Skenè Texts DA - CEMP
Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England
General Editor Silvia Bigliazzi

A Feast of Strange Opinions: Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes on the English Renaissance Stage

Edited by Marco Duranti
and Emanuel Stelzer

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S K E N È   Theatre and Drama Studies

CEMP - Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

The series of CEMP volumes offers studies and fully annotated scholarly editions related to the CEMP open-access digital archive. This archive includes texts pertaining to the genres of the paradox, of the paradoxical fiction, and of the problem, which were published in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and which are currently unavailable online and/or not open access (https://test-01.dlls.univr.it/teipublisher-cemp/apps/cemp-app/index.html). Our digital archive features diplomatic, semidiplomatic, and modernised editions of selected works, furnished with critical apparatuses and editorial notes, alongside related documentary materials, which, in turn, are relevant to poetic and dramatic texts of the English Renaissance. These texts provide fundamental testimony of the early modern episteme, functioning as a hinge joining widespread forms of the paradoxical discourse in different genres and texts and within the development of sceptical thinking.

The project is part of the Skenè Centre as well as of the Project of Excellence Digital humanities applied to foreign languages and literatures (2018-2022) Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Verona (https://dh.dlls.univr.it/en/).

Contents

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Introduction

Marco Duranti and Emanuel Stelzer[1]

1. Enter Paradox

On 2 February (Candlemas Day) 1618, the students of Gray's Inn gathered to celebrate the investiture of their distinguished alumnus, Sir Francis Bacon, as Lord Chancellor. They organised an entertainment called *The Masque of Mountebanks and Knights*, which was also performed 17 days later in the Banqueting House at the Palace of Whitehall. The Mountebank reciting the prologue informed the audience that he has "heard of a madd fellowe that stiles himself a merry Greeke, & goes abroad by the name of Parradox who with dauncinge & frisking & newe broached doctrine" (Add. MS 5956, 74*r*.) has managed to persuade the authorities to stage the performance they are about to see. Why is Paradox called "a merry Greeke"? In the early modern period, a "merry Greek" meant "A merry fellow; a roysterer; a boon companion; a person of loose habits" (*OED*, "Greek" n, 5) – a usage which originated in the Roman poets' derogatory attitude towards the Greeks, as Erasmus explained in one of his *Adagia* (the Romans saw the Greek nation "non solum quasi voluptatibus addicta et effeminata deliciis, verum etiam quasi lubrica fide", "not only nearly addicted to pleasures and made effeminate by luxuries, but also, as it were, of slippery reliability").[2] Paradox is indeed a "slippery" Greek because, as the Elizabethan and Jacobean intellectuals well knew, the word and the genre which the character personifies originated in Greece – and indeed, Paradox calls his disciples "the glory of Athens"

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[1] Sections 1, 2, and 4 were written by Emanuel Stelzer, section 3 by Marco Duranti.

[2] *Adagia*, 4.1.64. Unless stated otherwise, all translations are mine.

(81*v.*). The Inns of Court gentleman who played Paradox was much commended, as in Sir Gerard Herbert's contemporary letter to Sir Dudley Carleton: "The speeches weare acted by some of there owne gentlemen: one, called paradox, who spake most, & pleasinge in many thinges, was much comended for well dischardinge his place, & good vtterance in speech" (REED 2022). Paradox bursts on the scene, dressed "in a wide-sleeved gown laid with white" with underneath "a suit laid over with black chevrons" (Wiggins 2016, *s.v.* 1858) and invites all of those who are "desirous to be instructed in the misterie of Paradoxing" to go and visit him "in the blacke & whit Court" (82*r.*) in the Old Bailey (very close to Gray's Inn). The juxtaposition of black and white indicates that he represents a union of contraries. At the end of the entertainment, Paradox participates in a dancing competition but ultimately has to defer to the personification of Obscurity, of whom he is a "slip", a scion. This is how he introduces himself:

> I am a merrie Greeke, and a Sophister of Athens who by fame of certaine novell & rare p*re*sentments vndertaken & prom*is*ed by the gallant spiritts of Graia drawen hither, have intruded my selfe Sophister like in at the backe doore to be a Spectator or rather a Censor of their vndertakings . . . Knowe then my name is Paradox[:] a strange name but p*ro*per to my descent for I blush not to tell you truthe[.] I am a slypp of darknes[,] my father a Jesuite[,]my mother an Anabaptist and as my name is strange soe is my p*ro*fession, & the Ar[t] which I teache my self beinge the first that reduced it to rules & [m]ethod, beareth my owne name Paradox, And I pray you what is a paradox? It is a quodlibet or a straine of witt & invencion screwd above the vulgare conceipt to beget admiracion. (77*r.*)

