Skenè Texts DA - CEMP

Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

General Editor Silvia Bigliazzi

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

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and Emanuel Stelzer

Supplement to *SKENÈ. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies*

ISBN 979-12-200-6188-9
ISSN 2464-9295
SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
https://textsandstudies.skeneproject.it/index.php/TS
info@skeneproject.it

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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/).

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Performing Mock Encomia in Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays

Emanuel Stelzer

Abstract

This essay analyses the paradoxical praises which are staged in a number of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, including Thomas Dekker's *Fortunatus* (1600) and *Satiromastix* (1602), George Chapman's *All Fools* (1604), and John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (c. 1604-5). Such mock encomia have often been regarded as rhetorical pieces detached from the dramatic action, mere homages to the early modern enthusiasm for paradoxes. On the contrary, this essay demonstrates that they are fully integrated into the dramatic action and that they perform a number of different functions, from creating a metaperformative moment to making the audience reconsider their own values; from better delineating the speaker's character to setting the tone and background of a scene within the dramatic structure.

Keywords: mock encomium; early modern drama; paradox; dramatic function; metaperformative

There is a remarkable dearth of studies on the staging of mock encomia in early modern drama, perhaps owing to a difficulty in locating them, since they cannot but be embedded in the dialogical exchanges between the dramatis personae, except for monologues. By mock encomium I mean generally "the praise of unworthy, unexpected, or trifling objects" (Knight Miller 1956, 145), a genre which has a long history and specific rhetorical features (see the introduction to this volume). The only study devoted entirely to this subject in connection to the drama of the Elizabethan period dates back to 1949: Alexander H. Sackton's essay "The Paradoxical Encomium in Elizabethan Drama". This evident scholarly paucity finds a corresponding absence of critical attention in Italian studies (where there have been examinations of the tradition of mock

encomia in Italian Renaissance poetry and prose, not drama)[1] and French studies (where Molière's functionalisation of the mock encomium has been investigated, but not particularly in reference to earlier dramatists, see Dandrey 1997). In general, mock encomia can be introduced into a dramatic text to provoke the audience, "challeng[ing] received wisdom and encourag[ing] spectators to rethink their complacent assumptions by entering into a kind of dialogue with the text, in order to work out how much of what is being said is intended to be ridiculous and how much is perhaps good sense" (Yearling 2016, 125). However, this general function can be modified or expanded according to the dramatic situation into which the mock encomium is set. As we shall see, a dramatist's use of a mock encomium has often been explained away as a *divertissement* or as a pandering to a then current fashion for paradoxes – but Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights could make much more of its rhetorical and formal features.

According to Sackton, early appearances of the mock encomium in drama have the character of the set-piece speech. "Such speeches . . . are dramatic only in a limited sense, but as Elizabethan drama matures, these rhetorical forms take their place unobtrusively in the dramatic language" (83). He clarifies:

> The dramatists in whose work speeches in this tradition appear are those who were best acquainted with contemporary and classical Latin literature. But even in such a popular writer as Dekker examples of the paradoxical encomium are found. In Dekker, Chapman, and Marston the form is taken over unchanged and inserted in a play. In Jonson it has been adapted to purely dramatic purpose . . . The specific subjects of these speeches in Elizabethan plays are not closely parallel to those treated by non-dramatic authors. (86)

It is also interesting to note that, in Sackton's opinion, "[i]n Shakespeare the form as such is not so prominent; it seems to be more completely assimilated to other forms of dramatic speech" (ibid.). While another essay in this volume is devoted to mock

[1] On paradoxes in verse, see Cherchi 1975 and Bartali 2014; on prose paradoxes, see Figorilli 2008.

encomia in Shakespeare's comedies, one should contrast Sackton's view with the fact that Shakespeare was not only perhaps the first Elizabethan dramatist to use the word 'paradox' in his plays, but also the pre-Restoration playwright who used the term in a larger number of plays (five). This aspect becomes clear if one carries out a lexical search, by using Voyant Tools (https://voyant-tools.org/), of the Visualizing English Print (VEP)-Expanded Drama – a corpus of English play-texts from the beginning of the sixteenth century to 1660.[2] The earliest occurrence in this corpus can be found in *Love's Labour's Lost* (first published in 1598), when King Ferdinand replies to Lord Biron's extended praise of Rosaline's unconventional beauty ("No face is fair that is not full so black", 4.3.251) with the words: "O paradox! Black is the badge of hell, / The hue of dungeons and the stylet of night, / And beauty's crest becomes the heavens well" (252-4). The praise of a dark lady, whether paradoxical, satirical, or something much more complex (as in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*), was not at all unique in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century texts (see Bettella 2005, 133-51), hence Sackton's contention that the subjects of mock encomia were "not closely parallel to those treated by non-dramatic authors" results misleading. Early modern England has often been portrayed as marked by a "culture of paradox" (Platt 2009) infected by a pan-European "*paradoxia epidemica*" (Colie 1966), although, of course, mock encomia are just one type of paradox. What clearly emerges is that, *pace* Sackton, "strange thing[s] to heare, and contrarie to the

