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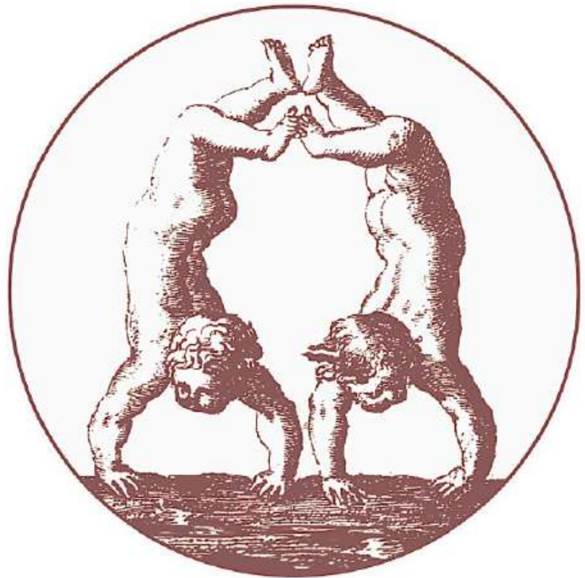
# A Feast of Strange Opinions: Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes on the English Renaissance Stage

Edited by Marco Duranti and Emanuel Stelzer



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Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

**Skenè Texts DA - CEMP**

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General Editor Silvia Bigliazzi

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S K E N È Theatre and Drama Studies

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Supplement to *SKENÈ. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies*
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ISBN 979-12-210-1709-0
ISSN 2464-9295
SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
https://textsandstudies.skeneproject.it/index.php/TS
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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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# Contributors

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**Beatrice Righetti** is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Aosta Valley and a former doctoral student in Linguistics, Philology and Literature at the University of Padua. Her doctoral project deals with the reception of paradoxical writing and the *querelle des femmes* as regards the literary figure of the talkative woman in six-

teenth- and seventeenth-century England and Italy. Her main case study is the literary and theatrical character of the English shrew and the Shakespearean shrew in particular. She has published on Renaissance women writers and Shakespeare's plays, mostly *The Taming of the Shrew*, focusing on both the use of paradoxes and the relationship between metamorphosis, gender-based violence and power relations. She contributes to two digital projects directed by Silvia Bigliazzi ("Shakespeare's Narrative Sources: Italian Novellas and their European Dissemination", SENS; and "Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England", CEMP) and to "From Paradise to Padua" directed by Alessandra Petrina.

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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 w*i*th 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"

[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 discharginge 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

[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,

[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

[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

[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, metadramatic 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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# 1. Paradoxes of the Real

1

# Doing Things with Paradoxes: Shakespearean Impersonations

Silvia Bigliazzi

Abstract

The chapter discusses the functions of figures of contradiction in their various rhetorical and logical articulations in a number of Shakespearean tragedies, arguing that it is the pragmatic context of drama that produces paradoxical effects even when language is not technically paradoxical. In the tragedies this articulation becomes especially complex when paradoxical utterances interrogate the coexistence of being, being-other and non-being, redefining the relation between the ontology and the epistemology of Shakespearean tragedy. The chapter focuses on questions of selfhood and impersonation with regard to theatre and mimesis, as well as identity fabrication. Special attention is paid to selected passages in *Hamlet* and *Othello*, where a whole gamut of figures of contradiction are employed to explore the meaning of simulation in ways that reconfigure the boundaries of self and reality.

Keywords: *Romeo and Juliet*; Friar Laurence; source studies; intertextuality; novellas

## 1. Towards a Pragmatics of Paradoxes

When in 1996 Paul Stevens criticised Rosalie Colie's famous reappraisal of Renaissance paradoxes, he argued that their main flaw was the political noncommitment that paved the way to quietism.[1] One of the examples he brought was Claudius' "brilliant series of paradoxical antitheses" (214) in *Hamlet* 1.2:

Therefore our sometimes sister, now our queen,

[1] For a similar position emphasising paradox as a dehistoricising device see also Bristol 1985, 11ff.; for a fuller discussion of this point see Platt 2009, 47. A succinct introduction to the debate is in Bigliazzi 2014a.

Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
Taken to wife. (8-14)[2]

Stevens' conclusion was that "Reassured by these paradoxes, we might ask what are we to do?" (214). Nothing, he replied, in that what follows "is business as usual, and he [Claudius] will take care of it" (ibid.). The first question to arise, though, is whether these are paradoxes at all, and whether any analysis of Renaissance paradox should also consider falsidical ones, which deceive by expressing a non-existent insoluble complexity, or veridical ones, whose apparent insoluble contradiction may in fact be solved.[3] Steven's answer was no (ibid.).

Soon after the appearance of Colie's study in 1966, Frances Yates also found fault in it, selecting the lack of discerning criteria as the reason behind Colie's tendency to find paradoxes everywhere. Although the topic of Renaissance paradoxes had been discussed occasionally before then,[4] it was this book which first argued extensively that paradox was an intellectual and artistic form of political and epistemological subversion, and included different types of contradiction.[5] This position has been defended in more recent years by Platt, with the conclusion that paradox does pose "a challenge to the doxa" (2009, 48).[6] But the question whether clear criteria to identify different types and functions are still needed remains open.

The two main arguments arising from this debate are the agency

[2] If not otherwise stated, all Shakespearean references are to Shakespeare 2005.

[3] See Quine 1966; see also in Stevens 1966 and Platt 2009.

[4] See for instance Rice 1932, Wiley 1948, Burrell 1954, Knight Miller 1956, Malloch 1956.

[5] A stance which has variously been taken up in the following years, for instance by Rabkin 1967, Vickers 1968, Peters 1980, Neill 1981; for references to Shakespeare and paradox see Platt 2009, 45ff. On early modern English paradoxes see also Grimaldi Pizzorno 2007; Bigliazzi 2011 and 2014b.

[6] See also Montrose 1996 and Platt 2009, 51.

of paradox and the need to define what we mean by it within literary and drama texts. If we limit our discussion to theatre, it should be pointed out that the relevance of the pragmatic context requires us to consider a third variable: contradictions, whatever their nature, may or may not produce different effects situationally, and this is an issue that has a profound effect on our sense of paradoxical discourse. If we go back to Stevens' comment that nothing happens after Claudius' speech, we realise that 'nothing' is exactly the effect desired: what Claudius wants is to prevent criticism and carry on with his "business". Claudius' antinomies are part of a politically falsidical speech which elaborates on the rhetorical model of the oxymoron to cover up his own guilt and show moderate happiness in spite of of his brother's death. In other words, it is the pragmatics of the exchange, the intention of the speaker and the nature of the context and the situation which define the quality of the agency inherent in contradictions. Provoking nothing may in fact be exactly what the paradox wants to *do*.

In this particular example, Claudius' antinomies do not flaunt logic but rather the meaning of the words joined in compounds. In this sense they can broadly be called paradoxes while being both veridical and falsidical: the oxymora may be explained as the result of the psychological coexistence of different states of mind, except that this coexistence is factually false (Claudius is not unhappy). By playing on the figures of the oxymoron and the chiasmus, Claudius at the same time flaunts the rules of language and the *doxa*, according to which "joy" cannot be if "defeated". However, this contradiction belongs to the domain of rhetoric which allows for semantic trespass.

This example shows that whatever appears contradictory may be so in various ways and its effects depend on circumstances. In this sense, Hermione turning from stone back to life in *The Winter's Tale* has been considered key to the Shakespeare paradoxical project in ways different from the contradictions just mentioned. As Platt has argued, it is at this point that the audience "fully enacts the play's true meaning" (2009, 201). This episode plays around with the unveiling of the logic behind the impossible embodiment of simulacra which are by definition untrue, so that the counterfactual, impossible transformation of the statue into a

woman eventually finds its explanation in Paulina's story. But, as Platt contends, we are amazed and our amazement requires both acceptance and investigation; we accept unknowing while trying to understand and "complete the play by accepting incompleteness" (ibid.). The paradox is perceived as such as long as we keep our disbelief suspended.

What we sense here are memories of Pygmalion's story as recounted by Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, Book 10). But it is a narrative and its reading does not entail quite the same experience as seeing a piece of stone turned into a body on stage.[7] To find an example somewhat equivalent we should turn to Euripides' *Alcestis*, where we witness Alcestis' enigmatic return from the dead, mysteriously veiled and silent. In early modern England, the story circulated through George Pettie's narrative contained in his 1576 *Petite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasures* (rpt 1608), but it was also easily accessible in Euripides' Latin editions, although in both cases it would have again meant reading the play, not seeing it onstage. Another example might have been Euripides' *Helen*, to which Hermione is indirectly connected by bearing the name of Helen's daughter. Knowledge of this could derive from Ovid's *Heroides* (epistle 8) where she addresses a lament to Orestes about being married to Pyrrhus and having grown up without a mother.[8] Bullough remarks that "The double pathos of wife without husband and daughter without mother may have appealed to Shakespeare, but his Hermione, unlike Ovid's, does not seek relief in copious tears" (1975, 124). All the same, if a connection with Helen may be perceived here through Ovid's Hermione, doubtless this is not Euripides' Helen, although we would have guessed that the radical interrogation of her double status as a woman and as an airy simulacrum raised in that play may have sounded appealing to Renaissance theatre. And yet, the name of Helen recurs in English drama with different connotations. She is not primarily the woman whose double ethereal image rescues her from shame while not preventing the war at Troy, as in Euripides, but the infamous Trojan beauty whose face "launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium"

[7] On the various sources mentioned here see Bullough 1975, 134-5.

[8] See Duncan-Jones 1966 and Bullough 1975, 124.

(A 5.1.90-1).[9] Everywhere Helen is the epitome of female devilish power: she is the "wofull wracke of Troy", as in John Hanson's *Time Is a Turne-Coate or Englands three-fold Metamorphosis* (1604, 18; D1*v.*); she is the "faire Helen the Greeke" for whom "poore Troy endured such cruell ruine and destruction", as in Anthony Munday's translation of Ortensio Lando's paradox 2 ("For the hard-fauored face, or Fowle Complexion", 1593, 18; D1*v.*). Several stories circulated at the time about her fate, but none revolved explicitly around Euripides' version casting her as a victim of the gods. Even an early chronograph such as Lodowick Lloyd's 1590 *The Consent of Time* mentions other plausible versions, now suggesting that she had been abandoned in Egypt by Paris and she had met Menelaus there, now that Menelaus brought her back from Troy, but neither version contains the paradox of the two Helens.[10]

It has been argued that Shakespeare "arrived at [Euripides] through the extensive filtration provided by Seneca", and as Gillespie remarks, although this position has been recently challenged, it is still widely held (2004, 162). Seneca's Helen in the *Trojan Women* is no positive figure: she is entrusted by the Greeks with a false narrative about the prospective marriage of Polyxena with Pyrrhus and is attacked by Andromache (888ff.) before she defends herself. In Euripides, Helen acknowledges that her whole life is a wondrous event, unbelievable since the moment of her conception, when Leda was made pregnant by the divine swan.[11] She is the offspring of Zeus and of a woman transformed by him into a beautiful animal; she originates in the seductive appearance of a divine simulacrum; in Collinus' 1541 Latin translation she is a "prodigium", a monster.

[9] Reference is to Marlowe 2005. Even when, as in the case of Marlowe, the idea of the *eidolon* is what is being toyed with. For a fuller discussion see Carla Suthren chapter in this volume.

[10] Reference is to p. 156. Curiously, the glosses in the margin refer to Iosephus Flavius, *Contra Apionem*, Book 1, and Herodotus Book 2, but while the latter is correct (Herodotus 1584, 98-9), the former is not.

[11] φίλαι γυναῖκες, τίνι πότμῳ συνεζύγην; / ἆρ' ἡ τεκοῦσά μ' ἔτεκεν ἀνθρώποις τέρας; (255-6: "Did my mother bear me as a wonder to mankind? [For no other woman, Hellene or barbarian, gives birth to a white vessel of chicks, in which they say Leda bore me to Zeus.]"; trans. Coleridge in Euripides 1938).

Hermione's transformation into a statue and back to a woman also arouses a sense of wonder; it is like an old tale, Paulina says, at the same time claiming that it is not one and metatheatrically implying the double fictionality of the monstrous event on the stage ("That she is living, / Were it but told you it should be hooted at / Like an old tale", 5.3.116-18). But then the event is brought back to normal and a rational explanation is provided in ways that are not extant in Euripides, where Helen herself avows her amazement at her own birth and her duplication into an ethereal simulacrum, and the audience is informed from the beginning that an image of her has indeed been created and is real in its paradoxical unreality. The audience is invited to believe it and the paradox is solved within the wondrous frame of divine agency.[12]

And yet Nuttall has argued that although "between Euripides and Shakespeare there is only the most tenuous and speculative historical connection", "[i]f we read, not as source-hunters but as critics, we shall see that the late Euripides is *like* Shakespeare as no other dramatist is".[13] But may the wondrous palinodic device of the double Euripidean Helen be felt in any way like a Shakespearean paradox beyond demonstrable relations? Or, to put it differently, is the sense of paradox Helen embodies in her birth and in her following Euripidean approach to her own myth comparable to any of Shakespeare's innumerable paradoxes related to unstable appearances challenging our sense of the real? The virtual absence of the version of her story dramatised by Euripides seems to suggest a convergence of suspicions about idola and misogynistic stances in the English Renaissance, traversed as it was by religious tensions about simulacra, which that particular version of Helen's story at the same time embodied and resolved, possibly contributing to checking its circulation.

Moving from Stevens' discussion of Claudius's speech and from the implications of the similarities and differences between Hermione's amazing transformation and Euripides' Helen in the

[12] For a discussion of epistemological and metatheatrical issues related to an experience of paradox in this play, see Marco Duranti's chapter in this volume.

[13] Nuttall 1989, 8, 9; see also Gillespie 2004, 163.

homonymous play, in the following pages I will concentrate on a particular type of paradox concerning identity at the intersection of ontological and epistemological stances in Shakespeare's dramas. Building on the premise that identity on stage is itself a paradox (Platt 2001, and 2009, esp. ch. 4), I will revise the paradox of acting as discussed by Platt and will assume its relevance in a context permeated by the well-known antitheatrical polemics. My other assumption is summed up in Altman's remark that a dialectic between self and subject is at work "in many a Shakespearean dramatis-persona-cum-character" (2010, 290), which favours the articulation of different forms of contradiction and paradoxes. In his words,

> Shakespeare's experience of acting and observing actors . . . led him to think beyond the vaunted flexibility of orator, courtier, and machiavel, and to query the power of a host self to fit itself deliberately to an action, retain control of the shape it assumes, and know the content of that shape. As a result, he represented persons who variously model actors learning to act or playing their parts, some of whom believe they have mastered their roles, some who find the roles have mastered them, some whose actorial consciousness discovers in varying degrees that they are behaving in ways unclear to themselves, having that which passes show. (Ibid.)

Trying to respond to critiques of lack of analytical criteria in the study of Renaissance paradoxes, I will consider the relation between different types of contradiction in drama within a cultural context which was becoming aware of the potential dangers of simulation and dissimulation. I will then distinguish between doxastic, rhetorical and logical paradoxes in relation to pragmatic uses in a few Shakespearean dramas where veridical and falsidical antinomies alternate with radical antinomies and where what looks like an aporia may dissolve into various forms of only apparent contradictions. But what counts is the fact of their pragmatic uses and effects, in other words their *doing things*. It is precisely this doing things with paradoxes that I will examine with regard to issues of impersonation, suggesting that their doxastic definition does not exhaust their performative potential.

## 2. Wonder, Simulacra, and Lying

In his *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham wrote that when the poet expresses astonishment and admiration at the exceptional nature of the events he narrates, he uses the rhetorical figure of paradox, which he tellingly nicknamed "the Wondrer". In his *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, Cicero had already clarified that paradoxes are "Quae quia sunt admirabilia contraque opinionem omnium (ab ipsis etiam παράδοξα appellantur)" (4; "These doctrines are surprising, and they run counter to universal opinion – the Stoics themselves actually term them paradoxa"; Cicero 1942), a definition which John Florio was to reproduce in his dictionary *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598) when he said that a paradox is a "marvellous, wonderfull and strange thing to hear, and uncertain to the common received opinion". Ingeniously elaborating on this sense of wonder, in his 1593 *Garden of Eloquence* Henry Peacham had already spelled out that

> This figure is then to be used, when the thing which is to be taught is new, straunge, incredible, and repugnant to the opinion of the hearer, which this exornation confirmeth by the forms of speech before rehearsed. It is well resembled in two kindes of men, that is, in old men and trauellers, from the one sort we haue the benfit of tradition, and from the other the frute of Geographie, the one kind of these men are messengers of auncient times, the other are Ambassadors of farre places. (113)

This recommendation grasps the Janus-faced sense of a figure that in yoking together opposite views is best used by the bearers of exceptional knowledge. Cautiously, these must be reliable speakers and must not lie:

> In the use of this figure the speaker ought to be a man knowne of credit, lest the which he affirmeth be either lightly regarded, or ridiculously scorned: also regard ought to be had, that the things which we report or teach by the forme of this figure be true. A far traveler that is a lyar, filleth the world full of wonders, and an old man delighting in reporting untruths, leaveth many vanities, and

false traditions behind him. (Ibid.)

The question of lying is central to the early modern experience of paradox within a society which was increasingly becoming aware of the deceits of appearances. Not being a "lyer" nor a "fonde flatterer" was a crucial recommendation at the end of Castiglione's *The Courtesan*. Manners should not display affectation (*affettazione*), and artifice ought to be concealed by way of "reckelesness", as Hoby translated the Italian *sprezzatura* (1561, "A breef rehersall of the chiefe conditions and qualities in a Courtier"). For Cicero dissimulation was pernicious in public intercourse ("ex omni vita simulatio dissimulatioque tollenda est", *De officiis*, 3.15; "pretence and concealment should be done away with in all departments of our daily life"; Cicero 1913), but in common opinion it was deemed useful.[14] In his essay "Of Simulation and Dissimulation", Francis Bacon distinguished three degrees of a "hiding and veiling of a man's self",[15] secrecy, dissimulation and simulation, of which the third one was considered to be an outright "vice, rising either of a natural falseness or fearfulness, or of a mind that hath some main faults, which because a man must needs disguise, it maketh him practise simulation in other things, lest his hand should be out of ure" (2002, 350-1). Bacon's position was coherent with theories of duplicity of language as described in manuals of rhetoric and oratory.[16] His notorious suspicion towards the heuristic value of words brought him to stigmatise language as the idol of the market in *Novum Organum* (1620, 1.43). Before him, Puttenham shifted the attention to the ruses of figurative language, famously calling all ornament a potential abusive and deceitful instrument of discourse. They invert and transport the sense (metaphor), produce "duplicitie

[14] ". . . quello che ha saputo meglio usare la volpe, è meglio capitato. Ma è necessario questa natura saperla bene colorire, ed essere gran simulatore e dissimulatore" (Machiavelli 1961; "Those best at playing the fox have done better than the others. But you have to know how to disguise your slyness, how to pretend one thing and cover up another": Machiavelli 2009, 70).

[15] Bacon 2002, 350; added in 1625 to his original collection.

[16] Vickers has pointed out that his discussion overlapped with that in Francesco Guicciardini's *Ricordi*, a work which circulated widely in various languages (Bacon 2002, 723).

of meaning or dissimulation under covert intendments" as in the case of allegory, or "false semblant", and spoke "obscurely and in riddle" as in the case of Aenigma (1589, 3.7 "Of figures and figurative speaches", 128). It is no surprise, therefore, that for Puttenham allegory was an intrinsically political figure.

Knowledge of the potential for lying residing in language and a consequent distrust of it was indeed brought about by the Reformation (cf. Zagorin 1990), alongside a distrust of any possible or real disguise of one's identity, a question which came to be typical of discussions on religious conformity and communal wellbeing. This extended to political attempts at securing one's social identity through clothing, which prompted a revival of earlier sumptuary laws by way of new Statutes of Apparel (1562 and again in 1574 and 1587; Vincent 2003, 143). The idea that "'seeming' might not be the same as 'being'" was broadly shared and was one that wild moralists continuously railed against, calling it monstrosity (ibid., 10). The word "sincerity" not coincidentally came into regular use by the end of the sixteenth century. So it is no surprise that

> Shakespeare used the terms 'sincerity', 'sincere' and 'sincerely' thirteen times in his printed works (Sidney and Jonson used the terms twice each, while Milton, by contrast, used them forty-eight times in his prose works alone). The advice Polonius gives Laertes in *Hamlet* 'to thine own self be true' may have been a commonplace but it was a relatively new commonplace. What is more, the term 'sincere' was becoming a fashionable one in other languages during this period, notably Italian and French (Montaigne was one of the first recorded users). (Burke 1997, 19-20)

Thus, in a period traversed by the antitheatrical polemics, where theatre was clearly the epitome of paradoxical duplicity,[17] fear of lying was very much akin to fear of a paradoxical reality which in its wondrous appearances shared in the sense of a potentially unreal reality. It was an age that was the cradle of both sceptical relativism aware of the duality of all truth, and of the metaphysical wit whose unbridled paralogical exuberance raised astonishing and provocative contradictions, commingling entertaining surprise and

[17] See Platt 2009, ch. 4.

an effort to grasp the truth hidden beneath the surface of things. As Anthony Munday wrote in the *Letter to the friendly Reader* in his *Defence of Contraries* (1593), paradoxes are "things contrary to most mens present opinions: to the end, that by such discourse as is helde in them, opposed truth might appeare more cleere and apparent" (A4*v.*). Or, as John Donne would write to his friend Henry Wotton in a 1600 letter accompanying his own paradoxes, "they are rather alarums to truth to arm her than enemies" (qtd in Simpson 1948, 316). In other words, there was a diffuse awareness that paradoxes do not only give access to a wondrous reality and new ways of seeing the world, but they are also expected to do something pragmatically, whether disclosing truth or making up one. Theatre was precisely the place where to explore their functioning and potential for lying.

## 3. Doing Things with Contraries

In Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3, Ulysses calls paradoxes the imitations of their comrades-in-arm which Achilles and his friend Patroclus perform in their own tent, grotesquely counterfeiting their faces and gestures. With clumsy and ridiculous movements, they use,

> All our abilities, gifts, natures, shapes,
> Severals and generals of grace exact,
> Achievements, plots, orders, preventions,
> Excitements to the field or speech for truce,
> Success or loss, what is or is not, serves
> As stuff for these two to make paradoxes. (1.3.179-84)

Ulysses feels indignant about their mockery which disturbingly plays around with nonsensical simulacra in times of war, albeit within a closed tent and without an audience. He is offended by their impersonations, which contradict common knowledge about the soldiers' identities and in so doing subvert the ideology behind the expedition to Troy. Achilles and Patroclus deny names, traditions and the sense of the real. Ulysses resents their laziness and above all their turning a war into a ridiculous farce.

But playacting is not the only way to produce contradictions of the kind suggested here. Contraries may flaunt the *doxa*, or

opinions; they may contradict the rules of language as defined in the dictionary; or, more radically, they may go against logic and factuality. It is one thing to contradict common knowledge by denying the cultural discourse, quite another to flout expected sense through contradictory figures such as the oxymoron, and yet another to controvert the principle of non-contradiction, according to which a proposition cannot be simultaneously true and false, or to deny factual evidence. This tripartition helps us identify different uses of paradoxical discourse depending on whether it belongs to an essentially metadiscursive category concerning opinion (*doxa*) or instead with logic and factuality. This distinction becomes especially relevant in the pragmatic context of drama where actions depend on speech acts tied to their situationality.

Criticism has often shown that Shakespeare was fond of rhetorical contradictions suggesting coexistence of contraries,[18] and Macbeth has often been selected as a prime example of this kind of language. The plot is ignited by an enigma which, as Peacham claims, is "like a deepe mine, the obtaining of whose mettall requireth deepe digging, or to a dark knight, whose stars be hid with thicke cloudes" (1593, 29). Differently from the logical paradox, it has a solution, and in fact "it may be understood of prompt wits and apt capacities, who are best able to find out the sense of a similitude, and to uncover the darke vaile of Ænigmatical speech" (ibid.). However, it may be employed "to seduce by obscure prophecie, as oft it hath bene to many a mans destruction, nor amongst simple and silly persons, which are unapt and unable to conceive the meaning of darke speech, and therefore a vanitie" (ibid.). This is exactly what happens to Macbeth, whose paradoxically monstrous experience of not-nothing, or of a nothing which is neither nothing nor being, as Caygill calls such cases (2000, 105-14), alienates him from factual reality, and produces a subjective experience of paradoxical contradictory states: "nothing is / But what is not" (1.3.140-1). As I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere (2005), this paradoxical experience identifies a semiotic border between different contradictory articulations of 'non-being': factual, symbolic, imaginary. In the case of Macbeth, his apparent irresolvable antinomy becomes a veridical paradox

[18] Cf. for instance Burrell 1954; Duthie 1966; Hussey 1982, 194; Kranz 2003.

once the temporal states are separated and "nothing" refers to the obliteration of factual reality in the present, and "what is not", instead, to Macbeth's imaginary desire to become king in the future.

Like this chiasmus, other figures of repetition and inversion produce in Shakespeare a similar sense of antinomic thinking that may or may not translate into veridical or falsidical paradoxes depending on the position of the subject. This implies that, as in this case, more than one perspective may co-exist. The hendiadys, for instance, which Puttenham called the "figure of Twinnes" as it "will seeme to make two of one not therunto constrained" (1589, 147), has sometimes been interpreted as producing paradoxical effects because it may convey a highly complex perceptual and cognitive experience. G.T. Wright has explored its occurrences in *Hamlet* and has found it to be paradoxical in expressions such as "for a fantasy and trick of fame" (4.4.52), by which Hamlet defines the ephemeral reasons behind the Norwegian captain's leading his soldiers to fight in Poland virtually for nothing. While paraphrasing it as for a "deceptive dream of fame", Wright claims that "if we take the words one by one, it is hard to make them and their syntax add up to this meaning" (1981, 169). And yet, this well-known example shows neither semantic nor logical contradiction, but a hierarchical sequence of thoughts: 1. wish of fame, 2. foolish act, a "trick" aimed at gaining fame (see also Kermode 1985).

Differently from these examples, the aporia is by definition an irresolvable contradiction. Othello experiences a sense of paralysis caused by this type of antinomy when he finds himself unable to decide between alternative and equally plausible hypotheses about the honesty of both his wife and Iago: "I think my wife be honest, and think she is not, / I think that thou art just, and think thou are not" (3.3.389-90). Not coincidentally Puttenham deals with this figure, which he calls "the Doubtfull", soon after "The Wondrer", considering it not "much unlike" it (1589, 189). In turn, Peacham emphasises that it is a logical stumbling block in any argument: "This figure most properly serveth to deliberation, and to note perplexity of the mind, as when declaration is necessarily required, and the knowledge either through multitude of matters, or ambiguitie of things can direct nothing, or say very little" (1593,109).

Syneciosis (from *synoikein*, or to cohabit) also joins forcibly

contrary ideas, overturning current perspectives and showing that contraries may have something in common; and yet it is not a purely metalogical figure. Puttenham calls it the "figure of the Crosse-couple" (1589, 172), while for Peacham it "teacheth to conioine diverse things or contraries, and to repugne common opinion with reason, thus: The covetous and the prodigall are both alike in fault, for neither of them knoweth to use their wealth aright, for they both have it and both get shame by it" (1593, 170). "I must be cruel only to be kind" (3.4.162), says Hamlet to his mother when he fashions himself as divine executioner ("scourge and minister", 159), manifesting a psychological tension while justifying himself ethically. In all such cases, except for the aporia, contradictions are not logical, but rhetorical and doxastic or semantic. And yet they may acquire metalogical value and be combined in complex articulations of thought that not only describe a puzzling sense of the real but in so doing perform actions.[19]

## 4. The Oxymoron

As already noticed with regard to Claudius' speech mentioned above, unlike metalogisms, which are logically contradictory and deny factuality, the oxymoron flaunts opinion. If metalogical figures contradict facts external to language, and this is ascertainable by comparing signs and referents,[20] this comparison is not necessary with the oxymoron. To give a simple example, the expression 'black sun' either refers to an eclipse, and therefore is denotative, or the contradiction may function as a metaphor for melancholy (the sun is a star and influences humours; black is a colour endowed

[19] For other Shakespearean examples see Joseph 1947, 135.

[20] "En somme, le métalogisme exige la connaissance du référent pour contredire la description fidèle qu'on pourrait en donner. Par la voie de métasémèmes associés, il peut d'aventure arriver à modifier le sens des mots, mais en principe il va à l'encontre des données réputées immédiates de la perception ou de la conscience. C'est pourquoi il semble qu'à la différence du métasémème, il doive contenir au moins un circonstanciel égocentrique, ce qui est reconnaître qu'il n'y a de métalogismes que du particulier" (Groupe μ 1970, 125).

with symbolical negative connotations).[21] The expression "today the sun is black" would become paradoxical if we realised that there is no eclipse. The metalogical paradox, unlike oxymora, therefore, concerns those states of affairs and events that constitute the immediate dramatic context of the stage action. The possible metalogical emphasis of other non-metalogical figures depends instead on a specific illocutionary intent in relation to the context.

To give just one example of how reference to semantics and the cultural discourse, in the case of the oxymoron, and to the context, in the case of the metalogical paradox, may have different dramatic effects, let us consider the first lines of two well-known splenetic characters: Romeo and Hamlet. In the famous sequence of oxymora with which Romeo draws his self-portrait as a love melancholic, he speaks the language of Petrarchan sonneteers not with a view to being untrue, but to emphasising the contradictions of a psychological state consistent with stereotypes of unrequited love: "Tut, I have lost myself, I am not here. / This is not Romeo; he's some other where" (1.1.194-5). It consists of an exuberant display of rhetorical clichés of well-known literary origin that only causes pensiveness to Benvolio ("Dost thou not laugh?" Benvolio: "No, coz, I rather weep", 180). His speech has nothing of the complex articulation typical of turbulent thinking in Shakespeare's late plays (Kermode 2000, 16). Its artificial style is appropriate to an exposition functional to the construction of a character who has just appeared on stage and whose strange behaviour the audience has only just heard his father talk about.

Hamlet's use of the oxymoron in his first lines is immediately

[21] As Groupe μ point out (1970, 120), in the oxymoron "La contradiction est absoloue parce que'elle a lieu au sein d'un vocabulaire abstrait, où la negation a cours: 'orde merveille', 'soleil noir'. Nous avons donc une figure où un des termes possède un sème nucléaire qui est la negation d'un classème de l'autre terme. Mais la question se pose en vérité de savoir si l'oxymore est réellement une figure, c'est-a-dire si elle possède un degré zéro. Comme Léon Cellier l'a très bien mis en avant, l'oxymore est une *coincidentia oppositorum*, où l'antithèse est niée et la contradiction pleinement assumée. Elle serait donc irréductible à un quelconque degré zéro. En fait, l'examen des occurrences montre que fort peu d'oxymores sont vraiment irréductibles".

performative in ways that Romeo's are not. His puns on "kin/kind" and "sun/son" are clearly provocative and their metalogical value is politically subversive in targeting the excess of 'kinship' and 'kindness' Claudius 'shows' in his first address to him. Claudius cannot be both father and cousin simultaneously, unless we consider time, social role-play, and a figurative use of language (I'll be *like* your father), which Hamlet unveils by literalising meaning and exposing Claudius' aporetic statement as evidence of his untruth:

> KING Take thy fair hour, Laertes, time be thine
> And thy best graces spend it at thy will,
> But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son –
> HAMLET A little more than kin and less than kind.
> KING How is it that the clouds still hang on you?
> HAMLET Not so much, my lord, I am too much i'th' sun. (1.2. 62-7)

Claudius has just presented himself as the new king with a speech ebullient with oxymoronic imagery suggesting elaborate hyperboles through contrived antonyms. As we have seen, they are not aporetic, but ingeniously descriptive of his pretence of grievous joy. Hamlet's response is to unveil the deceits concealed in rhetoric and this is where the process begins: his strategy is to turn Claudius' oxymora into logical paradoxes.[22]

Hamlet's reply to Claudius, in contrast to the one Romeo addresses to Benvolio, is immediately relevant to the action on the dramatic level, so much so that Gertrude promptly intervenes, urging him to strip himself of the colour of night and reconcile with the kingdom of Denmark. Under the paronomastic pun on "kin" and "kind", evoking the proverb "the nearer in kin the less in kindness", Hamlet shows the possibilities for subtle semantic shifts through sound play and perspectival inversion, eventually overturning Claudius' statement by way of an additional pun ("less than kind": not of the same kind, but also unkind). Layering multiple messages within a single short line counts as exposing the deceitfulness of ornate language. Obscure and yet literal speaking prompts metalingual reflection on figurative discourse as the very

[22] For a discussion of this passage see Serpieri 1986, part 1, chap. 4, esp. 101 and ff.

site of counterfeit, so that the metalogical value of the antithesis functions as an implicitly polemical illocution. By claiming that he is a little more than a relative ("kin") and a little less than of the same 'blood' ("kind"), and therefore less than a son, Hamlet rejects Claudius' address and contradicts the identity fabricated for him, where he is both nephew and (adopted) son of the new king. He then contradicts Claudius' metaphor for his melancholy (his cloudy mood) by polemically implying impatience with being his "son" (he is too much i'th'sun"), and rejecting his own new identity as the (acquired) son of this king, while in fact being one.

These are famous lines which hardly need comment, except for the fact that if we consider the different functions of the figures of contradiction and repetition it allows us to grasp their significantly different roles. Romeo's and Claudius' oxymora express artificiality, conveying the sense of stereotypical passionate confusion and of a simulated emotional conflict, respectively. In contrast, Hamlet uses the logical paradox ("cousin and son") with the provocative intent of showing the insincerity of Claudius' line: his paronomasia on sun/son is imbued with a metalinguistic function that unveils the potential ambiguities inscribed in language. In displaying the contradiction immanent in Claudius' construction of his own identity as 'cousin and son', Hamlet provokes an interrogation of the court discourse and of the assumptions of truth in articulated language. This kind of paradoxical speech implies epistemological and hermeneutical questions that demand an immediate tie to the situationality of the action and therefore proves relevant to the pragmatics of drama.

## 5. The Diaphora

Shakespeare often uses the diaphora with a metalogical value although it too concerns the field of semantics rather than logic. It consists in the use of a noun with a denotative meaning first and then a connotative emphasis (e.g., "a father is always a father"). There are, however, instances where the speaker expresses a subjective sense of contradiction and incorporates negation in the diaphora while tying it to the circumstances of the illocution. At the end of Romeo's lines mentioned above – "This is not Romeo; he's some other where"

(1.1.195) – the deictic “This” underscores the situational context of his line which sounds paradoxical only if we do not keep the Romeo we see now separate from the one he was in the past – it is the temporal conflation that makes Romeo experience the condition of being a living aporia. Likewise, no genuinely paradoxical import has the Antony who is no longer himself, but only a plaything in the snares of Cleopatra’s passion in Philo’s words (“Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony, / He comes too short of that great property / Which still should go with Antony”, 1.1.59-61); or the Othello who has lost his name after killing Desdemona (Lodovico: “Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?” Othello: “That’s he that was Othello: here I am”, 5.2.289-90); or, again, Hamlet’s split identity in his apology to Laertes for the murder of Polonius, which he ascribes to intermittent madness: “Was’t Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet. / If Hamlet from himself be ta’en away, / And when he’s not himself does wrong Laertes, / Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it” (5.2.179-82). In all these cases, antinomy is subjectively perceived as insoluble although a solution may be provided once it is referred to time passing and change: one is not at one time who one is at another. So, the negative diaphora in Desdemona’s response to Cassio, who urges her to intercede for him with the Moor, has an explanation, although she does not see it. “My lord is not my lord” (3.4.122), she says, avowing ignorance of what has happened to him and whether in him different personalities cohabit. As we will see later, Othello is simultaneously himself and other (‘he is not he’), and his otherness is referred to a temperamental change (“humour altered”, 123) which rationalises the paradox, while still leaving Desdemona puzzled. A similar sense of alienation is conveyed by Lear’s famous negative diaphora acknowledging his daughters’ disowning his royal identity:

> Lear Does anyone here know me? [Q]Why[Q], this is not Lear.
> Does Lear walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes?
> Either his notion weakens, [Q]or[Q] his discernings are lethargied
> – Ah! [Q]sleeping or[Q] waking?
> [Q]Sure[Q] ’tis not so. Who is it that can tell me who I am?
> [F]Fool[F] Lear’s a shadow. (Shakespeare 1987, 1.4.217-21)

Unlike what emerges in Philo’s lines, or in Othello’s and Hamlet’s

in the previous examples, these lines do not suggest a temporal change, but as in Desdemona's case, Lear conveys his bewildered perception of simultaneously being and being-other. In other words, the diaphora becomes an aporia which defines his mental state, caught in an insoluble, logical and circumstantial, paradox.