Interestingly, Paradox describes himself as someone who refuses to be relegated to antiquity: he is very much alive and kicking, being the child of a Jesuit and an Anabaptist. The Jesuits' equivocal replies to avoid taking the 1606 Oath of Allegiance (which required Catholics to swear faithfulness to James I over the Pope in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot) were commonly regarded as paradoxes (as the titlepage of *Apologia Catholica*, a 1606 work by Thomas Morton, future Bishop of Durham, put it, the Jesuits were known for their "paradoxa, haereses, blasphemiae, scelera"). That Paradox's mother

is an Anabaptist has been explained as a reference "to the Puritan disparagement of reason in defense of their own doctrines" (Pagano 2000, 6), but more probably this indication aims at presenting Anabaptists as a radical sect which goes against the Protestant *doxa*: they were persecuted as dissidents of the state under the Tudors and the kingdom of James I (Edward Wightman, the last heretic to be burnt at the stake in England in 1612 was an Anabaptist). Paradox is later called "a fabulous Greeke" and an "[a]ccomplishd Greeke" (82*r*,), two adjectives which suited the early modern perception of sophist(er)s – in John Florio's definition, a sophist is a "subtile disputer, he that professeth philosophie for lucre or vaineglorie, a deceiuer vnder an eloquent or craftie speaking" (1598, *s.v.* "Sophista"). Instead, the "method" to which Paradox refers as "breeding" him is Ramism: Petrus Ramus' innovations in the fields of dialectic and logics, while very influential in the Elizabethan period, soon aroused controversy. His simplification of dialectical procedure, aimed at getting rid of fallacies, was thought to generate paradoxes: thus, Thomas Nashe accused the pamphleteer and poet Anthony Chute of being "a peruerse Ramisticall heretike, a busie reprouer of the principles of all Arts, and sower of seditious Paradoxes amongst kitchin boyes" (1596, X1*v*). While Francis Bacon's works have been hailed as "the apotheosis" of "Ramus's utilitarian approach to knowledge" (Grimaldi Pizzorno 2007, 94), the tide had turned, and Bacon had changed his mind: Paradox's Ramism makes him an object of satire, because the students of Gray's Inn knew that their illustrious alumnus now "rate[d]" Ramus "below the sophists", because "Aquinas, Scotus, and their followers out of their unrealities created a varied world; Ramus out of the real world made a desert" (as he wrote in *Temporis Partus Masculus*, c. 1602-3, reported here in a modern translation, Farrington 1964, 64).

It is clear that the presence of Paradox personified catered to the interests of the Inns of Court students. In 1593, Anthony Munday had translated Charles Estienne's paradoxes (themselves a translation of Ortensio Lando's)[3] "only to exercise yong wittes in difficult matters", as the titlepage of his *Defence of Contraries*

[3] On Lando's reception in England, see Vickers 1968, Grimaldi Pizzorno 2007 and Coronato 2014.

reads, and had written that "for him that woulde be a good Lawyer . . . he must aduenture to defend such a cause, as they that are most imployed, refuse to maintaine . . . to the end, that by such discourse as is helde in them, opposed truth might appeare more cleere and apparant" (A4*r.-v.*). For centuries, lawyers had been trained in the practices of the *disputatio in utramque partem* and *controversiae*; paradoxes could "sharpen law students' acuity" even more forcefully (Elton 2016, n.n.). In the last decade of Elizabeth's reign, there grew a fashionable trend among people attending the Inns of Court to invent and circulate paradoxes. "In their revelry, as in the literature they produced, the inns-of-court gentlemen defined themselves through paradoxes" (Smith 1994, 103). Those written by authors such as John Donne and William Cornwallis must be understood in this context, and – given the educational role ascribed to theatre in that period – it was only natural that "the performance of arguments against received opinion became popular during the revels seasons" (Crowley 2018, 108), a practice that eventually crossed the boundaries of the Inns of Court and came to be functionalised in the dramatic situations of the plays performed in the public and private theatres.