[2] The Visualizing English Print Expanded Early Modern Drama Collection (https://graphics.cs.wisc.edu/WP/vep/vep-early-modern-drama-collection/, accessed 7 May 2022) features 39 occurrences of the root-word 'paradox' and of its derived forms. Instead of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, the earliest extant play to use the word may have been Ben Jonson's *The Case Is Altered* which was first staged in 1597 (although the 1609 quarto reflects a revised version acted c. 1600 at the Blackfriars with a number of interpolations). Here, Master Juniper, a cobbler, invites the poet Antonio to "make some pretty *Paradox* or some *Aligory*" about a friend of his, the servant Onion (A2*v*.). Thomas Lupton's earlier morality play *All for Money* (1578) had used the word twice in Latin, when the personification of Learning Without Money tries to convince Money Without Learning: "I saye / As *in vltimo paradoxo* I finde a good probation . . . And *in primo paradoxo* thou art trimly painted" (C2*v*.).

common receiued opinion" (to use Florio's definition of paradox) or "strange or admirable opinion[s] held against the common conceit of men" (Philemon Holland's)[3] were not the exclusive property of a bookish coterie merely elaborating on ancient motifs and adapting them to more recent fashions, but circulated far and wide across cultural discourses and social strata: paradoxes were not only a rhetorical tradition tapped into by scholars, but could be utilised in the most disparate environments – for instance, this is how Desdemona describes Iago's oratory: "These are old fond paradoxes, to make fools laugh i'th' alehouse" (*Othello*, 2.1.140-1). In the same years in which Anthony Munday published his translation of Charles Estienne's paradoxes "to exercise yong wittes" (as reads the titlepage of his 1593 *Defence of Paradoxes*), and John Donne and William Cornwallis were writing theirs, paradoxes excited the minds of the lawyers at the Inns of Courts, were exploited by preachers in their sermons and reflected upon by lovers in their letters to each other. The stage could not remain a stranger to this phenomenon, considering how rhetoric structured virtually all aspects of the Elizabethan social life, and mock encomia made their first entrance there in the 1590s.

This essay aims at problematising Sackton's view that the early uses of mock encomia in Elizabethan drama amount to little more than set pieces, and would also like to ask how mock encomia were functionalised on stage by analysing a few examples as case studies, starting with Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and *Satiromastix*. It will be seen that the staging of a mock encomium could go beyond being a simple display of rhetorical prowess and instead create a metaperformative moment in the play, i.e. a moment in which spectators are reminded of being such by having to respond to an intradramatic audience and are called upon to weigh in on doxastic propositions.

[3] See the respective definitions in *Lexicons of Early Modern English*: https://leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry/275/236 and https://leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry/299/43610 (Accessed 7 May 2022).

1. Staging the Performance of Mock Encomia in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* (1600) and *Satiromastix* (1602)

This volume takes its title from a quotation drawn from *Old Fortunatus*, a popular play by Thomas Dekker first published in 1600: the quotation "a feast of strange opinion" comes from a scene in which spectators are regaled with the performance of an encomium of hunger. The play is about the adventures of an old man, Fortunatus, who is given by Fortune a magical purse which will always contain ten gold pieces; this ever-renewable wealth will have tragical consequences for Fortunatus and his two sons. In the scene that interests us, we encounter Andelocia, the spendthrift son, who is always followed by the aptly named Shadow, Fortunatus's servant. It is not the first time the spectators have met Shadow, who is consistently portrayed as ravenously hungry. For him, it is always "fasting day" (B4*r.*).[4] But Shadow's character is not that of a mere clown. His words, however humorous, are the expressions of an earthy culture that is used to feeling pain and valuing simple pleasures; he is always thinking about food but channels his bodily needs into anger when faced with social injustice. In a previous scene, Andelocia had commented that Shadow is smart because hunger sharpens his wit: "a leane dyet makes a fat wit" (ibid.), although he occasionally understands Shadow's vexation.

> Shadow I am out of my wits, to see fat gluttons feede all day long, whilst I that am leane, fast euery day: I am out of my wits, to see our Famagosta fooles, turne halfe a shop of wares into a suite of gay apparrell, onely to make other Ideots laugh, and wisemen to crie who's the foole now? I am mad, to see Souldiours beg, and cowards braue: I am mad, to see Schollers in the Brokers shop, and Dunces in the Mercers: I am mad, to see men that haue no more fashion in them then poore Shaddow, yet must leape thrice a day into three orders of fashions: I am mad, to see many things, but horne-mad, that my mouth feeles nothing.
>
> Andelocia Why, now shadow, I see thou hast a substance:

[4] All quotations from *Old Fortunatus* refer to Dekker 1600; I have silently expanded and modernised the speech prefixes.

I am glad to see thee thus mad. (C1*v.*)

In general, though, Andelocia dismisses Shadow's grievances:

ANDELOCIA Shaddow, when thou prouest a substance, then the tree of vertue and honestie, and such fruit of heauen shall florish vpon earth.

SHADOW True, or when the Sunne shines at midnight, or women flie, and yet they are light enough. (C1*r.*)

Note how the two characters' words are filled with irony, oxymorons, and puns: these exchanges prepare the spectators for the mock encomium that Andalocia later commissions to Shadow, in the presence of his brother, Ampedo.

ANDELOCIA Because ile saue this gold, sirra Shaddowe, weele feede our selues with Paradoxes.

SHADOW Oh rare: what meat's that?

ANDELOCIA Meate, you gull: tis no meate: a dish of Paradoxes is a feast of straunge opinion, tis an ordinarie that our greatest gallants haunt nowadaies, because they would be held for Statesmen.

SHADOW I shall neuer fil my belly with opinions.

ANDELOCIA In despite of sway-bellies, gluttons, & sweet mouth'd Epicures, Ile haue thee maintaine a Paradox in commendations of hunger.