How strongly the metalogical diaphora may define the sense of split identities in a specific dramatic context is perhaps no better expressed than by Troilus in *Troilus and Cressida* 5.2. Troilus has just witnessed Cressida's betrayal with Diomedes, and although he refuses to believe that she is the one he has just seen together with the enemy in the Greek field, he cannot deny it. It is precisely this hesitation in the face of the coexistence of two antinomian options which provides the paradoxical knot from which his reflection begins: "Rather, think this not Cressid" (135). Torn between his inner gaze on an ideal and pure love, and what he actually sees with his eyes, Troilus gets entangled in a tortuous argument, attempting to deny to himself what his eyes show him. The speech unfolds through a *sorite* based on a sequence of flawed syllogisms, where each sentence's last word is repeated at the beginning of the following one as in a *climax* ("If beauty have a soul, this is not she; / If souls guide vows, if vows are sanctimonies, / If sanctimony be the gods's delight, / If there be rule in unity itself, / This is not she", 141-5). The conclusion is that Cressida is not Cressida, which entraps him within circular thinking, bringing him back to where he started: "This, she? No, this is Diomed's Cressida" (140). Nonetheless, Troilus cannot fail to notice the fallacy of his own reasoning, which is grounded on a counterfactual, metalogical diaphora ("this not Cressid"), as well as on doxastic and obtusely axiomatic assumptions: 1. beauty has a pure soul; 2. vows come from the soul; 3. therefore they are sincere. Hence, his reflection on the absurdity of his own discourse rooted in flawed reasons disproves the premise that the woman he sees is not Cressida, and he suddenly becomes aware of being subject to a "Bifold authority" (147): a metalogical way of thinking that turns rationality against itself without thereby causing it to be lost ("without perdition", 148), while making insanity ("loss" [of reason]) appear rational without thereby causing it to be turned against itself. We get here at the heart of an insoluble antinomy, pivoting on chiastic duplication,

where reason is equated with madness and madness with reason. In Troilus' distraught mind Cressida's identity is split into two:

> . . . O madness of discourse,
> That cause sets up with and against itself!
> Bifold authority, where reason can revolt
> Without perdition, and loss assumes all reason
> Without revolt. This is, and is not, Cressid!
> Within my soul there doth conduct a fight
> Of this strange nature, that a thing inseparate
> Divides more wider than the sky and earth;
> And yet the spacious breadth of this division
> Admits no orifex for a point as subtle
> As Ariachne's broken woof to enter. (145-55)

These famous examples suffice to signal the dramatic relevance of the diaphora and its flexible uses in conveying contradictory viewpoints on issues of identity with respect to different types of positionality of the speaker. What is not technically paradoxical may be articulated rhetorically in ways that in fact express its being experienced as such. The puzzlement provoked by an anamorphic sense of double identity was first explored by Shakespeare in the Plautian *Comedy of Errors* and later revived, still in a comic key, in the twinning between Viola and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* as well as in innumerable other examples of cross-dressing with well-known gender implications for characters, actors, and audiences alike.[23] But in the tragedies it acquires a different complexity and poignancy. There, the metalogical sense of the coexistence of being and being-other in the same person is not finally solved in a happy ending, but bears on the tragic unfolding of the story redefining the relation between ontology and epistemology through reflection on the dialectic between being, being-other, and not-being.

More on this soon. In the meantime, it may be remarked that in these uses of the negative diaphora we perceive the subject strive to come to terms with the sudden awareness of an insoluble duplicity of the self, puzzled by the revelation of the instability of reality when

[23] On the broader topic in Shakespeare's England see for instance Orgel 1996.

the boundary between true and false fades away. Desdemona's line quoted above is addressed as much to herself as to Cassio, just as Lear's diaphora, which in the Folio is responded to by the Fool, yet not in the Quarto. Or, again, Troilus' diaphoric contradictions are the language of a confused state of mind, and his reflection on the meaninglessness of his own reasoning is but the self-reflexive voice of his solitary speech.

More immediately performative at the level of action, on the other hand, is Hamlet's paradoxical line addressed to Claudius, thus representing a case in point, articulating a polemical antagonism towards his interlocutor by combining figures of repetition and metaphorical expressions. This shows the dramatic flexibility of a figure which, while not being strictly paradoxical, may acquire a metalogical function whose performative force radiates on the action even when, as will be seen, it leads to a barrage of meaning. This is especially interesting when language becomes paradoxical while not being logically contradictory, or when the antithesis it pivots on allows for multiple significations depending on the position of the receiver both within drama and as external audience. In such cases, which interrogate theatre through explicit or implicit metatheatrical strategies, language suggests paradoxical short circuits around an ontology of being which is irreducible to received binaries. Demonstrating this are Hamlet and Iago.

## 6. Impersonations 1

At the end of 2.2, after the player's performance of Aeneas's tale of the fall of Troy and Hecuba's woe, Hamlet famously engages for the second time in a soliloquy where he accuses himself of laziness and lack of passion:

> Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit
> That from her working all the visage wanned,
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
> A broken voice, and his all function suiting
> With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing.

> For Hecuba!
> What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
> That he should weep for her? (2.2.552-62)

In her re-evaluation of the reception of Greek dramas and models in early modern English theatre, Tanya Pollard has recently read Shakespeare's choice of Hecuba as allowing him to "explicitly explore the effects of tragedy, and especially of a tragic protagonist, upon audiences". More precisely, the figure of the Trojan queen would hint at a specifically female tragic experience unexpectedly viable for a male tragic hero as a tragic paradigm (2012, 1077). This reading grafts a gender paradox on to the more traditional paradox of acting confronted by Hamlet through the Player's Hecuba speech, complicating the levels of impersonation: the male player empathises imaginatively with a tragic Queen who provides the Prince with a contrastive model for his own passion. Platt has seen this speech as the occasion for Hamlet to be both troubled and empowered (2009, 155) in so far as, following the sudden revelation of the effect of theatre upon the audience, he ends up accepting the paradox. The actor is and is not Aeneas and himself at the same time, and his acceptance of this paradox prepares him "for the paradox of being and dying" (164). In this light, theatre is not only a practical device whose usefulness Hamlet intuits and then handles in order to provoke Claudius' reaction validating the words of the Ghost. It is also the instrument leading him to a fuller understanding of life and the acceptance of non-being as part of it.

I will argue that the levels of impersonation interrogated here, beyond gender troubles, imply an even more articulated approach in terms of simulation and otherness, and that the tensive relation with being complicates the traditional being/non-being antinomy. My reading of the scene suggests a climax of Hamlet's sinking into doubt, rather than the opposite. It is precisely his inquiry into the ontology of seeming as being-other, or being-like, rather than not-being, which makes it irreducible to the traditional being-versus-seeming binary as two opposed categories, and eventually translates into an aporia with a specific effect on the unfolding of drama.

Both Pollard and Platt concentrate on the latter part of Hamlet's meditation upon the actor impersonating Aeneas who tells the

story of Hecuba, underlining the effect of the play on the audience. Polonius asks that the acting be stopped for excess of pain and this pinpoints the power of theatre over the spectators – an influence that was famously feared by the antitheatricalist polemists, worried that the audience might be deeply corrupted by spectacle (Platt 2009). Yet Hamlet's initial focus is on the workings of impersonation and the power of the "nothing" which is Hecuba to move the actor to tears, not the audience. The actor is two steps away from the Trojan Queen; he is speaking as Aeneas about the massacre of Priam and what first comes to mind is Aeneas' tale to Dido in Book 2 of *Aeneid*, a most famous tale at the time. The first four books, particularly 2 and 4, were more frequently read in Tudor grammar schools than any other passage from Virgil's epic (Burrow 2019, 56) and its first seven books were translated by Thomas Phaer in quantitative verse in 1558 (the whole twelve books were first published in 1573). In the same heroic Latinate metre Richard Stanyhurst translated the first four books in 1582, while Books 2 and 4 were also translated in blank verse by Henry Howard Earl of Surrey already in 1557. So, what the player is doing here is very likely declaiming a poem or possibly a piece from a closet drama, rather than performing the kind of play Hamlet will ask the actors to put on to "catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.607). What he is puzzled by is not only that acting may result in the simulation of such a passionate remembrance of Hecuba's despair, but that it also causes the actor to show visible signs of inner pain, prompting the first part of his question: What's Hecuba to him? This is riddling, of course, and yet reasonable: Hecuba is the woman Aeneas suffers for first by eye-witnessing her tragic fate in Troy, and then by recalling it now. Through the imagination the actor becomes Aeneas, Hecuba is the object and cause of his suffering, and this was no surprise for anyone who knew Quintilian's famous comparison between the orator and the actor.[24] At that point, the player is both himself and other-than-himself – he is the real actor in a real context and an unreal character in a fictional space. But above all, as far as his identity is concerned, he is himself and other at the same time.

This concern becomes an insoluble conundrum in the latter

[24] Inst. Orat. 6.2.35-6; cf. Altman 289 and n10, 406.

part of Hamlet's question: what is the actor to Hecuba? He is the player who revives the narrative of her tragedy by impersonating Aeneas. However, Hamlet's provocative question implies a specific relation in the context of passionate playing: causation. While it is clear why Hecuba causes pain to the actor through Aeneas (she is the "nothing" he suffers for within the fictional world of the play), there is no reasonable answer to what the actor causes her once he steps into the world of playacting. This is a purely speculative question, but in its being raised at this point it suggests anxiety and uneasiness about both the epistemology and the ontology of impersonation as a specific process distinct from audience reception to which he will move shortly. While the first part of the question is perfectly sensible and goes straight to the heart of the nature of simulation, the chiasmus of the second part produces a logical short-circuit pointing to the paradox inherent in impersonation once the relation between being and being-other is inverted. These two views bifurcate into two different directions: on the one hand, the extraordinary fact that acting may passionately affect the audience induces Hamlet to devise the Mousetrap; on the other, the aporia of the reciprocal, chiastic commerce between reality and fiction plunges Hamlet into an even deeper crisis of knowing. If the relation works well, albeit mysteriously, in one direction, why should it not work in the opposite one too?

But here questioning stops short at the insolubility of the aporia. It is another turn of the screw about the possibility of knowing one from the other beyond doubt and to understand their mutual relation, as well as how the "nothing" of Hecuba may translate into the tangible and visible 'something' embodied in the physical presence of the actor, while not allowing for reciprocity. Such a chiastic question impedes to reach a stable sense of what being is. Not coincidentally Hamlet will soon compare himself to the actor blaming himself for vicious laziness, as if the real passion for revenge he should be moved by were compatible with any actorial impersonation of passion. 'If this actor felt the passion I should feel he would cleave the general ear and would make the audience mad', he says; 'but I only keep prating and do nothing'. Although determined to use theatre in order to obtain confirmation of Claudius' guilt on account of the effective proof of the audience

response to the Hecuba tale, the 'to be and not to be' meditation will follow soon afterwards before the staging of the Mousetrap, shifting the question from the meaning of the paradox of acting in relation to reality, with the correlates of being and being-other, to a radical questioning of the alternative between life and death.[25]

In this sense, Hamlet's journey towards the acceptance of a divinely scripted life according to which readiness is all and providence decides for him, is clearly connected with the aporetic question raised in this scene on the reversible relation between Hecuba and the actor. And yet it does not descend from it. It is not the solution of that paradox and the acceptance of simulation as part of life that ignite that journey. On the contrary, it is once he disentangles himself from the trappings of simulation and its paradoxes that he eventually contemplates life from the point of view of death – the possibility of his own radical, irreversible non-being. His witnessing the passage of the Norwegian troops who "for a fantasy and trick of fame / Go to their graves like beds" (4.4.60-1) is the first step in that direction – for the first time this 'untheatrical' vision of men directed to their possible death pushes him to commit himself to "bloody" thoughts (65). Then the discovery of the deadly plans Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are charged with on the way to England suddenly frees him from the fetters of questioning, from an epistemology of doubt grounded in the aporetic interrogation of the relation between Hecuba and the actor – a scene that had not solved that epistemology, but contributed to strengthening it. Back from his voyage to England, Hamlet moves beyond those questions and is finally prepared to present himself as "Hamlet the Dane": no longer the tragic hero fraught and paralysed with doubt, stuck in self-scrutiny and in epistemological conundrums, but an epic-like hero eventually endowed with agency, bearing the heroic legacy of his own dynasty and name, ready to die if heaven so wants.[26]

Those few lines from the Hecuba scene draw an ontology of

[25] Which, as Colie points out, is still envisioned through figures of life: "It was not fear of not-being that held him back from taking his life as much as it was fear of some continued exacerbation of consciousness ("conscience," in the older idiom) in the sleep of death" (1966, 493).

[26] For a more elaborate discussion see Bigliazzi 2001.

seeming as being-other which goes beyond the traditional being/non-being polarity, questioning the very nature of impersonation. Hamlet's interrogation results in the apprehension of an unresolvable antinomy which can be overcome only if he moves away from it to consider the performative effects of theatre on the audience. This suggests to him the stratagem of the play within the play although it does not avoid his engagement within the circle of seeming and playacting. In order to sidestep that antinomy and escape the paralysis caused by his questioning of being and being-other he must proceed to a different type of impersonation – one which does not assume a gap between being and being-other (the playacting of his antic disposition and the duplicity of Claudius), but that incorporates in his own identity the role of Hamlet the Dane as the avenger of his murdered father.

## 7. Impersonations 2

Like Hamlet, Iago too creates logical short circuits about being and being-other that play around with an ontology of seeming. And he too, albeit for different reasons, manages to formulate an extreme type of insoluble paradox while being able to use "paradoxes that could have come from the books of Lando, Munday, and Donne" (Platt 2009, 88):

> Iago O, beware, my lord, of jealousy.
> It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
> The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss,
> Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger:
> But O, what damnèd minutes tells he o'er
> Who dotes yet doubts, suspects yet strongly loves!
> Othello Oh, misery!
> Iago Poor and content is rich, and rich enough,
> But riches fineless is as poor as winter
> To him that ever fears he shall be poor.
> Good God the souls of all my tribe defend
> From jealousy! (3.3.169-80)

Iago's mock encomium of the cuckold unaware that he is one and of the poor man who does not know his misery has an immediate

perlocutionary effect on Othello, who suddenly wants to *know*, not imagining that Iago will never bring unequivocal factual evidence. But the ensign's strategy of falsification of truth does not begin here, as these lines are only a step in the process imbuing deceit with the credibility of doxastic wisdom. Although Iago's "verbal playfulness" in 2.1 shows delight in handling doxastic knowledge (Altman 2010, 238), he is at his best when he simulates logical paradox through convoluted contradictions (Bigliazzi 2005, 124-35). The play has just opened and his first self-presentation on stage consists in the famous negative diaphora "I am not what I am" (1.1.65) often read by critics as a blasphemous inversion of the "I am that I am" for God's name in Exodus 3.14.[27] This expression is now generally identified with Iago, but it was first used by Shakespeare in *The Twelfth Night* when Viola, aware of Olivia's attraction for her own androgynous self, tries to shun her homoerotic advances by hinting at her own disguise as Cesario:

> OLIVIA Stay. I prithee tell me what thou think'st ? of me.
> VIOLA That you do think you are not what you are.
> OLIVIA If I think so, I think the same of you.
> VIOLA Then think you right, I am not what I am. (3.1.135-9)

As in the case of Viola's veridical paradox, Iago's "I am not what I am" may be rephrased as "I am not what I seem", a meaning which is entirely consistent with his self-presentation as a hypocrite in the previous lines. He has just told Roderigo that by professing to follow the Moor he only pursues his own interest. After all, "Were I the Moor I would not be Iago" (1.1.57), he says, suggesting that Othello would not like to be his ensign while being the General in the Venetian army. And yet, his intention remains unclear as "would" may and may not have the implied sense of 'willingness' suggesting

[27] The expression "I am what I am" does not appear anywhere in the Geneva Bible, but only in 1 Corinthians 15.10 in King James' Bible, which however followed Shakespeare's play. At any rate, in that point it does not define God but Paul, who is what he is thanks to His grace: "But by the grace of God, I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vaine; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me".

his craving for advancement. If it had, Iago would state the obvious: the Moor is not Iago, a claim whose glaring evidence would raise questions on the need to state it, unless there is something unsaid about the definition of 'being' and the reciprocal relation between the two of them through projection and negation.[28] Desdemona's reply to Cassio, who pleads for her intercession, "My lord is not my lord" (3.4.122), reinforces this sense, while clearly, and more simply, referring to Othello's change of mood since his arrival in Cyprus, except that the change implies a deep and inexplicable mutability of his self.

But to return to Iago's negative diaphora: the fact that the line has come to be associated with him is also because it bears overtones not present in Viola's use. Elsewhere in the play, mention that seeming is not the same as being crops up when Desdemona avows that she is not merry due to Othello's absence from Cyprus, so her apparent cheerfulness is only a pretension ("I am not merry, but I do beguile / The thing I am, by seeming otherwise", 2.1.125-6). The language she uses makes it clear that being and seeming are kept separate, suggesting a stable self ("the thing I am") behind the visible mask of apparent joyfulness. This implies that she too knows 'seems', and yet in ways different from Iago, whose knowing it appears to be a defining feature of his 'being' in a deeper sense. Iago's line implies a stratification of meanings connected with the causes of his behaviour, whose final explanation is continuously deferred. All the reasons he adduces in his soliloquies never fully explain why he "hate[s] the Moor" (see 1.3.378-82 and 2.1.290-306; Bigliazzi 2005, 131-3). And yet the end frustrates expectations, because Iago's final puzzling tautology disallows access to causality, and silence is his only answer: "Demand me nothing. What you know you know".

So, by looking back at Iago's initial negative diaphora, we are led to sense a subtle articulation of an ontology of seeming that challenges ideas of selfhood through the positionality of the subject. What is Iago's position here and how does he relate to the other characters beyond pretensions, and to what extent do these contradictions define his own relation to himself? If 'I am not what I am' assumes that 'I am' is different from 'I seem', then what is 'I

[28] For a fuller discussion see Serpieri 2003.

am'? As already recalled, the soliloquies do not provide satisfying answers, but rather define 'I am' circumstantially: through an unspecified hatred of the Moor, his desire for revenge about possible cuckoldry (his doing his own office in his sheets, 1.3.179-80), his lust for Desdemona (2.1.290ff.), as well as his revenge over Cassio whom he fears "with [his] nightcap too" (2.1.306). Are these different facets making up what Altman calls a "host self", or are they rather discontinuous "circumstantial" selves (190)? And if so, is there a "host self" at all?

Of course, the main problem in Iago's line is the "what", as it does not define *what* Iago is. But being so undefined, his "what" can only point to an encompassing, if vague, essence. Are we to understand that that core of selfhood shifts situationally and plays around with different levels of disclosure? One should ask whether he is sincere with Roderigo at that point, and to what extent his not being what he is formulates two different messages intended for his interlocutor on stage and the external audience. Is he impersonating a hypocrite for the sake of Roderigo or is his self-portrayal the only possible epiphenomenon of shifting subjectivities, at a deeper level composing the *what* of his being?

The aporia cannot be solved, but what matters is that it is dramatically and tragically relevant precisely as an irresolvable paradox. Its articulation differs from both Viola's negative diaphora as a veridical paradox, and Hamlet's aporetic questioning of impersonation through a reflection on the irreversible causality between being (the real actor as person) and being-other (the persona). In Iago's case it is hard to identify his shifting positions because he is not playacting in a play, where characters are scripted, but in life, where he is continuously scripting himself. Reality is not the same as theatre, and the life-as-a-stage metaphor remains a trope (as in *As You Like It*, 2.7.139ff.). The troping of the subject through that metaphor is precisely what reveals the gap between world and stage, the one being *like* the other, not identical with it. This is the gap that separates actorial impersonation within the fictional world and 'being' as 'being-other' in the real world. In other words, the question with Iago is whether a sequence of being-others makes up an ontology of being where the assumed "host self" is lacking.

The parasitical attitude towards the Moor detectable in Iago's

self-projection into the general's social position and identity in the line recalled above is not isolated, and this reinforces the sense of a reciprocal mirroring also at the level of paradoxical discourse. When Lodovico, amazed by Othello's violent reaction to Desdemona's attempt to intercede with him on behalf of Cassio, asks whether the "noble Moor" might be mad ("Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain?", 4.1.271), Iago finds no better expression than the allusive "He's that he is" (272), which resonates with his initial negative diaphora ("I am not what I am") as an inverted figure of it. Iago's reticent allusion is to the Moor's character and, implicitly, to his psychological (and cultural) strangeness as part of what he is – a Moor, albeit a noble one, is still a Moor and therefore other than them.[29] "I may not breathe my censure", Iago continues, "What he might be. If what he might, he is not, / I would to heaven he were" (272-4). Iago's empty signifier "what", which refers back to "that" in the previous diaphora ("He is *that* he is", my emphasis), strengthens the paradoxical ambivalence of his statement, whose variable meanings depend on how we interpret "might". If temporally, it alludes to what the Moor could *become*, and the line could be rephrased as follows: I cannot say, except by litotes, what I think about how violent he will grow; if his present violence is not yet what he will be capable of, I pray heaven that what he has done be the worst he can do. This is spelled out in his following lines as a gloss: "Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew / That stroke would prove the worst" (275-6).

But the line may also be read differently, for instance, as an aporetic subtext descending from the equally aporetic acceptation of Iago's initial negative diaphora: Othello too is not what he is. In this case, the conditional does not draw a different temporal scenario, but rather suggests the uncertainty of all interpretations, so that Iago's statement would sound like a comment on his "He's that he is", metadiscursively pretending that he cannot say explicitly what the diaphora means. 'I fear that deep down he might be worse than he appears to be (what he is), and if this is so I pray heaven

[29] Although it is true that here Lodovico does not refer to his barbarism, it is undeniable that that implication is active from the start; all deviance from the Venetian norm is quite naturally connected with his otherness.

to be wrong'. Whichever way we read the line, it projects on to Othello the possibility that he be not what he is, in a perverse game of projections and assimilations resulting in veridical paradoxes as well as, simultaneously, in logical short circuits. Lodovico only response is one of astonishment ("What, strike his wife!", 274).

Between this exchange and the first "I am not what I am" the plot of deception unravels. At its centre, in 3.3, it is Cassio's turn to be woven into Iago's own net of contradictions and ambiguities:

> IAGO For Michael Cassio,
> I dare be sworn I think that he is honest.
> OTHELLO I think so too.
> IAGO Men should be what they seem,
> Or those that be not, would they might seem none!
> OTHELLO Certain, men should be what they seem.
> IAGO Why then, I think Cassio's an honest man. (3.3.129-34)

The conditional mode expresses hope, as reference is to certain men, not everybody, and this is what renders the syllogism fallacious: 1. one should not appear different from what one is; 2. those who do not seem what they are should not appear as if they were what they seem; 3. Cassio is honest. But the argument is flawed for other reasons too. Iago appears to be obsessively repeating his own self-portrayal by making continuous variations on similar antinomies about others, as if that first diaphora were the matrix of all his subsequent fabrications of other people's identities. In this case, if "none" refers to "Or those they be not", Iago claims that 'those who appear different from what they are' (and therefore are not honest) should not appear as 'those who appear different from what they are': i.e. they should not seem dishonest, which is nonsensical – why should anyone want to appear dishonest? One would if somebody made them look so. But his final claim is that Cassio is honest and this is inconsistent. If instead "none" refers to "men", Iago would claim that those who are not what they seem should not look like men since they are monsters. As Colie remarks,

> In his paradoxical sentence [I am not what I am] Iago lies and does not lie; for he *is* in fact what he is not since he is, and proves himself by the action of the tragedy to be, not really a man, a member of

human kind. As he says of himself, in an ultimate deceit, telling the truth out of context. (1966, 243)

The argument is so convoluted and peppered with equivocations that Othello cannot but feel that there is more in it, and wants to know more ("Nay, yet there's more in this. / I prithee speak to me as to thy thinkings", 135-6). Iago has definitely *done* something with paradox here.

Iago's final tautology tells us that knowledge is not achievable; it is not an awareness of not knowing, in a Socratic sense, but is identical with not-knowing. This is his final word which eventually inverts the negative diaphora into a tautology. It suggests meaning while finally eroding all possible sense.[30]

## 8. Coda

The actor is simultaneously himself and someone else in a context which is real (the stage) and fictional (the drama world) at the same time. In this intrinsically contradictory space, Iago and Hamlet interrogate the self/other experience of impersonation in ways that suggest, albeit differently, that seeming and simulation are not identical with not-being, prompting a reflection upon a paradoxical ontology of appearance irreducible to the traditional being *vs* seeming binary. If 'not to be' for Hamlet is 'to die' in his famous soliloquy, theatre is something quite different. It has existence in ways different from factual reality, and it is precisely this otherness which defines it. In this sense, Hamlet's interrogation of impersonation does not lead him to accept 'not to be', but instead gets him stuck in the act of interrogating the paradox of the irreversible causality of 'being' and 'being-other'. In *Hamlet*, the paradox is an active, provocative figure of speech which denies quiescent approaches to the dialectic between being and seeming; in *Othello* it represents the paradigm of double identity, not hierarchically articulating the "being/ appearing" alternative, but suggesting a 'being ↔ being-other' relation that challenges conceptual traditions. Hamlet eventually

[30] After all, also the tautology is an argumentative figure in so far, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca contend (1969), it never suggests absolute identities, in that being close to the diaphora.

overcomes the paradox of an ontology of 'seeming' hinged on the reversibility of being and being-other by posing that question, which he leaves unsolved; Iago lets us glimpse the antinomian symmetry and paradoxical coexistence of being and being-other in the world. In either case, paradoxical discourse, in whichever rhetorical, veridical, falsidical or aporetic forms it manifests itself, endows the speaker with agency in the pragmatic context of drama – a *doing* that is not denied even when it results in a questioning which cannot go beyond illogical reversibility or result in anything other than tautological silence.

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2

# From Speechlessness to Powerful Speech. Coping with Paradoxes of Reality in Euripides' *Helen*

Marco Duranti

Abstract

This chapter investigates the paradoxes of Euripides' *Helen* and their relevance for the issue of the limits of human knowledge. After pointing out how the entire plot of *Helen* can be regarded as a doxastic paradox, it focuses on Menelaus' bewildering experience of meeting two Helens (the real one and the phantom). It appears that the character experiences a logical paradox, whereas the audience both know more than him and identify with him. Then the chapter illuminates how, in the second part of the play, Helen and Menelaus manage to flee from Egypt by using the illusionistic power of words to create a new paradox. Menelaus himself, by announcing his own death to Theoclymenos, is paradoxically both alive and dead. The two spouses manipulate reality and stage a play within the main play, with disturbing metatheatrical implications on the distinction between reality and illusion.

Keywords: Euripides; *Helen*; paradox; reality; metatheatre

In her chapter on the pragmatics of paradoxes in this volume, Silvia Bigliazzi distinguishes statements flaunting common opinion (*doxa*) from statements contradicting the meaning of words, and finally from statements producing logical *aporiai*. Whereas the doxastic paradoxes consist of questioning established beliefs about reality, the logical ones violate the principle of non-contradiction, according to which a proposition cannot be simultaneously true and false, or by denying factual evidence. As Bigliazzi points out, oxymora and other figures of contradiction – the second case above – may turn out to be perceived by the speakers as if they were paradoxes, thus leading them to raise questions on traditional epistemological assumptions precisely as if they were. Exemplary cases consist

of apparently inexplicable situations which puzzle the characters in ways that produce a sense of clashing realities on stage, with a side-effect on the audience's perception of the drama world as itself an illusory space.[1] Such issues were largely explored in the Renaissance, and to some extent also in ancient drama, but on very different grounds. The closest parallel for the state of confusion and bewilderment of early modern, and especially Shakespearean, characters can possibly be found in Orestes' hallucinations after killing his mother Clytemnestra. Unlike in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, in Euripides' *Iphigenia Taurica* and *Orestes* the Erinyes do not appear on the stage. Although being mentioned also by other characters, they are visible only to Orestes, who finds in them the cause of his own fits of madness. In *IT*, Orestes' delirium is narrated by the Taurian Messenger (285-91), whereas in *Orestes* it is shown on stage (251-79). As Enrico Medda has argued, Euripides wavers between depicting Orestes' madness as a purely psychological phenomenon and sticking to the traditional explanation of the goddesses' fury (2013, 167-84). Aeschylus had anticipated Euripides in staging Orestes' psychological distress at the end of *Choephori* (1048-62), but in the following *Eumenides* had brought the Erinyes on stage. A similar divinely-sent madness affects Ajax: at the beginning of Sophocles' homonymous tragedy, the audience is told that the hero has killed the herdsmen and the flocks of the Greek army, believing them to be the commanders of the expedition to Troy (1-70). But like the other ancient examples of altered mental states just recalled, in this case not only are divine powers responsible for them, but, more importantly, they are not experienced as paradoxical and expressed accordingly. The only tragedy to some extent comparable to what may be found on the English Renaissance stage, where the paradox denotes an idiosyncratic experience raising both epistemological and ontological questions, is Euripides' *Helen*. As Carla Suthren illustrates in this volume, the early modern reader's fascination with Helen's *eidolon* is not coincidental.

As a premise to that discussion, the present chapter focuses on this play, whose distinctively paradoxical quality has often been recognised. For instance, Dale describes *Helen* as a tragedy "rich

[1] On which see Bigliazzi's chapter in this book.

in paradox and excitement" (1967, xiv). According to Erich Segal, "[a] . . . Euripidean paradox is visible in the figure of Helen" (1983, 248). Matthew Wright argues that the effect of the plot of *Helen* and *Iphigenia Taurica* on the spectators "is paradoxical and unsettling" (2005, 200; cf. Wright 2017, 61-3). In no tragedy more than in *Helen* Euripides intends to inspire a reflection on the epistemological problems of the limits of human knowledge, and paradox is an apt way to show how unexpected and how far from men's presumptions reality can be. We may say that the entire plot of *Helen* constitutes a doxastic paradox, in that it shows that nothing is as it seems and that appearance is not reality. The woman who is regarded as the adulteress *par excellence* is instead a model of fidelity: she did not follow Paris to Troy but was instead brought by Hermes to Egypt, were she has preserved her marital fidelity to Menelaus. The universal opinion about Helen is therefore false. This doxastic paradox is expressed throughout the play by way of antithesis and oxymora. An example of the former can be found in Helen's prologic monologue: προυτέθην ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ, / τὸ δ' ὄνομα τοὐμόν ("it was not me who was set up as a prize, but my name"; 42-3). The oxymora of Euripides' tragedies have been listed by Wilhelm Breitenbach (1934, 236-8, with respect to the lyric parts) and Detlev Fehling (1968, 152-4).

This chapter analyses Menelaus' perception of a contradictory reality which he expresses through what for him are logical paradoxes or *aporiai*. The sense of bewilderment he experiences is extraordinary. We will see how his initial amazement at the apparently absurd coexistence of two 'Helens' – the one he has brought from Troy and the one who lives in the Egyptian palace – eventually gives way to a rational explanation. I shall first follow the process of what I call Menelaus' 'intellectual crisis' when he experiences what appears to be a logical and factual contradiction. Interestingly, at this stage, the audience both know more than Menelaus and identify with him, thus having a sort of split experience of the occurrences on stage. I shall investigate what implications Menelaus' episode has on ideas of human knowledge. I shall then discuss the turn in the plot whereby Helen and Menelaus decide to ingeniously exploit appearances in order to leave Egypt, as well as the falsifying potential of words in ways that expose the

tricks inherent in language and its relation to reality.

## 1. The Two Helens and Menelaus' Crisis

The origin of Menelaus' crisis lies in the coexistence of two Helens. The 'Helen' whom Menelaus is bringing back from Troy is in fact a phantom, which has been moulded by Hera in retaliation for not being chosen by Paris as the most beautiful goddess in the contest on Mount Ida. This phantom, which shares not only Helen's physical aspect, but also her voice and her personality,[2] symbolises the elusiveness of reality, which can deceive humans with false appearances. It is far from certain whether Euripides was the first to devise this version of Helen's story: it appears that the phantom (εἴδωλον) was invented by Stesichorus in the Palinode, but the sources on that work (discussed in Wright 2005, 86-110) do not offer conclusive evidence that in Stesichorus the real Helen was brought to Egypt. In Herodotus (2.112-20), Helen and Paris end up in Egypt due to adverse winds. The Egyptian king Proteus keeps Helen in Egypt, after taking her away from Paris, for the entire duration of the Trojan war. Since the Trojans fail to persuade the Achaeans that Helen is not in Troy, the war is fought anyway. After the fall of Troy, Menelaus sails to Egypt, where he is given back his wife by Proteus. Thus, in Herodotus' version there is no phantom.

It may be that the plot of *Helen* represents "an original *combination* of pre-existing but disparate elements" (Wright 2005, 82; emphasis by the author). It is possible that the ingeniousness of the plot triggered a sense of wonder in the spectators: however, given the inherent plurality of Greek myths, it is hardly likely that "[t]he overall effect would have been to shock the audience out of complacency and radically to undermine their sense of secure, certain knowledge of myths", as Wright argues (2005, 155; cf. Wright 2017, 57). Regardless of the details, it is certain that different versions of the Helen myth with respect to the version contained

[2] In the play it is not said that the phantom has the personality of Helen; however, we must assume that, in order to fully deceive Menelaus and the other Greek warriors, it shares the inner thoughts and the memories of the real Helen.

in the Homeric poems were at least in Stesichorus' and Herodotus' works, not to mention that other versions may as well have been present in other literary works that are now lost. As is well known, Greek religion had no canonical books and Wright's notion of a "secure . . . knowledge of myth" is misplaced.

Euripides himself plays with different images of Helen. In 415 he staged *Trojan Women*, in which Helen is again the unfaithful woman who actually went to Troy. At the end of *Electra*, on the contrary, Castor reveals that Helen has never gone to Troy, but was brought to Egypt, whereas a phantom (as in *Helen*, an εἴδωλον) was sent to Troy in her place (1280-2). Critics used to date *Electra* to 413, thus interpreting its ending as an anticipation of what will be presented in *Helen*. However, the criterion of the resolution rate of the iambic trimeters indicates a date included in the interval 417-21 (Cropp and Fick 1985, 23). Therefore, we must conclude that even in Euripides' oeuvre there is no consistency in the choice of the versions of myth.

Thus, the aim of Euripides' manipulation of myth lies elsewhere. By exposing the plurality of myths regarding Helen, as well as by fully exploiting the presence of the phantom – whether he invented it or not – Euripides undermines our faith in reality, not in myth. In this play, we are constantly reminded that neither hearing nor sight, the two main senses through which we acquire knowledge, are reliable. Humans are told a number of stories and they lack a safe criterion to understand whether they are true or false. Right at the beginning of the play, Helen says that there is λόγος τις, "a tale",[3] regarding her birth: that Zeus flew to her mother Leda disguised as a swan; however, she herself does not know if this tale is σαφής ("clear", 17-21). After Teucer has revealed that Menelaus is believed to have died on sea, the chorus exhort Helen not to uncritically trust what she has been told:[4]

[3] I use the term 'tale' to translate λόγος instead of the common translation 'story' (*OED* I.4 defines 'tale' as "[a] story or narrative, true or fictitious, drawn up so as to interest or amuse, or to preserve the history of a fact or incident"). Being a cognate of 'tell', as λόγος is cognate to λέγω, 'tale' makes clear how the act of repeatedly talking about a thing creates an established version, which is then believed as true, whether it is so or no.

[4] The text of *Helen* is quoted according to Alt's Teubner edition (1964); all

Χο. Ἑλένη, τὸν ἐλθόνθ', ὅστις ἐστὶν ὁ ξένος,
μὴ πάντ' ἀληθῆ δοξάσῃς εἰρηκέναι.
Ελ. καὶ μὴν σαφῶς γ' ἔλεξ' ὀλωλέναι πόσιν.
Χο. πόλλ' ἂν γένοιτο καὶ διὰ ψευδῶν σαφῆ.
Ελ. καὶ τἄμπαλίν γε τῶνδ' ἀληθείᾳ ἔπι. (306-10)[5]

[Co. Helen, do not believe that the stranger, whoever he is,
Has said all true things.
HEL. But he has said clearly that my husband has died.
Co. Things that are said clearly are often false.
HEL. And on the contrary, many things that are clearly said are
true.][6]

It turns out that there is no way to distinguish between a true and a false statement, as both can be σαφής ("clear"). As Wright notices (2017, 62-3), the confusion is increased by the fact that, whilst σαφής and ἀληθής were normally used as synonyms with the meaning of "true", Euripides separates the concept of σαφήνεια ("clarity") from that of ἀλήθεια ("truth").