This volume is interested in discussing the functions and uses of paradoxes in early modern English drama by investigating how classical paradoxes were received and mediated in the Renaissance and by considering authors' and playing companies' purposes in choosing to explore the questions broached by such paradoxes. Far from being just a literary *divertissement* or a lawyer's favourite brainteaser, the epistemological duplicities of paradoxes could (and still can) destabilise received truth. It can be no coincidence that the Pyrrhonist *Dissoi Logoi* (arraying a series of antithetical arguments in opposition to one another) were first published in the period (to be precise, in 1570 by Henry Estienne; see Arrington 2015). Often displayed as virtuoso-like trifles, paradoxes become vehicles of scepticism and can serve as a heuristic instrument. For instance, Cornwallis saw them as resources against the tyranny of common opinion as well as all naturalising and de-politicising practices: "Seeing Opinion of a little nothing is become so mighty that like a monarchess she tyranniseth over Judgment, I have been undertaken to anatomise and confute some few of her traditions" (Stelzer 2022).

John Donne made much of the heuristic function of this genre: he explained to his readers that his *Paradoxes and Problems* (written probably shortly before 1600) were "rather alarums to truth to arme her then enemies" (Peters 1980, xxvi)". However conventional it had become to reduce paradoxes to the status of mere trifles, their subversive as well as gnoseological properties were cherished. The scholar Gabriel Harvey went so far as to declare

> I would, upon mine owne charges, travaile into any parte of Europe, to heare some pregnant Paradoxes, and certaine singular questions in the highest professions of learning, in physick, in law, in divinity, effectually and thoroughly disputed *pro* & *contra*, and would thinke my travaile as advauntageously bestowed to some purposes of importance as they that have adventurously discovered new-found landes, or bravely surprized Indies. (1593, 6-7)

And paradoxes could find fertile ground in the multi-perspectival world of the theatre. In soliloquies and dialogic exchanges, spectators are exposed to the arguments of the various speakers and are called to respond to them both emotionally and ethically. To quote Bacon, who was convinced of the public utility of drama, which he called "animorum plectrum quoddam" ("a sort of plectrum of the mind", 1624, 121), it is, "as it were, a mystery of nature that human minds are more open to affections and impressions when people are gathered together than on their own" (ibid.). The more so if such "affections and impressions" ("Affectibus & Impressionibus") are received when the spectators are asked to actively position themselves in front of a problem which puzzles their horizon of expectations and makes them wonder what is true and what is false (famously, George Puttenham called paradox "the Wonderer" in his *The Art of English Poesy*, first published in 1589).

In a rhetorically literate society such as early modern England, audiences were attuned to such positioning. It is well known that the early modern episteme has been called a "culture of paradox" (Platt 2009), infected by a veritable "*paradoxia epidemica*" (Colie 1966), generated by the multifarious calling into question of religious doctrines (with the Reformation) and the development of revolutionary philosophical and scientific ideas concerning the world, the universe, and human subjectivity: as Donne put it,

"New philosophy calls all in doubt", whereby "'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone; / All just supply, and all Relation" (1962, 202). Early modern theatre could not but reflect on and explore these issues: of course, plays are not philosophical lectures, but theatre can be the site where paradoxes can exert their power more firmly because, as William N. West puts it, "[p]erformances in the Elizabethan theaters were provocations toward meaning rather than representations of a meaning" (2006, 136). And such provocations of the *doxa* could be activated in the theatres because watching *dramatis personae* grappling with conflicting sets of values (sometimes demystifying them, sometimes reasserting them) and different definitions of what it means to be a human and a social being worked on the spectators' minds. Watching the enactment of ethical 'what ifs' made drama a special place, a "subjunctive space" (Reynolds 2006, 16) especially drawn to paradoxes. And this could happen also because, since its very origin in Greece, theatre is effectively built on paradox. "In *all* theater the imaginary is presented as, is taken for, the real" (Orgel 1999, 557); "[t]he founding principle of dramatic representation, then, is the fiction of the *presence* of a world known to be hypothetical" (Elam 1980, 69). Before proceeding, however, it is indispensable to define what we mean by paradox in this volume.

2. Defining Paradox and the Purposes of this Volume

As we have seen, Paradox's definition of himself in the Gray's Inn entertainment was: "a quodlibet or a straine of witt & invencion screwd above the vulgare conceipt to beget admiracion" (Add. MS 5956, 77*r*.). But when we move to the public and private theatres and to the multiple ways in which admiration may be aroused, we encounter a far broader concept of paradox. Grafted onto the conception of theatre as an illusion of reality or a real illusion are layers of conceptual paradoxes concerning the performance itself, where playing around with gender roles implies the equivocations of male acting, but above all where the processes of representation and theatrical communication are continuously exposed, challenged, and called into question, as the following chapters will show.