SHADOW I shall neuer haue the stomacke to doo't.

. . .

ANDELOCIA Fall to it then with a full mouth.

SHADOW Oh famine, inspire me with thy miserable reasons. I begin, master. . . Theres no man but loues one of these three-beastes, a Horse, a Hound, or a Whore; the Horse by his goodwill, has his head euer in the maunger; the Whore with your ill will has her hand euer in your purse; and a hungrie Dogge eates durtie puddings.

ANDELOCIA This is profound, forward: the conclusion of this now.

SHADOW The conclusion is plaine: For since all men loue one of these three monsters, being such terrible eaters, therefore all men loue hunger.

. . .

Hunger is made of Gun-powder.

Andelocia Giue fire to that opinion.

Shadow Stand by, lest it blow you vp: hunger is made of Gun-powder, or Gun-powder of hunger; for they both eate through stone walles; hunger is a grindstone, it sharpens wit, hunger is fuller of loue then Cupid, for it makes a man eate himselfe; hunger was the first that euer open'd a Cookes shop; Cookes the first that euer made sawce; sawce being lickerish, lickes vp good meate; good meate preserues life: Hunger therefore preserues life.[5]

Andelocia By my consent thou shouldst still liue by hunger.

Shadow Not so, hunger makes no man mortall: hunger is an excellent Physition: for hee dares kill any body: hunger is one of the seuen liberall sciences.

Andelocia O learned? Which of the seuen?

Shadow Musicke, for sheele make a man leape at a crust: but, as few care for her sixe sisters, so none loue to daunce after her pipe . . . (D4*r.-v.*)

This mock encomium is not a set-piece speech. It is perfectly embedded into the action of the play: Andelocia has been gambling away his father's fortune; both he and Shadow are hungry, and Shadow is asked to paradoxically praise hunger "[i]n despite of sway-bellies,[6] gluttons, & sweet mouth'd Epicures" – the mock encomium here should serve, through inversion, as a covert denunciation of corrupt elites who live in luxury and do not deserve it. The nature of the dramatic situation, however, makes it clear that the circumstances are more equivocal: Andelocia and Shadow are envious of these privileged gluttons and wish they were just like them. Paradox is described quite negatively as "an ordinarie [i.e. an inn] that our greatest gallants haunt nowadaies, because they would be held for Statesmen": a fashionable instrument of deception which can be exploited to take advantage of other people. These privileged epicures are "sweet mouth'd" both because they have dainty tastes, but also because they can speak sweetly through their rhetoric and

[5] Allan H. Gilbert (1935, 536-7) comments on this passage: "Shadow's concluding series forms a logical *sorites*, fallacious because causes in themselves are subordinated to accidental causes".

[6] Probably swag bellies, persons "having a pendulous abdomen" (*OED*, *s.v.* swag belly, n. 2)

deceive their neighbours. Shadow delivers his mock encomium by appropriating the style of his superiors and Dekker organises the speech not as a monologue but as a funny, well-structured dramatic exchange. Shadow resorts to both popular sayings and sophisticated tropes. He starts with an invocation to Famine, subverting the epic trope of an appeal to the Muse. He then proceeds by making a ridiculous (and misogynistic) syllogism, stating that since all men love horses, hounds, or whores, and such objects of their love are all famously greedy, then all men love hunger. The reactions of the characters who listen to Shadow's argument are those which may be shared by the audience, and are still couched in the same imagery of eating and hunger: Ampedo finds it a "very leane argument", while Andelocia likes it, since he says "this fats me" (D4*r.*) and asks him to go on. Now Shadow's speech seemingly changes direction: he likens hunger to gunpowder, but does not immediately proceed to clarify this comparison, probably making a so-called dramatic pause. Again, Andelocia's reaction is aimed at mirroring the audience's surprise: "Give fire to that opinion" (furthering the imagery), and Shadow reminds his listeners that, proverbially, hunger, just like gunpowder, can "eate through stone walles" (ibid.). But Shadow does not stop there and starts accumulating similes and syllogisms, mixing high and low.

Before considering more in depth the function of this mock encomium, let us briefly turn to another paradoxical praise employed by Dekker in one of his comedies: *Satiromastix*. Sackton usefully calls attention to two scenes in this play in which an encomium of hair is "set off by italics, and the reply in praise of baldness is called a 'Paradox' in the stage directions" (1949, 87). I cannot quote the two passages in full because they are rather long, but these are the most salient moments. The situation is as follows: several knights are wooing a widow, Mistress Miniver, who seems very interested in Sir Adam, a bald man. Sir Vaughan hosts a banquet, engaging Horace to rail against baldness, so that Miniver may be dissuaded from pursuing her affection towards Adam. Horace, it turns out at the end, is not 'the' Roman poet, but an imposter – besides being a satirical representation of Ben Jonson (*Satiromastix* is one of the plays composed within the so-called War of the Theatres, 1599-1602). After a few of the guests briefly exchange their views on the

pros and cons of hair, Horace starts his oration which develops into a fully-fledged encomium of hair:

> *For if of all the bodies parts, the head*
> *Be the most royall: if discourse, wit, Iudgement,*
> *And all our vnderstanding faculties,*
> *Sit there in their high Court of Parliament,*
> *Enacting lawes to sway this humorous world:*
> *This little Ile of Man: needes must that crowne,*
> *Which stands vpon this supreame head, be faire,*
> *And helde inualuable, and that crowne's the* Haire*:*
> *The head that wants this honour stands awry,*
> *Is bare in name and in authority.*
> . . .
> Haire*, tis the roabe which curious nature weaues,*
> *To hang vpon the head: and does adorne,*
> *Our bodies in the first houre we are borne:*
> *God does bestow that garment: when we dye,*
> *That (like a soft and silken Canopie)*
> *Is still spred ouer vs.*
> . . .
> *Besides, when (strucke with griefe) we long to dye,*
> *We spoile that most, which most does beautifie,*
> *We rend this* Head-tyre *off. I thus conclude,*
> *Cullors set cullors out; our eyes iudge right,*
> *Of vice or vertue by their opposite:*
> *So, if faire haire to beauty ad such grace,*
> *Baldnes must needes be vgly, vile and base.* (G2*v*.-G3*v*.)[7]

Readers and spectators notice that after the initial part of the speech, composed in blank verse, Horace starts to use rhymed couplets. Thus, not only is this speech set apart typographically in the quarto by way of italics, but it also draws attention to itself aurally in performance. Whether it is a set-piece speech is another matter, and I will consider this aspect shortly. The encomium is persuasive: Mistress Miniver first reacts by exclaiming "By my truely I neuer thought you could ha['] pickt such strange things

[7] All quotations from *Satiromastix* refer to Dekker 1602; I have silently expanded and modernised the speech prefixes.

out of haire before" (G3*v*, thus characterising the praise as a mock encomium), but then affirms that she cannot care any longer for the bald knight: "Troth I shall neuer bee enameld of [i.e. 'enamoured of', as well as perhaps 'beautified by'] a bare-headed man for this, what shift so euer I make" (ibid.). All seems lost for Sir Adam, but he commissions Crispinus, Horace's rival (usually considered a *persona* of John Marston or of Dekker himself), to deliver a praise of baldness ("let them lift vp baldenes to the skie", H1*v*.). In a later scene, Crispinus states that he "shall winn[e] / No praise, by praising that, which to depraue [i.e. to vilify], / All tongues are readie, and which none would haue" (H4*v*.). He thus seems to pre-empt the reactions of his listeners, saying that he will not be liked if he delivers a praise of something held dishonourable. After this sort of *captatio benevolentiae*, he starts his oration, which, just like Horace's, starts unrhymed but soon enough changes and becomes longer and (slightly) more complex than his rival's encomium:

> Mistris you giue my Reasons proper names,
> For Arguments (like Children) should be like,
> The subiect that begets them; I must striue
> To crowne *Bald heades,* therefore must baldlie thriue;
> But be it as it can: To what before,
> Went arm'd at table, this force bring I more,
> If a *Bare head* (being like a dead-mans scull)
> Should beare vp no praise els but this, it sets
> Our end before our eyes; should I dispaire,
> From giuing *Baldnes* higher place then haire?
> MINIVER: Nay perdie, haire has the higher place.
> CRISPINUS: The goodliest & most glorious strange-built wonder,
> Which that great Architect hath made, is heauen;
> For there he keepes his Court, It is his Kingdome,
> That's his best Master-piece; yet tis the roofe,
> And Seeling of the world: that may be cal'd
> The head or crowne of Earth, and yet that's balde,
> All creatures in it balde; the louely *Sunne*,
> Has a face sleeke as golde; the full-cheekt *Moone*,
> As bright and smooth as siluer: nothing there
> Weares dangling lockes, but sometime blazing Starres,
> Whose flaming curles set realmes on fire with warres.

Descend more low; looke through mans fiue-folde sence,
Of all, the *Eye,* beares greatest eminence;
And yet that's balde . . .
A head and face ore-growne with Shaggie drosse,
O, tis an Orient pearle hid all in Mosse,
But when the head's all naked and vncrown'd,
It is the worlds *Globe*,[8] euen, smooth and round;
. . .
what man euer lead
His age out with a staffe; but had a head
Bare and vncouer'd? hee whose yeares doe rise,
To their full height, yet not balde, is not wise.
. . .
Right, but beleeue this (*pardon me most faire)*
You would haue much more wit, had you lesse haire:
I could more wearie you to tell the proofes.
(As they passe by) which fight on *Baldnes* side,
Then were you taskt to number on a head,
The haires: I know not how your thoughts are lead,
On this strong Tower shall my opinion rest,
*Heades thicke of haire are good, but balde the bes*t[.]

Whilst this Paradox is in speaking, Tucca Enters with Sir Vaughan at one doore . . .

(H4*v.*-I1*r.*)

Thus, Crispinus engages his listeners directly: he asks a question ("should I dispaire, / From giuing *Baldnes* higher place then haire?"), to which Lady Miniver must answer, on behalf of the other characters and of the extra-dramatic audience. He makes an intentionally conventional comparison between the macrocosm and microcosm and ironically mobilising Biblical language (to list all the reasons why it is better to be bald would be a divine task since, according to Matthew 10:30, KJV, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" by God), so that he can be sure that his audience follows him to the extent of accepting that baldness is indeed praiseworthy and superior to having hair. For his description of

[8] May one detect a pun with the name of the Globe Theatre, where the play was acted by the Lord Chamberlain's Men in the autumn of 1601?

the cataclysmic effects of "blazing Starres" and the nakedness of the eye, Dekker was very probably inspired by Abraham Fleming's translation of the Neoplatonist philosopher Synesius' encomium of baldness,[9] which had been published in 1579:

> The fiue senses are precious things, and those partes whereby all liuing creatures haue life and feeling, are excellent things: among all which, the sight is the quickest, the liueliest, the most necessarie, and (you knowe) the eies haue their smoothnesse and baldnesse. That therefore which in man is of this kinde, deserueth most honour. So it followeth in conclusion, that the verie best things are bald.
> . . .
> Now, if you saie that a blasing starre is a hairie starre, it resteth to be proued first that it is a starre in déede: but doubtlesse it is no starre, although it be termed so amisse: neither doeth it continue aboue foure daies, and then consumeth awaie by litle and litle. But suppose it were a starre, and consider what a mischéeuous and euill thing the haire thereof is, which bringeth decaie euen to the starre it selfe (if it be a starre:) besides innumerable miseries whereof it is a foretoken, all which I passe ouer in this place. Haue we euer read that anie good starre wasted to nothing? But this starre with crisped haire vanisheth, and the substance thereof dieth . . . So it fareth with baldpates, who are (as it were) full Moones, or rather Sunnes, because they diminish not, but kéeping continually their full compasse of roundnesse, giue light vnto other starres in the skies. (B5*r.*, C2*r.*, C2*v.*-C3*r.*)

We have now the elements to examine these mock encomia in the context of their respective dramatic situation. According to Sackton, in both plays

> Dekker brings the paradoxical encomium to the stage with little attempt to give it dramatic significance. He even uses such traditional subjects as hair, baldness, and hunger. The speeches are remarkable mainly because of the explicit way in which they are labelled . . . In both speeches an attempt is made to elevate an unlikely subject to sublimity. But one character's comment, "By my

[9] Synesius' work also preserves, embedding it, Dio Chrysostom's encomium on hair.

> truely I neuer thought you could ha pickt such a strange things out of haire before", represents a reaction more naïve than that of the audience to the paradox which was so laboriously brought forth. (87)

One can immediately notice a contradiction: Sackton had claimed that "the specific subjects of these speeches in Elizabethan plays are not closely parallel to those treated by non-dramatic authors" (86), but, in order to contend how deficient Dekker is in his integration of the mock encomium into the dramatic text, Sackton writes that he "*even* uses such traditional subjects as" hunger and baldness (italics mine) – as if one should expect that a dramatist should necessarily compose a mock encomium on an original theme in a period that especially valued *imitatio*.[10] On the contrary, "[p]aradoxes in the drama are obviously to be related to those occurring in the literature of the period" (Gilbert 1935, 537) and those passed down from antiquity – thus, for example, Thomas Nashe, in his *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (published in 1600), has Orion deliver a ca. 100-line-long speech in commendation of dogs modelled after a speech by Sextus Empiricus which he could apparently find in a no longer extant English translation of the *Pyrrhonianae Hypotyposes* (McKerrow 1910, 120).

Both *Old Fortunatus* and *Satiromastix* feature 'formal' mock encomia, i.e. epideictic speeches which follow a certain type of argumentation and which occupy a considerable amount of lines. We have seen that these speeches are clearly characterised as paradoxes and that their special status as an embedded genre within the dramatic text is emphasised in several ways (especially

[10] Baldness had been the theme of Synesius' praise, so it would have been strange that Dekker had not picked up that text. John Donne refers in an entry of his *Catalogus librorum satyricus* to a different encomium of baldness, Baldus's medieval *Ecloga de calvis* (Smith and Payne 2018, 464n30). Hunger was not the formal subject of any paradox by Lando, but he had written two paradoxes on poverty and dearth which Dekker could read in Anthony Munday's 1593 English translation (via Estienne). Moreover, Nashe's 1599 *Lenten Stuff* featuring the "praise of the red herring" has been described as "an extended exercise in mock praise . . . [also because a]s a meal, the herring was associated with hunger and scarcity rather than considered a rare feast" (Andersen 2016, 62).

in *Satiromastix*, where the speeches are rhymed and the printed text employs a number of typographical devices to remark this distinctiveness). Does this mean that these speeches do not advance the dramatic action and could be cut out from the play? The answer is a definite no. In both plays, the performance of a mock encomium delivered by a character creates a *meta*performative event, which engages the other characters and turns them into (passive or active) listeners in front of the actual audience around the apron stage of the Elizabethan playhouse.

In *Old Fortunatus,* Shadow's praise of hunger is entirely in keeping with the character and further elaborates the delineation of the other *dramatis personae.* An encomium of hunger finds an understandable place in the action of the play, also because, as seen, it thematises the characters' social envy through the use of a ubiquitous imagery on such subjects as shadow/substance, seeming/being and dispossession/wish-fulfilment. *Old Fortunatus* is a play that is obsessively interested in the themes of physical desire, ambition, and transience, where Fortunatus himself is described as a "Camelion" (C2*r.*, an animal which was thought to feed on air), a "[s]hadow" (C1*v.*), and (thanks to a magical hat he acquires from the Sultan) someone who can become "nothing but ayre" (D4*v.*). In the early modern period, there was also a direct connection between feeling hunger and paradoxes: consider for example Robert Burton's following statement – "*what strange accidents proceed from fasting[;] dreames, superstition, contempt of torments, desire of death, prophesies, paradoxes, madnesse; fasting naturally prepares men to these things*" (1994, 360-1) – or, for that matter, the frequent feast/fast paronomasia in the works of religious writers (see George Herbert's poem on Lent in *The Temple* and Colie 1966, 136). The theme would return in the literature and drama of the period, for instance in James Shirley's *A Contention for Honour and Riches*, where the personification of Riches attacks Ingenuity and cries out: "Goe, and . . . write whole volumes in / The praise of hunger and your lowsie wardrobe" (1633, B2*r.*).