Being unable to understand whether a tale is reliable, in principle humans can at least rely on their own autoptic perception of reality. However, the presence of Helen's phantom undermines the possibility of believing in one's own eyes. Although Teucer tells the woman he has just met in front of the Egyptian palace – in fact, the real Helen – that he has seen 'Helen' with the same eyes with which he now sees the woman herself (ὥσπερ σέ γ', οὐδὲν ἧσσον, ὀφθαλμοῖς ὁρῶ, "as I see you with my eyes, not less"; 118), when he believed to see Helen his eyes were mistaken: Teucer was actually seeing the phantom, not Helen. Since the phantom looks like Helen, he had simply no criterion to understand that what he was seeing was not, in fact, Helen.

The fact that, in the course of the play, Helen's phantom

translations are mine. My changes to Alt's text are written in italics and explained in footnotes.

[5] Unlike Alt, I adopt the emendation ἔπι *in lieu* of σαφής of manuscript L in l. 310, made by Jackson and printed, among others, by Kannicht and Diggle (Alt has instead ἔπη, conjectured by Hermann).

[6] All translations are mine.

disappears does not bode well for the fate of human knowledge. As the phantom itself says, it has remained in the world for the time decreed by fate, and now it is returning to the sky from which it came (612-14). The war at Troy is over, Menelaus has been forced by a storm onto the Egyptian coast, and Helen is finally allowed to reunite with her husband. This means that the disappearance of false images and the possibility of acquiring true knowledge of the world is subordinated to supernatural plans – or caprices. As long as the gods intend to deceive the humans through false appearances, there is no possibility for them to distinguish between true and false visions. Thus, Menelaus has no means to establish who the real Helen is. The miracle of the disappearance of the phantom does not make Menelaus' bewilderment less significant or painful. And we can conclude that an analogous experience may occur any time and to any human being.

But let us consider the scene more closely. Upon his entrance on stage, Menelaus is first told by the old Egyptian doorkeeper that Helen lives in Egypt (470-6): the woman specifies that Helen is the daughter of Zeus, but also of Tyndareus, that she comes from Sparta and that she arrived in Egypt shortly before the Greeks sailed for Troy. This information leaves Menelaus almost speechless (τί φῶ; τί λέξω; "What should I utter? What should I say?"; 483; ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἔχω τί χρὴ λέγειν, "I do not know what I should say"; 494), and his speechlessness is the natural response to the impossibility of understanding reality. Despite this initial puzzlement, Menelaus tries to find a rational explanation of what he has heard and concludes that it must be a case of homonymy (483-99). There might be another Zeus, probably a mortal, as there must be only one in the sky (490-1); there might be another Sparta (or Lacedaemon), another Tyndareus, another Troy. As artificial as this explanation sounds, it is true that "[t]here is nothing intrinsically ludicrous about M.'s reasoning" (Allan 2008, 203). It is understandable that Menelaus resorts to this explanation, as it would be impossible for him (for anyone, in fact) to imagine the existence of a phantom. His reasoning is perhaps the only rational, if convoluted, way to reconcile the information he has heard from the old woman with a normal experience of reality.

Menelaus is still able to find a rational explanation as long as

he hears the name of Helen in Egypt, without seeing the woman herself; or, to use the language of this play, her *body.* The contrast between ὄνομα ("name") and σῶμα ("body") is recurrent in the play (66-7, 588, 1100): it is always Helen who juxtaposes the two terms in an antithesis, in order to stress that her *body* has remained pure, whereas her *name* has been stained with adultery. The name 'Helen' has been attached to a different entity, the phantom, and since the phantom has followed Paris to Troy, the social identity of Helen dependent on her name is that of an adulteress. Menelaus does not suspect it, and instead surmises that two women, two men, two countries, though being different, have the same names.

Strikingly, when Menelaus sees the real Helen, he experiences a clash between sensory impressions and reasoning, which he himself underlines: οὔ που φρονῶ μὲν εὖ, τὸ δ' ὄμμα μου νοσεῖ; ("How is it possible that I reason well, but my eye is sick?"; 575). While his reason was capable of conceiving of the existence of two different bodies with the same name ("Helen", but also "Zeus", "Tyndareus" and, by extension, "Sparta"), he now sees a woman who has the same *body* as Helen and also the same *name*, that is, the same identity: a woman who claims to be his wife. This is beyond human reason. Menelaus points out the paradox by commenting οὐ μὲν γυναικῶν γ' εἷς δυοῖν ἔφυν πόσις ("I am not the husband of two wives, being one man"; 571). While, again, there is nothing inherently ludicrous in Menelaus' utterances, it is ironical that Helen asks him τίς οὖν διδάξει σ' ἄλλος ἢ τὰ ὄμματα; ("who will instruct you more than your eyes?"; 580). The eyes, that is sensory perception, is exactly what Menelaus cannot trust anymore, as he explains to Helen: ἐκεῖ νοσοῦμεν, ὅτι δάμαρτ' ἄλλην ἔχω ("this is the point on which I'm sick, because I have two wives"; 581). He repeats the verb νοσεῖν, "being sick", which he has already used six lines before. Menelaus' puzzlement results in ἔκπληξιν ("amazement"; 549), and ἀφασίαν ("inability to speak"; ibid.). Whereas after hearing of the presence of Helen in Egypt he was able to overcome this impasse by finding a reasonable explanation, now this possibility is excluded. Helen tries to explain that a phantom was sent to Troy in her place (582) and Menelaus finds it almost unbelievable (ἄελπτα, "unbelievable things"; 585). Helen insists that τοὔνομα γένοιτ' ἂν πολλαχοῦ, τὸ σῶμα δ' οὔ ("the name can be in many places, the body cannot";

588). Even though she is right in saying that the same body cannot be in two different places and that the same name can be attached to different bodies, the point is that Menelaus has no way to verify which body – the one of the woman he has in front of him or the one of the 'woman' he has brought from Troy – corresponds to the real Helen. The fact that entities are ontologically distinct is of little help if, from a gnoseological point of view, humans are unable to ascertain this distinction. Thus, Menelaus is in the unenviable position of having to make a blind choice. His criterion for choosing is psychological: he does what allows him to make sense of all travails which he has experienced at Troy. As he replies to Helen, τοὐκεῖ με μέγεθος τῶν πόνων πείθει, σὺ δ' οὔ ("the amount of sufferings that I have endured there [*scil.* in Troy] persuades me, not you"; 593). The implications of acknowledging that the real Helen is the one who has hitherto lived in Egypt would be psychologically unbearable: the War at Troy would have been fought in vain and countless warriors would have died for nothing. Therefore, Menelaus refuses this unacceptable option and the real Helen has no means to persuade him that he is wrong.

The failed reunion between Helen and Menelaus makes the recognition scene the most anomalous one of all Greek tragedy. Commenting on the latter's reaction after seeing Helen, Allan writes that "amazed speechlessness is a typical motif of recognition scenes" (2008, 209). However, Menelaus' astonishment is rather different from that felt by other tragic heroes. In this case, it is the presence of two identical women which is bewildering. Unlike in normal recognition scenes between two persons who have long been separated – as in the case of Electra and Orestes in plays such as Aeschylus' *Choephori*, and Sophocles' and Euripides' plays both entitled *Electra* – here Menelaus believes that he has already reunited with Helen after the sack of Troy and is unprepared for what he sees. The recognition of Helen is a failed recognition because the traditional methods which were valid in previous plays are here inapplicable. In Aeschylus' *Choephori*, Electra recognises Orestes by the lock of hair and by the footprints, both of which are strikingly similar to her own (*Ch.* 168-211); in *Electra*, Euripides makes Electra mock this recognition method, arguing that these tokens are not reliable (*Hel.* 513-46). The scar on his eyebrow, which is noticed by

the old Pedagogue (*Hel.* 573-4), is the only reliable evidence, as it is peculiar to Orestes and marks his own body. However, in *Helen* Menelaus does not have this piece of evidence, as the two Helens are physically the same.

Another possible recognition method would be a shared memory, as for instance in *Iphigenia Taurica* 808-26, where Orestes shares with Iphigenia memories of their past and their paternal house in order to prove to her that he is her brother. Indeed, Helen says that she and her husband would be able to easily recognise each other through ξύμβολα ("tokens") who are known only to them (290-1; with an obvious hint to Homer's *Odyssey*). However, in the recognition scene "Helen does not even attempt to provide proof of her identity, whether through a physical artifact or a shared memory" (Boedeker 2017, 248). Boedeker is right in regarding this as one of the incongruities which "produce an aura of imbalance or inconsistency that characterises the tragedy as a whole, complementing its focus on illusion versus reality" (2017, 248). Nevertheless, we must add that even if Helen had mentioned a shared memory, it would hardly have counted as conclusive proof of her identity. Menelaus has already spent time with Helen's phantom since the conquest of Troy and we can infer that the second Helen not only looks like the real one, but she also shares her thoughts and memories. A physical artifact – like Agamemnon's seal in Soph. *El.* 1222-3 – could be more persuasive, but this is pure speculation. In fact, Euripides is interested in focusing on *physical* recognition, as this allows him to bring to the fore the theme of the impossibility of distinguishing between truth and falsehood through perception.

Only the providential disappearance of the phantom can help Menelaus understand where truth lies. His Servant comes on stage and narrates how it flew up to the sky (597-624) after uttering a speech which frees Helen from all responsibilities. Thus, Menelaus realises that the speech of the phantom and that of Helen coincide (ξυμβεβᾶσιν οἱ λόγοι, "the two speeches coincide"; 622) and he embraces his wife. It is interesting that also at this point Euripides shows us how the paradoxical coexistence of the two Helens induces humans to make wrong assumptions: seeing Helen in front of Menelaus, the Servant believes that she has fled from the cave in some way, instead of flying to the sky. He ironically comments

ἐγὼ δέ σ᾽ ἄστρων ὡς βεβηκυῖαν μυχοὺς / ἤγγελλον εἰδὼς οὐδὲν ὡς ὑπόπτερον / δέμας φοροίης ("I announced that you had gone to the depths of the sky, without knowing at all that you had a winged body"; 617-19). Although he has heard the phantom say that it was itself the cause of the war at Troy and that Helen is innocent, the Servant is still unable to grasp the trick of the phantom. Therefore, Menelaus reveals the truth to him (700-10) after the recognition duet with Helen (625-99).

Despite the joy of the spouses' reunion, it is impossible to avoid the disturbing thought that the greatest war of all time has been fought over the least meaningful cause: as Menelaus and the servant now say, over a νεφέλη ("cloud"; 705, 707). The futility of the war at Troy is summarised in the adverb μάτην, "in vain", which is repeated three times in the play (603, 751, 1220). Not only do the opacity of truth and the presence of false appearances affect the epistemology of perception; they also have practical consequences, in that humans act on the basis of false assumptions.

Clearly, the sense of a paradoxical reality is here entirely subjective. The audience have been informed in the prologue (33-4) that a phantom identical to Helen has been created by Hera. The two Helens go against the common opinion about the adulteress single Helen, and what is paradoxical at the level of *doxa* is experienced as paradoxical logically by Menelaus: two identical Helens may have existence only in a divinely-ordered reality. The audience know more and can explain what for him is inexplicable. Nevertheless, the audience's superior knowledge is far from being reassuring. What they now witness is a sense of unbelief and puzzlement that in other circumstances they too may experience. This is the human condition: astounding events or situations, for which no possible reasonable explanation may be provided, produce astonishment, and paradoxical thinking is its linguistic expression. Generalising statements on human knowledge encourage this conclusion. For instance, the Egyptian Messenger who reports to Theoclymenos of the Greeks' escape comments: σώφρονος δ᾽ ἀπιστίας / οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν χρησιμώτερον βροτοῖς ("nothing is more useful for humans than a wise scepticism"; 1617-18). As reality may always be deceiving, unbelief is the only defence which humans have. Moreover, the Greek Messenger exhorts humans not to trust seers, as neither the

Greek seer Calchas nor the Trojan seer Helenus understood that Helen was not in Troy (749-51). Instead, humans should sacrifice to the gods so that they may receive from them what they need (753-4); also, humans should be active and resourceful, as no one has ever become rich by just making divinatory sacrifices (755-6); in the end, the best mantics are γνώμη ἀρίστη ("utmost intelligence"), and εὐβουλία, ("soundness of judgement"; 757). Significantly, the chorus agree with the messenger on avoiding seers (758-60). This gnomic passage makes it clear that humans cannot foresee what will happen and must accept the unpredictable will of the gods. At best, they can try to guide them through prayers, or partly predict what they will do by using their cleverness. What comes to the fore is the importance of human judgement and enterprise. As Allan notices, the messenger's speech "prefigures the action to come, where, despite the tacit support of the prophet Theonoe, H[elen] and M[enelaus] must rely for success upon their own intelligence and planning" (2008, 233). Therefore, it is a link between the first and the second part of the play, where human inventiveness will play a major role.

## 2. Paradox as Strategy

Until the recognition scene, Helen and Menelaus were the passive instruments of events over which they had no control. However, this condition changes in the last part of the play, where the two take their destiny into their own hands and plot their escape. This turning point is marked in line 1050: βούλῃ λέγεσθαι, μὴ θανών, λόγῳ θανεῖν; ("are you willing to be said to be dead in words, without being dead?"). Helen asks Menelaus whether he is prepared to pretend to be dead and disguise himself as one of the mariners of his crew who fortunately escaped shipwreck. This strategy is based on the counterfactual power of *logos*, the same which has made everybody believe that Helen had betrayed her husband and had sailed to Troy. After suffering the tricks of the gods and the blames of a false narrative, at this point Helen eventually acquires agency. The falsifying power of language and faked appearances is what she uses. The time has come for her to harness the power of words to her own advantage. Although the possible connection between

Euripides and sophistic thought is not under scrutiny here, it is tempting to read the play through Conacher's view that the two parts reflect the two different views on words in Gorgias' fragments: "first, the view that words are incapable of expressing reality (D-K 82 B3, 84), and second, the successful use of words in deceptive persuasion (D-K 82 B11, in *The Encomium of Helen*)" (1998, 81).

Menelaus' answer to Helen's suggestion of faking his own death reveals his readiness to the plot: κακὸς μὲν ὄρνις· εἰ δὲ κερδανῶ, λέγειν / ἕτοιμός εἰμι μὴ θανὼν λόγῳ θανεῖν, ("It's a bad omen; but if I can profit from it, I am ready to say that I am dead in words, without being dead"; 1051-2). According to superstitions, faking one's own death in words can bring about one's death (cf. Kannicht 1969, II 267-8); nonetheless, Menelaus does away with superstition in order to achieve a sure advantage. We can see a similar pattern in *Iphigenia Taurica*, where Iphigenia proposes to exploit the ritual pollution of Orestes for killing his mother to reach the seashore (*IT* 1031). She will tell the Taurians that Orestes, Pylades, and Artemis' statue need to be washed in the sea in order to remove the impurity. And Orestes replies: χρῆσαι κακοῖσι τοῖς ἐμοῖς, εἰ κερδανεῖς ("make use of my misfortunes, if this brings you a profit"; 1034). κέρδος ("profit") is the goal to which both in *Helen* and in *IT* the characters aim. This entails the ability to transcend the limits of traditional belief, whether with respect to bad omens or to ritual pollution; moreover, this means performing a mock religious ceremony.[7] In both tragedies, the escape plan consists of turning something that has hitherto been negative for the character into something positive. Orestes' pollution has made him a pariah in Athens, preventing him from being welcomed in the Athenian houses (*IT* 947-57), but now it can be turned into a weapon to his advantage. Likewise, *logos* has hitherto been used to spread the fame of Menelaus' death, as we have learned in the dialogue between Helen and Teucer (123-33); but now this false information may prove profitable. The distance between appearance and reality has damaged Helen and Menelaus; but now, thanks to Helen's inventiveness, the very cause of their suffering becomes the very instrument of their success. While, in the case of Helen, her *soma* was not present in Troy but everybody

[7] On this cf. Medda and Taddei 2021.

believed it was, in the case of Menelaus his body is in fact present in Egypt, but the two spouses make Theoclymenos believe that it is not. The split between *onoma* and *soma* is exploited in a new way: whereas in the case of Helen it was her *onoma* which was attached to a different *soma* (although it was in fact a phantom, identical to the real *soma*), in the case of Menelaus it is his *soma* which is attached to a different *onoma* (the generic identity of a Greek soldier and mariner). The difference between the two situations, as we have seen, lies in the characters' awareness: whilst nobody knew that the phantom was not the real Helen, now the two spouses know the truth and lie on purpose. This lie is based on what we may call the 'phantom of Menelaus' (as the reverse of Helen's own phantom): because nobody has seen his body for a long time, he is reduced to a mere name. Now the presumed absence of the body is skilfully exploited by Helen, who stages a paradoxical ritual of burial, as she pretends to bury only Menelaus' name and not his body, which has disappeared.

The counterfeiting of Menelaus' identity produces a sort of logical paradox, in that he is dead and alive at the same time. It is true that it may be easily explained through the appearance *vs* reality binary. Nevertheless, it is equally true that this tragedy constantly brings to the fore the power of illusion and belief as a force which re-creates reality. The false belief of Helen's elopement has triggered a number of events: the war of Troy, her mother's and possibly – as they say – her brothers' suicide. We may say that the false Helen has been more real than the real one: whereas the latter has lived in the suspended dimension of the Egyptian exile, outside history, the false Helen has made history. Analogously, the belief that Menelaus is dead will persuade Theoclymenos to provide Helen with a ship, thus producing the real effect of the Greeks' escape. In Theoclymenos' perception of reality, Menelaus *is* dead and remains dead until the epiphany brought about by the Messenger's report. Theoclymenos lives for a short period in the same dimension of false reality in which Greeks and Trojans alike have been for years due to Helen's phantom.

The manipulation of reality by Helen and Menelaus also involves physical appearance and clothing. In a word, they create a full theatrical staging. As Craig Jendza puts it, they make "a play-within-

a-play whereby Euripides facilitates metatheatrical reflection by engaging with the methods by which dramatists create, cast, and produce dramas for audiences" (2020, 96). The spectators know that it is an illusionary staging. And yet, its illusion is embedded within a "reality" which is itself illusionary (the world of the play), and which reflects on the illusions of real reality through the two Helens and Menelaus' response to them. It is a play which in different ways calls into question the criteria themselves for establishing what is real.

Helen's and Menelaus' play-within-the-play even alludes to previous plays. When Helen suggests to Menelaus to tell the news of his own death to Theoclymenos, Menelaus comments: παλαιότης γὰρ τῷ λόγῳ ἔνεστί τις ("this tale is somehow old-fashioned"; 1056). Memory goes to Aeschylus' *Choephori* (682) or Sophocles' *Electra* (48-50), where the false news of Orestes' death is exploited by Orestes himself as part of the revenge plot. As in *Helen*, in Sophocles' *Electra* too Orestes dismisses the bad omen of his announced death by referring to κέρδος ("profit"; 61) and comments that "wise" men in the past have already used the trick of declaring themselves dead (62-3). This hint at previous tragedies is probably meant to underline the novelties of the trick in *Helen*, especially the mock ceremony which Helen herself devises in order to obtain a ship and flee from Egypt.

The two spouses' ability to use a disguise for their play-in-the-play plot allows them to transform some aspects of reality which have been negative for them into a positive and effective means for their escape. As stated by Helen in two subsequent antitheses (1081-2), the loss of Menelaus' clothes, which appeared to him as a catastrophe, is instead a blessing. Significantly, Menelaus' rags – which he is wearing after the shipwreck – will make him a credible witness in the eyes of Theoclymenos (1079-80). Those miserable rags which symbolised Menelaus' degradation from his former heroic status will be the very means through which Menelaus will re-gain that status. After their deception of Theoclymenos has been successful, Helen washes the alleged sailor and dresses him in new clothes in order to prepare him for the fake burial ceremony (1382-4). This act of changing clothes symbolises the restoration of royal dignity and is a positive prediction of the drama's ending. What

was taken from Menelaus by an accident of fate is now restored to him by human intelligence.

Like Menelaus, Helen too will rely on the impact of her physical appearance with the aim of persuading Theoclymenos. In order to play the part of the bereaved wife, she will cut her curls, change her white clothes for black ones, scratch her cheeks with her nails (1087-9). Helen demonstrates her ability to manipulate her own physical appearance for which she has always been desired and chased. As Theoclymenos, like all men, is seduced by Helen's looks, and her false consent to marry him is obviously subservient to her plot. Ironically, Helen is now doing what fame has long – and falsely – blamed her for: she is using her beauty to conquer men. She is not betraying her husband, but is playing false in order to be reunited with him.

As a result of their successful trick, Helen and Menelaus appear to be both the actors and the directors – especially Helen – of their own lives. And yet, one should not forget that their agency is limited by supernatural powers: as the Dioscuri remind us at the end of the play (1660-1), it is fate and the gods who have decreed the course of the events.

## 3. Conclusion

The entire plot of *Helen* revolves around a fundamental split between appearance and reality. In the play's world, nothing which is perceived by the senses can be confidently regarded as true, and human society is trapped in appearances, disorder, and falsehood.

This general rule of human life has an exception in a privileged human being who is in contact with the divine realm and hence derives a special, well-founded knowledge: Theonoe. Her divine inspiration underlines, by contrast, the ignorance to which the other humans are doomed. If it is true, as the chorus say, that there is nothing clear (σαφές) among the mortals and only the gods' voice is true (ἀλαθές) – and the play does not let us reach other conclusions – Theonoe draws her knowledge from the only genuine source of knowledge. In a play where the value of words is questioned, the name of Theonoe ("divine mind") corresponds to her real qualities, in striking contrast with the name of her

brother Theoclymenos ("god-renowned" or "inspired by the gods"; cf. Allan 2008, 146), which is at odds with his impious behaviour. This discrepancy underlines, by contrast, how words often do not correspond to reality.

One of the main points which *Helen* highlights concerns the limits of human action. In this respect, this tragedy is manifestly bipartite. The first part, prior to the escape plan (which is devised at 1032-106), sheds light on the potential futility of all human enterprises, even the greatest of all, that is, the War at Troy. In this part, Helen leaves her refuge beside Proteus' tomb only once, when she goes to consult Theonoe into the palace (*exit* after 385; she goes back to the tomb at line 528). Her departure from the altar after line 1106 marks the beginning of a new, dynamic phase, in which with Menelaus she undertakes an action that will be crowned with success. Helen is aware of the risks they run and reflects that there are only two possibilities: either she will be discovered and killed, or she will manage to go back to Greece with her husband (1090-2). Therefore, she prays to both Hera and Aphrodite (1093-106). Nevertheless, she and Menelaus carry out their plan with determination, as they know that their reunion as husband and wife is within their rights. Helen also received from Hermes the prediction that she would return to Sparta with Menelaus, as she reveals in the prologue (56-9), but she does not mention this prophecy again in the course of the play. But what matters here is that an awareness of the futility of many human actions, above all the war at Troy, does not induce the characters to passive resignation. On the contrary, as we have seen, they understand how they can exploit appearances to their own advantage. Thus, Menelaus and Helen seem to demonstrate that an active and flexible approach to life is likely to be successful. However, this can only happen as long as human actions do not conflict with supernatural plans.

A crucial part of human inventiveness is the ability of using words. The change from being objects of words, as Helen and Menelaus have long been, to becoming subjects of words and employing them to achieve one's own goals, is the turning point of the tragedy. But there is a further use of words which can help humans minimise the negative effects of living in a world where everything can be different from what it seems. As the chorus

argue in the first stasimon (1151-64), humans should avoid waging wars which cause irreparable losses and suffering; instead, disputes may be solved by talking. This use of words is not based on the truth value of what is said – which can never be verified – but on agreement and mutual utility. In the dispute over Helen, this would have been the only way to avoid the 'paradox' whereby the greatest number of men have died for the least meaningful cause.

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3

# The *Eidolon* Paradox: Re-presenting Helen from Euripides to Shakespeare

Carla Suthren

Abstract

This chapter explores the early modern reception of Euripides' *Helen*, particularly with regard to the false *eidolon* of Helen which Euripides presents as having gone to Troy in place of the real one, who remained in Egypt. It identifies Helen's *eidolon* as a site at which three main forms of paradox intersect: the semantic, the rhetorical, and the logical. The *eidolon*'s paradoxical nature makes it a fertile figure for exploring the paradoxes inherent in all acts of mimetic representation, especially the embodied form of drama. The chapter begins with a paratext included in most sixteenth-century editions of Euripides' complete works: a short essay 'On the *Eidolon*'. It looks at the various ways early modern writers translated the word "*eidolon*", in order to establish a nebulous semantic field of reference. In light of this, it examines works by Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare within a wider discourse generated by Helen's paradoxical *eidolon*.

Keywords: Euripides; Shakespeare; Marlowe; Spenser; *eidolon*; Helen

Everyone knows the story of Helen of Troy: the face that launched a thousand ships. The dominant tradition as represented in Homer identifies her elopement with (or abduction by) Paris as the cause of the Trojan War, launched by the Greeks to get her back. But there is another version. What if Helen never went to Troy at all? In Euripides' play *Helen*, the gods instead created an *eidolon* of her which went to Troy in her place, while she herself remained in Egypt for the duration. Helen's *eidolon*, I suggest, can be read as a site at which multiple forms of paradox intersect. These might be categorised as follows: 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 (*doxa*); 3) logical, in that it both is and is not the thing it represents.[1] This third category makes the *eidolon* a particularly fertile figure for exploring the paradoxes inherent in all acts of mimetic representation, and especially the embodied form of drama. This chapter will explore the early modern reception of Helen's paradoxical *eidolon*, locating works by Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare within a wider discourse generated by the *eidolon*.

In Euripides' *Helen*, the *eidolon* initiates an obsession with doubling, which affects both plot and language, and reflects and enacts the epistemological concerns at play. Charles Segal has shown that *Helen*'s combination of the "passage between real and ideal worlds" characteristic of romance and the "mistaken identities and delusions of the recognition play" has the effect of "invit[ing] paradox and irony to a high degree" (1986, 224). The play's characteristic linguistic mode utilises figures of speech which are related to paradox, such as antithesis, oxymoron, and polyptoton; Helen, for instance, simultaneously left and did not leave her husband's bed (ἔλιπον οὐ λιποῦσ', "I left without leaving", 696). "Name" (ὄνομα) is repeatedly contrasted to "body" (σῶμα) or "mind" (νοῦς) (e.g. 66-7). From Helen's opening prologue stories are multiplied, from the two versions of Helen's birth to the fate of her brothers, and characters cannot determine which is true. What 'they say' is inextricably related to 'reputation' (or 'being called' something), which is both unreliable and of utmost importance. Seeing is not believing, since ocular proof cannot distinguish Helen from her *eidolon*. Faced with two Helens, Menelaus is confronted with the gap between name and thing, and reasons that there may also be two Zeuses, two Troys (on which, see Marco Duranti's chapter in this volume). Generically too, the play has often been described as a tragicomedy, holding in the irresolvable tension of paradox two antithetical generic modes. Moreover, as Segal goes on to argue, "This play, with its recurrent antitheses between appearance and reality, *onoma* and *pragma*, is simultaneously about the nature of reality and the nature of language and art" (1986, 225).

[1] I take these categorisations from Silvia Bigliazzi's chapter in this volume.

Segal's description here articulates the paradox encapsulated in the *eidolon*, simultaneously about the nature of reality (on the one hand), and language and art (on the other).

In its vindication of Helen through the device of the *eidolon*, which it presents as a correction to the pre-existing narrative, the play participates in a tradition of literary paradox. According to Cicero, paradoxes are "surprising, and they run counter to universal opinion", a definition in accordance with "the Greek root of paradox, whose etymology – *para* ['beyond'] + *doxon* [*sic*] ['opinion'] – suggests a reversal of common belief or convention" (Platt 2009, 2). In fact, Peter Platt locates the mythological character of Helen at the very origins of the tradition of the rhetorical paradox: "The mock encomium is the earliest surviving paradoxical literary form, dating from the defenses of Helen written by Gorgias and Isocrates in the fifth century BC" (2009, 20). As the most beautiful and terrible of women, the object of hyperbolic praise and hyperbolic blame, Helen seems to generate paradox, inviting a proliferation of strategies for defending the indefensible. The device of the *eidolon* literally splits her into two, so that one can be the 'good woman' worthy of praise, and the other the 'bad woman' to be blamed, emblematising the common misogynistic fantasy.[2] Gorgias and Isocrates defend Helen without making use of the *eidolon*, though Isocrates does refer to Stesichorus, the archaic poet with whom Helen's *eidolon* apparently originated (10.64). A further permutation is offered by Herodotus (2.1.113-21), who agrees that Helen was not at Troy but in Egypt all along, while dispensing with the device of the *eidolon* and replacing it with logic: if the Trojans had had her, he says, they must surely have given her back to prevent the destruction of their city.

Early modern readers of Michael Neander's *Aristologia Euripidea Graecolatina* (1559), a kind of printed commonplace book of extracts from Euripides with Latin translations designed for students, were invited to place Euripides' *Helen* in the context of the proliferation

[2] Eleanora Stoppino refers to the "duplicitous or wavering attitude towards the legend of Helen" among Renaissance readers and writers since her "voyage from Sparta to Troy was . . . visible in two opposite ways: as kidnapping or eloping" as "the Helen paradox", producing praise and blame for each alternative (2018, 33-4).

of these defences of Helen. Neander gives some prominence to *Helen*, placing it second in his collection after *Hecuba*, as opposed to its sixteenth position in editions of Euripides' complete works. Neander arranges the plays thematically, beginning with those dealing with the Trojan War, and values *Helen* in this context. As well as the argument for *Helen*, he provides the relevant extract from Herodotus. Moreover, Neander also includes Isocrates' oration in praise of Helen as a kind of appendix to the whole volume. Though Neander stresses the device of the *eidolon* in relation to the play's plot, in his excerpts from the play he is more concerned with pursuing his project of providing edifying and sententious extracts for his student readers. It is worth noting that early modern writers might follow Neander's interests rather than ours: William Vaughan, in *The Golden Grove Moralized* (1600, sig.K.7.*r.*) quotes "Eurip. in Helen": "there is a certain desire of friends, to know the miseries of their friends" (*Hel.* 763-4; Neander extract 30), and Thomas Gataker chose as the epigraph to *The Spiritual Watch* (1622) lines 941-3 (Neander extract 36), which he quotes in Greek followed by a Latin translation, on the importance of children living up to the nobility of their fathers. But Neander does also include Theonoe's observation that "though the mind of dead men does not live, it has eternal sensation once it has been hurled into the eternal upper air" (1014-16), on which he comments: *Anima immortalis. De eo uide Phaedonem Platonis* ("The immortal soul. On which see Plato's *Phaedo*"). This connection to Plato and questions of the nature of the soul are also raised in a short essay "On the *Eidolon*" which early modern readers might encounter in their texts of Euripides.

## 1. On the *Eidolon*

What is an *eidolon*? Publishers of Euripides' complete works, from the Aldine *editio princeps* in 1503 throughout the sixteenth century, evidently felt that this was a question in which their readers might be interested. Ten out of the thirteen editions printed before 1600 included a short essay "On the *Eidolon*" (περὶ εἰδώλου in Greek, or *De Idolo* when translated into Latin).[3] This was attributed to the

[3] The essay is found among the prefatory materials to the editions of

Byzantine scholar Manuel Moschopulus, but was actually extracted by him from a longer theological work by the eleventh-century polymath Michael Psellus, thus entering the manuscript tradition inherited by Aldus Manutius.[4] The essay is an attempt to disentangle the paradox contained by the word '*eidolon*' itself, which, Psellus explains, is commonly used in two contradictory ways. "It is carried away by contrary senses", he writes (διαφόροις ἐννοίαις ἐκφέρεται) – the Latin translation has *distrahat*, which conveys even more vividly the idea that the word is being pulled violently in two different directions.[5] On the one hand, he observes, "we say that souls are *eidola* of physical bodies" (εἴδωλα τῶν σωμάτων φαμὲν τὰς ψυχάς); on the other, "all philosophers say that *eidola* are the inferior [images] of superior things" (φιλόσοφοι δὲ ξύμπαντες, τὰ χείρωνα, εἴδωλα τῶν κρειττόνων φασίν). For both statements to hold, logically we would have to conclude that the soul is inferior to the body, which for Psellus cannot be true.

Having established this paradox, Psellus attempts to solve it by showing that both statements can indeed be true, while it also remains true that the soul is superior to the body; in other words, to demonstrate that it is what W. V. Quine might call a "veridical" paradox (1966). Psellus' argument runs as follows: 1) *eidola* are inferior images of superior things, and the soul is by nature superior to the body, so the body must be an *eidolon* of the soul, not vice versa. 2) When souls are made visible to us, this is according to our own limited perceptual abilities, which is why they appear to be modelled on corporeal forms but indistinct and shadowy; in this sense souls are the *eidola* of physical bodies. 3) The

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1503 (Venice, Greek), 1537 (Basel, Greek), 1541 (Basel, Latin), 1544 (Basel, Greek), 1550 (Basel, Latin), 1551 (Basel, Greek), 1558 (Frankfurt, Greek), 1560 (Frankfurt, Greek), and 1571 (Antwerp, Greek). In the 1562 (Basel, Greek/Latin) edition, it has been moved to the end where it is provided in Latin. It is not included in the editions of 1558 (Basel, Latin), 1562 (Frankfurt, Latin), 1597 (Heidelberg, Greek/Latin), or in the 1602 Geneva edition (Greek/Latin).

[4] British Library Arundel MS 522, ff 62*v.*-65*v.*, for example, attaches Psellus' essay to Euripides' works and attributes it to Moschopoulos.

[5] The Greek text is reproduced in Westerink and Duffy 2002, 50-1, to which I refer for convenience. The Latin translation appeared first in the 1541 Basel edition.

physical body and its senses are inferior to the mind and its ability to reason, so the body is an *eidolon* of the soul. What appeared to be a contradiction in step 2) turns out to be further proof of the inferiority of the body, with its limited physical senses. This allows Psellus to resolve the paradox to his own satisfaction, though in the process the discussion has turned back on itself so many times that it takes a fairly diligent reader to sort it out. The discussion of the *eidolon* paradox seems to require or produce a high concentration of linguistic and syntactical doubling and repetition: "Because of these things, therefore, the soul is an *eidolon* of the body; and again the body is an *eidolon* of the soul . . ." (διὰ ταῦτα μὲν οὖν εἴδωλον σωμάτων ἡ ψυχή· αὖθις δὲ σῶμα, ψυχῆς εἴδωλον), Psellus writes, using the characteristic Greek idiom μὲν . . . δὲ ("on the one hand . . . on the other"), which is able to keep both sides of the paradoxical equation in play at the same time.

If paratexts (at least in theory) work in "the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (Genette 1997, 2), the presence of Psellus' essay in so many editions suggests that a pertinent early modern reading of Euripides might involve thinking about the *eidolon*. Psellus uses the ghost of Polydorus in Euripides' *Hecuba* as a brief example of the soul-as-*eidolon*, but the play by Euripides which demonstrates most overt interest in the concept of the *eidolon* is of course not *Hecuba*, but *Helen*. As Segal puts it, the central antitheses of *Helen* surround the contrasts between "appearance and reality, body and spirit (160-1)", which, he argues, "looks ahead to the Platonic attempt to distinguish appearance from reality in a deeper sense" (1986, 257). Like Neander, Psellus refers his readers to Plato's *Phaedo*, which discusses the nature of the soul. Elsewhere, as Segal notes, "Plato too used Stesichorus' myth of the phantom Helen as a parable of the evils we suffer when we are deceived by the 'false' beauty and 'false' pleasures of the sense world (*Rep.* 9.586BC)" (1986, 258).

Moreover, while Psellus' main focus is philosophical-theological, he also connects the *eidolon* to mimetic representation in the realm of art.[6] In common usage, he points out, we say that this or that

[6] In his theological writings, Psellus typically takes "a problem [of scripture] and elucidates its philosophical background by drawing on his im-

bronze statue (*aenea statua* in the Latin, translating the Greek ὁ χαλκοῦς) is an *eidolon* of Heracles, or Theseus, or the wolf suckling Romulus and Remus. He uses this to illustrate the proposition that an *eidolon* is an inferior image, in agreement with Aristotle's statement in his *Physics* that "ἡ τέχνη μιμεῖται τὴν φύσιν" (194a 22, usually translated as "art imitates nature"). But the specific formulation that Psellus arrives at is that created artworks are "*eidola* of the truth" (εἴδωλα δὲ ἀληθείας), which opens up space for a paradox of mimesis which Aristotle goes on to express: ἡ τέχνη τὰ μὲν ἐπιτελεῖ ἃ ἡ φύσις ἀδυνατεῖ ἀπεργάσασθαι, τὰ δὲ μιμεῖται ("art on the one hand brings to completion things which nature is unable to perfect, while on the other hand it imitates them", 199a 16-17). As, traditionally, the most beautiful woman ever to have lived, Helen uniquely represents the paradox of mimesis as articulated by Aristotle, as an anecdote about the painter Zeuxis, known to the Renaissance in various forms, illustrates.