Our book is premised on the fact that, unlike narratives, drama uses paradoxes in a certain respect and that the resonances of

those uses may affect communication on stage and between stage and audience in a variety of ways. In prototypical drama, characters interact without the mediation of the narrator (see Segre 1981, 96 and McIntyre 2006),[4] and this makes for the potentially performative function of all their speeches. It is no surprise that in a highly rhetorical context, where drama is imbued with rhetorical strategies (see e.g. Smith 1988), paradoxical speeches are likely to become very powerful discursive tools: "certain dramas of the [early modern] period encourage community by drawing on the energies of paradox" (Crockett 1995, 58), urging a response from the audience members. As Alessandro Serpieri points out, *dramatis personae* must give voice to different "worlds":

> If drama is institutionally based on *antithesis*, the characters cannot share the same prepositional attitude with regard to a state of affairs, insofar as they must actualise a clash of 'worlds' which always manifests itself in tactics of reciprocal influence. Unable to agree, but forced to coexist within a story or a situation, that has its origin in the very fact that they disagree, each of the characters tries to assert his own world (or that of a group of characters that he represents) by means of illocutionary acts. (1979, 59)

Antithesis and paradox are very similar to each other: they are both based on forms of dissociation and contradiction, but while the effect of the former is a sense of antinomic amplification (Puttenham called this figure "the Quarreller"), the effect of the latter is admiration (as already seen, paradox is "the Wonderer"). Importantly, both can be profitably used in a dramatic situation.

Theatrical discourse encompasses a whole range of contradictions spanning semantic and logical categories. In this book we will consider three especially. First, statements which contradict the *doxa*, or common opinion; second, figures which are intrinsically contradictory while being commonly accepted, as in the case of the oxymoron. Third, logical paradoxes, either veridical or falsidical (see Quine 1966), which flaunt the principle of non-contradiction, according to which a proposition cannot be simultaneously true

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[4] On point of view in drama, see also Elam 1980, Richardson 1988 and, more recently, Bigliazzi 2016 and 2020.

and false, or deny factual evidence.

The last ones, which are called metalogisms by Groupe μ,[5] contradict facts external to language, and therefore can be detected by comparing signs and referents. Metalogisms are thus to be found on the axis of the pragmatics of communication. As Serpieri pointed out (1979, 155), metalogisms are especially relevant in drama, where every speech act is tied to its situationality, because metalogisms belong to the ostensive, deictic sphere: "they depend on the audience's ability to *measure* the gap, as it were, between reference and referent" (Elam 1980, 108).[6] Paradox can be seen as a metalogism in that it "modifies the logic value of a sentence in order to deny reality and stimulate a mode of understanding which challenges our habits of thought" (Gallo 2014, 102).

The second and third sections of this volume address a specific type of the first category of contradictions: the mock encomium, or paradoxical praise. It has been defined as "a species of rhetorical jest or display piece which involves the praise of unworthy, unexpected, or trifling objects" (Knight Miller 1956, 145), defying common opinion.[7] Indeed, it was common to mix topics which the Greeks would have kept separate: *paradoxa vs adoxa*, or, to use Thomas Wilson's terms, "Matters trifelyng", wanting in authority (1584,

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[5] The Belgian collective of semioticians under the name 'Groupe μ' define metalogisms as follows: they constitute "en partie le domaine des anciennes 'figures de pensée', qui modifient la valeur logique de la phrase et ne sont, par conséquent, plus soumises à des restrictions linguistiques" (1970, 34); "le métalogisme exige la connaissance du référent pour contradire la description fidèle qu'on pourrait en donner . . . le métalogisme a pour critère la référence nécessaire à un donné extra-linguistique" (125).

[6] See also Elam 1980, 84: the dramatic situation is "the *situation* in which a given exchange takes place, that is, the set of persons and objects present, their physical circumstances, the supposed time and place of their encounter, etc." which is to be considered together with "the communicative context proper, usually known as the *context-of-utterance*, comprising the relationship set up between speaker, listener and discourse in the immediate here-and-now".

[7] For an early study of mock encomia in Elizabethan drama, the argumentation of which is questioned by Righetti and Stelzer in the present volume, see Sackton 1949. On mock encomia in Renaissance Italian literature, see Figorilli 2008.