The dramatic significance of the mock encomium in *Satiromastix* is even more important: the action of one of the three subplots depends on it, and the performances of the praise of hair and of the praise of baldness occupy the large part of two scenes of the play.

From a contextual point of view, these moments are important also because they represent the War of the Theatres (which underlies the whole play) in a certain way, as Jay Simons elucidates: "Dekker's treatment of the struggle between Sir Vaughan and Sir Adam parodically reduces the entire Poetomachia to a poetical battle over the value of baldness" (2018, n.n.).[11] Thus, I cannot agree with Joel Fineman who describes Dekker's device here as "strikingly gratuitous, present solely for the sake of rhetorical display" (1986, 328).

This discussion of the function of the mock encomia as performed in *Fortunatus* and *Satiromastix* has problematised the view that they are speeches which are not truly integrated into the dramatic action and that they simply mirror an enthusiasm of the period for paradoxes. One does not have to wait for Volpone's praise of gold at the beginning of Jonson's 1606 comedy of the same name for the convention of the paradoxical encomium to be "completely assimilated to the theme of the play" (Sackton 1949, 97), where Volpone's praise of gold indicates the debased nature of his own life. On the other hand, this consideration does not mean that paradoxical encomia could not be anthologised as standalone pieces: for instance, Roslyn Lander Knutson has shown that Edward Pudsey, the author of one of the best known early modern commonplace books to contain extracts from printed plays (c. 1600-15), was utterly "uninterested in topical theatrical references in *Satiromastix*" but "quote[d] extensively from the pair of poems on baldness by Horace and Crispinus" (2001, 144). The culling of paradoxes from a dramatic text must not have been uncommon in an age which has justly been defined as a "commonplace book culture" (Smyth 2010): the same practice was of course applied to soliloquies, *sententiae*, proverbs, etc. Naturally, the staged mock encomium loses its original function once taken away from the dramatic situation, and one could compare the specificity of

[11] Besides, "Crispinus's speech seems far more important for the thematic issues it implicitly raises than for its quality as rhetoric. Some of its imagery, by alluding to God's kingship . . . indirectly reminds us of the corruption of the earthly king and of the earthly court the play represents" (Evans 1994, 30).

Horace's encomium of hair with a passage which Dekker wrote in a section of *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), in which he praises long hair and vilifies bald heads: "How vgly is a bald pate? it lookes like a face wanting a nose . . . wheras a head al hid in haire, giues euen to a most wicked face a sweet proportion, & lookes like a meddow newly marryed to the *Spring*" (16). The plurality of perspectives and voices marking the dramatic text is gone in the passage from the stage to the page, and from drama to non-fiction, which necessarily produces a different experience.

2. Mock Encomia Used to Set or Conclude a Scene

Formal mock encomia such as those in Dekker's plays are less frequent than their sprinkled and heavily truncated versions articulated in dramatic exchanges, where "[t]he formality of the tradition gradually lessens itself, and becomes submerged in the dialogue of the play" (Sackton 1949, 101). However, the distinctiveness of the mock encomium as a genre and *qua* speech could be harnessed to establish a different form of communication with the audience. For instance, George Chapman's *All Fools* (1604) ends with a mock encomium in the form of a quasi-epilogue to sum up the action. At the end of this comedy centred on deception, jealousy, and the fear of adultery, one of the protagonists, the young man Valerio, who has finally received his father's blessing for his secret wedding and avenged himself of two characters by spreading the rumour that one has cuckolded the other, sits down on a chair and promises to deliver a praise of the cuckold's horn:[12] "then will I make a speech in praise of this reconcilement, including therein the praise and honor of the most fashionable and autenticall *HORNE:* stande close Gentles, and be silent" (I3*v*.). All the characters gather around him – once again creating an 'intra-dramatic' audience – and he starts speaking. His father comments: "Come on, lets heare his wit" (ibid.). The spectators had witnessed another situation of a similar nature: in a previous scene, a notary had been summoned to

[12] The cuckold's horns were a traditional subject of Renaissance mock encomia: for Italian and French examples, see Figorilli 2008, 37-9. All quotations from *All Fools* refer to Chapman 1605.

read aloud a document certifying the divorce of a character, where everyone had promised: "We will all marke you sir" (H2*r.*). Thus, the presentation of a mock encomium seems to instantiate the same situation produced by the recitation of a legal document – that is, it slows down the action and the moment acquires a soft of gravitas. Valerio's argumentation is articulated as follows. We all live in "the horned age" (I4*r.*) and one should revere the cuckold's horns:

> A Trophey so honorable, and vnmatchably powerfull, that it is able to raise any man from a Beggar to an Emperours fellow, a Dukes fellow, a Noble-mans fellow, Aldermans fellow; so glorious, that it deserues to be worne (by most opinions) in the most conspicuous place about a man: For what worthier Crest can you beare then the Horne? which if it might be seene with our mortall eyes, what a wonderfull spectacle would there be? and how highly they would rauish the beholders? But their substaunce is incorporall, not falling vnder sence, nor mixt of the grosse concretion of Elementes, but a quintessence beyond them; a spirituall essence inuisible, and euerlasting. (Ibid.)