According to Cicero in *De inventione*, the citizens of Croton employed the painter Zeuxis to produce a series of paintings for their temple. He decided "to paint a picture of Helen so that the portrait though silent and lifeless might embody the surpassing beauty of womanhood".[7] Needing a model, he asked to see "what girls they had of surpassing beauty".[8] The Crotonians, instead, "showed him many very handsome young men" so that he could imagine the beauty of their sisters.[9] Zeuxis requested to see "the most beautiful of these girls . . . so that the true beauty may be transferred from the living model to the mute likeness".[10] When the girls had been assembled, he chose five to use as models "because he did not think all the qualities which he sought to combine in a portrayal of beauty could be found in one person, because in no single case has Nature made anything perfect and finished in

mense knowledge" of the Greek philosophers, particularly Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists (Louth 2007, 341).

[7] 2.2.1: "ut excellentem muliebris formae pulcritudinem muta in se imago contineret, Helenae pingere simulacrum velle dixit". Text and translations from Hubbell 1949.

[8] 2.2.2: "quaesnam virgines formosas haberent".

[9] 2.2.2: "ei pueros ostenderunt multos".

[10] 2.2.3: "ut mutum in simulacrum ex animali exemplo veritas transferatur".

every part".[11] Zeuxis' art will be able to perfect what nature cannot provide. As Tim Whitmarsh puts it,

> the story is an allegory of the power of human artifice to transcend nature: by judiciously selecting your models, you can create a work of ideally beautiful (written or visual) art that transcends the particularity of the world in front of our eyes. Frankensteinian without the freakishness, Zeuxis' Helen expresses both a beauty that exceeds the possibilities of real physical bodies, and the power of graphic creativity to assemble existing parts into new wholes. (2018, 135)

However, the canvas at the heart of the anecdote is left blank. Rather than resolving the paradox of mimesis, the text instead re-presents it, offering a series of substitutions in place of Helen. This is the function of the diversion of the beautiful boys, apparently pointless since the Crotonians subsequently show him the girls anyway. It raises the suggestion that male beauty might be closer to the ideal than female beauty, that perhaps a beautiful boy might better represent Helen than a beautiful girl – something that the early modern stage in general and Marlowe in particular will be interested in. In Cicero's anecdote, we are being asked to *imagine* the beauty of the girls based on the partial representation offered by their brothers, opening up the gap crucial to the operation of mimesis.

This illustrates the second paradox of mimesis, according to which it is "a deception wherein he who deceives is more honest than he who does not deceive, and he who is deceived is wiser than he who is not deceived" (ἀπάτην, ἣν ὅ τ' ἀπατήσας δικαιότερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατήσαντος καὶ ὁ ἀπατηθεὶς σοφώτερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατηθέντος).[12] This paradoxical statement is attributed to Gorgias (speaking of tragedy) by Plutarch, who quotes it twice in the *Moralia* (15d and 348c). The paradox applies to both poet, who

[11] 2.2.3: "Neque enim putavit omnia, quae quaereret ad venustatem, uno se in corpore reperire posse ideo quod nihil simplici in genere omnibus ex partibus perfectum natura expolivit".

[12] Text and translation from Babbitt 1927. On Gorgias' paradox, see Grethlein 2021, 1-32.

perpetrates a just deception, and audience, which is knowingly deceived. Segal has connected this idea to the functioning of Euripides' *Helen*, in which "[a]s the kaleidoscope of the play's antitheses between appearance and reality turns before our eyes, we become aware that the play *qua* play is itself a term in those antitheses" (1986, 264). Though Euripides never brings the *eidolon* on stage, its existence is a reminder that the 'real' Helen in front of us is equally a representation, both real and not real. The *eidolon* is referred to as a μίμημα at 875, an "imitation" of Helen, just as the actor in turn imitates Helen. Craig Jendza has recently argued that the escape plot engineered by Helen "is, in effect, a play-within-a-play whereby Euripides facilitates metatheatrical reflection by engaging with the methods by which dramatists create, cast, and produce dramas for audiences. The deception contains a metafictional narrative intended to be staged for an audience (Theoclymenos and the Egyptian sailors), characters feigning new identities (Menelaus as the witness and Helen as the grief-stricken widow), and the adoption of new costumes (Menelaus's rags and Helen's black clothes, shorn hair, and bloodied cheeks)" (2020, 96). But whereas for the success of the dramatic and intra-dramatic plots Menelaus and Theoclymenos must be absolutely deceived, by the *eidolon* and by Helen respectively, we as the audience must be knowingly deceived, in order for the overall act of dramatic mimesis to be successful.

In Euripides, Helen's *eidolon* is crucially indistinguishable from its original, or from an actor: it breathes, and speaks, and can be embraced. In her prologue, Helen describes its creation:

> Hera, annoyed that she did not defeat the other goddesses, made Alexandros' union with me as vain as the wind: she gave to king Priam's son not me but a breathing image she fashioned from the heavens to resemble me. He imagines – vain imagination – that he has me, though he does not. (31-6).

In spite of its realism, it is made out of sky (οὐρανοῦ, 34), and is described as a νεφέλης (cloud) at 750 and a νεφέλης ἄγαλμα at 705 and 1219; ἄγαλμα is commonly used to mean "statue", though it can also be an "image" more generally. The airy imagery extends

further: the metaphor in ἐξηνέμωσε (32) – beautifully translated by Jean-Antoine de Baïf as "Tourne tout son espoir en vent" ("turns all his hope to wind") – connects the substance from which the *eidolon* is made to the effect of its existence. The *eidolon*-Helen is empty or vain (κενή) at 36 and 590, and eventually disappears, "swept out of sight into the sky's recesses, vanished into the heavens!" (605-6). The physical nature of the *eidolon* as both solid and airy is connected to its ontological status as real and not real, and is reflected in the nebulous semantic field which extends through early modern translations of the word "*eidolon*" itself.

As Psellus found, the word "*eidolon*" contains a paradox, in that it holds in tension potentially contrary meanings. When Psellus' essay was translated into Latin, it appeared as *De Idolo*, using the Latin word (*idolum*) directly derived from the Greek εἴδωλον. Interestingly, though *idolum* continues to be used in Psellus' essay, early modern translators do not use it for Euripides' own uses of εἴδωλον in the text. In fact, Psellus himself notes at the end of his essay that term εἴδωλον has been "rejected by the religion of the Christians"; in the Church fathers an *idolum* had become a false idol. In a Protestant context, it becomes further associated with Catholic practices. *Idolum*, then, inevitably brings such theological connotations with it, which evidently direct translators of Euripides tended to avoid. But some other early modern responses to Helen's *eidolon* choose either to ignore or to activate them. In his commentary on Helen, Stiblinus finds a moral in how humans are led on "by *idolis* of Helen", while Natale Conti in his *Mythologiae* reports that "some assert that [Paris] returned to his country with an *Idolum* of Helen, as Euripides thought" (6.23). Ronsard, who plays with the alternate Helen myth throughout his *Sonnets pour Hélène*, imagines himself in the position of Paris, "[e]mbrassant pour le vray l'idole du mensonge" ("[e]mbracing in reality the idol of my dream", I.LX). Likewise Spenser, as we shall see, uses "Idole" twice in the context of his own explorations of Helen and her *eidolon* in *The Faerie Queene*.

For the occurrences of εἴδωλον in *Helen* itself (34, 582, 683), translators tend to opt for *simulacrum* or *imago*. The connotations which come with these words are summed up by Thomas Thomas in his 1587 dictionary, who defines *simulacrum* as "An image of a

man or womn [sic], the proportion of any thing, the shadow, figure, likenes, semblance, counterfait, picture, or paterne of a thing", and *imago* even more extensively as "An image: a similitude, an appearance, a representation of a thing: a liknes, a couterfaite, a vision, an idle toy, a fansie, an imagination: a paterne, an example, the proportion, the resemblance, the figure: a pretence, colour, or cloke: a cogitation conceived in the minde". From Thomas' definition a strong connection emerges to the visual arts, and indeed *simulacrum* was the word used by Cicero to refer to Zeuxis' painting of Helen in *De inventione* (2.1-3). It is also the term favoured by Stiblinus in his commentary on *Helen*, and by Neander. Erasmus, in *Ciceronianus*, writes that Paris "fought a war for ten years for the Helen he had carried off and all the time was embracing a false image of Helen [*mendax Helenae simulacrum*], because the real Helen had of course been carried off to Egypt by a stratagem of the gods". George Buchanan, in *De iure regni apud Scotos*, relates that "after the real Helen had been left in Egypt with Proteus", the Greeks and Trojans "struggled for ten years over her likeness [*simulacrum*]".

A third overlapping field of references becomes even more shadowy. Psellus used the ghost of Polydorus in Euripides' *Hecuba* as an example, and the *dramatis personae* in Greek editions of Euripides' complete works specify Πολυδώρου εἴδωλον, unanimously translated into Latin (including by Erasmus) as *umbra*, which Thomas poetically defines as "[a] shadow: also a colour, semblance, appearance, or likeness: the first drawght in painting or drawing, before any beauty or trimming come therto: the bare shadow of a thing drawn, darkenes". *Umbra* does not tend to be used directly in translations of *Helen*, though Stiblinus concludes that Euripides shows how due to human blindness disasters occur "merely because of an *umbra*". It shades into similar terms, however. In his commentary on the *Aeneid* (often printed in the sixteenth century), Servius refers to the *phantasma in similitudinem Helenae Paridi datum* ("*phantasma* in the likeness of Helen given to Paris", II.592 (see also I.651), and in his translation of the prologue to *Helen* de Baïf renders εἴδωλον as "fantôme". In *The Joy of the Just*, Gataker writes that those who think they can achieve joy without faith "deceive and delude themselves, embracing . . . a figment instead of Helen with Paris, a counterfeit shadow of mirth instead of true joy".

The language of shadowy *eidola* resonates strongly with Platonic philosophy, which will be an important element of Spenser's engagement with Helen's *eidolon*.

## 2. "So liuely and so like": Spenser's Poetic *Eidola*

In "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie", Spenser produced a couplet which functions neatly as a gloss on Psellus' central preoccupation in his essay on the *eidolon*: "For of the soule the bodie forme doth take: / For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make" (132-3).[13] The tidiness of the couplet, with its perfect rhyme, suggests a resolution of the paradoxical linguistic duality perceived by Psellus which gave his essay its particular shape. But Spenser's "forme" takes on the function of Psellus' "*eidolon*", mediating between "bodie" and "soule"; its placement in the first line associates it with the former, while in the second line it is bracketed with the latter by the punctuated caesura. Performing this manoeuvre produces a reduplicative effect: each of the two lines begins with the same word and ends with the same sound, with the key words "soule", "bodie", and "forme" each repeated in a slightly varied order. For Spenser, the "soule is forme", while the body *has* form. This doubleness of "forme" means that in the Garden of Adonis episode in *The Faerie Queene* Spenser can write that "formes are variable and decay" (3.6.38), enacting precisely the linguistic paradox observed by Psellus (since it appears incompatible with the statement that the "soule is forme").[14] The formulations of both Psellus and Spenser on this topic are indicative of the significance of the *eidolon* or "forme" within Platonic and Neo-Platonic discourse.[15] For Rosalie Colie, Spenser's exploration of the relationship between form and substance in the Garden of Adonis and the Mutabilitie Cantos of *The Faerie Queene* constitutes a "paradoxical reformation of the relation of being to becoming", which further manifests itself in his constant fascination with "veils, disguises, . . . the difference between

[13] Quoted from De Selincourt 1910.

[14] Quotations are from Hamilton 2007.

[15] On Spenser and Platonism, see the special issue of *Spenser Studies* dedicated to the subject (Boris et al. 2009).

appearance and reality, between substance and metaphysical being" (1966, 341, 349). Meanwhile, Angus Fletcher, also focusing on the Mutabilitie Cantos, argues that they "are modelled after" the paradoxical "rhetorical tradition of . . . the ironic defense of women" (2002, 8). I have been suggesting that the logical and rhetorical paradox (as represented by Colie's and Fletcher's readings of *The Faerie Queene* respectively) come together in Helen's *eidolon*, with which Spenser engages specifically in Book 3.

The myth of Troy, as we are reminded here, has a particular relevance to Spenser's narrative and to his iteration of a national mythology. In Merlin's prophecy we are informed that from Britomart "a famous Progenee / Shall spring, out of the auncient *Troian* blood" (3.3.22); later on she remembers that she has been told she is "lineally extract" from the Trojans, since "noble *Britons* sprong from *Troians* bold, / And *Troynouant* was built of old *Troyes* ashes cold" (3.9.38). Britomart's recollection of the prophecy comes in the context of Paridell's account of his lineage, in which he briefly recounts the story of "Sir *Paris*" and "Fayre *Helene*" (3.9.33-5). Paridell's tracing of his descent from Paris through his son Parius, who went to live on Paros, and had a son called Paridas (3.9.36-7), also figures his downward literary trajectory, from epic hero to "permanently reduced version of Paris", as David Mikics puts it, in his exploration of Spenser's quasi-polyptotonic wordplay here (1994, 108). Paridell describes Paris as the "[m]ost famous Worthy of the world" (3.9.34), an exaggeration coloured by Paridell's desire to emulate his ancestor in his own adulterous pursuit of a "second *Helene*, fayre Dame *Hellenore*" (3.10.13). Her name encodes her as this "second *Helene*" (Helen-o'er), while suggesting that she represents the negative tradition of "Helen-whore" ("of a wanton lady I do write", Spenser says at 9.1.6).[16] In this "shrunken, trivialized" (Maguire 2009, 175) retelling of the Trojan narrative, then, Spenser gives us an extreme version of the orthodox misogynistic interpretation of Helen.

Prior to this, however, Spenser's introduction of the true and false Florimells also engaged Euripides' counter-orthodox version. Florimell links herself to Helen through her projection of a second

[16] See Maguire 2009, 176.

Trojan War in her defence:

> How soone would yee assemble many a fleete,
> To fetch from sea, that ye at land lost late;
> Towres, citties, kingdoms ye would ruinate,
> In your auengement and dispiteous rage. (3.8.28)

In Euripides' *Helen*, Proteus the king of Egypt was Helen's protector, while after his death his son threatens her chastity: "Spenser's Proteus combines the behaviour of father and son" (Hamilton 1992). Thomas Roche has argued that "by juxtaposing his versions of the alternate and Homeric Helen myths Spenser is presenting a Neoplatonic explanation of the Troy story and . . . his two Florimells are really the philosophic prototypes of the conflicting Helen myths – true and false beauty" (1964, 162). What is more, as David Quint points out, "the false Florimell [is] herself a second version in the poem of the demonic *eidolon* that Archimago manufactures in the false Una at its beginning" (2000, 37). If, as has been suggested, Book 1 was at least revised or completed if not completely written after Books 3 and 4 already existed in some version, we might see the Helen-*eidolon* originating in Book 3 and spreading its implications throughout the whole text.[17] The episode with Archimago, who is both "archi-mago" and "arch-imago", and the false Una established "both Spenser's textual exploration of the kinds of duplicity that inhabit all metaphoric imitation, and his attempt to limit that duplicity to the text itself", as A. Leigh DeNeef puts it (1982, 95). The false Una and the false Florimell, both created using "Sprights", are each described with the identical phrase as "So liuely and so like" (1.1.45; 3.8.5) their originals. Spenser refers to the false Florimell as an "Idole" specifically (at 3.8.11 and 4.5.15); for him, the Christian and particularly Protestant inflections of idolatry are active here.

If according to our first paradox of mimesis art is at once superior and inferior to nature, within a Christian context this causes problems for the artist, whose acts of creation hover dangerously between appropriate homage to an originating deity and usurpation of this power. As created work of art, the *eidolon* focuses this ambivalence.

[17] See Bennett 1942. As Quint observes, Archimago "seems to have read the rest of the poem in advance" (2000, 32).

Of the Witch's creation of the false Florimell, we are told that "euen Nature selfe enuide the same, / And grudg'd to see the counterfet should shame / The thing it selfe" (3.8.5). The possibility that the counterfeit might shame the thing itself becomes entangled with the specific parameters of poetic language, Spenser's own artistic medium, as the process of creating a woman uncovers the problems of describing a woman. The false Florimell is literally constructed out of the stock images of the Petrarchan tradition of love poetry: her body is made "of purest snow" (6), her eyes are "two burning lampes", her hair is of "golden wyre" (7). The problem becomes clear when we remember how the "real" Florimell was first described at the beginning of Book 3: her "face did seeme as cleare as Christall stone, / And eke through feare as white as whales bone: / Her garments were wrought of beaten gold" (3.1.15), while "her faire yellow locks behind her flew . . . All as a blazing starre" (16). The false Florimell is a materialisation of the figurative language used to describe female beauty, which designedly undercuts that language itself. And it uncovers a problem, even a paradox, reversing the usual relationship of "seeming" to "being" (in which the latter is superior): the 'real' Florimell can only be 'like' these things, but the false Florimell actually *is* them. The text attempts to assure us that "golden wire was not so yellow thrice / As Florimell's fair hair" (3.8.7) – nature *is* superior to artifice, being is better than seeming, and it is possible to tell the difference if you look closely. But this distinction collapses again immediately, since "who so then her saw, would surely say, / It was her selfe, whom it did imitate, / Or fayrer than her selfe, if ought algate / Might fayrer be" (3.8.9). The confusion of pronouns between "her" and "her selfe" is symptomatic, while the possibility that the false Florimell might be fairer, that the counterfeit might shame the thing itself, is maintained in the conditional.

Spenser engages playfully with the semantic field of the *eidolon* in both Book 3 and Book 1. Once created and given to the Witch's son, the false Florimell proves "[e]nough to hold a foole in vaine delight: / Him long she so with shadowes entertain'd" (3.8.10). In the next stanza, he goes walking "with that his Idole faire, / Her to disport, and idle time to pas" (3.8.11). This idol/idle pun can be read back into the "ydle dreame" of Una (1.1.46) which Archimago sends

a Spright to fetch in order to afflict the Redcrosse Knight (we might remember too that if Paridell is "Paris-idle" then he might also be "Paris-idol"). While one Spright fetches the dream, his twin is used by Archimago to create "a Lady . . . fram'd of liquid ayre" (1.1.45), very much in the language of the εἴδωλον ἔμπνουν οὐρανοῦ ξυνθεῖσ' ἄπο (33-4). Archimago is referred to as a "maker" in relation to this act of creation; the Greek word for 'maker' is *poietes*, from which we get our term 'poet', and in early modern English a poet might often be referred to as a 'maker'. [18]

In Spenser, the theological imperative that an *eidolon* must be a false idol coexists with a neo-Platonic interest in "forme", and an investigation into the paradox of mimetic representation. While Spenser is primarily concerned with his own medium of poetic creation, the creation of the false Florimell prompts a striking evocation of dramatic performance, and the specific conditions of the Elizabethan stage. To bring the *eidolon* to life, the Witch chooses "A wicked Spright yfraught with fawning guile, / And fayre resemblance aboue all the rest" (3.8), whom she costumes as Florimell ("Him shaped thus, she deckt in garments gay, / Which *Florimell* had left behind", 3.9). This male Spright is presented as a boy actor expert in taking on women's roles:

> Him needed not instruct, which way were best
> Him selfe to fashion likest *Florimell*,
> Ne how to speake, ne how to vse his gest;
> For he in counterfesaunce did excell,
> And all the wyles of wemens wits knew passing well. (3.8)[19]

Here the *eidolon* becomes not merely a work of art, but the work of art in its specifically embodied form, taking us from *eidolon* as art to actor as *eidolon*. We might imagine just such a talented boy actor taking on the role of the *eidolon*-Helen in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*,

[18] Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy* writes that "The Greeks called him 'poet', which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It cometh of this word, *poiein*, which is 'to make', wherein, I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a 'maker'" (Alexander 2004, 46-7).

[19] See Roberts 1997, 74.

a play which engages directly with several moments in Book 3 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene.*

### 3. 'Heavenly Helen': Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

If Archimago was figured as a devilish poet, Mephistopheles in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is a dramatist, who stages theatrical entertainments to distract Faustus from the possibility of salvation. At the point of signing away his soul, Faustus appears to see a warning inscribed on his arm ("*Homo, fuge!*", A 2.1.76, 80).[20] To cement him in his purpose, Mephistopheles brings on a masque of devils "to delight his mind" (81). When Faustus asks, "Speak, Mephistopheles; what means this show?" he replies: "Nothing, Faustus, but to delight thy mind withal / And to show thee what magic can perform" (82-4). On the one hand, as is often noted, Faustus has sold his soul for a mere "show", signifying "nothing". But at the same time, by revealing that Mephistopheles' art *is* the dramatist's art, Marlowe does indeed show us what the magic of theatre can perform for our delight. If magic is merely theatre, then theatre is, really, magic. As Andrew Sofer argues, "*Faustus* traffics in performative magic not in the service of skepticism, as some critics have argued, but to appropriate speech's performative power on behalf of a glamorous commercial enterprise, the Elizabethan theatre itself" (2009, 2). *Faustus* is a play that is interested in performance, in both the modern and early modern senses, and in what Platt identifies as the "paradoxical nature of theatre itself", the way that "something on the stage always provides a 'natural perspective that is and is not'" (2009, 4).[21] This inherently paradoxical nature of theatrical performance was "all the more pronounced" due to the performance conditions of the early modern English public stage, "when the acting took the form of boys playing women" (Platt 2009, 164) – a somatic fact which *Faustus* suggestively registers at a key

[20] I quote from Kastan 2005, which provides the A and B-texts separately. I give references to both only where the texts differ substantially.

[21] See Crane 2001 on the early modern uses of the word "perform", which "had the primary meaning 'to carry through to completion; to complete, finish, perfect'" (172).

moment in relation to its staging of a "heavenly Helen" (A 5.1.84).

Dustin Dixon and John Garrison have recently used Euripides' *Helen* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* to explore "Helen and her *eidolon* as embodiments of the artificial doubling and duplicitousness that theatrical mimesis requires" (2021, 52). They identify Lucian as the "bridge between Euripides' erroneously slandered heroine and Marlowe's devilishly beautiful Helen", since Marlowe's most famous lines – "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?" (A 5.1.90-91) – have long been connected to Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*.[22] Lucian's character Menippus, faced with Helen's skull, asks: "Was it then for this that the thousand ships were manned from all Greece, for this that so many Greeks and barbarians fell, and so many cities were devastated?".[23] The Lucianic source perhaps invites us to see the skull beneath the skin of Marlowe's Helen, shifting our perspective somewhat in the manner of an anamorphic painting like Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, in which a change in the position of the viewer suddenly reveals a grinning skull.[24] But Faustus is not holding a skull, like Menippus or Hamlet; instead, Marlowe presents us with a living, breathing representation of Helen. In doing so, he engages with the wider discourse in which Helen and her *eidolon* form a locus of overlapping paradoxes. In fact, the very same lines which draw on Lucian also contain an echo of Book 3 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, in which Paridell tells of the "stately towres of *Ilion*" (3.9.34).

Patrick Cheney has argued that it is precisely this book, and specifically the Helen material, "that Marlowe had his eye on when composing *Doctor Faustus*" (1997, 212). Cheney offers several parallels. Marlowe's Third Scholar speaks of Helen "[w]hose

[22] Dixon and Garrison 2021, 65; attention was first drawn to the Lucian parallel by Tupper 1906.

[23] Εἶτα διὰ τοῦτο αἱ χίλιαι νῆες ἐπληρώθησαν ἐξ ἁπάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ τοσοῦτοι ἔπεσον Ἕλληνές τε καὶ βάρβαροι καὶ τοσαῦται πόλεις ἀνάστατοι γεγόνασιν; (5.2). Text and translation from MacLeod 1961. As Dixon and Garrison point out, Marlowe could also have used Erasmus' Latin translation (2021, 65).

[24] Platt, drawing on Baltrusaitis, *Anamorphic Art*, sees anamorphic paintings as "visual paradoxes", which "dismantle truth in order to provide a different perspective" (2009, 27).

heavenly beauty passeth all compare" (A 5.1.29); Spenser has "whose soveraine beautie hath no living pere" (*FQ* 3.1.26). Cheney notes that *Faustus* 1.3.1-4 (". . . And dims the welkin with her pitchy breath") contains an imitation of *FQ* 3.10.46 (". . . Did dim the brightness of the welkin round"), and that this comes specifically "from the episode of Hellenore among the satyrs" (1997, 209). Where Faustus means to "wall all Germany with brass" (A 1.1.88), at *FQ* 3.3.10 Merlin "did intend / A brasen wall in compas to compyle / About *Cairmardin*". Finally, Cheney draws attention to "Faustus' claim that he has made blind Homer sing to him about Paris and Oenone, since Homer sang no such song"; in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser mentions that Paris "[o]n faire Oenone got a lovely boy" (3.9.36) (1997, 212).[25] Perhaps Marlowe was also struck by Spenser's theatrical description of the Spright as boy-actor at 3.8.8, but where Spenser's Spright is impersonating Florimell, Marlowe, like Euripides, stages Helen. In Faustus' response to his Helen-*eidolon* the body of the boy-actor hovers close to the surface:

> Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
> When he appeared to hapless Semele;
> More lovely than the monarch of the sky
> In wanton Arethusa's azured arms. (A 5.1.105-8)[26]

In suggesting that Helen's matchless beauty can best be described through comparison to the brightness and loveliness of masculine deity, these lines both queer Faustus' response to his Helen and gesture towards the male body performing her.[27] Like Cicero's

[25] *2 Tamburlaine* is also interested in the idea of re-writing Homer: Tamburlaine imagines that if Zenocrate had "lived before the siege of Troy, / Helen, whose beauty summoned Greece to arms / And drew a thousand ships to Tenedos, / Had not been named in Homer's Iliads, - / Her name had been in every line he wrote" (3.4.86-90).

[26] Marlowe alters the myth here, implying that Jupiter slept with Arethusa instead of the river-god Alpheus, who could hardly be called "the monarch of the sky".

[27] And within the fiction, perhaps the (male?) demon impersonating her. Faustus is echoing the turn of thought expressed by Mephistopheles earlier in the play: "She whom thine eye shall like, thine heart shall have, / Be she as chaste as was Penelope, / As wise as Saba, or as beautiful / As was bright

Zeuxis, early modern audiences were required to imagine female beauty by looking at male bodies. But, paradoxically, it might be precisely this gap between seeming and being which engages the action of the imagination, crucial to the functioning of mimesis. A boy actor may not simply be the only way of representing Helen available to Marlowe, but in fact the most effective.[28]

As Sofer puts it, "[d]oubleness of vision colors almost every aspect of *Doctor Faustus*" (2009, 10); texts, authors, structures and perspectives are all doubled. The play has supported interpretations of Marlowe's theology as both orthodox and heterodox; along with many critics, Faustus' pursuit of knowledge is motivated by a desire to "[r]esolve me of all ambiguities" (A 1.1.80), but this the play notably frustrates. In fact, Sofer reads Faustus' trajectory in the play as an attempt to be certain, once and for all, that he is damned: to resolve, in other words, the theological paradox of predestination.[29] As Martha Rozett explains, "[a]t the core of the play is the same central paradox which defines Elizabethan Puritanism: predestined election to salvation or damnation determines the spiritual state of each soul at birth, yet repentance is everywhere and at all times possible" (2004, 81). This produces a "consistent strain of inconsistency in *Faustus*: equivocations structured by theological-political disputes over the relationship between bodies and minds, matter and spirit" (Maus 1995, 90). In Platt's formulation, the "discourse of paradox" is one "in which opposites can coexist and perspectives can be altered" (2009, 1). The play fulfils this function through what Jonathan Dollimore terms the strategy of "the inscribing of a subversive discourse within an orthodox one, a

Lucifer before his fall" (2.1.151-4). John D. Cox notes the "similarity" of these moments "to the undisguised homoeroticism of *Hero and Leander*" (2000, 113); Stephen Orgel notes the inversion here in that "the moral and intellectual ideals are female, but the ideal of beauty is male" (2002, 225).

[28] Dixon and Garrison draw attention to the tradition (as found in Lyly's *Euphues*) that Helen had a scar on her chin, which imperfection paradoxically enhanced her beauty; they conclude: "Within the calculus of Lyly's formulation, perhaps we can imagine how an actor who is clearly not Helen would be the most accurate" (2021, 59).

[29] "Stretched on the rack of uncertainty, Faustus seems determined to settle the question once and for all" (Sofer 2009, 20).

vindication of the letter of an orthodoxy while subverting its spirit" (2004, 119).[30]

The play's doubleness of vision comes to a climax of sorts in its representations of Helen in 5.1: as Maguire puts it, "everything to do with Helen is doubled"; "she appears twice, between two cupids [in the B-text], and is herself a double' (2009, 152). In this scene, too, the "tension between orthodoxy and blasphemy which runs through the whole play is at its strongest" (Snyder 1966, 575). Though united in appreciation of the poetry of Faustus' great speech in response to Helen, critical opinion has been divided on its significance. Is this the moment when Faustus is, finally, damned? Or does it offer, even fleetingly, some compensation for what Faustus has lost, just as Homer's old men of Troy found in the sight of Helen? Orgel argues that "there's no indication here that the woman who appears this time, whatever she is, is an inadequate reward for Faustus's pains" (2002, 228).[31] For Orgel, Helen represents "the quintessential emanation of humanist passion": "a literary allusion, the paragon from his classical education, Homer's ideal" (ibid.).[32] Similarly, Alison Findlay finds that "[w]hile the audience recognize that [Faustus] is deceiving himself, they are tempted to share his belief that immersion in the classics will allow him to transcend the Christian heaven and hell. Helen represents the climax of this alternative existence" (1999, 23). Marlowe's principal source, *The English Faust Book*, unambiguously stresses the orthodox misogynistic presentation of Helen who "looked roundabout her with a rolling hawk's eye, a smiling and wanton countenance", causing sleeplessness in the students who have seen her, from which the narrative voice draws this moral: "Wherefore a man may see that the devil blindeth and inflameth the heart with

[30] Alan Sinfield argues that "[t]he theological implications of *Faustus* are radically and provocatively indeterminate" (1992, 234).

[31] Dixon and Harrison consider that Faustus' question might express "disbelief", or (like Lucian's Menippus) even "a kind of disappointment when he beholds the legendary beauty" (2021, 58).

[32] Ornstein agrees that Helen is an "incarnation of poetic aspirations", but disagrees on the value of this: "For a despairing Faustus . . . the beauty of Helen is no anodyne. There is no depth or intensity of experience that compensates for mortality" (1968, 1381).

lust oftentimes, that men fall in love with harlots, nay even with furies, which afterward cannot lightly be removed" (Jones 1994, 163). *Faustus* certainly offers us this possibility, making "her use as a figure of final temptation and damnation" unsurprising (Findlay 1999, 15); but in its difference from the *Faust Book* it opens up space for alternative counter-orthodox readings, as Findlay's work has powerfully demonstrated.

Two sections from *The English Faust Book* provide material for the two apparitions of Helen in 5.1.[33] In chapter 45, the students ask to see "Helena of Greece", and Faustus obliges; Marlowe's scholars likewise ask for "Helen . . . that peerless Dame of Greece" (5.1.11-14), and at Faustus' command "*Music sounds, and* HELEN *passeth over the stage*" (24 SD). Ten chapters later (chapter 55), the *Faust Book* briefly describes "How Doctor Faustus made the spirit of fair Helena of Greece his own paramour and bedfellow". The changes that the Helen episodes undergo from source to play necessarily relate to the shift from prose narrative to embodied drama. Where chapter 45 of the *Faust Book* describes Helen's physical attributes in some detail, this description is essentially replaced in the play by the audience's experience of watching her pass over the stage; indeed, Marlowe chooses instead to emphasise here the inadequacy of language to draw a portrait of Helen ("Too simple is my wit to tell her praise", says one of the scholars). As Sara Munson Deats has recognised, Marlowe's shaping of his material assigns a significance to the figure of Helen which is lacking in the source material; "In the source . . . Helen does not appear at a time of spiritual crisis nor is she an agent of Faustus' damnation. She occupies a subordinate position as one of the long procession of Faustus' amours" (1976, 13). As Deats notes, Marlowe's crafting of the source material so that Helen's two appearances directly frame the Old Man's speech exhorting Faustus to repent elevates her to a key symbolic position.

*Doctor Faustus* stages a 'Helen' whose ontological status is radically indeterminate. The literal answer to Faustus' question ("Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?") is, from one perspective, no: this is a boy actor in a Helen costume. Even within the fictional bounds of the play, the nature of the 'Helen' we see

[33] On Helen in *The English Faust Book*, see further Maguire 2009, 148-51.

before us is called into question by two prior episodes. Earlier in the play, when Faustus asked for a wife, the stage directions indicate that Mephistopheles brings him "*a Devil dressed like a woman*" (A 2.1.143 SD), or a "*Woman Devil*" (B-text).[34] David Bevington interprets this as a manifestation of the "utilitarian" nature of the B-text, as opposed to the "literary and metaphorical" A-text: "the surmise that it is in fact a Devil dressed like a woman is safe enough, but it is an interpretative statement. What the company must provide here is an actor dressed like a woman Devil, not a Devil dressed like a woman" (2002, 49). While this may or may not be the case (it is quite easy to imagine how a company might provide an obviously male devil in a dress), the paradox that it points to is one which *Faustus* plays with – what *is* the difference between a woman devil and a devil dressed like a woman, especially when the theatrical body producing both is male? For Orgel, when Mephistopheles "produces . . . a devil dressed as a woman furnished with fireworks", this is "at once an allegory of lust and of theater" since "the only beautiful women this stage provides are sparkling female impersonators" (2002, 225). If Faustus rejects this one "for a hot whore", he literally embraces the 'Helen' of Act 5; Dixon and Garrison read this "as the experience of a playgoer encountering an actor", like the real-life audience "choosing to be moved by a performed spectacle" (2021, 62).

A similar moment occurs when the Emperor asks to see Alexander the Great and his "paramour" in Act 4. Faustus is at pains to explain that "it is not in my ability to present before your eyes the true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes, which long since are consumed to dust"; instead, "such spirits as can lively resemble Alexander and his paramour shall appear" (A 4.1.45-8; 51-2).[35] The Emperor is warned not to try to interact with the spirit

[34] This is quite different from the *Faust Book*, in which Mephistopheles simply uses violence to dissuade Faustus from thoughts of marriage (which is holy).

[35] Both the Emperor's request and Faustus' caveat come from the *Faust Book* ("their dead bodies are not able substantially to be brought before you, but such spirits as have seen Alexander and his paramour alive shall appear unto you in manner and form as they both lived in their most flourishing time", Jones 1994, 148).

actors – to observe, essentially, the usual conventions of theatrical spectatorship. Nonetheless, he is enthralled by the quality of the performance: in the A-text, he exclaims, "Sure, these are no spirits, but the true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes" (69-70). Again, it is drawn to our attention that the actors' own true substantial bodies can either (or both) reinforce the fiction of the realism of the illusion created by the spirits, or break it by reminding us that no spirits are actually involved at all (this is not magic, but theatre). In the B-text, the stage directions indicate that "*the* EMPEROR . . . *leaving his state, offers to embrace them, which* FAUSTUS *seeing, suddenly stays him*"; "My gracious lord, you do forget yourself", Faustus warns, "These are but shadows, not substantial" (100-1).

In his later encounter with Helen, Faustus forgets his own advice, stepping through the fourth wall to embrace the actor and write himself into the fictional world of the performance. The stage directions in both texts simply specify "*Enter* HELEN", making it impossible to distinguish the *eidolon* from reality, the boy actor from the part he plays. In fact, the B-text has "*Enter Hellen*", its preferred spelling orthographically underlining for its early modern readers the oxymoronic pun encoded in the request Faustus makes to Mephistopheles for "heauenly Hellen" (sig.G.iv.*r.*). The A-text, conversely, uses the spelling of "Helen" more familiar to us, but shortly before her entrance has Faustus refer to "our hel" (sig.E.iv.*v.*), maintaining the visual connection. Marlowe effectively transposes into an appropriately Christian register the Greek pun linking Helen's name to the root of the verb meaning "to destroy".[36] In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the Chorus comment that Helen was appropriately named, since she is "ἑλένας, ἕλανδρος, ἑλέπτολις" (689-90), literally "ship-destroyer, man-destroyer, city-destroyer"; Anne Carson's translation uses the same trick as Marlowe, calling her "hell to ships, hell to men, hell to cities" (2009, 34). At the same time, Marlowe's "heavenly Helen" toys again with the idea of substantiality. Euripides' *eidolon*-Helen was made from the οὐρανός

[36] Marlowe was not the only one to do this. Maguire 2009, 77: "In Peele's *Edward I* Mortimer plays on the name of his beloved: 'Hell in thy name, but heaven is in thy looks'".