8). Chapters 4-8 deal with drama texts which make use of praises of topics as varied as tyranny, baldness, war, poverty, hunger, adultery, and several others. Almost all these subjects had already been covered by ancient paradoxical encomia (one may think of Gorgias, Synesius, and Lucian) and, while in the Middle Ages there were a couple of specimens of texts produced in this vein (see Pease 1926, 41), it was the Renaissance, the age of Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium* (1511), Agrippa's *De Vanitate Scientiarum et Artium* (1530), and Ortensio Lando's *Paradossi* (1544), that rediscovered their power and modelled new paradoxes after them. Apparently harmless, mock encomia "permitted authors to avoid the most aggressive confrontation" (Tomarken 1990, 5) and successfully enact satire. Beatrice Righetti and Emanuel Stelzer's essays in this volume argue that, when staged, mock encomia can have several functions depending on the dramatic situation, but they often create a metaperformative moment in the play, that is a moment in which spectators are reminded of being such by having to respond to an audience on stage.

Finally, while technically paradoxes fall within the first and the last categories by being related to the *doxa* and to logic respectively, the second type too (statements that are intrinsically contradictory while being commonly accepted) can be used to evoke a sense of wonder and in this way turn into a speech act related to the action. As argued in Chapter One, their specific uses in the context of drama may underline different degrees of paradoxicality and affect the action as well as the epistemological levels of drama accordingly (see e.g. Bigliazzi's discussion of Hamlet's tackling Claudius' oxymora in *Hamlet* 1.2).[8]

The theatrical paradox can be regarded as a means to foster a philosophical, ethical, or political discussion, as well as to expose the fallacy of received, traditional knowledge, because it maximises an inherent quality of paradox which has been highlighted by A. E. Malloch:

[paradoxes] do not become themselves until they are overthrown. They are written to be refuted, and unless they are refuted their

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[8] For an earlier discussion, revised here, see Bigliazzi 2011.

true nature is hidden. Thus the paradox may be said to present one part in a verbal drama (truly a word play); the other part is not written out, but is supplied by the reader as he tries 'to find better reasons' . . . The dramatic author can manipulate speech without associating himself 'personally' with it. He can exploit falsehood without becoming a liar . . . the reader of the paradox [participates] as actor. (1956, 195-6)

Urging the reader to become a sort of actor in order to supply the paradox with meaning takes on a fuller dimension when the paradox is actually inserted in a dramatic situation on stage.

This volume aims at providing a comprehensive view of the performative as well as heuristic potentialities of the theatrical paradox in plays written in an age, as the early modern period was, fixated with the uncertain and the contradictory, and mediating classical models. "Epistemological, political, ideological, aesthetic and performative uses of contradiction intertwine within a cultural system where outright debate on unsolvable opposites paved the way to a sceptical engagement with knowledge" (Bigliazzi 2014b, 10). As William M. Hamlin argues, several plays written in those decades share "a deep imbrication in sceptical matrices as well as a thoroughgoing concern – thematic and linguistic – with paradox" (2005, 167). Our volume takes stock of the investigation conducted by Peter G. Platt in his 2009 monograph *Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox*, a New Historicist and poststructuralist reappraisal of Rosalie Colie's *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (1966). Drawing on these studies, but carefully distinguishing between different types of paradoxes, and analysing plays by different authors can serve to exemplify the different ways in which contradictions could be functionalised in the theatre. In the last decade no substantial work on paradoxes in early modern English drama has appeared, and the essays contained in this volume intend to show how stimulating this area can still prove.

This book takes its title from a quotation drawn from Thomas Dekker's *Fortunatus* (1600): in a scene which features the performance of a praise of hunger,[9] a character says that he is preparing "a dish of Paradoxes" which "is a feast of straunge opinion" (D4*r.*). Since

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[9] See the analysis provided by Stelzer in his essay in the present volume.

paradoxes are a constitutive feature of early modern English drama, we have decided to pluralise "strange opinion", channelling also Moth's words in *Love's Labour's Lost*: "They have been at a great feast of languages" (5.1.35-6). Since the best convivial occasions are always a bit unruly, in the next section we try to act as masters of these revels.

3. The Essays in this Volume

The chapters in this volume have been divided into three sections. The first section, "Paradoxes of the Real", is devoted to a theoretical investigation of the dramatic functions of paradoxes. Silvia Bigliazzi's essay ("Doing Things with Paradoxes: Shakespearean Impersonations") examines the pragmatic uses and effects of paradox in Shakespeare's drama (especially *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, and *The Winter's Tale*) by considering the relation between different types of contradiction and contextualising conceptions of simulation and dissimulation in the early modern period. Bigliazzi shows that contradictions in the text are often not logical, but rhetorical and doxastic or semantic, and yet they can acquire metalogical value and express a puzzling sense of the real, and, in so doing, perform actions. Possible uses include exposing the contradictions and the insincerity of the interlocutor, or blurring the distinctions between being, seeming, and non-being.

