Dictionnaire Le Robert, 1992) , 1967.

convey false identity. It is the case with characters who actually choose to change their names, and doing so, also change their gender and status through the use of a pseudonym. Changing their name, they change their identity; but pseudonyms are exceptions to the rules since they help the re-named characters improve their perilous situation.

Even if nicknames and quasi nicknames appear at first sight as mere comical devices, they can happen to be dangerous tools because they embody with a few letters the whole public identity of a character. Modifying an appellation comes down to controlling someone's identity and reputation. Ridiculing a character via his nickname can be a way to ridicule real life noxious behaviour, so that people change their attitudes. Whatever the genre of the play, whatever the gender of the characters, sobriquets are warnings for the audience. If one does not want to be re-named and made fun of, then one should behave in a proper way.

'The conclusion is victory. On whose side?' asks Don Adriano de Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* (4.1.72).[36] Concerning nicknames, 'victory' may be too strong a word, but the process of re-naming can certainly be seen as a '(merry) war' between two characters, the result of which can be harmful. What is also certain is that nicknames can be considered as discreet but efficient informal ways to control, or at least, influence, the social behaviour of Elizabethan audiences.

[36] Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 762.

Contributors

REBECCA AGAR is a Renaissance PhD researcher at the University of Ulster, where she obtained her Master of Research investigating the meaning of costume in Shakespeare's work. She has undertaken a study of *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* for her doctoral thesis which explores this drama's significance as the first English History Play. In addition to Elizabethan drama, she also has a strong interest in feminist theory and Marxist literary criticism.

CHARLÈNE CRUXENT is a doctoral researcher in early modern literature at the University Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 (France), where she also obtained a master's degree in English. Through an Erasmus Scholarship, she benefited from a one-year study experience at the University of Cambridge. Her current research interests include early modern literature, language, onomastics, and anthropology. She is particularly interested in sociolinguistic structures and dynamics. Her thesis entitled "Nicknames in Shakespeare's World" aims at observing the occurrences of unofficial names and titles in the playwright's work. With special attention on socio-cultural aspects, this thesis consists in an attempt to theorise the use of nicknames in Shakespeare's plays.

MARIA ELISA MONTIRONI received her PhD in Intercultural European Studies from the University of Urbino Carlo Bo in 2012. Her research interests lie in the areas of Literary Reception, Shakespeare Studies and

Intercultural Studies. She has developed her PhD research on the German reception of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* into a book titled *Riscritture tedesche del 'Coriolanus' di Shakespeare (1609-1951). Ricezione politica e politica della ricezione* (2013), and has published on Shakespeare's plays, on contemporary adaptations of classical works and on intercultural issues. She currently teaches English Literature at the University of Urbino and at the University of Macerata.

ROBERTA MULLINI, former Professor of English Literature at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo, has published widely on English medieval and Shakespearean drama and theatre. She is also interested in theoretical issues connected to theatrical reception and to Shakespeare on screen. She has written volumes on Shakespeare's fools (1983 and 1997), on early modern plays (1992), on John Heywood (1997) and on the material culture of the theatre (2003). She has also directed students' performances of English interludes. Her book *Healing Words. The Printed Handbills of Early Modern London Quacks* was published in 2015. She is editor-in-chief of *Linguæ &*, a journal devoted to modern languages and cultures.

ALLISON L. STEENSON is an Italian/British national and was brought up in Italy, where she currently lives. She is a Postgraduate student in Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Padua and a Visiting Postgraduate at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Her current research focuses on Scottish neo-Latin literature in its European *milieu* and on Scottish manuscript miscellanies. Her research interests include manuscript culture, book history and material culture,

sixteenth-century poetic forms and occasional lyrics in English and Latin. She has published articles in conference proceedings as well as in the journal *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*.