("sky" or "heavens", 34), and Faustus praises his own version of her as "fairer than the evening air / Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars" (A 5.1.103-4). For Maguire, what is at stake for Marlowe is "the duplicity of language": "Marlowe exploits the *eidōlon* tradition and does so in a way that emphasizes Helen's role as an emblem for the sign system in which you do not get what you seek but a substitute for it" (2009, 152). If the *eidolon* paradox is partly a linguistic phenomenon, it also embodies that phenomenon. The discourse of the *eidolon* facilitates the paradoxical double-vision in which the substantial bodies of actors can simultaneously function as shadows, instigating a mode of meta-dramatic reflection which appears to have particularly fascinated Shakespeare.

## 4. "The Name and Not the Thing": Shakespeare's Helens

Troilus' declaration that Helen "is a pearl / Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships / And turned crowned kings to merchants" (*Troilus and Cressida*, 2.2.81-2) gives a typically mercantile twist to Faustus' lines: this play, obsessed with the language of economic exchange, substitutes Helen's "price" for her "face".[37] In a world where market value is determined by what the customer is willing to pay, "Helen must needs be fair", as Troilus says, "When with your blood you daily paint her thus" (1.1.86-7).[38] In an inversion of the Homeric elders finding compensation for the losses of war in Helen's beauty, here the losses of war *determine* Helen's beauty. The characters in Shakespeare's bitter retelling of this Trojan War episode are simultaneously unable to escape from the mythical weight of their own names, and unable to live up to them; Helen, symptomatically, is reduced in her only scene to "my Nell" (3.1.131). No *eidolon* here exists in order to shift the blame from this Helen, whom Diomedes openly calls a "whore" (4.1.68). Within the logic of the play, one woman is much like another, and Cressida

[37] Quotations are from Bevington 1998. The description of Helen as a "pearl" seems to have been fairly common; in the *Faust Book* she is described as "that famous pearl of Greece"; similarly in *Euphues* she is "the pearl of Greece" (Salzman 1998, 144).

[38] Hector's opinion that Helen "is not worth what she doth cost / The holding" (2.2.49-50) is still expressed in the same language of exchange.

is set up as a second Helen: also described as a "pearl" (1.1.96), her beauty is repeatedly compared to Helen's.[39] As Bevington puts it, "Troilus' love for Cressida . . . ends in a murderous rivalry between two men for whom the woman serves solely as the contested object of possession"; "Cressida acts out Helen's role in this encounter, as she is expected to do".[40] In performance, the element of doubling between them can be further emphasised: "In the RSC production of 1968, the women were visually indistinguishable" (Maguire 2009, 93).

Also displaced onto Cressida is the existential crisis precipitated by the *eidolon*. She experiences this split herself, telling Troilus, "I have a kind of self resides with you, / But an unkind self that itself will leave / To be another's fool" (3.2.143-4). George Peele's "Tale of Troy" depicts a similar split in Helen:

> And for her hart was from her body hent,
> To Troy this *Helen* with her Louer went
> Thinking perdie a part contrary kinde
> Her hart so wrought, her selfe to stay behind. (1589, sig.B.ii.*v.*)

Dixon and Garrison comment: "The desiring heart is seized upon, or 'hent,' in the moment and leaves the hesitant body behind, thus creating a double of the self" (2021, 64). The sense of anxious self-alienation in the face of the simultaneous longing for union with and fear of being subsumed by the desired other, which Cressida expresses, is mirrored in the classic misogynistic bifurcation (as Bevington puts it) of "women into idealized mother figures and those who are sexual objects", culminating in Troilus' paradoxical perception that "This is and is not Cressid" (153) (1998, 47).

*Troilus and Cressida* is the only play in which Shakespeare puts Helen of Troy onstage. But two other plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, feature characters named Helena; these have been read in the light of the mythological

[39] E.g. Pandarus: "Because she's kin to me, therefore she's not so fair as Helen; and she were not kin to me, she would be as fair o' Friday as Helen is on Sunday" (1.1.71-3).

[40] Maguire 2009 further points out that Helen and Cressida were widely associated in the early modern imagination as wanton women (92).

resonances of Helen of Troy by Laurie Maguire (2007) and Katherine Heavey (2014). The names Helen and Helena were used interchangeably, so Faustus can declare that "all is dross which is not Helena" (A 5.1.96), while the characters in *MND* and *All's Well* can both be addressed as "Helen". As Maguire has shown, for early modern readers, "there was no other referent for Helen/a . . . Helen meant only one Helen – Helen of Troy" (2007, 75). Maguire argues that Shakespeare was engaged in a revisionist project to demonstrate that "someone named Helen can be sexual without being wanton, can be desiring and chaste" (107); this is, of course, precisely what Euripides does in his *Helen*, and Maguire considers that in the case of *All's Well* "the fact that Shakespeare wrote a drama very like Euripides' *Helen* can be seen not as coincidence but as influence" (109). Heavey, on the other hand, is interested in the comic potential of references to Helen of Troy, arguing that Shakespeare "make[s] sport of his female characters, by inviting his audience to view them as less accomplished successors to the classical Helen" (2014, 428). While these interpretations differ in nuance, they both suggest that Shakespeare's approach to Helen was in some important way paradoxical. I would like, then, to expand these discussions in light of the early modern discourse of the *eidolon* which I have been tracing, and specifically Helen's *eidolon* as a site of overlapping paradoxes which facilitates exploration of the nature of theatrical mimesis.

One significant revisionary effect of the *eidolon*-Helen was to problematise the epic tradition of the Trojan War, explicitly calling the glory of Troy into question. Stiblinus explains that "the play by means of the veiled symbol of the deceitful image, on account of which the two most powerful nations carried on most savagely a ten-year war, signifies that often among stupid and blind mortals it comes about that merely because of a shadow huge disturbances arise, resulting in general slaughter".[41] Euripides' Messenger asks:

[41] "Praeterea involucro praestigiosi simulacri, propter quod duae potentissimae gentes decennium crudelissime bellum gesserunt, notat saepe fieri apud stultos ac caecos mortales ut propter umbram tantum ingentes motus non sine publicis cladibus exoriantur". Text and translation (by Meghan Bowers) from 'Stiblinus' Prefaces and Arguments on Euripides (1562)'.

"So we suffered in vain for the sake of a cloud?" (νεφέλης ἄρ᾽ ἄλλως εἴχομεν πόνους πέρι; 707), and having heard the story declares that "the city was sacked in vain" (πόλις ἀνηρπάσθη μάτην; 751). Segal notes that "[e]nding with battle and war enables Euripides to keep a certain bitterness of mood" (1986, 263). In her final speech, Helen and the (now departed) *eidolon* seem to merge. She cries: "Where is the glory of Troy?" (Ποῦ τὸ Τρῳκὸν κλέος; 1603), demanding to be fought over in a miniature replay of the Trojan War. Using a trick, the armed Greeks slaughter their unarmed enemies – Helen's question has the effect of radically calling into question the value of victory purchased in such terms, whether in Egypt or at Troy. We might recall Achilles' slaughter of the similarly unarmed Hector in *Troilus and Cressida*. The wars in *All's Well* are likewise overwhelmingly arbitrary – the King cares nothing for the outcome and tells his subjects that "freely they have leave / To stand on either part" (1.2.14-15). Scene 3.1 fleetingly "raise[s] moral/political issues" concerning the wars; as Susan Snyder observes, "to bring up and then suppress the causes of the hostilities creates a different effect from just omitting them" (Snyder 1993, 15). The contrast between the heroic pomp and splendour of the military parades and the reality, which is characterised by confusion and unheroic accidents (3.6.48-53), is emphasised.

In *All's Well*, the epic tradition of Troy is alluded to, notably refracted through the dramatic works of Marlowe and Shakespeare himself. Lafeu declares, "I'm Cressid's uncle, / That dare leave two together" (2.1.97-8), while the clown Lavatch spouts a parody-version of Marlowe's lines, which Shakespeare had already used in *Troilus and Cressida*: "'Was this fair face the cause', quoth she, / 'Why the Grecians sacked Troy?'", he sings (1.3.69-70). From this perspective *All's Well* "is an inverse *Helen* play"; this "Helen is shunned, not sought. Bertram goes to war to avoid her, not for love of her" (Maguire 2007, 108). The play's characteristic mode is that of paradox, which originates with Helen, whose very first lines express her experience of herself such terms: "I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too" (1.1.52). At the beginning of *Helen*, too, the heroine has recently lost a father-figure, and is grieving over her apparently hopeless fidelity, in this case to her husband. Both Helens are urged to moderate their grief in conventional terms:

"Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead, excessive grief the enemy to the living", Lafeu replies (1.1.53-4); σύμφορον δέ τοι / ὡς ῥᾷστα τἀναγκαῖα τοῦ βίου φέρειν, the Chorus tell Helen at 253-4, in a passage excerpted by Neander who translates it as "sed commodum tibi, / Quàm facilimè [sic] necessitates uitae ferre" ("but it is expedient for you to bear as easily as possible the necessities of life", my translation).

The first lines spoken by the Helen of *All's Well* might be termed a veridical paradox, since they are paradoxical in expression, but contain no actual logical paradox when correctly understood. In fact, we might say that the veridical paradox (of which the riddle forms an important subcategory) constitutes the play's fundamental mode of operation, in terms of the construction, expression, and resolution of the plot. In Act 1 Scene 3, Helen tries to reconcile the two apparently irreconcilable statements that the Countess is her mother, but the Countess's son is not her brother: "Can't no other / But, I your daughter, he must be my brother?" (1.3.162-3). This is solved, somewhat too easily, by the Countess: "Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law" (164). This too-easy solution leads to Bertram's apparently unsolvable list of requirements:

> *When thou canst get the ring upon my finger,*
> *which never shall come off, and show me a child*
> *begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me*
> *husband. But in such a 'then', I write a 'never'.* (3.2.60-3)

This in turn leads to the paradoxical riddles of the final scene, from Paroles' "He loved her, sir, and loved her not" ("As thou art a knave and no knave", the King replies, 5.3.247-8), to Diana's "Because he's guilty, and he is not guilty" (287), and to her final riddle, in which "one that's dead is quick" (301).

Euripides' *Helen* is also quite fond of formulations which express apparent paradoxes through linguistic doubling and negation. The statement that Helen both left and did not leave her husband's bed (ἔλιπον οὐ λιποῦσ', 696) is of course resolved through the device of the *eidolon*, just as in *All's Well* the riddles of the final scene are resolved through the revelation of the bed-trick through which Helen and Diana had functioned as doubles. But although the "meaning" (302)

is thus revealed, the paradoxical mode of experience established by the plays cannot be so easily resolved. In the final scene of *All's Well*, the King (surprised to see Helen, who was supposed dead) recapitulates Faustus' question when faced with his own Helen: "Is there no exorcist / Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes? / Is't real that I see?" (5.3.302-4), he asks. Shakespeare goes one further than Marlowe, and has his Helen reply: "No, my good lord; / 'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see / The name and not the thing" (304-6).[42] The issue at stake here is the same as in Euripides' scene between Helen and Menelaus, in which the latter, like Shakespeare's King, doubts the functioning of his eyes (τὸ δ' ὄμμα μου νοσεῖ; he asks – "are my eyes sick?", 575). Helen demands: "Look: what more do you need? . . . Who then shall teach you, if not your own eyes?" (σκέψαι τί σοὐνδεῖ; . . . τίς οὖν διδάξει σ' ἄλλος ἢ τὰ σ' ὄμματα; 578, 580). But in the context of the *eidolon* the appearance of her body (σῶμα, 577) – or the actor's – simply cannot provide indisputable evidence of identity. Similarly Bertram demands physical proof that he is the father of the child Helen claims to be carrying, which the body of Shakespeare's Helen and her male actor can never satisfy: "If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly, / I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly" (5.3.313-14). As in *Faustus*, this is a moment which plays with metatheatre ("Is't real that I see?"), and with the body of the boy actor beneath the Helen-costume. The language used by Helen, moreover, brings us back to the semantic field associated with the *eidolon*, particularly when she calls herself a "shadow".

Shakespeare apparently enjoyed the joke that Helen's namesake should repel suitors rather than attract them, since he had already used it in the earlier *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which Maguire has called "Shakespeare's most classically complex Helen play" (2007, 78). Here, it is Hermia who has two suitors competing over her, while Helena fruitlessly pursues Demetrius; Peter Holland connects this to Ovid's question in the *Ars Amatoria* 2.699: "scilicet Hermionen Helenae praeponere posses" ("Would you be able to prefer

[42] Given the questions of collaboration and authorship surrounding *All's Well* (on which see Maguire and Smith 2012 and Taylor and Egan 2017, especially Loughnane, Nance, and Taylor), I use "Shakespeare" as a convenient placeholder.

Hermione to Helena?", Holland 1994, 61). Alison Shell, however, has suggested that Shakespeare might have arrived at the name "Hermia" via Spenser's *Shepheard's Calendar*, in which a helpful note by "E.K." mentions "Himera, the worthy poet Stesichorus his idol, upon whom he is said so much to have doted that, in regard of her excellency, he scorned and wrote against the beauty of Helena. For which his presumptuous and unheedy hardiness he is said by vengeance of the gods (thereat being offended) to have lost both his eyes" (Shell, 2015, 83).[43] Though E.K. omits any direct mention of the *eidolon*, his use of the word "idol" here constitutes a knowing wink in that direction, and in any case, as Shell observes, the story was fairly well-known in the period. Shell argues that in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare made "sharp, specific use of Stesichorus's story and the commentary it generated" (85). In particular, she connects Demetrius' palinodic recantation by the end of the play to that of Stesichorus, and examines the theological implications of the *eidolon* in the context of the Reformation. Whether or not the *eidolon's* relation to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is precisely Stesichorean (via Spenser), it resonates with the features of the more general early modern reception of Helen's *eidolon* which I have been tracing here. The *eidolon*'s submerged presence notably "complicates the relationship between being and seeming" (95).

As Shell's analysis indicates, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is concerned with being and seeming, knowledge and doubt, and the value of perceptual evidence for interpreting external reality. When the confusions of the forest have been resolved, Hermia's experience is much like Menelaus' double world provoked by the sight of Helen: "Methinks I see these things with parted eye, / Where everything seems double" (4.1.186-7). Helena agrees with a similar note of wonder and doubt: "So methinks; / And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel, / Mine own, and not mine own" (4.1.188-9). She uses the same syntactical formulation as the Helena of *All's Well*

[43] The identification of "Himera" as Stesichorus' mistress rather than birthplace is a characteristic "error" on the part of E.K., as Shell details, possibly also coloured by the story of the "Hermia" believed by Renaissance commentators to have been a prostitute beloved by Aristotle (Shell 2015, 83).

to express the paradoxical nature of her experience: "The name, and not the thing", "Mine own, and not mine own". The mythological Helen is mentioned explicitly by Theseus in Act 5:

> . . . The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name. (5.1.10-17)

The lover's delusion articulated by Theseus is of course a manifestation of the "racialized language" of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Hall 1995, 2);[44] it is also rather like the delusion that Menelaus suspects he may be suffering from, when he sees Helen in Egypt, where he knows she should not be. This speech may, as Percy Smith notes, be the first time that Shakespeare comments on the art of theatre in a play. Here we find the familiar semantic field of the *eidolon* – embodiment, forms, shapes, composed (by the poet) from airy nothing. Theseus goes on to make the association between actors and shadows: "The best in this kind are but shadows", he says, "and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them" (5.1.210). The connection is reiterated in the epilogue ("If we shadows have offended . . . "), a liminal part of the play in which the actor steps forward and addresses the audience, speaking both on behalf of the company and in character: even more than usual, this is and is not Puck.

The familiarity of these lines perhaps tends to smooth over some of their strangeness. Amy Cook writes:

> Associating actors with shadows is one of the "loose or extended use" definitions listed in the OED, which can be "Applied rhetorically to a portrait as contrasted with the original; also an actor or a play in contrast with the reality represented," and it does not warrant a footnote for the editors of the Riverside or the Folger, so one

[44] On this discourse in relation to Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Hall 1995, 1; 22-4.

supposes it makes sense. But *how* does it make sense? (2016, 99)

She points out that "[i]n performance, the actor playing Puck is not a shadow; he is no less real or physically in front of us than the person standing next to us in the yard of the Globe" (100). The OED actually cites *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as being the first instance of the word "shadow" being used in this way in English; whether or not this is the case, Shakespeare is thinking with it here in a new way within his own works. If we understand his use of the word "shadow" here as connected to the idea of the *eidolon* (which might be an *umbra* or *phantasma*), substance and insubstantiality can paradoxically coexist. Shakespeare's Helens, as Maguire has shown, always exist in uneasy relation to their mythological namesake. The doubling this produces generates a particular kind of ontological uncertainty which we might associate with the *eidolon*, and which lends itself to reflections upon the nature of the embodied form of mimetic representation of the early modern stage.

## 5. Epilogue: "Helen's cheek but not her heart"

The flexibility of the *eidolon* allows it to stand in for the constructed artwork of any kind – poetic, dramatic, or visual – as well as for the false idol or philosophical form. Euripides' Helen-*eidolon* draws attention to the fact that the 'real' Helen on stage is also an *eidolon*, and raises epistemological questions which are only resolved to the extent that we accept the conventions of the romance plot. Greek tragedy is not prone to the kind of explicit metatheatrical self-reflection that we find in Shakespeare, for instance, but it can enlist other art forms to reflect upon its own processes. In *Helen*, we find what Edith Hall calls (arguably) the moment in Greek tragedy at which "the material presence of the actor's mask is with most force brought to the audience's conscious attention" (2010, 54). Helen wishes that she "had been wiped clean like a statue and made ugly instead of beautiful" (εἴθ' ἐξαλειφθεῖσ', ὡς ἄγαλμ' αὖθις πάλιν, / αἴσχιον εἶδος, ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ λάβω, 262-3).[45] As Hall comments,

[45] I give the Aldine text here; Teubner reads ʼλαβον, but the textual variation does not alter the sense.

since "'Helen' herself is but a male actor wearing a sculpted mask painted with beautiful colours", in "drawing attention to this false 'face' the actor draws attention to one of the illusory conventions of the theatrical performance in which he is participating" (281).

In Spenser, as we have seen, the *eidolon* is used as a figure for poetic creation, but it becomes easily contaminated with the language of the stage, with the male Spright impersonating a female character much as Marlowe's "spirit"/boy actor impersonates Helen. Interestingly, *Doctor Faustus* seems to be concerned solely with the *eidolon* in the context of embodied drama, to the deliberate exclusion of other art forms: in *The English Faust Book*, the students ask for and are granted a "counterfeit" image of the Helen they have seen, in the form of a painting. An opaque, supernatural Zeuxis-figure thus hovers between the lines of *The Faust Book*, but is banished entirely from the play.[46] Spenser, on the other hand, opens *The Faerie Queene* Book 3 with a Proem which mentions Zeuxis by name, bemoaning that his subject "liuing art may not least part expresse, / Nor life-resembling pencill it can paynt, / All were it *Zeuxis* or *Praxiteles*" (2). Even "Poets witt, that passeth Painter farre / In picturing the parts of beauty daynt" will struggle with this task (2). Spenser therefore begs pardon of his "dredd Souerayne", since "choicest witt / Cannot your glorious pourtraict figure playne, / That I in colourd showes may shadow itt" (3). If in Zeuxis' portrait of Helen art to some extent transcended nature, here he is reduced to mere imitation.[47]

Shakespeare in some ways comes closer to Spenser than Marlowe in his multiple and varied approaches to the idea of Helen and her *eidolon*. Orlando, in *As You Like It*, paints a literary portrait of Rosalind after the fashion of Zeuxis:

*Therefore heaven Nature charged*
*That one body should be filled*
*With all graces wide-enlarged.*

[46] In a strange detail, the *Faust Book* reports that after receiving the image of Helen, the students "soon lost it againe" (Jones 1994, 163).

[47] Boccaccio indeed considered that the *simulacrum* painted by Zeuxis must have failed to represent Helen's beauty, as art cannot match nature (*De Mulieribus Claribus*, chap. XXXV).

> *Nature presently distilled*
> *Helen's cheek but not her heart,*
> *Cleopatra's majesty,*
> *Atalanta's better part,*
> *Sad Lucretia's modesty.*
> *Thus Rosalind of many parts*
> *By heavenly synod was devised,*
> *Of many faces, eyes and hearts*
> *To have the touches dearest prized.* (3.1.138-49)

In composing his Rosalind out of "many parts", Orlando is of course careful to specify that Rosalind has "Helen's cheek, but not her heart", performing the familiar splitting of Helen into two (good and bad, outer and inner). Rosalind deposes Helen: she is now the ideal woman composed "of many faces, eyes and hearts". The image is deliberately grotesque: we are supposed to laugh at Orlando's amateur verses, as Rosalind and Celia do. By offering us Orlando as a parody-Zeuxis, Shakespeare comically exaggerates the paradox of mimetic representation expressed by Cicero.

Since Zeuxis' portrait of Helen as a constructed artwork is itself an *eidolon*, a *simulacrum*, its association with Euripides' *eidolon*-Helen seems natural. Ronsard, for instance, plays with both stories in his *Sonets pour Helene*. Sonnet LIII, for example, begins: "Lorsque le Ciel te fit, il rompit le modelle / Des vertus, comme un peintre efface son tableau"; she is "la forme la plus belle", so that neither "couleur, ny outil, ny plume, ny cerveau" can equal her. We find the same nexus of ideas in Shakespeare's Sonnet 53, which is concerned with substance, imitation, and art:

> What is your substance, whereof are you made,
> That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
> Since every one hath every one one shade,
> And you, but one, can every shadow lend;
> Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
> Is poorly imitated after you;
> On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set
> And you in Grecian tires are painted new;
> Speak of the spring, and foison of the year:
> That one doth shadow of your beauty show,

The other as your bounty doth appear,
And you in every blessed shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

As in Spenser and Ronsard, we are once again in Platonic territory here: "The philosophical basis of the sonnet is drawn from the Platonic contrast between substance and appearance", as Helen Vendler puts it (1997, 258). Vendler identifies an "illogical paradox" at the heart of the sonnet, in the subject's simultaneous singleness and multiplicity: though "one", he generates a multitude of forms, including the poem itself. In fact, the poem turns out to be more about the poet than the beloved, as it reflects on Shakespeare's own previous works, including *Venus and Adonis*, and other sonnets ("Speak of the spring . . ."). Most interestingly, as Katherine Duncan-Jones points out, the image of the fair youth dressed as Helen in "Grecian tires" is one "that Elizabethan audiences would have seen either in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or Shakespeare's *TC*" (2010, 216). At the mathematical centre of this sonnet, we find Helen and her theatrical *eidola*. The shadows of Sonnet 53 are the shadows cast by Helen's paradoxical *eidolon*.

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# 2. Staging Mock Encomia

**4**

# Dramatic Appropriation of the Mock Encomium Genre in Shakespeare's Comedies

Beatrice Righetti

Abstract

Since Rosalie Colie's 1966 pivotal study on the Renaissance epidemics of paradoxes, scholars have tried to identify the classical origins and the early modern developments of this rhetorical tradition in both prose and verse literature. Still, few studies have discussed the dramatic adaptations of this rhetorical mode on the early modern English stage and, in particular, in the works of William Shakespeare, a dramatist most receptive to local and foreign rhetorical fashions. The present essay aims to fill this gap by focusing on a specific element of the paradoxical tradition, the mock encomium. In order to investigate the adaptation of the mock encomium to the theatrical dimension, this essay focuses on Shakespeare's comedies, and it aims to show not only the rhetorical compatibility between paradoxical praises and the dramatic fabric of Shakespeare's comedies, but also how such mock encomia can be studied according to their subject matter, speaker and dramatical framework. For what concerns the former, mock encomia address either a character (e.g. Katherine Minola, Rosalind) or a specific situation (e.g. cuckoldry, violence). The presence of a given subject matter is usually coupled with the presence of a specific speaker. Wealthy characters falsely praise each other, as Petruchio does with Kate in *The Taming of The Shrew*. Contrariwise, lower-class characters address specific situations: in *The Comedy of Errors*, the servant Dromio delivers a mock praise of his master's violence against him, while in *As You Like It* as well as in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Touchstone and the Clown respectively perform a paradoxical praise of cuckoldry. The dramatic framework also distinguishes between intentional and unintentional mock praises. The most complicated instance can be found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where mock encomia can be read as either honest praises by the spell-bound *dramatis personae* uttering them (Lysander, Titania) or cruel jokes shared by the characters (Helena, Bottom) and the offstage audience. Further variations on this paradoxical feature are offered by the female leads in *The Taming of The Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, showing uncommon rhetoric abilities in performing 'reversed' mock encomia.

Keywords: Shakespeare; mock encomium; comedy; paradox; rhetoric

As will be considered in the next chapter, the paucity of studies on mock encomia on the early modern English stage goes hand in hand with the relatively little scholarly attention paid to this paradoxical genre in Shakespeare's dramatic writing.[1] One of the first scholars to partially downplay the role of mock encomia in both English Renaissance and Shakespearean dramatic texts, Alexander Sackton, defined mock praises not only as set-piece speeches with no specific dramatic weight in the early modern English theatre, but also as rhetorical features which are "not so prominent" in the Shakespearean corpus, where they seem "to be more completely assimilated to other forms of dramatic speech" (1949, 86).

Such little interest in the mock encomia genre seems at odds with its popularity in early modern England. After its decline during the Middle Ages,[2] the paradoxical genre of mock encomium regained its popularity in Renaissance Europe, where it aroused the interest of great Latin scholars.[3] Two exemplary works concerning mock encomia are Henry Cornelius Agrippa's *De Vanitate Scientiarium et Artium* (1524), which includes "A Digression in Praise of the Ass", and Desiderius Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium* (1509). In the following decades, the international popularity of the mock encomium genre led to a consistent process of translation and adaptation into regional and national vernaculars. In England, James Sandford translated Agrippa's work in 1569 as well as the purportedly French text which he entitled *The Mirrour of Madnes: or a Paradoxe Maintaining Madnes to Be Most Excellent* (1576), while Abraham Fleming translated Synesius' praise of baldness (1579). Eventually, also Ortensio Lando's *Paradossi* (1544) reached the English shores via Charles Estienne's French translation, readily translated by Anthony Munday in 1593. This appropriative process reached its peak in the original production of English mock encomia, such as John Donne's *Juvenilia, Or Certain Paradoxes and Problemes* (first published in 1633), which can be considered "the first group of

[1] But see Vickers 1968; Platt 2009; Bigliazzi 2011, 2013, 2014; Coronato 2014.

[2] For detailed information, see Knight Miller 1956.

[3] On the Inns of Court, see the introduction of the present volume and also Murphy and Traninger 2014 and Baker 2013.

paradoxes written by a major writer in England after Erasmus wrote *The Praise* in More's home" (Geraldine 1964, 60). The popularity of this literary genre is also testified by collections of classical and contemporary mock encomia as the one listed in Thomas Nashe's "Praise of Red Herring" in *Lenten Stuffe* (1599) and those collected in Caspar Dornavius' *Amphitheatrum sapientiae socraticae joco-seriae* (1619), which provides one of the most complete lists of paradoxical praises of that time and couples popular early modern original works, such as Daniel Heinsius' *Laus Oediculi*, Philipp Melanchthon's *Laus Formicae* and Willibald Pirckheimer's *Laus* or *Apologia podagrae*, with classical ones both in their original language and in translation. The popularity of mock encomia can also be appreciated in their more subtle influence on the early modern dramatic production. As investigated in Emanuel Stelzer's chapter in the present volume, they can be found in well-known plays, such as Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* (1600) and *Satiromastix* (1602), Chapman's *All Fools* (1604) and Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (c. 1604-5).

Given their popularity, it would be implausible not to find this paradoxical genre in the works of perhaps the most receptive playwright of his age, William Shakespeare.[4] Although not a student at the Inns, Shakespeare is known to have "enthusiastically and brilliantly adapted for the stage the schemes and tropes of the humanist masters" (MacDonald 2001, 48), which partially rely on the paradoxical practice of investigating pros and cons of arguments and the most uncommon opinions (Farley-Hills 1981, 164). Shakespeare's literary permeability to popular rhetorical modalities and his ability in adapting and developing them by means of his logical and linguistic sensitivity may be further confirmed not only by his taste for opposition and contrasts both in the dramatic structure and in the language but especially by the presence of paradoxical elements such as mock encomia in his plays.

For the sake of brevity, the present contribution investigates

[4] One of the first theatrical references to the word 'paradox' can be found in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* ("O paradox!", 4.3.249). Eventually, this word resurfaces in other four Shakespearean plays: *Hamlet* (3.1.119), *Troilus and Cressida* (1.3.185), *Othello* (2.1.150), and *Timon of Athens* (4.5.24).

the use and role of mock encomia in Shakespearean comedies only: *The Comedy of Errors* (1589), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593), *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *As You Like It* (1600), *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602), *Measure for Measure* (1604).[5] *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1600) and the tragicomedies *The Winter's Tale* (1610) and *The Tempest* (1611) are not included in this study as they do not seem to feature paradoxical praises, while *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1594) shows a passage in praise of a conventionally undesirable topic, that is, desert places, which however proves not to be paradoxical, but honest in intention (5.4.1-17).

The present analysis focuses first on those plays which feature mock encomia, conventionally described as inversions of the standard encomiastic genre which result in praises of unworthy subjects.[6] These are first investigated according to their subject matter. It will be seen that the gravity of the subject matter is usually linked to the social status of the speaker: wealthy and educated characters usually address complex notions, while lower-status ones tend to deal with baser topics. Likewise, mock encomia about specific characters usually do not cross social boundaries since high/low status characters mock only those with whom they share the same social class. The critical focus then shifts to the 'reversed' mock encomium, that is an attack or *vituperatio* which maintains a paradoxical shade since it is directed against a conventionally positive subject. It may be worth underlying the difference between Vickers's label of 'inverted encomium' and the 'reversed mock encomium' one: the former hints at the process by which a mock encomium is created, namely by inverting the logical extremes of the encomium, thus by praising something unworthy

[5] Quotations from *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* refer to Shakespeare 2007. All other plays here investigated refer to the respective Arden Third Series critical editions.

[6] In his 1542 translation of Erasmus' *Apophthegmata*, Nicholas Udall refers to paradoxical praises as "feigned argumentes of matiers inopinable, and suche are properly called declamacions and not oracions . . . So did Homere write the battaill betweene the frogges & the myce, Erasmus wrote the praise of foolyshnesse, an other the praise of baldenesse, an other of drounkenship" (326).

of praise; the latter reverses the mock encomium itself and acts like a *vituperatio* as it dispraises something conventionally worthy of praise (see Vickers 1968, 307). The present study aims to investigate the structural variation of conventional mock praises in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Lastly, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are introduced as case studies to investigate the role of the dramatic framework in enhancing or undermining the paradoxicality of a given mock encomium.

As such, the present analysis problematises Sackton's claims regarding the little "prominence" of mock encomia in Shakespeare's plays and shows how the playwright introduced the paradoxical genre to the dramatic setting. In accordance with Allan H. Gilbert, who stated that "[p]aradoxes in the drama are obviously to be related to those occurring in the literature of the period" (1935, 537), this investigation also highlights the thematic and argumentative echoes between dramatic and non-dramatic mock praises. This analysis counters Sackton's description of Shakespeare's "assimilate[ing]" them "to other forms of dramatic speech" (1949, 86).

## 1. The Subject Matter in Shakespeare's Mock Encomia

In Shakespeare's eight comedies here investigated, paradoxical praises seem to consistently address abstract notions which range from philosophical to more humble conceits. *The Comedy of Errors* seemingly deals with the latter category as it embeds a mock encomium of violence on behalf of a beaten servant.

The play recounts the comical exchanges between two long-lost couples of twins: Antigonus of Syracuse and Antigonus of Ephesus and their servants, Dromio of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus respectively. In 4.4, Antigonus of Ephesus is arrested and lashes out against his servant, Dromio of Ephesus, who has not brought the money necessary for his bail. In fact, Antigonus has fallen prey to just another misunderstanding caused by commonplace exchanges of identity since he had unwillingly asked that money to his servant's twin, Dromio of Syracuse. Facing his master's customary violence, Dromio of Ephesus addresses it in mocking terms:

> I am an ass, indeed; you may prove it by my long ears. I have served him from the hour of my nativity to this instant, and have nothing at his hands for my service but blows. When I am cold, he heats me with beating; when I am warm, he cools me with beating; I am waked with it when I sleep; raised with it when I sit; driven out of doors with it when I go from home; welcomed home with it when I return; nay, I bear it on my shoulders, as a beggar wont her brat; and, I think when he hath lamed me, I shall beg with it from door to door. (30-40)

In referring to his master's habit of beating him, Dromio embeds in his speech a mock praise of physical violence which complies with paradoxical conventions as it finds positive traits in a stereotypically negative notion. Dromio starts by contextualising his long-term service to Antigonus ("I have served him from the hour of my nativity to this instant") and his pay back for it as "blows". Dromio is no masochist; a few lines earlier he explicitly stated: "I would I were senseless, sir, that I might not feel your blows" (26-7). His eight-lines praise of his master's violence thus results from a witty handling of the subject through irony and paradoxicality, which construe a mock encomium about physical violence as something worth receiving. As Dromio explains, his master's beatings protect him from heat or cold ("[w]hen I am cold, he heats me with beating; when I am warm, he cools me with beating;"), prompt him to action ("driven out of doors with it when I go from home") and "welcome" him home when he returns. Besides a caring attitude on Antigonus' part, violence is also defined as Dromio's "brat", possibly the visible outcome of his relationship with his master. The signs of Antigonus' violence on Dromio's body, however, may prove useful too as they may stand for his last resource to find a living when he will be dismissed from service ("and, I think when he hath lamed me, I shall beg with it from door to door").

The argumentative convention of finding positive traits in traditionally negative subjects is respected in all Shakespearean mock encomia on abstract notions. In both *As You Like It* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, comical characters address one of the most popular paradoxical themes, cuckoldry. Maria Cristina Figorilli inscribes this topic within the so-called *infames materiae*, namely

shameful conditions, and highlights its popularity in sixteenth-century Italy by mentioning mock praises about it by Doni, Grazzini (il Lasca), Nelli, Modio and Garzoni (2008, 37-8). These works rely on standard argumentative and rhetorical strategies of the paradoxical tradition, such as "ironical quotations from *auctores*, lists of topics, false etymologies, elements from onomastics and toponymy, burlesque inserts" meddled with "comical linguistic virtuosity" (37, translation mine). In early modern France too, writers and poets tried their hands at mock praises of cuckoldry, as it is the case with Belleau's *Petites Inventions* (1578), Rabelais' *Tiers Livre* (1564) and Passerat's *La Corne d'abondance* (1606).[7] This sub-genre seems to have peaked in England almost one century later in plays, as Chapman's already mentioned *Al Fooles* (1609), poems, such as the anonymous *Cornucopia or Pasquil's Night-Cap* (1612) and Samuel Wesley the Elder's "In Praise of the Horns" (1685), and songs, as the anonymous "The Horn Exalted" (1661).[8] In most of these works, the cuckold's horns are paradoxically turned into signs of abundance given the resemblance between his horns and the prodigious cornucopia, usually depicted as overflowing with flowers, fruit, and wheat.[9] Also, mock praises of female infidelity often consider the husband's horns as proofs of his generosity, which enables him to share with others not only his material goods, but also his wife. Possibly benefitting from the foreign development of this sub-genre, mock praises of cuckoldry feature both *As You Like It* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, although displaying different argumentative strategies.

In *As You Like It*, Touchstone admits that men's main obstacle to marriage is their fear of becoming cuckolds ("that [horns] is the dowry of his wife", 3.3.50-1). To overcome it, he shows how such dowry can benefit the receiver. With a paradoxical twist, Touchstone turns the cuckold's horns from a subject of *infames*

[7] It may be interesting to notice a literary connection between the Italian and the French developments of this sub-genre. Attributed to one "F.C.T.", *Le Monde des cornuz* is a French addition to the 1580 edition of Chappuys' translation of Doni's *I Mondi celesti*, a series of volumes dedicated to imaginary worlds. For further information see Tomarken 1990.

[8] Some of these and later titles can be found in Knight Miller 1956.