Marco Duranti's chapter ("From Speechlessness to Powerful Speech. Coping with Paradoxes of Reality in Euripides' *Helen*") discusses the dramatic function of paradoxes with reference to Euripides' *Helen*. Although being somewhat eccentric insofar as it is the only essay in the volume to deal exclusively with a classical text, it provides a crucial link between ancient and early modern dramatic conceptions of paradoxes of the real. Euripides was the most often-quoted Greek dramatist in early modern England, and *Helen* was cited as a model by Renaissance apologists of the tragicomic genre. The whole play can be regarded as a doxastic paradox, but the aspects Duranti foregrounds rather concentrate on the pragmatics of epistemological paradoxes in ways that underline both the similarity and the distance of this play from

the examples discussed in the previous chapter. In the first part, Duranti illustrates the metalogical paradox of the presence of two Helens: the real one, who has been secluded in Egypt for the entire duration of the War of Troy, and the false image of her which has been created by Hera and which everybody believes to be real. When Menelaus meets the authentic Helen, after coming to Egypt with the false one, he experiences an intellectual bewilderment, which represents the gnoseological crisis of human intellect in the face of the contradictory aspects of reality. However, Menelaus' puzzlement is not the ultimate response to the paradoxicality of the world. In fact, the second part of the article shows how Helen and Menelaus are able to experiment surprisingly with a new, meta-dramatic function of the paradox, by manipulating reality and using paradox as a strategy to flee from Egypt: Menelaus will be both alive (in deeds) and dead (in words), thus persuading King Theoclymenos to provide the Greeks with a ship to perform an alleged burial ritual on sea, and on that ship Helen and Menelaus will sail to Greece.

The final chapter of this section is by Carla Suthren ("The *Eidolon* Paradox: Re-presenting Helen from Euripides to Shakespeare") and follows Helen's paradoxical phantom in its route to early modern England. In her survey, Suthren sets works by Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare against the backdrop of the wider discourse generated by the *eidolon*. She suggests that this latter encompasses three forms of paradox: 1) semantic, in that the word "*eidolon*" carries within itself potentially contradictory meanings; 2) rhetorical, in that the *eidolon* exists in order to counter received opinion; 3) logical, in that it both is and is not the thing it represents. By way of this third dimension of paradoxicality, the *eidolon* becomes an apt means for exploring the paradoxes inherent in all acts of mimetic representation and especially drama.

The following chapters of the volume investigate a particular type of paradox: the paradoxical encomium. The two essays featured in the second section, "Staging Mock Encomia", look at the multiple dramatic functions of mock encomia and at the specific dramatic situations in which paradoxical praises were inserted in early modern plays.

Beatrice Righetti's contribution ("Dramatic Appropriation of the Mock Encomium Genre in Shakespeare's Comedies") is concerned

with the use and role of paradoxical encomia in Shakespeare's comedies. She first examines them according to their subject matter, highlighting a specific relation between the social status of the characters who utter them and the topics these encomia deal with. Righetti then focuses on the 'reversed' mock encomium, that is an attack or *vituperatio* which is paradoxically directed against a conventionally positive subject. She demonstrates how, for these mock praises, Shakespeare adapts to the theatrical dimension literary fashions which are usually to be found in texts such as Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems* and the translation of Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. Furthermore, she shows how reversed paradoxical encomia contribute to the characterisation of the protagonists of the play, as they usually define the speaker's intellectual and linguistic abilities. Righetti also examines some cases in which the category of mock encomium is slippery and it is disputable whether this label is appropriate to define the character's speech. In such cases, it is the dramatic framework which allows us to recognise these as paradoxical encomia.

Emanuel Stelzer ("Performing Mock Encomia in Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays") analyses the mock encomia which are staged in Thomas Dekker's *Fortunatus* (1600) and *Satiromastix* (1602), George Chapman's *All Fools* (1604), and John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (c. 1604-5). Critics usually regard these encomia as rhetorical pieces detached from the dramatic action, inserted in the plays just to pay tribute to the early modern enthusiasm for paradoxes. On the contrary, Stelzer demonstrates that they are fully integrated into the dramatic action, in which they perform a number of different functions: creating a metaperformative moment; making the audience reconsider their own values and opinions; better delineating the speaker's character, and their dynamics with the other *dramatis personae*; setting the tone and background of a scene within the dramatic structure.

In the third section, "Paradoxical Dialogues", Francesco Morosi, Francesco Dall'Olio, and Fabio Ciambella see the paradoxical praise of unworthy objects or people from a more broadly literary point of view, detecting the connections between some early modern mock encomia and ancient or contemporary models.