The cuckold's horns are universal since they can be found in all regions of the world and can be attached to anyone regardless of class. Finally, horns outlive their cause: "though the wife die by whom this title came to her husband, yet by the curtesie of the City, he shalbe a cuckold during life" (K1*r.*).

The prose of this mock encomium is elegantly witty and occupies four leaves of the 1605 quarto edition, after which the characters briefly praise Valerio's oration and shake hands. As Sackton puts it: "Although the action of the play has ceased, the speech is an effective part of it, serving as an epilogue which comments on the play and binds it off" (1949, 89). The performance of the mock encomium is thus revealed to not be extraneous to the action, but its status as a relatively autonomous piece renders the actual epilogue in verse which follows it completely pleonastic. Its content is extremely generic: it starts with the lines "Since all our labours are as you can like, / We all submit to you; nor dare presume, / To thinke ther's any realy worth in them" (K1*v.*), and then proceeds developing a rather banal metaphor of a play seen as a meal prepared by the players for the audience. Here, "the note of careless ease is clearest"

(Bradbrook 1956, 165): such an epilogue could be attached to any of Chapman's comedies and expresses nothing specific at all about the peculiarities of *All Fools* – unlike the concluding encomium of horns.

John Marston, in his *The Dutch Courtesan* (c. 1604-5), instead, introduced two mock encomia at the beginning of the first two scenes of Act 1 to give the audience the information they require to understand the dramatic situation, the dynamics between the characters, and the general context of this city comedy (a device which would also be used by Jonson in his *Volpone*, as already mentioned). The first is a defence of prostitutes, the second is a praise of bawds. The first speech is spoken by Master Freevill, who is trying to persuade his prim and pious friend, Master Malheureux, that his visits to brothels such as the one where Franceschina, the eponymous Dutch courtesan, works, should not be vilified. Malheureux tells him that his lust is a sin in a little speech in blank verse (with lines such as "Know, sir, the strongest argument that speaks / Against the soul's eternity is lust" (1.1.95-6) and calls whores "money-creature[s]" (104) and "mangonist[s]" (105),[13] i.e. slave-dealers), which triggers Frevill's praise of prostitutes. His speech starts in prose and is filled with bawdy puns but ends ultimately in blank verse, perhaps as a *crescendo* to show that only poetry can fittingly convey the paradoxical excellence of prostitutes – although the close, "Give me my fee", enables him to present himself as a lawyer who has pleaded his case:

> Alas, good creatures! What would you have them do? Would you have them get their living by the curse of man, the sweat of their brows? So they do. Every man must follow his trade and every woman her occupation. A poor, decayed, mechanical man's wife – her husband is laid up – may not she lawfully be laid down when her husband's only rising is by his wife's falling? A captain's wife wants means, her commander lies in open field abroad; may not she lie in civil arms at home? A waiting-gentlewoman, that had wont to take say to her lady, miscarries, or so. The court misfortune throws her down; may not the city courtesy take her up? Do you know no alderman would pity such a woman's case? Why is charity grown

[13] All quotations from this play refer to Britland 2018.

> a sin, or relieving the poor and impotent an offence? You will say beasts take no money for their fleshly entertainment. True, because they are beasts, therefore beastly. Only men give to lose, because they are men, therefore manly. And, indeed, wherein should they bestow their money better? . . . They sell their bodies; do not better persons sell their souls? Nay, since all things have been sold – honour, justice, faith, nay, even God himself – ay me, what base ignobleness is it to sell the pleasure of a wanton bed?
> Why do men scrape, why heap to full heaps join?
> But for his mistress, who would care for coin?
> For this I hold to be denied of no man:
> All things are made for man, and man for woman –
> Give me my fee. (106-44)

Malheureux is not convinced, he does not want to go to Franceschina's house: "The most odious spectacle the earth can present is an immodest, vulgar woman" (167-8), but agrees to join his friend, because he thinks he can redeem the prostitute and confirm himself of his beliefs. He ends his scene with a sententious couplet: "I'll go to make her loathe the shame she's in: / The sight of vice augments the hate of sin" (170-1), which is ridiculed by Freevill and the audience will soon see that Malheureux' stance, criticised by his friend in the paradoxical encomium, will immediately transform at the mere sight of Franceschina, as he will fall head over heels for her. This conversion happens in the next scene, but not before Cocledemoy, a prankster, praises extensively the profession of Mary Faugh, Franceschina's bawd. Mary does not understand the appellations used by Cocledemoy (e.g. "thou ungodly fire that burnt Diana's temple" 1.2.12-13, "[n]ecessary damnation", 27) and tells him that he should not rail at her. Thus, Cocledemoy promises her: "I'll make an oration, I, in praise of thy most courtly-in-fashion and most pleasurable function, I" (27-8), and he launches into this encomium:[14]

> List then: a bawd. First, for her profession or vocation, it is most worshipful of all the twelve companies, for as that trade is most honourable that sells the best commodities — as the draper is more

[14] The passage borrows heavily from Florio's translation of Montaigne's essays: see Hamlin 2012, 411.