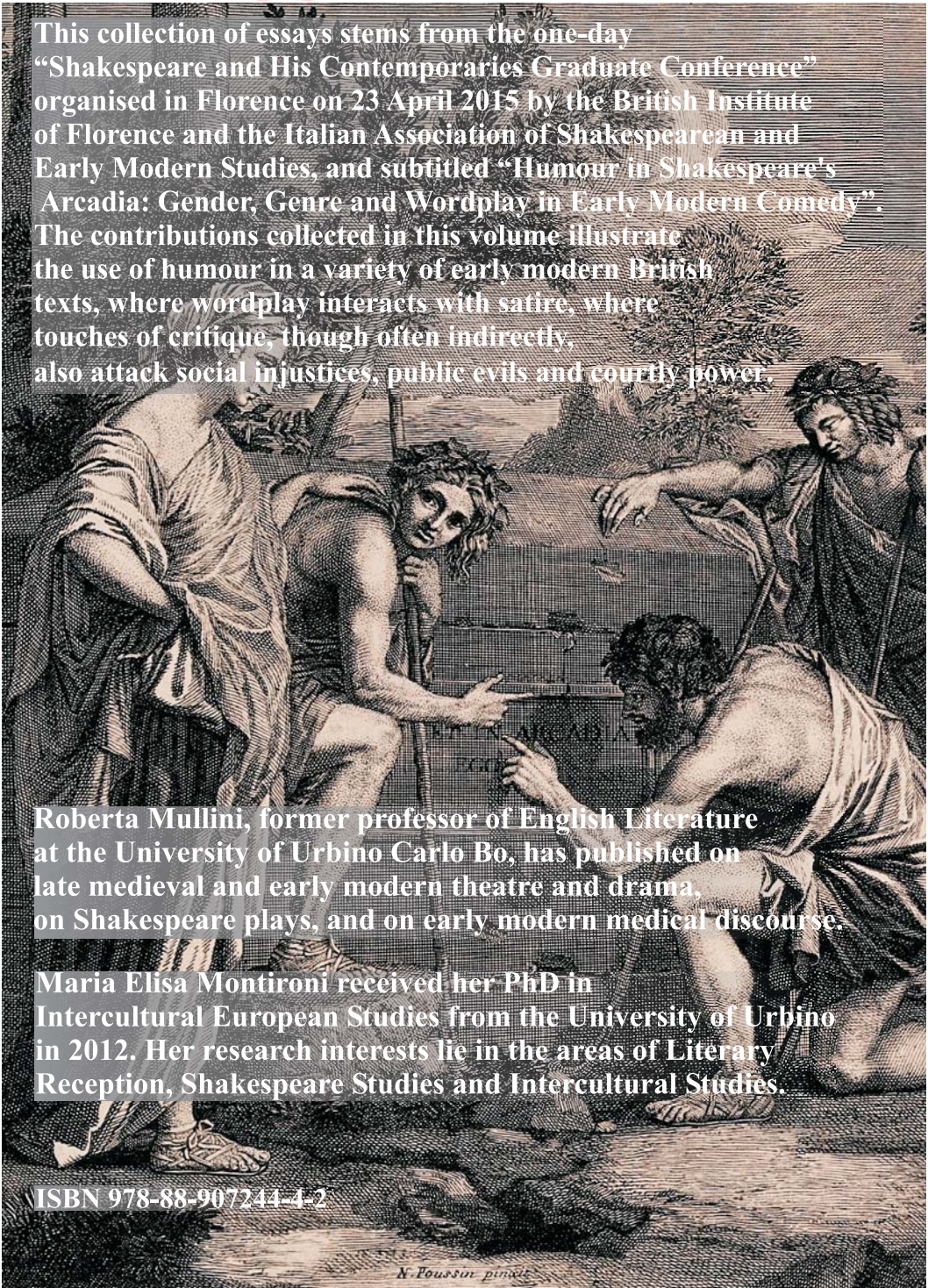
Index of Names

the British Institute of Florence 1917-2017

IASEMS

The Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies

This collection of essays stems from the one-day "Shakespeare and His Contemporaries Graduate Conference" organised in Florence on 23 April 2015 by the British Institute of Florence and the Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies, and subtitled "Humour in Shakespeare's Arcadia: Gender, Genre and Wordplay in Early Modern Comedy". The contributions collected in this volume illustrate the use of humour in a variety of early modern British texts, where wordplay interacts with satire, where touches of critique, though often indirectly, also attack social injustices, public evils and courtly power.



Roberta Mullini, former professor of English Literature at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo, has published on late medieval and early modern theatre and drama, on Shakespeare plays, and on early modern medical discourse.

Maria Elisa Montironi received her PhD in Intercultural European Studies from the University of Urbino in 2012. Her research interests lie in the areas of Literary Reception, Shakespeare Studies and Intercultural Studies.

ISBN 978-88-907244-4-2