Francesco Morosi's article ("The Paradox of Poverty. Thomas

Randolph's Translation of Aristophanes' *Wealth*") compares the paradoxical encomium of poverty – or we may say, self-encomium, as it is uttered by Poverty herself – in Aristophanes' *Wealth* and in its translation-adaptation by Thomas Randolph, *Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (c. 1625). In both plays, poverty is personified as an intellectual: in Aristophanes, as a Socratic thinker, in Randolph as an academic. Being stereotypically destitute, intellectuals are the most appropriate spokespersons of poverty. According to Morosi, Randolph's adaptation is the result of a careful reading of Aristophanes' text, whereby Randolph understood the intellectualistic tone in Penia's argumentation, and decided to accentuate it. His choice to set the agon of *Hey for Honesty* in an academic *milieu* is due to the scholarly context of the first staging of the play: Trinity College, Cambridge.

The chapter by Francesco Dall'Olio ("'I know not how to take their tirannies': Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and the 'Praise' of the Tyrant") focuses instead on the figure of the tyrant, in its *prima facie* clear, but in fact controversial relation to that of the legitimate king. Dall'Olio sets the eponymous protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* against the backdrop of two tyrannical figures: Nero, as depicted in Girolamo Cardano's *Neronis Encomium* (1562), and Richard III in William Cornwallis' *Praise of King Richard the Third* (printed in 1616, but presumably written in the 1590s). Dall'Olio shows how all these works overturn the traditional image of the tyrant, thus providing a critical reinterpretation of the contrasting depictions of the tyrant and the good king in Renaissance political theory. They both unmask the ideological premises of that distinction and question its utility as a criterion for evaluating the good ruler.

With Fabio Ciambella's contribution we move to paradoxes on war and the conditions that make it legitimate. He investigates the mutual influence of Thomas and Dudley Digges' *Four Paradoxes* (1604) and English Renaissance drama. Previous critics have acknowledged interdiscursive echoes of *Four Paradoxes* in such plays as Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, especially in relation to the principle of the Just War (Pugliatti 2010), according to which Christian princes should employ their armies against the Ottoman empire, instead of fighting futile and debilitating wars against each other. Ciambella goes one step further, adopting a lexicosemantic approach for a closer textual reading,

which allows the location of references to *Four Paradoxes* in plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and vice versa.

4. Coda

The picture chosen for the back cover of this volume encapsulates some of the key issues which are investigated in the present work. This 1577 painting by an anonymous artist is usually entitled *Portrait of George Delves and a Female Companion* (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, oil on panel, 218.4 x 132.7). George Delves was a respected Elizabethan courtier and military commander, born c. 1545. He is placed at the centre of the picture, fashionably dressed, surrounded by English, Italian, and Latin mottos. He has a discarded armour at his feet, with a laurel branch visible on his left and an imaginary garden with a maze in the background. The woman on his right, who is shown taking his hand and leading him away, is a complete mystery. She wears an all-black gown, a black French hood, a pendant set with a cameo of a woman whose arms are entwined by snakes (a symbol of Prudence or, more likely perhaps in this context, Ceres) and another jewel depicting Cupid and Psyche (Hearn 1996, 106). The most captivating feature, however, is the branch of myrtle veiling her face. Whatever does this mean? The woman may represent Love: the myrtle is sacred to Venus. Delves stands between fame (the laurel) and love, because the inscription reads "ALTRO NON MI VAGLIA CHE AMOR E FAMA" (Italian for "Let nothing be of value to me except love and fame") – and it seems clear that love is winning. But why should the woman's face be partly covered by that branch of myrtle, her eyes peering through the leaves, her lips curved in an enigmatic smile? It all looks very strange. Some have tried to identify this female companion with Delves' first wife, Christian(a) Fitzwilliam of Milton Hall, who died at an unspecified date (certainly before 1583, when he married again). For example, Bird et al. (1996) believe that the woman is dressed in black and has her face covered because Christian had died before the making of this painting; Delves' ring is inscribed with the motto "NON DA PO[CO]", which has been read as a signal of her recent death ("not long after", according to Bird et al. 1996, 169). But the more usual meaning of that Italian phrase is actually

its contrary: "not a short time ago", hence, *not* recently. Might this be a deliberate pun? Does the myrtle branch represent the veil of death or the mystic threshold which separates two different life conditions, one worldly but without love, and another made heavenly because of love? Finally: is this a neither/or situation, or a both/and scenario? All around the garden, strategically placed at the various entrances of the labyrinth, the onlooker can see several tiny couples where a person seems to invite their partner to enter the maze. It is as if the spectator were invited to do the same.