> worshipful than the pointmaker, the silkman more worshipful than the draper and the goldsmith more honourable than both, little Mary – so the bawd above all. Her shop has the best ware, for where these sell but cloth, satins and jewels, she sells divine virtues as virginity, modesty and such rare gems . . . and who are her customers? Not base corn-cutters or sowgelders, but most rare wealthy knights and most rare bountiful lords, are her customers. Again, whereas no trade or vocation profiteth but by the loss and displeasure of another — as the merchant thrives not but by the licentiousness of giddy and unsettled youth, the lawyer but by the vexation of his client, the physician but by the maladies of his patient—only my smooth-gummed bawd lives by others' pleasure and only grows rich by others' rising. Oh, merciful gain! Oh, righteous income! So much for her vocation, trade and life. As for their death, how can it be bad, since their wickedness is always before their eyes and a death's head most commonly on their middle finger? To conclude, 'tis most certain they must needs both live well and die well, since most commonly they live in Clerkenwell and die in Bridewell. *Dixi*, Mary. (32-59)

This second speech has been described as "another Inns of Court exercise in paradox" (Jackson and Neill 1986, 306), but it is perfectly integrated into the dramatic situation. It forms a diptych with Freevill's encomium of prostitutes and informs the spectators' understanding of the personalities of the *dramatis personae*, also because this is the first time that they have encountered them on stage. It is indicative that Mary is not permitted to respond to the encomium: just after Cocledemoy's conclusion, Freevill and Malheureux enter and the perspective remains the men's. Mary does not speak any longer in the scene, and Franceschina appears twice, the first time without uttering a word, the second time singing a song and speaking four lines in total. Although there are scenes in which female characters (such as Crispinella, the sister of Freevill's fiancée) puncture the sexism marking the society within and outside of the drama, the world of the play is one where "[m]en are inclined to buy women . . . just as they buy jewellery, wine or a decent shave, and Franceschina, taking the stereotype of the commercially astute Dutch to an extreme, sells her own flesh, wrapped up in an illusion of sophistication and romance" (Britland 2018, n.n.). The

slippery nature of the mock encomium can be revealed if one looks at scholarly works on the play. For example, according to Sandra Clark, Freevill's praise of prostitution as a profession which can protect the institution of marriage "is positioned as a witty paradox, and can thus be written off" (2007, 167-8). However, as William M. Hamlin notes, Freevill "comes gradually to represent a stance toward prostitution that would have been endorsed by the majority of Marston's contemporaries", and Cocledemoy's encomium "offers a mercantile fantasy in which prostitution proves exempt from the rule of profit and loss that underlies all other trades" (2012, 411). The speech "proves more germane to *The Dutch Courtesan*'s thematic structure than one might initially imagine", because it "lay[s] bare a comparable fantasy at the heart of Freevill's logic" (ibid.):

> Freevill has generated a fantasy of radical self-fashioning which entirely exculpates him from Franceschina's condition—and, for that matter, from Malheureux's. He has severed the development of an individual's moral standing from the complexities of social imbrication, offering a drastically pared down version of human agency that enables complacent moralizing. (415)

This is the main effect of such mock encomia: early modern spectators as well as contemporary readers are called upon to reconsider their assumptions and values by trying to disentangle what is meant to be absurd and yet forms the *doxa* of one's society, from what is shown to be true. This is achieved by considering who the speaker is, who the characters allowed to respond are, and the dramatic situation into which the mock encomium is set. In the specific case of *The Dutch Courtesan*, the mock encomia should not be 'written off': they should be examined in the context of the play which shows that they "presuppose and invigorate, even if they question, an established rhetorical iconography in which . . . woman, qua woman, is a bawd, prostitute by essence, and for this reason speakable only through paradoxical epideixis" (Fineman 1986, 328; for a more charitable view of the play's ethos, see Julian 2020).

3. Conclusion

This essay has questioned the allegedly gratuitous nature of the performance of mock encomia in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. From the start, dramatists chose to introduce them into their dramatic texts by creating a metaperformative moment and to fulfil specific functions, which, as we have seen, include: 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. This is not to say that a mock encomium may not be merely a display of rhetorical prowess directly on the part of a *dramatis persona*, and indirectly on the part of the playwright. For example, in 3.3 of a somewhat later text, Philip Massinger's *The City Madam* (1632), Luke Frugal, a poor scholar who has been released from the debtors' prison and succeeds to his rich brother's estate, exalts the virtues of the key to the counting house in the following hyperbolic terms:

> Thou dumb magician that without a charm
> Didst make my entrance easie, to possesse
> What wise men wish and toyl for. *Hermes' Moly*;
> *Sibylla's* golden bough; the great Elixar,
> Imagin'd only by the Alchymist
> Compar'd with thee, are shadows, thou the substance
> And guardian of felicity. No marvail,
> My brother made thy place of rest his bosome,
> Thou being the keeper of his heart, a mistris
> To be hugg'd ever . . . (1659, G2*v*.)

Yet, such exaggerations are not pointless: they demonstrate Luke's avid joy at the prospect of these new-found riches as well as his tendency to resort to erudite images and expressions as the fruit of his learning. Indirectly, they are Massinger's own way of exhibiting his rhetorical skills and knowledge of literary tropes. In his study of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Joel Fineman has noticed that an encomium, being a kind of epideictic speech, can often be described as "an objective showing that is essentially subjective showing off" (1986, 6), and also seems to presuppose a dramatic dimension: "it is

through something discursively 'extra', as an effect of something registered as supplementary or 'epi-', that praise becomes a showy showing speech, a pointing or indicative speech that is so in such a stagily performative way as to become a kind of theatrical oratory" (5-6). A mock encomium is bound to amplify the 'showiness' of this 'showing speech', and dramatists knew how to make the most of the implied or direct deixis of this special kind of epideictic oratory.

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