[9] For a more extensive discussion see Bruster 1990.

*materiae* to a sign of nobility and decorum. To do so, he explains how horns dignify those who wear them by means of everyday imageries:

> . . . But what though? Courage! As horns are odious, they are necessary. It is said: 'Many a man knows no end of his goods.' Right! Many a man has good horns and knows no end of them. Well, that is the dowry of his wife; 'tis none of his own getting. Horns? Even so. Poor men alone? No, no; the noblest deer hath them as huge as the rascal. Is the single man therefore blessed? No; as a wall'd town is more worthier than a village, so is the forehead of a married man more honourable than the bare brow of a bachelor; and by how much defence is better than no skill, by so much is horn more precious than to want. (3.3.47-58)

Touchstone first sets the paradoxical intention of his speech by equating a man's fortune with his horns by means of popular knowledge ("'[m]any a man knows no end of his goods.' Right! Many a man has good horns and knows no end of them", 49-50). To him, the cuckold's horns stand for necessary and magnificent ornaments which should become a source of pride for their bearer. To convey this meaning, he compares them to everyday images, such as the magnificent antlers of adult deers ("the noblest deer hath them as huge as the rascal", 51-2) and the prestigious walls that deck and protect wealthy cities ("a wall'd town is more worthier than a village", 52). The conclusion of his mock praise makes his point explicit: "the forehead of a married man [is] more honourable than the bare brow of a bachelor" (53-4).

Similarly, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, the Clown tries to downplay wifely infidelity as men's main reason for fearing marriage by showing how it could benefit the cuckolded husband.[10]

[10] A similar paradoxical argumentation can be found Middleton's city comedy *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (c. 1613). In 1.2, the knowing cuckold Allwit claims to thank his wife's lover since "h'as maintained my house this ten years, / Not only keeps my wife, but 'a keeps me, / And all my family; I am at his table, / He gets me all my children, and pays the nurse, / Monthly, or weekly, puts me to nothing, . . . / The happiest state that ever man was born to. / I walk out in a morning, come to breakfast, / Find excellent cheer, a good fire in winter, / I see these things, but like a happy man, / I pay for

By means of a farming metaphor, the dishonest wife is compared to a fertile field which is ploughed by her lover rather than her husband ("[h]e that ears my land spares my team and gives me leave to in the crop", 1.3.33-4). Still, this exchange is not something to be dreaded for it spares the husband from the necessary, though back-breaking activity of ploughing, which is carried out by his wife's lover, and leaves him to enjoy the crop thus produced. The Clown's main argument is further explained by a linguistic game on the word 'cuckold'. In claiming that "if I be his cuckold, he's my drudge" (34), the Clown relies on the etymological association between 'cuckold' and 'cuckoo', that is the bird which lays its eggs in the nests of other birds and leaves them to their care. By doing so, he compares the husband to the cuckold and the wife's lover to the weary host couple. In his view, it is the cuckolded husband who benefits the most from the extra-marital relation. As the host couple has to feed and protect the cuckoo's egg, so the lover eventually substitutes the husband in the demanding task of taking care of the wife's needs. In this light, husbands should be grateful for the salvific presence of a lover in their wife's life and greet him as "the cherisher of my flesh and blood" (34). As a result of the Clown's paradoxical reasoning, a traditionally negative situation as wifely infidelity turns out to be a wholly positive experience for the witty husband ("he that cherishes my flesh and blood loves my flesh and blood; he that loves my flesh and blood is my friend: ergo, he that kisses my wife is my friend", 34-6). This line defines adultery as a means to achieve domestic happiness rather than divorce. From a structural point of view, it seems to anticipate the result of the bed-trick played at Bertram's expenses: Helena takes advantage of an illicit situation – Bertram's extra-marital affair with Diana – to finally consummate and legalise her marriage with him by substituting herself with Bertram's would-be lover (see Iyengar 2003, 56). The same compliance to rhetorical and logical rules can be found in many other mock encomia on abstract notions uttered

none at all, . . . / O, two miraculous blessings; 'tis the knight / Hath took that labour all out of my hands; / I may sit still and play; he's jealous for me – / Watches her steps, sets spies – I live at ease; / He has both the cost and torment." (16-55).

by higher-status characters.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the shrew-tamer Petruchio relies on a mock encomium of poverty to explain to Kate the hidden reason of his rejection of both her newly-made cap and gown:

> Well, come, my Kate; we will unto your father's
> Even in these honest mean habiliments;
> Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor;
> For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich;
> And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
> So honour peereth in the meanest habit.
> What, is the jay more precious than the lark
> Because his feathers are more beautiful?
> Or is the adder better than the eel
> Because his painted skin contents the eye?
> O no, good Kate; neither art thou the worse
> For this poor furniture and mean array. (4.3.166-77)

Petruchio's mock praise follows a quite traditional argumentation in order to prove Kate how worldly goods do not determine someone's wealth. First, he downplays the role and importance of expensive objects by claiming that it is "the mind that makes the body rich" and not the other way round. Then, in order to underline how honour is not affected by the lack or presence of economic goods, Petruchio devises an apt comparison between honour and the sun, offers two examples from the natural world ("is the jay more precious than the lark . . . Or is the adder better than the eel"), and summarises his thesis with a conclusive remark ("neither art thou the worse for this poor furniture and mean array").

This structure is similar to that usually found in contemporary paradoxes on poverty, such as Munday's first declamation, 'For Poverty'. This focuses on proving the inconveniences related to wealth rather than on the difference between 'appearing' rich and 'being' rich ("[o]ur purses shall be proud, our garments poor"). In some passages, he seems to implicitly align with Petruchio as he mentions classical philosophers, politicians and poets as authoritative examples of how wealth is a weak signifier for intelligence and moral righteousness ("[t]o cal to memory the life of Valerius Publicola, Menenius Agrippa, as also the good Aristides,

who died all so poor, as they were faine by almes to be buried", Munday 1593, B1*v.*). Likewise, Petruchio's wise similitude between the sun and honour, which both pierce through any material they are covered with, seem to echo in Munday's mention of Seneca, who said "[t]hat the man is greatly to be commended, whoe prizeth earthen vessels as much as if they were of silver: but much more praise deserveth he, that esteemeth vessels of golde or silver no more when if they were of earth" (B3*r.*). Like the worth of a person, that of an object can be perceived despite the material it is made up of. Munday's paradox goes on by providing countless proofs of how any type of economic riches imply troubles and inconveniences: "horses of excellence" become "fantasticall beaste, night and day eating the goods of his maister" (B3*v.*), while "fair and sumptuous garments", as those desired by Kate, are turned into the objects of everyday care ("thou must so often rubbe, wipe, brush . . . to keepe them from spots and moaths") and emblems of "deep vanity" (B4*v.*). Like Petruchio's, Munday's paradox ends by firmly restating its thesis: "seeing from poverty springeth infinite profits and commodities, and from worldly goods, proceedeth nothing but unhappinesse" (D1*r.*). Similar resemblances in theme, structure and argumentative strategies between a Shakespearean character's and traditional mock encomia surface in other comedies too.

*Love's Labour's Lost* can also be useful in drawing comparisons between traditional mock encomia and Shakespearean adaptations of them. In 1.1, Biron depicts Ferdinand's quest for knowledge as destined to fail since it requires an endless and pointless pursuit of something that can never be fully grasped. As such, ignorance is preferable as it does not waste intellectual energies and eventually benefits who pursues it:

> Why, all delights are vain; but that most vain,
> Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain:
> As, painfully to pore upon a book
> To seek the light of truth; while truth the while
> Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look:
> Light seeking light doth light of light beguile:
> So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,
> Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.

Study me how to please the eye indeed
By fixing it upon a fairer eye,
Who dazzling so, that eye shall be his heed
And give him light that it was blinded by.
Study is like the heaven's glorious sun
That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks:
Small have continual plodders ever won
Save base authority from others' books
These earthly godfathers of heaven's lights
That give a name to every fixed star
Have no more profit of their shining nights
Than those that walk and wot not what they are.
Too much to know is to know nought but fame;
And every godfather can give a name. (72-93)

Biron opens his *vituperatio* of knowledge, which can be thus read as a mock encomium of ignorance, by highlighting its counter-intuitive nature and eventual damaging outcome ("all delights are vain; but that most vain, / Which with pain purchased doth inherit pain", 72-3). The rest of his monologue is marked by the fertile comparison between knowledge and light/sun. The reliance on such an effective metaphor helps highlighting the similarities between its terms. First, the impossibility of pursuing knowledge through the intellect is compared with the child-like attempts at grasping a proper image of the sun by looking straight into it ("[s]tudy is like the heaven's glorious sun / That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks", 84-5). Not only is this a time-consuming activity, it may also lead to serious consequences such as the loss of one's eyesight due to constant reading ("[y]our light grows dark by losing of your eyes"). Eventually, both activities, learning and sun-staring, would lead to the same meaningless outcome which has no concrete results ("[t]hese earthly godfathers of heaven's lights / That give a name to every fixed star / Have no more profit of their shining nights / Than those that walk and wot not what they are", 89-91). In the concluding lines of his monologue, Biron's critique to the learned habit of pursuing knowledge leaves room to a quasi-explicit praise of ignorance. In stating "[t]oo much to know is to know nought but fame" (92), he interprets in paradoxical terms the maximum expansion of one's knowledge as a cognitive contraction

which reduces the qualities of such learning to mere "fame", which may stand for superficial knowledge. In doing so, Biron also strips this intellectual task of its appeal: since extensive knowledge is comparable to fame, or ignorance, anyone can pursue and grasp it without much effort ("every godfather can give a name", 93).

Biron's tirade may echo one of the best-known mock encomia of ignorance of the time, namely Agrippa's *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum*. Like the Shakespearean character, Agrippa too conceives knowledge, namely "the Arts and Sciences", as "pernicious" and "destructive to the well-being of Men, or to the Salvation of our Souls".[11] He justifies his paradoxical claim by adding a reason similar to Biron's. As the latter highlights the impossibility of acquiring full knowledge ("[l]ight seeking light doth light of light beguile", 77), so Agrippa hints at the imponderable range of notions to be mastered in order to access such a level of knowledge and wisdom ("[t]he knowledge of all Sciences is so difficult, if I may not say impossible, that the age of Man will not suffice to learn the perfection of one Art as it ought to be", B3*v*.). Agrippa grounds his claim on religious writings as the Ecclesiastes, where knowledge is compared to the Sun like in Biron's speech ("[w]hich Ecclesiastes seems to intimate, where he saith, Then I beheld the whole Work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is wrought under the Sun; for the which man laboureth to seek it, and cannot find it", B3*v*.). This passage from Ecclesiastes is also present in Munday's *Defence of Contraries*. In "For Ignorance", Munday explicitly mentions the religious text by stating: "[a]nd these words agree with the saying of Ecclesiasticus: that wee should seeke after nothing, which surmounteth the capacity of our spirit" (E2*r*.). In all three authors too an attentive quest for knowledge seems to inevitably result in the paradoxical victory of ignorance. Biron mentions it in his closing reference to "fame" ("[t]oo much to know is to know nought but fame"), Agrippa defines it as the result of the dramatic events prompted by "Knowledge" ("this [Knowledge] is that hath extinguish'd the Light of Faith, casting our Souls into profound darkness, which condemning the Truth has mounted Error to a Throne", B4*r*.), while Munday almost links madness to

[11] Quoted here in the 1684 translation, 2.

it ("that the multitude of Sciences, and deepe knowledge in things, oftentimes puts a man beside himself, and carrieth him quite from all good sense", E4*v.*).[12]

Besides ignorance, Biron delivers a mock encomium on black beauty too. This topic was rather common at the time and in Shakespeare's production in particular. As well known, his *Sonnets* include almost thirty compositions on this subject, which are now referred to as 'The Dark Lady Sonnets' (127-54).[13] One of the most popular of them is Sonnet 130, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun", which is characterised by a paradoxical praise of the poet's object of desire. While mock praises of ugliness were already quite common in early modern England,[14] those concerning black beauty in particular became increasingly popular in the seventeenth century, as is the case with the anonymous and undated "That a Black-a-moor Woman is the greatest Beauty; in a Letter to a Lady exceeding Fair", Thomas Jordan's *A Paradox on his Mistresse, who is cole Blacke, Blinde, Wrinckled, Crooked and Dumbe* (1646) and Herbert of Cherbury's posthumous *Sonnet of Black Beauty* (1665). In these texts, black beauty may have been praised by means of a patriarchal narrative already connecting ugliness and morality.

[12] Biron's and Munday's mock encomia also share the same cause-effect relation between knowledge and pain. As Biron states that "all delights are vain; but that most vain, / Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain: / As, painfully to pore upon a book / To seek the light of truth" (72-5), so Munday "that learning being (by this edict) driven forth of the sight and beholding of men, by the same meanes might be prevented the unhappinesse, that from thence dailye ensueth" (E4*r.*).

[13] Quotations refer to Duncan-Jones 2010; for an alternative view, see Edmondson and Wells 2020.

[14] Another instance of Shakespearean praise of ugliness can be found in *The Comedy of Errors*. In 3.2, Dromio of Syracuse compares the kitchen wench Nell's flawed complexion to a precious treasure: "[o], sir, upon her nose all o'er / embellished with rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, / declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain, / who sent whole armadoes of carracks to be ballast at / her nose" (137-40). Besides Shakespeare's plays, mock praises of ugliness feature in Lando's *Paradossi* and consequently Estienne's and Munday's translations and Donne's 'The Anagram'. For further reading on this sub-genre in early modern Europe see Baker 2008 and Bettella 2005.

In the early modern period, the ugly female body was starting to be presented as "a stable, fixed, and knowable property" and celebrated for its "resistance to transformation, its immutability" (Baker 2008, 105). While fair women's appearance is transformed by time, sorrows, childbearing and fashions, ugly women's remain unscathed. Something similar can be said about light and black beauty. In Jordan's terms, the "changeless Hue" of the black mistress was considered a sign of her fixed nature ("[a]ll men's eyes / May trust thy face, for it brookes no disguise", Stelzer 2022). Unlike light-skinned women, the darker woman's inability to mask her physical appearance and, for extension, her morality turns her into a particularly useful image in conservative terms, "an easie booke/ Writen in plain language for the meaner wit", which defuse her agency as threat to the male subject (see Baker 2008, 106).

This socio-political shade is not to be found in Biron's praise of Rosaline's darker features. His encomium is anticipated by his bewilderment at feeling in love with her: "[w]hat, I! I love! I sue! I seek a wife! . . . A wightly wanton with a velvet brow, / With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes" (3.1.184-92). Although honest in intention, Biron's lines echo paradoxical writing in its argumentative structure and comical exaggerations. When confronted with contrary opinions, Biron reverses them and extricates from their negative terms some useful images for his praise. In 4.3, he develops a praise of Rosaline's blackness from the King's shocked comment on her physical appearance ("[b]y heaven, thy love is black as ebony", 243). Reworking the "ebony" image, Biron creates a startling encomium which, as seen, is immediately acknowledged as paradoxical by the King ("[o] paradox!", 250):

> Is ebony like her? O wood divine!
> A wife of such wood were felicity.
> O, who can give an oath? Where is a book?
> That I may swear beauty doth beauty lack,
> If that she learn not of her eye to look.
> No face is fair that is not full so black. (244-8)

This paradoxical argumentative pattern resurfaces as soon as Biron appropriates the King's following remark ("[b]lack is the badge of hell", 250) and uses its derogatory reference to praise Rosaline. As

the King mentions "hell" as the emblem of the negative connotation attached to blackness, Biron uses it to point in the opposite direction, namely heaven ("[d]evils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light", 253). His exchanges with Dumain and Longaville follow the same rhetorical pattern and end with Biron's reference to a rather controversial topic which surfaced in mock encomia too, i.e. women's make up.[15] He motivates conventional fair beauty with the use of cosmetics, which Rosaline does not need given her natural perfection ("[y]our mistresses dare never come in rain, / For fear their colours should be wash'd away", 266-7).[16]

In one play in particular, however, Shakespeare strays from the traditional argumentative structure of mock encomia of unworthy people. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio's praise of Kate does not rely on the rhetorical convention of finding the bright side in the character's weaknesses. Referring to her frowns, he does not conventionally endorse them as effective means to discourage possible suitors and keep her chaste. Rather, he turns them into their opposite by positively depicting them as "morning roses newly wash'd with dew" (2.1.173). This process of replacing flaws with their opposite virtues is most evident at the conclusion of his unconventional courtship, where Petruchio wholly rejects Kate's

[15] See for instance Donne's paradox "That Women Ought to Paint Themselves".

[16] Biron's praise of Rosaline's darker features seems rather consistent with the conventional rhetorical structure of this paradoxical genre, as it may be exemplified by William Cornwallis' paradoxical praise of Richard the Third investigated by Francesco Dall'Olio in the present volume. In his work, Cornwallis aims to alter the king's infamous reputation and to do so, he interprets King Richard's negative traits in positive terms: his unpleasant appearance ("he was crook-backt, lame, il-shapen, il-fauoured", B1*v*.) is read as a sign of intellectual sharpness ("I might impute that fault to Nature, but that I rather thinke it her bounty: for she being wholly intentiue to his minde, neglected his forme, so that shee infused a straight minde in a crooked bodie, wherein shee shewed her carefull prouidence", ibid.); likewise, his ambition is readily justified as an act of love to his country ("[i]t is laid to his charge (as a maine obiection) that hee was ambitious, let vs examine the truth of this accusation. Was he ambitious, who was onely content with the limits of his own Countrey, who sought to bee rather famous for instituting of good Lawes, then for atchieuing great conquests? No", C3*r*.).

personality and transforms it into something more convenient. While Rosaline's darker feature are maintained as a characteristic of hers and re-interpreted as emblems of divine beauty, Kate's shrewish identity is erased and replaced with an opposite portrayal of hers which provides her with a new, unnatural social mask: "'[t]was told me you were rough, and coy, and sullen, / And now I find report a very liar; / For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous" (2.1.237-9).

These analyses of Shakespeare's adaptation of the mock encomia genre in his plays have highlighted a specific relation between the characters who utter such paradoxical praises and the topics they deal with. For what concerns mock encomia of abstract notions, low subjects are often addressed by lower status characters. In the previously mentioned passages, servants and clowns develop paradoxical praises of their master's beatings or of cuckoldry. As seen, in *The Comedy of Errors* Dromio of Ephesus explains the benefits deriving from his master's violent conduct ("[w]hen I am cold, he heats me with beating; when I am warm, he cools me with beating" 4.4.34-5), while in both *As You Like It* and *All's Well That Ends Well* the clowns highlight the positive side of female infidelity and describe the cuckold's horns as husbands' noble ornaments ("so is the forehead of a married man more honourable than the bare brow of a bachelor. And by how much defence is better than no skill, by so much is horn more precious than to want.", 3.3.55-8). Contrariwise, more refined topics are usually investigated by higher status characters. Petruchio, a representative of the merchant class, and Biron, a lord attending on the king of Navarre, address themes such as poverty, ignorance and ugliness in terms of black beauty which require more structured argumentations and may also suggest philosophical or esthetical implications.

While mock encomia about abstract notions seem to follow conventional paradoxical standards in their structure and argumentation and show a possible pattern between the speaker and the topic addressed, those about people are too few to allow such an analysis. As far as the latter are concerned, it can only be hypothesised that there is a connection between the speaker and the object of the paradoxical praise in terms of social standing. In *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, Biron's paradoxical praise

of Rosaline's black beauty and Petruchio's mock praise of Kate's shrewishness do not violate social boundaries since the speaker and his interlocutor share almost the same social ranking: Kate is the daughter of a wealthy man and Petruchio of a respectable merchant of two renowned cities in the Veneto region.

## 2. Reversed Mock Encomia in *All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure,* and *Much Ado About Nothing*

While in some Shakespearean comedies mock encomia generally comply to rhetorical conventions, in some others they present variations in either their argumentative structure or intention. This is mainly the case of the reversed mock encomium and its use in three comedies in particular, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

As previously mentioned, the reversed mock encomium alters the conventional argumentative structure since it finds faults in something which is generally considered as praiseworthy. As such, it works like a paradoxical *vituperatio*.

In some comedies, the reversed mock encomium seems to follow its conventional argumentative structure, which aims to identify the negative aspects of traditionally positive attitudes or characteristics. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Parolles follows this standard as he utters a reversed mock encomium of, thus a paradoxical attack against, long-termed preserved virginity.[17] In sixteenth century Europe, the *carpe diem* motif was greatly

[17] In Renaissance Protestant England, the ancient Christian ideal of perpetual virginity progressively lost its appeal as women started to be considered almost exclusively in relation to their matrimonial status. While on the one hand, marriage was considered a "divine, natural and social institution . . . a natural state, found even in animals who possess neither a deliberative faculty nor freedom of choice" (Maclean 1980, 28), on the other, women were conventionally considered as more inclined to stray from virtue than men given their physiological and intellectual limitations proved by the humoral theory of that time. Hence the necessity "to move woman as quickly as possible from postpubescent virgin to wife and mother" and the complementary anxiety towards the unmarried – thus morally and socially unstable – virgin. For further readings on this topic, see Loughlin 1997 and Flather 2007.

successful and often intertwined with the classical image of the unplucked rose to comment on the need for women to lose their virginity at the right moment, thus in its prime. However, Parolles does not seem to fully embrace this literary tradition as it pushes it one step further in his paradoxical argumentation. The conventional exhortation in losing one's virginity relied on the basic principle that the more women waited, the more their beauty faded. Thus, it would have been increasingly difficult for those who excessively waited to find men still interested in plucking their virginal flower. In the Shakespearean comedy, Parolles shifts the female necessity to lose their virginity from a personal and aesthetic level to a social and political one. Developed in three separate speeches, Parolles' first two sections focus on the loss of virginity as a necessary social and political passage for women to be granted a legitimised role in society as both part of the marital institution and active members in the furthering and preservation of the species. His last speech only relies on the more conventional *carpe diem* motif which defines the loss of virginity as an "answer" to "the time of request" (156).

In the first speech, Parolles plainly states the gist of his paradoxical claim: "[i]t / is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity" (1.1.105-6). The connection with both the political, social world and the animal, natural one is fundamental to his reasoning and will be gradually unfolded in his speech. He then moves to highlight the resemblance of virginity with a negative quality, which is only when it is lost ("there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost", 107-8). By stating so, he proves the necessity for women to lose their virginity if they want to be acknowledged as such. Moving from this, Parolles concludes this first speech by explaining that preserving virginity may not be considered a praise-worthy custom since it is a virtue which must be eventually lost in order to be considered truly valuable ("by being ever kept, it [virginity] is ever lost", 109).

His second speech looks back to the natural order and the necessity of losing virginity to preserve the species. To prove his point, he compares virginity to suicide as one of the most feared acts for a Christian at that time: "[h]e that hangs himself is a virgin: virginity murders itself and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature." (114-

16). Relying on this religious image, Parolles strengthens his claim by pairing virginity with heinous sins and defines it as "peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon" (117-18). In this light, clinging to it equates to willingly dwell in unorthodox, blasphemous conduct. This section ends with an economic metaphor which turns virginity into a commodity, whose worth depends on its timely loss ("[w]ithin ten year it will make itself ten, which is a goodly increase", 119-20).

Parolles' paradoxical reasoning seems to convince Helena, who finally questions him on how "to lose it to her own liking?" (122). Parolles devotes his third reversed mock encomium on virginity to this topic. Still, although he begins by recalling the more conventional *carpe diem* motif, he develops it in purely economical terms: "the longer kept, the less worth. Off with't while 'tis vendible" (124-5). To "answer the time of request", Helena needs to understand the importance of timing in losing her most precious quality to make the most out of it. To do so, he compares long-kept virginity with a low-quality good, namely a mature – and thus unappealing – French withered pear which loses its appeal if kept too long on storage and is left unsold and useless to its owner ("[m]arry, 'tis a withered pear: it was formerly better: marry, yet 'tis a withered pear. Will you anything with it?", 129-30).

A similar paradoxical tirade against the preservation of virginity was penned by John Donne in his *Paradoxes and Problems*.[18] In 'Paradox 12, "That Virginity is a Virtue", Donne states that the "perpetuall keeping [of] it . . . is a most inhumane vice" (3-4) for much the same reason mentioned by Parolles, that is its obstruction of the natural continuation of the human species. Donne makes this point clear in referring to reproduction as woman's main role and objective ("[f]or surely nothing is more unprofitable in the Commonwealth of Nature, then they that dy old maids, because they refuse to be used to that end for which they were only made", 36-9). Like Parolles, Donne acknowledges the implicit paradoxicality in preserving virginity for too long and refers to it in religious terms. If not lost at a convenient age, virginity may turn into vices such as "[p]eevishnese, Pride and Stupidity" (30-1). He strengthens his

[18] Quotations refer to Donne 1980.

claim by eventually defining long-kept virginity as "a vice far worse then Avarice [since] it will neither let the possessor nor others take benefit by it, nor can it be bequeathed to any" (87-90).

Like Parolles and Donne, Vincentio in *Measure for Measure* utters a reversed mock encomium in accordance with the argumentative tradition of this literary genre. In 3.1, he comforts Claudio, who was lamenting his unfortunate fate, by highlighting faults which relate to life rather than death. In reading between the lines, his speech can thus be considered a mock praise of death, a rather common genre in early modern English literature.[19] To do so, Vincentio first downgrades life to "a breath . . . Servile to all the skyey influences" and to the origin of man's problems and sorrows ("[t]hat dost this habitation, where thou keep'st, Hourly afflict", 8-11). His main objection against life lies in the contradictory realisation that in it "[l]ie hid moe thousand deaths; yet death we fear" (39-40). This claim resurfaces in his discussion of the lack of nobility and courage in life, which to him derives from an implicit and possibly irrational fear of death: "thy [life's] best of rest is sleep, And that thou oft provokest; yet grossly fear'st Thy death, which is no more" (17-19). Vincentio's comparison of life as a disguised death can be found in one of the best-known paradoxical texts of the time, namely Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, first translated into English in 1534. There, Cicero affirms that "that whiche you call lyfe, is death" (1569, E7*r*.). Cicero's *Tusculanae* too may remind Vincentio's reasoning. Here, Cicero blames life for most of human suffering and highlights the role of death in restoring inner peace: "to lack is properly said of him which feels the lack. But there is no feeling in a dead man. No more therefore is there any lack in him" (Bigliazzi 2022). Likewise, he conventionally compares death to sleep in order to exemplify the naturalness and peacefulness of such a condition ("my death resemble sleep, which often without any trouble of dreams doth bring a man most quiet rest", ibid.).

In the previous instances, reversed mock encomia comply with the conventional argumentative structure which requires the identification of negative traits in generally considered positive

[19] See for instance Thomas Becon's *Prayse of Death* (1563) or the translation of Philippe de Mornay's *The Defence of Death* (1577).

subjects. This is not the case with the reversed paradoxical praise which is featured in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Here, Beatrice tries to find excuses to reject any man who means to woo her into the subjected role of wife. To do so, she applies the argumentation of the reversed paradoxical praise to any suitor she encounters. Thus, she widens the conventional subjects of the mock encomium, which traditionally feature positive concepts, to any subject whose amiable features she can substitute with negative ones without further argumentation. According to Hero's account of this paradoxical strategy, Beatrice finds no difficulties in emasculating a man if of light complexion ("fair-faced", 3.1.63) by comparing him to "her sister". With the same argumentative ease, she wittily downgrades a man of darker complexion in equally unpleasant terms ("[i]f black, why Nature, drawing of an antic, Made a foul blot", 65-6). This rhetorical strategy is used to question behavioural characteristics as well. To Beatrice, a talkative man is not a good match for his endless and possibly inconstant speech ("a vane blown with all winds", 66) and a quiet one is equally undesirable for his tiresome intellectual immobility ("a block moved with none", 67). Her indiscriminate application of the reversed mock encomium creates a logical paradox where any possibility leads to the same result, that is to her absolute rejection of any potential wooer.

Like the previous one on mock encomia, this section on reversed ones has shown how paradoxical praises either respect their conventional form or alter their argumentative structure or intention in Shakespeare's writing. While in *Measure for Measure* the reversed mock encomium follows traditional argumentation as it identifies the negative aspects of conventionally positive attitudes or characteristics, that is knowledge, in *All's Well That Ends Well* the reversed mock encomium shows stylistic variations in its conventional argumentation. As seen, Parolles' *carpe diem* invitation to women to lose their virginity relies less on the traditional motif of fading beauty than on the social implications of becoming a 'woman' and wife. Eventually, *The Taming of the Shrew* offers a reversed mock encomium which strays from its conventional argumentative structure since it widens its traditional subject, that is traditionally positive concepts, to anything the speaker can describe in negative terms and thus reject. The following section of this study shows

further variations of the mock encomium genre and argues that the presence of peculiar dramatic frameworks affects the readability of the mock encomium and eventually questions the honesty of its paradoxical intention.

## 3. Dramatic Frameworks and Mock Encomia in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The impact of the dramatic framework on the overall interpretation of the play and its mock encomium is first analysed in the last scene of *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Kate delivers her final monologue on male natural superiority over women. In this case the imaginative, and critical, context is fundamental in shaping the reading of her monologue as honest or paradoxical, and possibly subversive. These views have gradually been systematised into two main scholarly interpretative readings, which are usually referred to as revisionist and anti-revisionist.[20] The anti-revisionist critique interprets the play as a farcical rendition of traditional shrew-taming material and identifies Kate's and Petruchio's affinity with their habit of sharing wordplays. In this light, Kate's monologue is read in a rather literal way as the final piece of evidence of her newly acquired status of obedient wife and submission to Petruchio and the early modern status quo.[21] While the former interpretation strips Kate's speech of its paradoxical potential, the latter hands it back to her as it advocates Kate's aware and subversive use of rhetoric as a means to undermine patriarchal power. I argue that this reading is supported by structural and linguistic similarities between the last scene of the play and its dramatic framework.

In the Induction scene,[22] the Lord and his men stumble into a

[20] For the division between revisionist and anti-revisionist readings of *The Shrew* see Heilman 1966 and Bean 1980. In his analysis, Bean refers to the two oppositional readings and offers "a third way": to him, the play presents gender hierarchies and mutual affection between Petruchio and Kate which, however, is eventually read in terms of wifely obedience.

[21] For revisionist readings supporting Kate's honest praise of patriarchy see, for example, Boose 1994 and Blake 2002.

[22] *The Shrew*'s Induction has long been the subject of scholarly attention since it constitutes an important clog in the reconstructive process of the

drunken tinker named Sly and decide to prank him by making him believe he is a rich gentleman. To do so, the Lord instructs his men on how to behave towards the tinker and provides the Page with detailed indications on how to play his dutiful and obedient wife. His notes of conventional signs of female subjection mainly appear in the following lines:

> . . . [h]e bear himself with honourable action, such as he hath observ'd in noble ladies Unto their lords . . . with soft low tongue and lowly courtesy, and say 'What is't your honour will command, wherein your lady and your humble wife may show her duty and make known her love?' (Ind.1.107-15)

The Lord's instructions seem to resurface during the wager scene, where Kate responds to Petruchio's call with both "lowly courtesy" and "soft tongue" and gently addresses her husband with a variation of the Page's "[w]hat is't your honour will command", namely "[w]hat is your will, sir, that you send for me?" (5.2.101).[23] Similarly, the Page's conventional description of the husband-wife relationship in hierarchical terms ("[m]y husband and my lord, my lord and husband, I am your wife in all obedience", Ind.2.106-08, my emphasis) seems to echo in Kate's monologue, where she twice refers to her husband as "lord" (5.2.138-9; 147) and defines obedience as one of the main duties of a proper wife (5.2.153-4; 165). This display of traditional and comical subservience may lead to perceive a parallelism between the Page's and Kate's not only

play's textual history. Some scholars have underlined how it possibly derives from Tale Type 1531 ('Lord for a Day'), while others have focused on its presence in *The Taming of A Shrew* (1594), generally considered either a pirated copy of Shakespeare's play or an earlier comedy which may have been another source for Shakespeare's version. In the latter case, the Shakespeare's *The Shrew* and the anonymous *A Shrew* handle the Induction very differently. While in *The Shrew* it is present only at the beginning of the play, in *A Shrew*, it open *and* closes the comedy – besides appearing in three interludes throughout the play – as a proper meta-theatrical framework which comments on the love affair between the shrewish protagonists. For a detailed analysis, see Barbara Hodgdon's 2010 Arden edition of the play (esp. 23-8); Stern 2004 and Priest 1999.

[23] Shakespeare 2002, 134: "the disguised Page of the Induction prefigures the obedient and compliant wife which Katherina becomes in V.ii".

language, but also intention. In the Induction, the Page relies on such patriarchal conventions to carry out the Lord's prank and support his performance as Sly's obedient wife ("[m]y husband and my lord, my lord and husband, I am your wife in all obedience", Ind.2.106-08). Similarly, Kate's displays of subjection seem to respond to her lord's will, to Petruchio's need for an obedient wife. Like Sly, Kate may be rehearsing the conventional posture of female submission to support her societal role. In this light, her last speech may be read as a paradoxical praise of patriarchal rule since she is advocating for female silence while exploiting her traditional role of obedient wife to take centre stage and deliver the last monologue of the play.

The paradoxical interpretation of Kate's monologue as a mock encomium of patriarchal authority over women seems to be supported by linguistic cues which signal the existence of possible alternative readings:

> . . . [o]ur strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
> *That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.*
> Then *vail your stomachs*, for it is no boot,
> And *place your hands below your husband's foot*;
> In token of which duty, if he please,
> My hand is ready, may it do him ease. (5.2.175-80, my emphasis)

Referring to female natural inferiority, which women allegedly try to mask, the line "[t]hat seeming to be most which we indeed least are" may also recall the contrast between appearance and reality which frequently inhabits Shakespeare's plays. On a less literal level, then, this passage may suggest women's transformative nature which may allow them to feign excellent qualities ("seeming") when they have none ("which indeed least are"). Lexical ambiguity characterises Kate's following advice too. Her suggestion to fellow women of "vail[ing] your stomachs" may hide a subversive reading depending on the interpretation of the verb 'to veil'. If considered an alternative spelling for 'to vail', namely '[t]o lower in sign of submission or respect' (*OED*, *s.v.* "vail", v. 2b), then Kate seems to suggest other women to bend their will to their husbands'. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, the stomach, as well as the heart, often stood for the inward seat of passion and

emotion (see Spencer Kingsbury 2004, 78).[24] Thus, by 'vailing their stomach' wives would "be lowering their pride and acknowledging the greater and more fully developed physical strength of their husbands, thereby expressing their 'inner state in an intelligible fashion, revealing the disposition of the soul'" (ibid.). On the other hand, if 'to veil' is interpreted as "[t]o hide or conceal from the apprehension, knowledge, or perception of others", possibly also as "to hide or mask the true nature or meaning of" (*OED*, *s.v.* "veil", v. 4a), then Kate suggests other women to conceal their stomachs, thus their true passions and emotions, from their husbands in order to play the necessary role of the obedient wife; namely to "be most which we indeed least are". The ironical shade of Kate's submission to male authority can be also retraced in her conclusive powerful gesture of submission – that is, offering to place her hand below Petruchio's foot. This can be read as an exaggeration of pre-reformation wedding rituals, such as the Salisbury Manual, which prescribes that brides "prostrate . . . at the feet of the bridegroom" and "kiss his right foot".[25] Kate enhances the performativity of this gesture as she claims to be ready to "place [her] hands below [her] husband's foot", thus risking the pain of having her hands crushed by Petruchio's booted feet (see Spencer Kingsbury 2004, 77).

The paradoxicality of Kate's monologue is also suggested by specific elements of the dramatic framework, more precisely the other characters' reaction to her speech. Despite the conventionality of her message, most onstage listeners seem at least puzzled by Kate's unexpected change: Bianca and the Widow are left speechless at her words, while Lucentio defines her tirade "a wonder" (5.2.195).

The influence of the dramatic framework on the perception of a praise as paradoxical sometimes may be more a matter

[24] Spencer Kingsbury also recalls Elizabeth I's Tilbury speech, where the queen states "I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king," thus assuring that underneath her female physical appearance she owned behavioral traits traditionally identified as male.