Everything is arranged theatrically in the picture: the armour, the jewels, and the plants are props; the man and woman look directly at their spectators; the spectators are called upon to interpret what they are faced with visually as well as verbally, because the various inscriptions serve as cues. But the spectator's gaze is principally led to that partly visible, partly hidden face: a paradoxical see-through mask. If the face were completely inscrutable, one would not be so struck. The lady refuses to be seen in its entirety; she instead looks at you, troubling the subject-object boundary. The woman's veiled face proves tantalising: is she attractive? Is she attractive exactly because you need to use your imagination to reconstruct her features? But what would be revealed, un-veiled? Just her external appearance or her soul? Looking at that face and being looked at by it are acts that open questions of representation, identity and intersubjectivity. It is, to a certain extent, theatrical, because it enacts a performance on the part of the spectators. As Bryan Crockett reminds us:

> A paradox is not like a riddle, in which the tension is forever slackened once the solution has been realized. Paradoxes remain open-ended, problematic, challenging. But performative presentations of such contradictions hold out the possibility of an experiential resolution, however partial or fleeting. (1995, 28)

This function of theatrical paradoxes can lead us to a brief, final consideration concerning the archetype of all mock encomia. That founding text of rhetoric, Gorgias' *The Praise of Helen*, begins with a celebration of κόσμος (*kósmos*), a very complex word which can mean order as well as ornament, honour as well as fashion:

"Κόσμος πόλει μὲν εὐανδρία, σώματι δὲ κάλλος, ψυχῇ δὲ σοφία, πράγματι δὲ ἀρετή, λόγῳ δὲ ἀλήθεια τὰ δ ἐναντία τούτων ἀκοσμία" (Gorgias 1908; in Rosamond Kent Sprague's translation, "What is becoming to a city is manpower, to a body beauty, to a soul wisdom, to an action virtue, to a speech truth, and the opposites of these are unbecoming", Gorgias 1990, 40). The sophist sets out to distinguish what is praiseworthy from what is blameable in order to demonstrate why he is praising Helen, accused by the *doxa* of causing the Trojan war. The Greek text is extremely interesting, as Wolfram Groddeck (1995) notes:

> [The] translation cannot reproduce the linguistic force of the original . . . the enumeration of "city", "body", "soul", "thing" and "speech" integrates the "speech" itself in the enumeration, thus making it, as the last element, the epitome of all good things: "truth". The Greek word *aletheia* can also be translated as "un-seclusion" or as "unveiledness" or maybe even as "de-veiling". The truth of the speech is identical with the "adornment", the *kosmos*, of all fine things. (tr. Börnchen 2009, 337)

Gorgias proceeds in his argumentation and affirms that the war broke out as a consequence of Helen bearing her divine beauty "οὐ λαθοῦσα" (not hidden, unveiled), where λαθοῦσα is cognate with the word which forms the nucleus of *aletheia*: truth as 'unveiledness'. Thus, as Groddeck notes, "Helen's 'unveiled beauty' corresponds to the 'truth' of the speech about her. Even more: the beauty Helen bears 'unveiled' is the truth of the speech about her" (tr. Börnchen 2009, 338). Philosophers such as Heidegger, Cixous, and Derrida have explored the (gendered) nexus between truth and unveiledness and connected it to issues of reality and mimesis (Heidegger 1996; Cixous and Derrida 2002). However, since the praise of Helen served as a model for the whole genre of the paradoxical encomium, such ideas were able to reach the Renaissance and influenced sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century drama, as can be seen in this volume (see especially Bigliazzi's, Duranti's and Suthren's essays, concerning the features and reception of Euripidean as well as non-Euripidean Helens). Theatre is the natural site for reflecting on the paradoxes involved in processes of representation and, in the early modern episteme, the paradoxes of 'being', 'being-other' and 'non-

being' gained crucial relevance (as Bigliazzi shows in her chapter), because "the subject of knowledge" came to be considered as being able to "approach the world" only "through a veil of appearances", and "truth [was] defined as the adequation of our knowledge to the world thus veiled" (Egginton 2010, 2). The myrtle branch functions as a half-mask for the lady in the picture: instead of making her face inconspicuous, it "makes onlookers more inquisitive", words which Richard Wilson applies to Hamlet's "antic disposition", which serves as "a supreme instance of the inky textual cloak" (2016, 162) which should enable him to express "that within which passes show" (1.2.85), and complicate what is believed to be true and of value. We welcome you to participate in this feast of strange opinions.

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