[25] See Boose 1994, 182-4 and Spencer Kingsbury 2004, 77. For further references, see Howard 1904, 1, 306-7: "[t]unc procidat sponsa ante pedes ejus, et deosculetur dextrum; tune erigat eam sponsus". See also Wickham Legg 1903, 189-90 and MacGregor 1905, 36.

of metatheatrical perspective than scholarly interpretation. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers borderline cases of praises which can be read as either honest or paradoxical according to the character's or audience's perception of the dramatic context such encomia are framed in. In 3.2, Demetrius has been subjected to Puck's incantation and recants his affection for Hermia as he pursues and praises the virtues of Helena:

> O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
> To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
> Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
> Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
> That pure congealed white, high Taurus snow,
> Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
> When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
> This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss! (137-44)

The comical introduction of the love filter motif creates a dramatic context which justifies *and* undermines the paradoxicality of the same passage. The afore-mentioned flamboyant praise loses its paradoxical shade when interpreted from the perspective of its spell-bound speaker. Demetrius is unaware of being a victim of Puck's love filter and as such he truly believes in the love he feels for Helena. Contrariwise, clear-headed Helena perceives Demetrius' words as odd and contradictory. Her reaction is a customary response to paradoxical expressions as they often elicit doubt and bewilderment ("[o] spite! O hell! I see you all are bent / To set against me for your merriment", 145-6).

The same mechanism can be observed in Titania's praise of Bottom, who has already been transformed into a hybrid, asinine figure:

> I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
> Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
> So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
> And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
> On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. (3.1.99-103)[26]

[26] The same can be said for her praise of Bottom's fair appearance in 4.1: "[c]ome, sit thee down upon this flowery bed, / While I thy amiable cheeks

The dramatic context heavily influences the interpretation of these lines. Due to Puck's love filter, Titania truly loves Bottom's asinine figure and conveys no irony in her heart-felt praise of him. However, her perspective is inconsistent with that of other characters unscathed by the magic potion. Like Helena's, Bottom's reaction of amazement and perplexity at Titania's flatteries strengthens the paradoxicality of her praise ("[m]ethinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that", 3.1.104). In this case, spectators too may have perceived this passage as not only ironical but, more specifically, paradoxical since Titania's praise may have reminded them of the many early modern praises of the ass. As Harvey's 1593 *Pierces Supererogation* shows, this literary sub-category was rooted in classical texts and maintained its popularity well into the sixteenth century ("Aesops Asse no foole . . . Lucians Asse . . . Machiavels Asse", V3*r.*). One of the best-known praises of this kind is Agrippa's already mentioned "A Digression in Praise of the Ass" in his *De Vanitate*. There, Agrippa praises the animal's physical and behavioural traits by stating that it "lives by little food, . . . Of a clean and innocent heart, void of Choler, being at peace with all living creatures" (Aa4*v.*). Also, he recollects some of the authors and texts where the ass is mentioned and celebrated ("[n]either had Apuleius of Megara's Ass been admitted to the holy Mysteries of Isis, if he had not been turn'd out of a Philosopher into an Ass", Aa5*r.*). While these prose works are perceived as paradoxical because of the inherent oddity of their subject and argumentations, Titania's praise *may* be perceived as such according to point of view of the listener, thus to the dramatic framework.

## 4. Conclusion

As the present analysis has tried to show, the literary tradition of the mock encomium genre successfully reached the early modern English stage, where it was also adapted by Shakespeare to fit into his theatrical production. In the comedies here investigated, some paradoxical praises follow conventional rhetorical standards.

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do coy, / And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head, / And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy" (1-4).

Petruchio's encomium of poverty and Biron's praise of ignorance offer potential parallelisms to contemporary paradoxical praises on the same subjects and share with them a similar argumentative structure and the same final aim. Conversely, some mock encomia may present structural variations, as it happens with paradoxical praises of conventionally unworthy characters where flaws are not traditionally interpreted as potential virtues as they are simply substituted with their opposites. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate's verbal aggressiveness is not re-interpreted in positive terms, but readily turned into its pleasant opposite ("gentle conference, soft and affable"). This technique does not comply with standard argumentative practices in the mock encomia tradition; however, it supports the final aim of such paradoxical praises as it commends characters who are generally not appreciated by others and thus counters onstage common opinion.

This investigation has suggested a possible interrelation between the speaker of the encomium and its subject matter. While wealthy and educated characters usually address complex and abstract notions, such as poverty or ignorance, lower status ones tend to deal with baser topics, such as cuckoldry. Both these categories, however, show the same degree of self-awareness when it comes to praising people. In this case, social boundaries seem to be respected since characters deliver paradoxical encomia only about those with whom they share a similar social standing, such as Petruchio does with Kate and Biron with Rosalind. The only exception is Titania's praise of Bottom. Still, I would suggest her praise does not violate social boundaries since her mockery is unwilling and, if it were, it would be uttered by a queen to someone of a lower status. The existence of such an interpersonal pattern should be tested on a larger range of texts which includes Shakespeare's tragedies and historical plays to be properly questioned and eventually proved. Further studies in this sense may help gain a better understanding of the existence of such a rhetorical practice and its role in Shakespearean production.

As shown by his use of mock praises, the presence of specific rhetorical variations, such as the reversed mock encomium or paradoxical *vituperatio* as well as that of borderline cases of mock encomia, offers just another proof of Shakespeare's renowned

mastery of rhetorical mechanisms. His use of reversed mock encomia, or paradoxical *vituperatio*, may speak for his ease in adapting to the theatrical dimension literary fashions which are usually to be found in contemporary texts, such as Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems* and the translation of Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, as their introduction creates no evident rhetorical break from the dramatic fabric of the text. Far from being "not so prominent" (Sackton 1949, 86), mock encomia are also key to the characterisation of the protagonists of the play as they usually work as key rhetorical tools to define the speaker's intellectual and linguistic abilities. In *Love's Labour's Lost,* Biron's reversed mock praise or paradoxical *vituperatio* of knowledge reflects his wit and sharpness of mind, which will resurface in his later attacks against his enamoured companions. More poignantly, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Beatrice's tendency to "spell [men] backwords", that is to turn their virtues into flaws, proves a fine example of her rhetorical mastery which she often shows during her verbal skirmishes with Benedick.

In this context, however, the label 'mock encomium' may sometimes feel slippery when confronted with borderline adaptations. The difficulty in categorising Kate's final monologue in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Titania's and Demetrius' praises as proper mock encomia lies in their dependency on the dramatic framework. Kate's conclusive speech acquires a paradoxical shade thanks to some linguistic cues hidden in it and, mostly, to its echoing of the Lord's instruction on how to play the ideal wife in the Induction scene. Similarly, Titania's and Demetrius' praises of their beloved derive their paradoxicality from the character's place in the dramatic framework of the play. While the speakers perceive their words as honest and heart-felt, those characters who are not victims of Puck's incantation are aware of their paradoxical quality. In Titania's case in particular, the audience too is aware of the paradoxicality of her praise given its similarities with contemporary paradoxical encomia on the ass. The analysis of dramatic frameworks has proved central in determining the paradoxical quality of borderline cases of Shakespearean mock encomia. In this light, I hope future studies will cast more light on such a peculiar use of this genre in Shakespeare's plays, for example considering the tragedies and the histories. This may help

us understand whether this situation is a unicum in these two plays or whether Shakespeare's adaptation of the mock encomium genre is more often than not dependant on external, dramatic elements to be interpreted as paradoxical.

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**5**

# 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 prety *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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# 3. Paradoxical Dialogues

**6**

# The Paradox of Poverty. Thomas Randolph's Translation of Aristophanes' *Wealth*

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Abstract

This essay aims at comparing and contrasting two instances of the paradox of poverty: the agon of Aristophanes' *Wealth* (the first explicit extant formulation of the paradox), and Thomas Randolph's translation-adaptation of the scene in *Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (c. 1625). By so doing, this essay will show the intellectual matrix of the paradoxical defence of poverty: in both scenes, the personification of Poverty is clearly represented as an intellectual. This relates to the intellectual nature of the paradox of poverty, and to its intellectual origin, which will be traced back to Socratic thinking.

Keywords: paradox; poverty; Aristophanes' *Wealth*; Thomas Randolph; translation; early modern English drama

## 1.

Thomas Randolph's *Πλουτοφθαλμία Πλουτογαμία. A Pleasant Comedy Entituled Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery* (hereafter, *Hey for Honesty*) is a translation-adaptation of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, produced in the early 1620s (most probably right before 1625) by Thomas Randolph, then a fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. *Wealth* was by far Aristophanes' most widespread comedy during the Renaissance: it was the first to appear in a Latin translation, to be put onstage, and to receive full adaptations.[1] Although the cultural and historical reasons for the success of a text throughout the ages prove often elusive, we can be fairly certain that the

[1] On the reception of *Wealth* in early modern England, see Miola 2013, 492-5.

popularity of *Wealth* was at least in part due to its strongly moral stance. The moral problem on which the comedy is based – the relationship between one's behaviour and one's economic status –, as well as the religious problem of the role of the gods in rewarding men's behaviour, exerted a great fascination on modern readers, and looked particularly suitable for adaptations and proverbs. Of course, the theme of poverty, widely discussed throughout the agon of *Wealth*, attracted the readers' attention, and some even quoted Penia's arguments on the usefulness of poverty.[2]

Within such framework, *Hey for Honesty* stands out as one of the most extensive modern reworkings of *Wealth*. The text was not published until 1651, more than a decade after Randolph's death, by "F. J.", that is, Francis Jacques;[3] however, Randolph's authorship is virtually certain for all those scenes (the vast majority of the play) that directly translate Aristophanes' original.[4] Randolph's translation is mostly straight and accurate, but shows clear signs of adaptation to modern times. This is particularly true in the case of personal and political jokes, that needed to be adapted to the early modern English situation. In so doing, Randolph often shows the acumen of a shrewd interpreter, who is able to understand the dynamics of the original text in depth, and act accordingly. Religion, for instance, is one such case: as I intend to show elsewhere, Randolph's frequent attacks against Roman Catholicism are not just meant as sporadic jokes addressed to his modern audience, but are part of a coherent comic and ideological structure, that parallels, and takes the place

[2] Miola 2013, 492. These quotations are hardly ever a full reading of the agon, but a reuse of specific arguments with moralising aims (see especially Pierre de La Primaudaye's *The French Academy*, ch. 34, "On Poverty").

[3] See Smith 2015, 411. Jacques is probably the author of *The Queene of Corsica*, a tragedy published in 1642 (Watson 1974, col. 1746).

[4] The extant version of the play contains references to events and historical characters that certainly follow Randolph's death (e.g. the Civil War, Pope Innocent X, the Irish Rebellion), and must therefore be ascribed to "F. J.". However, close readings of the play have shown *Hey for Honesty* to be overall consistent with the poet's style (see esp. Day 1926). Nowadays, Randolph is rightly considered as the author of most of the play, which was later expanded through the addition of further, and unrelated to the original, scenes by "F.J.".

of, the original Aristophanic criticism of traditional religiosity.[5]

Religion is also mentioned at the beginning of the agon in *Hey for Honesty*, where Penia Penniless duels with Chremylus and Blepsidemus:

> CHREMYLUS What harm is it to you, if we study the catholic good of all mankind?
>
> PENIA What catholic good of mankind? I'm sure the Roman Catholic religion commands wilful poverty. (2.4.C4*r*.)

Obviously, this exchange is Randolph's own addition, and it gives a hint about the author's culture and methods: the word "catholic" is used by Chremylus in its etymological, and rather refined, meaning ("universal"), but is immediately taken up by Penia, who distorts it by assigning it its specific, and religious, meaning. Chremylus' line, thus, becomes a brilliant opportunity not only to establish once more the need to be poor, but also to give a sharp dig to the hypocrisy of Roman Catholicism, an aspect upon which the conclusion of the comedy (esp. 5.1) – bringing on stage no less than the Pope himself, become destitute due to Chremylus' moral reform – will insist greatly.[6]

Randolph's work on the agon of *Wealth* is particularly interesting. As we will see, this scene from Aristophanes' last extant play has attracted a great deal of attention from contemporary scholars, who have found it particularly puzzling. The scene is a grandiose debate between Chremylus, the comic hero who has decided to heal Plutus (the god of wealth) and by so doing making all honest men rich, and Penia, the goddess that impersonates poverty itself. Penia comes onstage to defend the role of poverty, and show Chremylus and his friend Blepsidemus that making wealth universal would be a

[5] Aristophanic comedy is replete of explicit attacks against a traditional form of religiosity consisting not so much in genuine worship but rather in a hypocritical form of *do ut des*. Such criticism is often related to money, as were most Protestant denunciations of Roman Catholicism: cf. e.g. Aristoph. *Pl.* 130-4, where Zeus is said to be very rich, due to the fact that his worshippers spend all their money sacrificing to him in order to become rich.

[6] Moreover, Penia's line immediately relates Penia's defence of poverty to a doctrine of Roman Catholicism – a relationship that Randolph's audience would have hardly found positive.

terrible mistake. Penia's defence of poverty, an actual *laus inopiae*, is counterintuitive at best, and aims at demonstrating that a world where everybody is rich is bound to fall apart: for a society to be productive, men have to be poor – not completely destitute, but just poor enough to keep working. If all men were rich, nobody would need to work, and nobody would perform the fundamental duties without which the *polis* would go bankrupt. Not even slavery would work anymore: if everybody had all the money they need, they would not be compelled to sell slaves. Moreover, all virtues can be traced back to poverty: moderation (*Pl.* 563: σωφροσύνης),[7] propriety (*Pl.* 564: κοσμιότης),[8] good physical shape and attitude to battle (*Pl.* 561) all derive from a state of hardship.

Thus, Penia can paradoxically conclude (*Pl.* 593-4) that πάντ' ἔστ' ἀγάθ' ὑμῖν / διὰ τὴν πενίαν ("all good things come to you thanks to poverty"). The paradox in Penia's line is even more evident if we observe that the phrase πάντ' ἀγαθά is frequently associated by Aristophanes with an image of exceeding wealth, which comic heroes tend to acquire, or re-acquire, toward the end of each play (see e.g. *Ach.* 976 αὐτόματα πάντ' ἀγαθὰ τῷδέ γε πορίζεται ["all goods come to him of their own accord"]; *Pax* 1326-7 τἀγαθὰ πάνθ' ὅσ' ἀπωλέσαμεν / συλλέξασθαι πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ["give us right back all the goods that we have lost"]; *Av.* 1706 ὦ πάντ' ἀγαθὰ πράττοντες ["oh you who enjoy all goods"]). This seems in keeping with one of the most pronounced trends in Old Comedy, namely the description of a utopian situation, set either in a remote past or in a distant place, where characters can enjoy an exorbitant quantity of goods.[9] Again, πάντ' ἀγαθά can often be found in such a context: see e.g. Pherecr. fr. 113.1-2; Amphis fr. 28; Mnesim. fr. 4.64-5.

[7] Unless otherwise specified, Aristophanes' plays are quoted from N.G. Wilson's edition (2007). English translations are by A.H. Sommerstein, slightly modified.

[8] Moderation and propriety are two sides of the same coin: since rich people were normally accused of being prone to ὕβρις (cfr. e.g. Lys. 24.16), Poverty provides her worshippers with the opposite quality – self-restraint and moderation resulting in a harmonious life (cfr. Isocr. 7.4; see Sommerstein 2001 and Torchio 2001, *ad loc.*). Of course, σωφρωσύνη also had a pronounced socio-political value: McGlew 1997, 41.

[9] On which see e.g. Ruffell 2000; Wilkins 2000, 110-23.

Aristophanes' *Wealth* itself will conclude on this note: after Plutus is healed, Chremylus becomes exceedingly rich (*Pl.* 802-22), and all goods finally come to his house: *Pl.* 1190 πάντ' ἀγαθὰ τοίνυν λέγεις ("You say all goods!").[10] Then, saying that πάντ' ἀγαθά, the utopian abundance of all goods, comes to men thanks to poverty amounts to posing a paradox – wealth depends upon poverty. Penia goes even further, and, as Chremylus summarises, she ends up claiming that poverty is better than wealth, pure and simple (*Pl.* 572-3): ἀτὰρ οὐχ ἧττόν γ' οὐδὲν κλαύσει—μηδὲν ταύτῃ γε κομήσῃς— / ὅτι γε ζητεῖς τοῦτ' ἀναπείθειν ἡμᾶς, ὡς ἔστιν ἄμεινον πενία πλούτου ("you're going to howl nonetheless, for trying to persuade us that poverty is better than wealth!").[11]

Chremylus' indignant reactions to Penia's demonstration denounce the paradoxical, and apparently absurd, nature of her opponent's reasons:

Πε. καὶ σύ γε διδάσκου· πάνυ γὰρ οἶμαι ῥᾳδίως
ἅπανθ' ἁμαρτάνοντά σ' ἀποδείξειν ἐγώ,
εἰ τοὺς δικαίους φῄς ποιήσειν πλουσίους.
Χρ. ὦ τύπανα καὶ κύφωνες, οὐκ ἀρήξετε;
Πε. οὐ δεῖ σχετλιάζειν καὶ βοᾶν πρὶν ἂν μάθῃς.
Χρ. καὶ τίς δύναιτ' ἂν μὴ βοᾶν "ἰοὺ ἰοὺ"
τοιαῦτ' ἀκούων;
(*Pl.* 473-9)

[Poverty And you should be ready to learn that it's true. I expect

[10] The interpretation of *Pl.* 1189-90, where Chremylus tells the priest that Zeus himself has come αὐτόματος to his own house, is a longstanding interpretive problem: some believe that we are to imagine that Zeus physically descended from Mount Olympus to reach Chremylus' house, while others, myself included, are convinced that we are to understand Chremylus' line as a pun, defining Plutus Ζεὺς σωτήρ ("now the true Zeus is in my house", that is, Plutus). Be that as it may, the association of αὐτόματος with πάντ' ἀγαθά in a matter of two lines seems hardly fortuitous, and describes quite certainly the standard comic situation of an imaginary state of bliss, abundance, and no effort.

[11] I see no reason for printing, as Wilson 2007 does, Πενία and Πλούτου with capital letters: even though the two gods are clearly personifications, Chremylus and Penia are discussing the general condition of being poor or being rich.

> to prove very easily that you are making a total mistake if you mean to make honest men wealthy.
> CHREMYLUS Pillories and execution-boards, come to our aid!
> POVERTY You shouldn't scream and go all indignant before you've learned the fact.
> CHREMYLUS And who could keep from screaming with rage at hearing such a thing?]

Chremylus presents his own arguments as obvious, matter-of-fact truths, that anybody must share:

> φανερὸν μὲν ἔγωγ' οἶμαι γνῶναι τοῦτ' εἶναι πᾶσιν ὁμοίως,
> ὅτι τοὺς χρηστοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὖ πράττειν ἐστὶ δίκαιον,
> τοὺς δὲ πονηροὺς καὶ τοὺς ἀθέους τούτων τἀναντία δήπου.
> (*Pl.* 489-91)

> [Well, I think this much is plainly obvious to everyone alike – that it's right and just that the virtuous among mankind should have prosperity, and the wicked and the godless, of course, the reverse of that.]

While Chremylus' plan is self-evidently good and reasonable, the *status quo*, in favour of which Penia wants to argue, is branded as sheer folly:

> ὡς μὲν γὰρ νῦν ἡμῖν ὁ βίος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις διάκειται,
> τίς ἂν οὐχ ἡγοῖτ' εἶναι μανίαν κακοδαιμονίαν τ' ἔτι μᾶλλον;
> (*Pl.* 500-1)

> [Because the way life is arranged at present for us humans, who would not regard it as sheer insanity and, even more, sheer wretchedness?]

By emphasising the obviousness of Chremylus' ideas, Aristophanes describes Penia's arguments as evidently opposed to good sense, and thus intrinsically, and perversely, paradoxical.

Randolph's dealing with the agon of *Wealth* deserves close scrutiny. On the one hand, the author is consistent with his general method of translating extensive passages from Aristophanes's text quite accurately. He thus preserves the core of each side's argumentation, in particular the paradox of poverty: Penia Penniless

boasts that she makes men better and that she is most noble, and therefore concludes that "I am to be preferred before riches" (2.5). On the other hand, and quite exceptionally, for the scene to be effective Randolph finds it necessary to alter the whole structure of the original text. In particular, he has Penia duel not so much with Chremylus and Blepsidemus (who leave quite early on during the agon) as Aristophanes did, but with four additional characters: three country swains (Scrape-All, Clodpole, and Stiff) and a parson called Dicaeus (in full Aristophanic tradition, a speaking name, which already sets the tone of the whole agon). The fundamental line of comedy consists in the sharp socio-cultural difference between the former and the latter: Dicaeus is proficient in Latin and rhetoric, while the country swains hardly speak English at all. During the agon, Dicaeus takes on the task of disputing with Penia, while Scrape-All, Clodpole, and Stiff play the role that Old Comedy ascribed to the so-called *bomolochos*, the ignorant buffoon commenting on everything that happens onstage – a role that in Aristophanic drama was frequently interpreted by the comic hero himself.

Dicaeus chooses a completely different style for conducting the agon in Randolph's *Hey for Honesty*. Since the outset of the scene, Dicaeus debates as if he were in an academic context, with a typically intellectual posture:

> DICAEUS Neighbours, be content. Poverty, stand you on one side, and I'll stand on the other; for I will be opposite to you *e diametro*, and teach you to know your distance. Thus I dispute. The question is whether *Plutus* ought to receive his eyesight? I say ay, *et sic probo.*
> (2.5.C4*v*.)

The extensive, and frankly quite useless, Latin quotations; the didactic tone and terms ("teach you"); the typical rhetorical strategy of putting forward his own proposition straightaway: all those elements immediately help describe the agon as a typical academic disputation, traditionally structured as a dialectic discourse of *pro et contra*, or *sic et non* ("*e diametro*"; "*sic probo*").[12]

[12] Along with lectures, declamations, and recitations, the *disputationes*

His opponent, Penia, is no less versed in Latin and rhetoric. Dicaeus will go so far as to define her a "she-Bellarmine", the female version of cardinal Bellarmino, and her argumentation is equally refined:

> PENIA You do not dispute seriously, you put me off with trifling nugations. Thus I dispute. If I make men better than riches, I am to be preferred before riches. But I make men better: for poor men have the better consciences, because they have not so much guilt, I call their empty purses to witness. *Aliter probo sic*. I moralise men better than Plutus. *Exempli gratia*: Plutus makes men with puffed faces, dropsy bodies, bellies as big as the great tub at Heidelberg; noses by the virtue of Malmsey so full of rubies, that you may swear, had Poverty had dominion in their nativities, they had never had such rich faces: besides, they have eyes like turkey-cocks, double chins, flapdragon-cheeks, lips that may spare half an ell, and yet leave kissing room enough. Nay, 'tis the humour of this age, they think they shall never be great men, unless they have gross bodies. Marry, I keep men spare and lean, slender and nimble; mine are all diminutives, Tom Thumbs, not one Colossus, not one Garagantua [*sic*] amongst them; fitter to encounter the enemy by reason of their agility, in less danger of shot for their tenuity, and most expert in running away, such is their celerity. *Ergo*, Irus is a good soldier, and Midas is an ass. (2.5.D1*r*.)

This passage reproduces quite faithfully, although with obvious modern additions, the Aristophanic original (see esp. *Pl.* 557-64). In Randolph's version, Penia is granted an altogether similar rhetorical ability to Dicaeus: she uses Latin, as well; she uses technical vocabulary, as her opponent did ("Thus I dispute"; "*Aliter probo sic*"); in arguing, she adopts a somewhat syllogistic strategy ("*If* I make men better than riches, I am to be preferred before riches. *But* I make men better"). A similar strategy can also be detected some

were one of the most widespread teaching methods in medieval universities, and were still largely employed in modern universities: see Rüegg 1996; Müller 1996. As Berensmeyer 2020 correctly observes, in early modern teaching rhetoric still received the lion's share, and one of its fundamental features was "its competitive rather than conciliatory or consolidating nature".

lines later:

> PENIA Moreover, that which is most noble is most preferrable. But Poverty is most noble. Minor I prove thus: whose houses are most ancient, those are most noble: but poverty's houses are most ancient; for some of them are so old, like vicarage-houses, they are every hour in danger of falling. (2.5.D1*r.*)

Moreover, both Dicaeus and his *bomolochoi* will describe the parson's argumentations as syllogisms:

> STIFF In my 'pinion this simple-gism—
> DICAEUS Fie neighbour, 'tis a syllogism.
> STIFF Why simple and silly is all one: be what gism it will be, sure 'twas not in true mud and fig-tree, there was never a tar-box in the breech of it. (2.5.C4*v.*)

The differences between the original and Randolph's version even grow when we come towards the end of the scene. The agon of *Wealth* ends on a note of irrationality: Chremylus refuses to hear more from Penia, and cuts the debate short by simply rejecting his opponent's reasons in full (*Pl.* 600: οὐ γὰρ πείσεις, οὐδ' ἢν πείσῃς ["You won't persuade us, not even if you do persuade us!"], on which more later). Randolph, on the contrary, eliminates any irrationalistic element from the conclusion of his scene, and has it end with an ultimate display of Dicaeus' rhetorical dexterity:

> DICAEUS Nay, she does not dispute well. Her major was born in Bedlam, her minor was whipped in Bridewell. *Ergo* her conclusion is run out of her wits. For well said M. Rhombus, *Ecce mulier blancata quasi lilium.* Now I oppose her with a dilemma, *alias* the cuckold of arguments. My dilemma is this: citizens and townsmen are rich, for there's the cornucopia; ergo, riches are better than poverty. Nay, if riches were not in some account, why would Jupiter be so rich? For you see he has engrossed to himself the golden age of Jacobuses, and the silver age of shillings and sixpences, and left us nothing but the brazen age of plundering and impudence; for tinkers' tokens are gone away too. To conclude in one syllogism more, I will prove my tenet true by the example of Hecate queen of hell; she would turn the clerk of her kitchen out of his office, and not suffer him to be the

> devil's manciple any longer, if he should bring any lean carcass or any carrion-soul to be served up at her table. Her chief dish is the larded soul of a plump usurer, basted with the dripping of a greasy alderman; the sauce being made with the brains of a great conger-headed lawyer, buttered with the grease of a well-fed committee-man, served up for want of saucers in the two ears of an unconscionable Scrivener. *Ergo*, Poverty, you may go and hang yourself. (2.5.D1*r.*-D1*v.*)

In other terms, while the original ended with a blatant rejection of any form of persuasion, in Randolph's version the debate is brought to a conclusion by a remarkable piece of persuasion.[13] Interestingly enough, Chremylus' line on not being persuaded even though he is persuaded (*Pl.* 600) is in fact translated by Randolph, but is placed at the end of the previous scene (2.4), right before Chremylus' and Blepsidemus' exit, when the agon has not yet even started:

> Penia But what if I persuade you it's necessary that Poverty live amongst you?
>
> Blepsidemus Persuaded! We will not be persuaded; for we are persuaded not to be persuaded, though we be persuaded. Thus we are persuaded; and we will not be persuaded to persuade ourselves to the contrary, anyways being persuaded. (2.4.C4*r.*)[14]

A scene so deeply rooted in rhetoric, intellectualism, and rationalism such as the agon of *Hey for Honesty* (2.5) cannot end on an explicitly anti-intellectualist and irrationalistic note as the original did.

Randolph's strategy in dealing with the agon of *Wealth* looks by all means peculiar. *Hey for Honesty* is normally far closer to

[13] Although it must be observed that toward the end of the agon of *Hey for Honesty* we can find a more or less explicit acknowledgement of Penia's argumentative victory: ". . . Methinks Poverty disputes very poorly, and that's a wonder; for likely the naked truth is on her side" (2.5). Of course, this blunt confession does not parallel *Pl.* 600, but it surprisingly opens a breach into Dicaeus' argumentative strategy, just like the ending of the agon of *Wealth* did with Chremylus' (see below).

[14] Of course, the persistent polyptoton of 'persuade' is an astute solution to the apparent paradox of the original text, but seems to betray Randolph's limited acquaintance with the crucial anti-intellectualism of Aristophanes' line.

the original text, and innovations are usually isolated. On the contrary, Randolph shows greater freedom in this particular scene, by bringing in significant changes both in the overall structure and in the character dynamics of the scene. This radical choice deserves an explanation. Why did Randolph abandon his strategy while translating the agon? Why, in particular, did he choose to overemphasise the intellectual nature of the debate? Of course, the paradoxical defence of a clearly unworthy and undesirable object could well relate to the exercise in paradoxical encomia, which was considerably widespread in English schools throughout the modern era – we even preserve a number of encomia of poverty or beggary.[15] When translating the first praise of poverty in European literature, then, Randolph must have kept in mind the closest and most obvious context for such a praise. However, I would suggest that there is more. I believe that Randolph was driven by an almost unique, but accurate and rigorous, reading of *Wealth*, detecting an intellectual tone in the original text that scholars do not usually notice. In other words, Randolph's innovations in *Hey for Honesty* were not purely idiosyncratic choices or adaptations to contemporary cultural tendencies, but evidence of an acute interpretation of the original. The translator observed an intellectualistic tone in Penia's argumentation, and decided to accentuate it. In what follows, we will try to show that although certainly eccentric Randolph's reading of the agon of *Wealth* was by no means misguided. On the contrary, it shows an acute interpretation of Aristophanes' original scene. The agon of *Wealth* is one of the hardest interpretive *cruces* of all the Aristophanic *corpus*: Randolph's solution, we would contend, is not only original, but largely correct. This essay aims to compare and contrast Aristophanes' agon and Randolph's translation-adaptation thereof, in search for an insight into the historical continuity of the socio-cultural question of the paradox of poverty.

## 2.

Starting out as a radical moral reform, the plan of Chremylus, the

[15] For a full picture, and a list of such encomia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Knight Miller 1956.

protagonist of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, soon turns into a program of universal enrichment: with Plutus, the god of riches, healed, only honest people would be rewarded and become rich; honesty would then spread as the most advantageous way of life; and if everybody were to turn honest, then everybody would become rich, too. However, on their way to the temple of Asclepius, where the healing should take place, Chremylus and his friend Blepsidemus are met by Plutus' nemesis, Penia, or Poverty.

As seen, Penia offers a counterintuitive defence of poverty, an actual paradox. Nonetheless, the core of Penia's line of argumentation seems reasonable enough. According to Penia χρεία, economic need, is one of the few effective incentives to get to work, and work is the basis of an efficient economy and an efficient society – two points that are now met with the consensus of almost all contemporary Aristophanic scholarship. This is also the reason why the agon of *Wealth* has widely embarrassed the vast majority of scholars. Many readers of the play are way more sympathetic to Penia's arguments than to Chremylus': in their eyes, then, the scene stands out as the only extant Aristophanic agon where the reasons given by the protagonist seem far less persuasive than those given by his or her antagonist.[16] Chremylus himself seems to come to this conclusion, too: in the above-mentioned l. 600 (οὐ γὰρ πείσεις, οὐδ' ἢν πείσῃς [You won't persuade us, not even if you do persuade us!]), while rejecting Penia's arguments he is also forced to recognise that precisely those arguments are most persuasive.

Those who conclude that the agon is won by Penia also tend to commit to the so-called 'ironic' reading of the play: Aristophanes, it is argued, does not believe in the actual possibility of the realisation of Chremylus' plan, and inserts some hints at disapproval throughout the text. The agon between Chremylus and Poverty would be the major signal of Aristophanes' pessimism about his hero's plan: by contrasting Chremylus' idea with a more realistic and persuasive view, Aristophanes would be hinting that what is happening on stage is to be considered implausible. Many reasons militate against

[16] See e.g. Schmid 1946, 379-80; Süß 1954, 303-5; Albini 1965, 434; Flashar 1975, 1996; Heberlein 1981, 44; Barkhuizen 1981, 19; David 1984, 31.

such an interpretation.[17] First and foremost, Chremylus' program is not the only Aristophanic comic idea that is utterly absurd, or unrealistic. In fact, most comic βουλεύματα are explicitly fanciful: obviously, in the real world there can be no such thing as a private peace treaty (as in *Acharnians*), or a flight to Mount Olympus (as in *Peace*), or the fortification of the sky (as in *Birds*), or the resurrection of a dead man (as in *Frogs*). In all these cases, though, the evident impossibility of the plan must not, and usually does not, lead us to believe that the playwright is distancing himself from the protagonist and his or her positions. In the fantasy world of comedy, the comic hero's plan is perfectly acceptable, even rational, and any reality check does not affect its credibility within the fictional context of the play. Although the comic βούλευμα is invariably absurd, nowhere in extant Aristophanic comedies does the poet feel the need to draw our attention to its absurdity. Chremylus' idea in *Wealth* is not different from the other heroes' ideas: absurd as it may seem, it is perfectly viable in the comic world, and makes a good response to a concrete problem, that of the unjust disparity of distribution of resources. Most importantly, Chremylus' plan is perfectly coherent with the crucial tendency of Aristophanic comedy towards self-fulfillment: individual pleasure must be gained at all costs, even when its realisation seems impossible. There is no reason to believe, then, that by introducing Penia's discussion of the healing of Plutus Aristophanes is ironically suggesting that Chremylus' plan is somehow flawed.

This, however, leaves us with the problem of the agon, where Penia is granted a stronger position than any other Aristophanic antagonist, and a line of reasoning that certainly looks persuasive. In what sense can we say that Penia's arguments are more convincing? And why is it so? As I tried to demonstrate elsewhere (Morosi 2020), this depends on the parodic intent of the agon: the whole scene is conceived of as a thorough parody of philosophical argumentation, and Penia herself – a rather rare figure of the Greek pantheon to meet in ancient literature, and even religion – is one of the typical Aristophanic personifications, in this case thought

[17] For a critical discussion of ironic readings of *Wealth*, see McGlew 1997; Fiorentini 2005; Ruffell 2006.

of as a character parodying a philosopher. This is evident in her vocabulary, in her aspect, and in her argumentation.

Specialised, philosophical vocabulary is consistently used by Penia throughout the agon: she challenges Chremylus to refute her arguments (*Pl.* 574), with a verb, ἐλέγξαι, that is closely connected with Socrates (see for instance his description by Thrasymachos in Pl. *Resp.* 337E1-3), and is frequently attested in relation to sophistic or philosophical characters (the Worse Argument in *Clouds*, Euripides in *Frogs*); she blames Chremylus for φλυαρεῖν (*Pl.* 575), a quite common accusation in the context of philosophical disputes (cf. e.g. Pl. *Resp.* 336C1, 337B4; *Grg.* 486C4-7, 489B7, 490E4, 492C7-8); she intends to give a demonstration about the benefits of poverty (*Pl.* 467 δοῦναι λόγον), another phrase that is widely used in philosophical prose (cf. e.g. Pl. *Phlb.* 50D8-E2); she mentions the difficulties in διαγιγνώσκειν, "distinguishing", "recognising" what is best, another verb typical of Socrates, describing his fundamental method of definition (cf. e.g. Pl. *Resp.* 618B-C). This wide use of specialised philosophical vocabulary fits in well with Penia's argumentation, a counterintuitive and paradoxical demonstration of a clearly weaker case – an activity in which comic philosophers are particularly versed (one only need think of Socrates' ability to make the wrong seem right and vice versa in *Clouds*).

Moreover, Penia's own aspect betrays her nature as a philosopher. When she first comes onstage, she is greeted by Chremylus' description (*Pl.* 422): σὺ δ' εἶ τίς; ὠχρὰ μὲν γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς (Who are you? You look very pale to me).[18] Now, since at the following line Blepsidemus suggests a comparison with a tragic Fury (*Pl.* 423 ἴσως Ἐρινύς ἐστιν ἐκ τραγῳδίας [Perhaps she's an Erinys out of some tragedy]), scholars have almost unanimously interpreted Penia's entrance as that of a Fury. However, the adjective ὠχρά looks out of place for an Erinys. Furies were either black (as in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*) or white (λευκαί), if they were depicted as young maidens. Although of course we cannot rule out in principle that in

[18] At l. 422, I do not accept Jackson's emendation (Jackson 1955, 78-9), also printed by Wilson 2007: σὺ δ' εἶ τίς <ὦ γραῦ>; γραῦς γὰρ εἶναί μοι δοκεῖς. The manuscripts are unanimous in transmitting ὠχρά, and the line is metrically sound if one adds μὲν before γὰρ as R does.

lost texts they were described as such, under no circumstances were they "pale", ὠχραί, in extant Greek literature. Most importantly, the comparison between Penia and an Erinys is dismissed by Chremylus and Blepsidemus themselves, who then go on to hypothesise she is an innkeeper or a pudding-seller. But while ὠχρός did not denote Penia as a Fury, it is commonly used by Aristophanes and other comic poets to describe the physical appearance of sophists and philosophers. In *Clouds*, Pheidippides calls Socrates' pupils in the Thinkery τοὺς ὠχριῶντας (those pale-faced, *Nub.* 103): among the effects of studying with Socrates, pale complexion is the first listed by the Better Argument (*Nub.* 1016-17 πρῶτα μὲν ἕξεις χροιὰν ὠχράν [first of all you'll have a pale skin]), and a practiced sophist is both pale and wretched (ὠχρὸν μὲν οὖν οἶμαί γε καὶ κακοδαίμονα, *Nub.* 1112). In comedy, philosophers frequently stand out because of their pallor: for instance, Chairephon, one of Socrates' closest pupils, is consistently depicted as pale (cf. e.g. Eup. fr. 253 K.-A.; Ar. *Nub.* 504).[19] Pale complexion, then, is one of the main features of the degenerate way of life of comic philosophers, in a sort of proverbial iconography.[20]

Penia, then, speaks, and looks, like a philosopher. This seems perfectly in keeping with Penia's own nature as a personification of poverty. Ancient thinkers (especially those coming from a Socratic *milieu*) tended to lead an extremely austere life, and interpreted their philosophical activity as an actual exercise in frugality and modesty. Comedy often distorts this trait, depicting philosophers – especially those connected to Socratism – as destitute characters, actual beggars (see Grilli 1992, 128-35): in *Clouds*, for instance, Strepsiades must suffer severe hardships (hunger, thirst, and cold) if he wants to enter the Thinkery, that is, if he wants to become a philosopher himself (*Nub.* 412-19); in *Birds*, the Socratic mania consists in not eating and not bathing (*Av.* 1282); and Ameipsias' *Konnos*, a harsh parody of Socratism, describes Socrates as a man

[19] On Chairephon's complexion see Dunbar 1995, *ad Av.* 1296; Guidorizzi 1996, 203; Catenacci 2013, 47.

[20] See Dover 1968, *ad Nub.* 103: "The intellectual is characteristically pale, because of his indoor life, but a 'normal' man is expected to be sunburnt, either, if poor, through long hours of work on the farm, or, if rich, through outdoor sports." See also Imperio 1998, 108.

with no cloak and no shoes (fr. 9 K.-A. = F4 Olson). Socrates himself was portrayed by comic poets as a πτωχός, a beggar (cf. e.g. Eup. fr. 386 K.-A. = F1 Olson), a trait which Chremylus attributes to Penia as well, prompting her discussion of the difference between πτωχεία, complete destitution, and πενία, the state of need that keeps people to their work (*Pl.* 548-54). Moreover, Penia's distinction between πτωχεία and πενία reminds forcefully of a central passage in Plato's *Republic* 4 (421C10-422A3), where Socrates argues in favour of moderate poverty and of its social importance, making a very similar case to that of Penia in the agon of *Wealth*. Elsewhere (Morosi 2020, esp. 414-21), I have proposed an earlier dating of the central books of *Republic*, in order for them to predate Aristophanes' last surviving plays, and thus account for what looks like an ample and consistent parody of Plato's arguments in both *Wealth* and *Ecclesiazusae*.[21] Be that as it may, Penia's line of reasoning is surprisingly close to that ascribed to Socrates by Plato and to Socrates' pupils by Xenophon.

Then, Penia's comic appearance, vocabulary, and argumentations are those of a comic philosopher, and even more so those of a Socratic thinker. This reading of the agon of *Wealth* brings about two important breakthroughs. Firstly, it helps to bring to a solution the interpretive problem of the agon. Penia's arguments are certainly stronger and more logical than Chremylus': this depends on their philosophical origin. However, this philosophical origin is precisely what makes them unacceptable in a comic context: in a fundamentally irrationalistic context, Penia's rationalism is to be rejected precisely because it is rational ("You won't persuade us, not even if you do persuade us!"). This is true from both a formal and a thematic point of view. To start with, Penia's arguments

[21] The critical issue of the relationship between Aristophanes and Plato is extremely vast and complex (now see Platter 2014), and the addition of *Wealth* to the question makes it all the more problematic. In recent times, see Ussher 1973, xvi-xviii, Sommerstein 1998, 13-18, and Capra 2010, 18-22 (on *Ecclesiazusae*); Beltrametti 2000 (on *Republic* 5). See also Tordoff 2007; Capra 2007; Canfora 2014. As for the dating of the *Republic*, most scholars tend to think that it was written only after 380 BCE; others, however, argue in favour of a "gradual growth" of the dialogue (see e.g. Thesleff 2009), supposing that the first elaboration could have started before Plato's first trip to Sicily in 388-87 BCE (as some sources seem to suggest, namely letter 7, 326B7).

are uselessly shrewd, and are discredited precisely because they appear rhetorically and philosophically refined, that is, far removed from common sense. By presenting Penia's demonstration as deliberately counterintuitive and paradoxical, Aristophanes is making her look like a supercilious untrustworthy smooth talker. On the contrary, Chremylus' ideas look way more down-to-earth and straightforward, then easier to grasp and to share. Moreover, Penia's – and Socrates' – reasons are seriously at odds with the most typical comic ideological framework: even though earning a living by working is an absolutely rational perspective, a genre such as Aristophanic comedy based upon the unrealistic self-fulfillment of each desire cannot accept any form of deliberate abstinence from pleasure.[22] The philosophers' ascetic program, and Penia's arguing against a complete, generalised and unproblematic enrichment, cannot but be rejected in full from the point of view of Aristophanic comedy. Precisely the philosophical nature of both Penia and her argumentation deeply invalidate Penia's position within the agon, directing the audience's empathy towards the protagonist.

This brings us back to Randolph's translation of the agon in *Hey for Honesty*. Of course, we cannot be sure that Randolph recognised much more than the generally intellectualistic tone of Aristophanes' scene. In fact, nothing in his translation points towards Socratic elements, and we can be fairly sure that Randolph's reading of the agon did not go as far as to recognising a parody of Socratic arguments.[23] The failure to grasp specific references to Socratism, however, is by no means a hurdle to Randolph's understanding of the deep comic and ideologic dynamics of the agon, and to their reproduction. Randolph seems particularly eager to highlight some of the most evident intellectual aspects that can already be found in *Wealth*: for instance, the incessant meta-discursive references to the opponents' argumentative strategies and their ability to debate, the use of technical vocabulary (which of course

[22] On the structural opposition between comic and philosophical ideology, see e.g. Grilli 1992, 133.

[23] Moreover, the parody of academics is a recurrent theme of Randolph's production: see for instance his *Aristippus, or the Jovial Philosopher* (1625-6), which is directly inspired by another Aristophanic drama, *Clouds*: Hall 2007.

Randolph transposes into Latin), the structure itself of the agon and the contents of each opponent's reasoning – all these originally Aristophanic aspects are faithfully reproduced. In other words, the similarities between Aristophanes' and Randolph's comic strategies here cannot be explained away as mere chance. On the contrary, they show a sophisticated literary and linguistic understanding based on a careful close reading of the original text, and resulting in an unparalleled interpretation of a difficult scene, that would be shared, and validated, by scholars only centuries later. This is altogether surprising as well as unique in the history of modern reception of *Wealth*, and is a testament to Randolph's acute reading of Aristophanes.

Of course, some crucial ideological differences can be observed between these two similarly academic scenes: to name just one, the opposition is now not between an intellectual and a rustic, embodying respectively the reasons of philosophy and those of comedy, but is entirely subsumed within a scholarly context, thus losing the typically Aristophanic clear-cut and symbolic nature. Certainly, Randolph's version, based on the widespread moralising reading of *Wealth* and staged in a scholarly context, is far from the anti-intellectualistic, anti-elitist, and anti-realistic stances of Old Comedy. In fact, Randolph's choice to set the agon of *Hey for Honesty* in an academic *milieu* is certainly due to the scholarly context of the first staging of the play, Trinity College, Cambridge: the scene is then conceived as a direct parody of Randolph's audience, who could watch their own cultural habits, manners, and obsessions brought onstage.[24] Whereas Aristophanes' parody of destitute philosophers is a representation, Randolph's parody is a *self*-representation: as such, it does not aim at being a sincere denunciation, but a benign caricature, that ends up confirming rather than condemning the most relevant aspects of any intellectual context.

The choice to have Penia depicted as an intellectual, however, also relates to another fundamental sociological aspect: scholars and Penia share a basic similarity – they are both intrinsically,

[24] Butler 1988 rightly takes the agon with its constant allusions to the poverty of scholars as one of the pieces of evidence for the comedy being performed in Cambridge rather than in a playhouse in London.

constitutionally, poor. This is made clear since Penia's first appearance, with Blepsidemus promising:

> . . . when Plutus can see again, we will kick you out of the universe, and leave you no place but the universities: marry, those you may claim by custom, 'tis your penniless bench; we give you leave to converse with sleeveless gowns and threadbare cassocks. (2.4.C4*r*.)

This line, one of Randolph's additions to the original text, explicitly states the existence of a strong link between universities and poverty: since "sleeveless gowns and threadbare cassocks" are destitute by nature, universities will be the only place left for Penia to live. Penia's ability to debate itself derives from her intimate acquaintance with scholars:

> STIFF . . . I say she will repute very well and tregorically, for she hath ever kept company with scholars ever since my memory or my grannam's either. (2.5.C4*r*.)

Of course, the poet, an academic himself, is no exception to this rule:

> PENIA If I do not [persuade you], do what you will with me; leave me no place to rest in, but the empty study of that pitiful poet, that hath botched up this poor comedy with so many patches of his ragged wit, as if he meant to make Poverty a coat of it (2.4.C4*r*.).

The metaphorical poverty of Randolph's poetic technique matches, and hints at, his actual poverty. To be sure, to say that Poverty and scholars are akin means both that intellectuals are destitute, and that Poverty is an intellectual. This is why Poverty must dispute as a scholar, and this is why her opponent must be a scholar, as well.

In connecting Poverty so closely with any intellectual activity, Randolph is comically emphasising a longstanding commonplace, as well as a social fact: *carmina non dant panem*, and intellectuals are therefore often thought of as poor people. However, I think the picture is more complex. Once more, this has to do with Aristophanes, and with his own choice to have Poverty depicted as a Socratic thinker. To fully understand this choice, and its historical

significance, we must take a closer look into the ancient spreading of the paradox of poverty.

**3.**

In a controversial book on ancient economy Moses I. Finley (1999, 35) famously argued that "the judgment of antiquity about wealth was fundamentally unequivocal and uncomplicated. Wealth was necessary and it was good; it was an absolute requisite for the good life; and on the whole that was all there was to it". Finley's theory was hotly debated, and branded as simplistic by later scholars.[25] However, as far as ancient Greece is concerned it does not seem far from the truth. Although definitive statements prove always elusive in the realm of ancient Greek literature, it is hard to find in there as well as in other sources an overt and absolute condemnation of wealth before the fourth century BCE. Excess and satiety (κόρος) are often criticised;[26] some specific kinds of wealth are also disapproved of;[27] but wealth as such is hardly ever described as a condition in which it would not be worth living.[28] On the other hand, poverty is regularly depicted as lacking any positive quality: it is bad (κακή),[29] accursed (οὐλομένη),[30] wretched (δειλή),[31] an insufferable evil.[32] To say that poverty ought to be preferred to wealth, then, was somewhat counterintuitive and paradoxical for a Greek. Of course, Greeks recognised the distinction between poverty (πενία) and destitution (πτωχεία),[33] and did not necessarily define poverty from

[25] See e.g. Ober 1989, 192n1.

[26] Cf. e.g. Thgn. 1.153-4, Sol. fr. 4.34-7 W.

[27] See for instance Aristotle's criticism of money and all financial goods (the so-called χρηματιστικὴ τέχνη: cf. esp. *Pol.* 1.1256a1-1258b8), and ancient Greek general distaste for the purely commercial life.

[28] Cf. e.g. Aristot. *Pol.* 7.1332a19-25, stating that, even though the good man can get advantage from difficult conditions such as poverty and disease, happiness (τὸ μακάριον) consists in their opposite (see also *EN* 1.1110b22-33).

[29] Hes. *Op.* 638: ἀλλὰ κακὴν πενίην, τὴν Ζεὺς ἄνδρεσσι δίδωσιν.

[30] Hes. *Op.* 717 (οὐλομένην πενίην θυμοφθόρον ἀνδρὶ); see also Thgn. 1.155-6, 2.1062.

[31] Thgn. 1.351; 1.649.

[32] Alc. fr. Z41.1 L.-P.: ἀργάλεον Πενία κάκον ἄσχετον.

[33] On this distinction, see e.g. Coin-Longeray 2014.

a financial point of view: anyone who was compelled to work for a living was often called a πένης, even if they were not completely financially destitute.[34] Thus, the praise of labour and of its social importance indirectly entailed a praise of poverty – or at least, of a degree thereof.[35] However, as commonsense as it may seem, even the praise of such partial kind of poverty is hardly ever present as a whole in non-philosophical extant literature before the fourth century BCE.

In fact, as William D. Desmond (2006) has persuasively shown, the praise of poverty is predominantly established within a philosophical, and principally Socratic, *milieu*. To be sure, the relationship between intellectual activity and destitution was already attested, at least in literature: one need only think of Hipponax's self-representation as an indigent poet.[36] However, in all those instances poverty is hardly ever depicted as a desirable condition. Socratic thinkers make a step forward, and paradoxically embrace poverty. Before going on to become one of the favourite paradoxes of Cynic thought,[37] the *laus inopiae* was a Socratic motif, and way of life. One need only think of Socrates' well-known καρτερία, his patient endurance and self-imposed abstinence from a life of comfort. Such ascetism was certainly a trait of Socrates' public self-portrait,[38] but most of all it was a direct, philosophical reaction against sophistic wealth, and sophistic teaching methods: in establishing free bonds of friendship with his pupils, Socrates was challenging the sophists' client-seller relationship,[39] and establishing a system based on the metaphorical wealth of wisdom, as opposed to the material wealth accumulated by Gorgias and his colleagues.[40] To be sure, such

[34] See e.g. Taylor 2017, esp. 34-6.

[35] Cfr. e.g. Plat. *Resp.* 4.421C10-422A3, on which more later.

[36] Cf. e.g. Hipp. frs 32, 34, 36, 39 W.

[37] On which see Desmond 2006, 21 ff.

[38] As such, it often played a crucial role in the descriptions of Socrates: see e.g. Plat. *Symp.* 174A, 219E-220B; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.1, 1.5.6, 1.6.2.

[39] On the giving and receiving of money as the basis of the sophists' pedagogical contract, see e.g. Too 2000, esp. 18-31 and Tell 2009; on Socrates' reaction to this prominent feature of sophistic education, see e.g. Corey 2002.

[40] Desmond 2006, 154-9. The metaphor of knowledge and friendship as forms of wealth is common in Socratic dialogues, even as directly opposed

favorable, and deliberately provocative, estimate of poverty was already perceived by Socrates' contemporaries as far removed from common sense and sound judgment, thus posing something of a paradox. Socrates' appraisal of poverty was then passed down to most of his pupils: see for instance Charmides' paradoxical praise of poverty in Xenophon's *Symposium* (4.29-32), or Plato's discussions on poverty (on which more later). The first person that we know of to express plainly the paradox that poverty is in fact wealth was actually a student of Socrates', namely Antisthenes, whose thought is strongly related to, and can be read as an anticipation of, Cynicism.[41] From Antisthenes, the Socratic *laus inopiae* sprang up directly into Cynic thought, which of course had close and evident ties with Socrates' teachings.[42] Thus, at least since the fifth century BCE, the praise of poverty was by no means a popular motif. In the following decades, it was developed as an eminently philosophical theme, mostly connected with Socratic wisdom. Before being a fact, or a commonplace, then, the intellectuals' poverty was a theoretical and philosophical stance.

Set against this background, that the first full-grown instance of the *laus inopiae* may be the agon of *Wealth* is hardly surprising. On the contrary, it shows the existence, since the first decades of the fourth century BCE, of a clear, direct, and intimate connection between the praise of poverty and Socratism – a connection which Aristophanes denounces and challenges by means of merciless parody, clearly showing that for Socrates and his acolytes poverty was a deliberate and paradoxical choice. Of course, this does not guarantee that Socrates was the *protos heuretés* of such praise; however, since its first literary instance, the theme has always been

to the sophists' literal earning of money: see for instance Plat. *Resp.* 1.337D6-338C1, where Trasymachus insists on getting paid by Socrates for teaching him what justice is, and Socrates explains that he normally pays back (ἐκτίνω) in terms of gratitude and praise.

[41] Xen. *Symp.* 4.34-46. On Antisthenes' ties with Cynicism, see Desmond 2008, 16-8.

[42] That of the (Socratic) origins of Cynicism is a longstanding critical question: for an overview, see Long 1996. According to a famous anecdote told by Claudius Aelianus (*VH* 14.33), Plato himself would define Diogenes a μαινόμενος . . . Σωκράτης (a "Socrates who got mad").

closely related to Socrates' doctrines. The history of the paradox of poverty, then, is an intellectual and a philosophical one, and the agon of *Wealth* can be now considered as the first extant stage in this history.

The social conditions of intellectuals did not improve after the staging of *Wealth*, and throughout the centuries the relationship between intellectual activity and poverty would become close and enduring. This relationship made the adaptation of Aristophanes' agon possible: in early modern England as well as in fourth-century-BCE Athens, the depiction of academics as poor people was ubiquitous,[43] and Poverty could therefore be impersonated by an academic. However, in both cases the perception of such relationship was not based on social grounds alone. In fact, Randolph's reception of Aristophanes' parody of Socrates demonstrates another socio-cultural continuity: poverty was also regarded, both in Greece and in seventeenth-century England, as a deliberate choice made by intellectuals. Such choice was obviously contrary to good reason, and deeply rooted in the (self-)representation of intellectuals as sharp-witted thinkers with a taste for counterintuitive reasoning and paradox. That being poor is preferable to being rich is a conspicuous paradox, which only those characters who were most versed in paradoxes could pose and live by: intellectuals.

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[43] This is not the place for a social history of intellectuals in early modern England. Of course, those who could proceed to higher education, and even enter Oxford or Cambridge, had a good prospect in life (Berensmeyer 2020), but this was a distinct minority. Moreover, social evidence is just one aspect of the question, and probably not even the most compelling. Although stemming from social facts, the intellectuals' poverty was part of a wider, traditional (self-)depiction, a literary cliché which originated in ancient literatures and was then strengthened throughout the Middle Ages.

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# "I know not how to take their tirannies": Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and the Praise of the Tyrant

Francesco Dall'Olio

Abstract

The eponymous protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* represents an anomaly amongst the tyrants of Elizabethan tragedy. Unlike many of his peers, he neither loses the support of his friends and subjects nor does he suffer the pangs of a bad conscience. On the contrary, he dies surrounded by his friends and children, still in possession of the thrones he usurped and still saluted by them in an honourable, kingly fashion. Moreover, more than once his actions reveal a noble side of his character, while his opponents are never characterised as more positive than him. Such anomalies of Tamburlaine's behaviour are compared, in this essay, with two paradoxical praises of tyrants written in the second half of the sixteenth century, Girolamo Cardano's *Neronis encomium* (1562) and William Cornwallis' "Praise of King Richard the Third" (printed 1616, but presumably written in the 1590s). I will underline in how all these works, both the paradoxes and Marlowe's tragedy, the overturn of the traditional image of the tyrant offers a critical reinterpretation of the contrasting depictions of the tyrant and the good king in Renaissance political theory, thus unmasking the ideological foundations behind them and questioning its ethical and political use as an evaluation of the good rule of a sovereign.

Keywords: Christopher Marlowe; tyranny; paradoxes; *Tamburlaine*; Machiavelli; Girolamo Cardano; William Cornwallis

## 1. Introduction: Is Tamburlaine a Tyrant?

From its first appearance on the English stage (1587-1588),[1] the protagonist of Marlowe's tragedy has been identified as a tyrant.

[1] Cf. Thomas and Tydeman 1994, 69-70. Success was instantaneous, as evidenced by the almost immediate publication of *Part One*, while *Part Two* would be printed only in 1606: see Marlowe 2011, xxvi.

In the course of the two parts of *Tamburlaine*, the titular character is called "tyrant" ten times (five in each play), while his actions are defined as "tyranny" seven times (once in *Part One*, six in *Part Two*), usually by the kings he has defeated and now submits to degrading acts of humiliation. In addition, on the title-page of the first printed edition of *Tamburlaine, Part One* (1590) it is written that Tamburlaine "for his tyranny . . . was tearmed, the Scourge of God".[2] Moreover, some important features of his personality, such as his boundless ambition, his stubbornness to always impose his will and his aforementioned cruelty towards his enemies, link the character both to the typical description of the tyrant in Renaissance political theory and to the ways in which other characters described as 'tyrants' were depicted in other early modern English plays. Even if his story does not end in the conventional manner for a tyrant,[3] it would nevertheless seem that Tamburlaine's characterisation meets the expectations of the time regarding the character of the 'tyrant'.

A closer reading of the tragedy, however, reveals that things are more complex. Not only is Marlowe's hero innocent of some of the vices usually attributed to such a figure (in fact, he is capable of actions that can be defined as virtuous), but the same 'tyrannical' inclinations of his personality can be interpreted as a paradoxical reversal of virtuous inclinations taken to excess. This makes him a complex character, who seems to resemble more the 'good king' modelled on the figure of Cyrus the Great rather than the traditional 'tyrant' (cf. Rhodes 2013, 211-12; Grogan 2014, 127-34). In the following pages, I will offer a reading of the ambiguous characterisation of Tamburlaine in Marlowe's play, set within the more general framework of Renaissance political theory.[4] I intend to show how Marlowe reverses the traditional condemnation of

[2] Quotations refer to Marlowe 2011.

[3] Tamburlaine dies at the end of the tragedy, but his death, as pointed out by Duxfield 2020, is not explicitly presented as a consequence of divine punishment: see also Vitkus 2003, 63; Thornton Burnett 2004, 139-40; Ragni 2018, 103-4.

[4] In doing so, I will address an aspect of the tragedy that has received relatively little attention in the albeit abundant critical literature on *Tamburlaine*, despite the well-known stature of the tragedy as a work of criticism of certain political and religious theories of the time.

the 'tyrant' as the bad king, presenting some of his qualities as beneficial to the king and pivotal in granting a successful political action. Marlowe's tragedy can thus be interpreted as a paradoxical 'praise' of the tyrant, in a similar way to two texts from the second half of the sixteenth century, Girolamo Cardano's *Neronis encomium* and William Cornwallis' "Praise of King Richard the Third". In those works, two figures traditionally considered among the greatest examples of tyranny were shown to have been good rulers, not because they were innocent of any crimes, but because their behaviour was fundamentally beneficial to the state. I will argue that with *Tamburlaine*, although moving on a different ground, Marlowe performs a similar operation in presenting a 'tyrannical' character as an example of true sovereignty.

## 2. How Is Tamburlaine a Tyrant?

> . . . [a] good king conformeth himselfe to the lawes of God and nature . . . a tyrant treadeth them vnder foote: the one striueth to enriche his subiects, the other to destroy them: . . . the one spareth the honour of chaste women, the other triumpheth in their shame: the one taketh pleasure to be freely admonished, and wisely reprooued . . . the other misliketh nothing so much, as a graue, free, and vertuous man: the one maketh great account of the loue of his people, the other of their feare: the one is neuer in feare but for his subiects, the other standeth in awe of none more than of them: the one burtheneth his as little as may be, and then vpon publike necessitie, the other suppeth vp their bloud, gnaweth their bones, and sucketh the marrow of his subiectes to satisfie his desires: . . . the one hath no garde or garrison but of his owne people, the other none but of straungers: the one reioyceth in assured rest, the other languisheth in perpetuall feare. (La Primaudaye 1586, 262)

This passage from the encyclopaedic treatise *The French Academie* by Pierre de La Primaudaye in its first English translation (1586) presents one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the two opposite models of the good king and the tyrant offered by Renaissance political theory. That was the result of a long cultural tradition, dating back to classical Greek works such as

Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*, and Xenophon's *Hiero*,[5] where fundamental concepts such as the identification of the tyrant's misrule with a disordered and vicious personality, the tyrant's distrust of his subjects, and his ultimate fate of loneliness were discussed for the first time. Later, Latin authors such as Seneca and Tacitus accentuated certain psychological traits of the tyrant, relocating them in a context in which he enjoyed absolute power.[6] It is in the works of these authors that the tyrant becomes the cruel and strong-willed character, prey to inordinate passions, who in the Middle Ages will be set in opposition to the good ruler as Satan was opposed to God.

With the development of Italian Humanism, the contrast was reinterpreted according to the new culture by authors such as Francesco Patrizi (*De regno et regis institutione*, 1481-1484), Giuniano Maio (*De maiestate*, 1492) and Giovanni Pontano (*De principe*, 1493).[7] In their works, the tyrant becomes the negative model of the uneducated ruler, unable to control his passions, and therefore unfit to rule. The conclusions of the Italian intellectuals were rephrased for a more international readership in Erasmus' *Institutio principis christiani* (1516), which became the model for all educational texts in the Renaissance. Specifically for England, Erasmus' work was the model for Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Governor* (1531), the educational text par excellence in the Elizabethan age, where Elyot continually evoked famous tyrannical figures from both the antiquity and English history, as negative examples of uneducated men and bad rulers.

But it was in the 1550s that the problem of tyranny became a grave matter for English culture. During that time, some renowned Protestant authors (John Ponet, Christopher Goodman, John Knox), exiled during Mary I's reign, wrote treatises where they justified the right of the subjects to depose and kill the tyrannical king who did

[5] See Bushnell 1990, 47-9; Dall'Olio 2017, 481-6; Humble 2017, 424-6. Regarding the birth and development of the character of the 'tyrant' in ancient Greece, Lanza 1977 remains the reference text.

[6] See the last chapter of Lanza 1977 for a summary of the history of the 'tyrant' after classical Greece; cf. Bushnell 1990, 29-36.

[7] See Gilbert 1939, 461-4 for an effective survey of the depiction of the ideal prince in those works.

not respect the word of God and subverted the laws of the country.[8] The idea in itself was not new. Both Xenophon and Aristotle had already stated that the king reigned over willing subjects, while the tyrant oppressed unwilling subjects and ruled only for his pleasure and not for the good of the kingdom (Xen. *Mem.* 4.3; Arist *Pol.* 4.1295a; cf. Bushnell 1990, 11, 26-9). As for the right of the subjects to depose and kill the tyrant, that had already been advocated by some important authors of the Middle Ages, like John of Salisbury (*Policraticus* 8.7) and Thomas Aquinas (*Sententiae* 2.quaest.44. art.2). In the works of the Protestant resistance writers, these two distinct political traditions were united. Their conclusions were later developed even further by George Buchanan in his dialogue *De Iure Regni Apud Scotos* (written shortly after Mary Stuart's deposition by the Scottish nobility in 1567), where the whole difference between a king and a tyrant came to be seen in his attitude towards the laws of the country: the good king respects them, the tyrant violates them and therefore is to be punished (see Mason and Smith in Buchanan 2004).

The various tyrannical characters appearing on the Elizabethan stage from the 1560s[9] onwards re-proposed those patterns. The protagonist of Thomas Preston's *Cambises* (1560-1561, printed 1569), a king who rules for his own pleasure, is represented as proud, deaf to good advice, intemperate, cruel, and suspicious (cf. Dall'Olio 2017, 491-2). This characterisation would be revised in the light of Seneca's tragedies, first translated into English in the 1550s and 1560s, which would offer Elizabethan playwrights a model of what we might call the 'psychology of the tyrant', i.e. a description of how a tyrannical personality is developed.[10] By an interesting coincidence, precisely

[8] See Woodbridge 2010, 138-49, for this literature of resistance and its impact on the description of tyranny.

[9] I exclude here earlier theatrical genres such as mystery and morality plays, although the character of Herod may be considered a forerunner of the Elizabethan tyrants: cf. Bushnell 1990, 106-15.

[10] This justifies the great interest of the young members of the future Elizabethan elite in these works: as Jessica Winston argues, translating Seneca was a way to 'study' the mechanisms of power and prepare themselves for their future as statesmen (see Winston 2008). Linda Woodbridge goes further, and proposes to consider the translation of the Senecan corpus

in 1587, the year *Tamburlaine* was first staged, Thomas Hughes' tragedy *The Misfortunes of Arthur* was performed before the Queen (cf. Dall'Olio 2017, 492-4). The antagonist of the play, Mordred, is an almost exact embodiment of the tyrant as conceived by the Elizabethan culture of the time: he desires the throne in order to satisfy his ambition, is deaf to good advice, and refuses to give up, even when tormented by dark fears about his future. Although the plot of the tragedy does not allow him to demonstrate a particularly vicious behaviour, his insistence on always seeking the satisfaction of his own desires is enough to qualify him as a tyrant. There is a new element in Mordred's characterisation, which puts Hughes' tragedy in tone with an important development of Elizabethan political theory. During the 1570s and 1580s, Elizabeth promoted the birth of a new official theory, according to which it was only permissible for subjects to rebel against a sovereign whose title was illegitimate. If the king ruled with a legitimate title, instead, subjects were forbidden to rebel against him, even if he proved a bad king: in that case, they could only pray God for deliverance (see Armstrong 1946, 161-81; Bevington 1968, 141-67; Dall'Olio 2017, 477-8). In *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, Mordred usurped Arthur's throne, and this is presented as both a consequence and a confirmation of his tyrannical inclinations.

This is an important point, because the identification between usurpation and tyranny constitutes the main reason for which Marlowe's protagonist is recognised as a tyrant. When Tamburlaine first appears on stage, in *Tamb. 1* 1.2, one of the first things he does is to refuse his 'natural' social status: "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove, / And yet a shepherd by my parentage" (*Tamb. 1* 1.2.34-5). Immediately after, he affirms his intention "to be a terror to the world, / Measuring the limits of [my] empery / By east and west as Phoebus doth his course" (39-41). The foundation of an empire is presented as a consequence of Tamburlaine's revolt against the established social order, in the name of a personal desire for kingship.[11] It is then no coincidence that the first recurrence of the

a proper 'resistance project' against tyranny (see Woodbridge 2010, 141-62).

[11] For the relation between Tamburlaine's attitude and the class conflicts in Elizabethan England see Vitkus 2003, 67; Thornton Burnett 2004, 130-1;

term 'tyranny' in connection to Tamburlaine's rule is to be found in the mouth of Mycetes, the first sovereign deposed by Tamburlaine: "I know not how to take their tirannies" (*Tamb. 1* 2.7.41). This is the first in a long list of passages, where the several opponents of Tamburlaine either call him a tyrant or define his actions towards them as 'tyranny', thus highlighting both his cruelty and the illegitimacy of his power, borne out of the 'unnatural' ambition of a peasant aspiring to go beyond his status. In the last of those recurrences, this is made explicit: in promising Callapine victory, the King of Amasia calls Tamburlaine "that base-born tyrant" (*Tamb. 2* 5.2.18). Like with Hughes' Mordred, the usurpation of a throne is at the same time a consequence and a confirmation of the 'tyrannical' inclinations of Tamburlaine's personality.

Tamburlaine's response to the charges of illegitimacy also apparently fits into the traditional behaviour of a tyrant. Firstly, he dismisses them by defining his "tyrannies" as simply "war's justice" (*Tamb. 2* 4.1.145-6), thus refusing to consider them serious accusations. Then, he cruelly punishes those who utter them. Bajazeth (who calls Tamburlaine 'tyrant' thrice: *Tamb. 1* 4.2.10, 21, 100) is first used as a footstool, then caged and kept like a dog, Orcanes and his allies (collectively, they call Tamburlaine 'tyrant' six times, between *Tamb. 2* 4.1 and 4.3) are chained to Tamburlaine's chariot to train it, like horses. This resembles a dramatic pattern familiar to Elizabethan audiences: someone blames the tyrant for his actions, the tyrant first dismisses them and then either kills them or makes them suffer, as a punishment for having spoken. The most notable example can be found in Preston's *Cambises*, where the tyrant kills the son of one of his noblemen, Praxaspes, because he dared reprimand him for his drunkenness.[12] On the surface, Marlowe seems to replicate the same pattern with Tamburlaine and his victims.

And yet, here we also see the first of the many differences between Tamburlaine and his predecessors. Traditionally, when

Grogan 2014, 128-9; Ragni 2018, 88-91.

[12] The story comes from Herodotus (Hdt. 3.34.1-5) and Seneca (*De ira* 3.14.1-2), and enjoyed some fortune as a traditional *exemplum* about wrath: see Dall'Olio 2020, 114-20.

a tyrant punishes someone who dares to reprimand him, this character is either a good adviser trying to counsel the tyrant or an innocent refusing to submit to his unjust desires. In *Tamburlaine*, the kings humiliated by the protagonist are "all shown to be power-hungry infidels" (Whitfield White 2004, 71), none so virtuous that the audience should feel he is suffering unjustly.[13] Tamburlaine never punishes any of his friends or loved ones, even in the few instances they contradict him.[14] What is more, all his acts of cruelty, both those towards the defeated kings and those towards innocents (as the virgins of Damascus), are all presented as part of his self-representation as "the scourge and wrath of God" (*Tamb. 1* 3.2.44). The traditional datum of the tyrant's cruelty is thus transformed: Tamburlaine's deeds resemble a lucid political strategy,[15] rather than the inordinate actions of a disordinate personality.

This reinterpretation of Tamburlaine's cruelty is indicative of how Marlowe re-elaborates the traditional portrayal of the tyrant: while the actions and words of the character seemingly fit the conventional depiction of the tyrant, at the same time they are either set in a context which gives them a very different meaning, or developed in a way which deprives them of every evil undertone. Tamburlaine's treatment of Zenocrate is particularly significant in that regard. If their first encounter can be interpreted as an "offensive rape" (*Tamb. 1* 3.2.6), and as such it fits one of the traditional crimes for a tyrant, lust, the subsequent evolution of their relationship paints a much more complex picture. On the one hand, Zenocrate

[13] Zenocrate does pity Bajazeth and Zabina in *Tamb. 1* 5.2.289-91, and invites the audience to "behold the Turk and his great empress" (291, 295, 299) as a testament to the fickleness of Fortune, but nothing in Bajazeth's characterisation presents him as a virtuous king suffering unjustly. On the contrary, he is a representation of 'the Turk' as the enemy of Christianity: see Vitkus 2003, 72-4.

[14] The only notable exception is the killing of his son Calyphas, but that happens the third time Calyphas refuses to follow in his footsteps: the first two times it happened, Tamburlaine only chastised him.

[15] For Tamburlaine's exploitation of his self-representation, see Whitfield White 2004, 72-3, 86; as for the suffering of the innocents, "Elizabethan providential theory agreed that many good people suffer when entire nations are scourged" (Whitfield White 2004, 71).

comes to truly love Tamburlaine, becoming his fervent admirer (cf. Ragni 2018, 90); on the other, while somehow continuing to regard her as a prey of war,[16] not only does Tamburlaine not abuse her, but even goes so far as to temporarily alter his behaviour out of love for her. Their exchange at *Tamb. 1* 4.4 is particularly significant. During a banquet Tamburlaine notices that Zenocrate seems sad, and asks her why; she replies that she suffers from the ongoing war between Tamburlaine and her father, and pleads for a truce. This scene recalls a similar one in Preston's *Cambises*, also set in the context of a banquet. There, Cambises noticed that his wife wept, and asked her the reason. When she replied that she was mourning the fate of Smirdis (Cambises' brother, killed by the king for fear that he would steal his throne), Cambises orders her immediate killing. The dramatic movement of the two scenes is very similar (we could even suspect Marlowe is purposely rewriting Preston's scene),[17] but it also highlights how starkly different its conclusion is: Tamburlaine, unlike Cambises, does not punish Zenocrate, and even promises her to spare her loved ones (4.4.84-9). Later, in his only soliloquy in the entire play (5.2.72-127), the conqueror admits to being touched by Zenocrate's pain, and after a brief debate with himself, accepts to be vanquished by love.[18] Consequently, not only does he spare her father the Sultan's life, but he also restores his kingdom to him after the battle (5.3.384-6), in a scene that seems to represent the birth of a new order after the upheaval brought about

[16] See Thornton Burnett 2004, 135-6, for Zenocrate as a symbol of Tamburlaine's power. However, I find it excessive to conclude that "Tamburlaine aestethicize[s] . . . Zenocrate in such a way as to rob her of a meaningful sexuality" (id., 135).

[17] Thomas Preston's tragedy enjoyed a lasting fortune well beyond the 1560s, with reprints in 1581, 1584 and 1590. It would not be unlikely, then, for Marlowe to craft a scene reminding the audience of *Cambises*, in order to highlight the novelty of his creation. It is also worth noticing that, while Bajazeth's mistreatment can be found in Marlowe's sources, the character of Zenocrate, and everything regarding her, is his own invention.

[18] Cf. Rhodes 2013, 209-10 on the reprisal of concepts and ideas from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in the soliloquy. The story of Tamburlaine and Zenocrate is itself modelled on that of Cyrus and Panthea in Xenophon's work: see Grogan 2014, 130.

by his conquests (cf. Thornton Burnett 2004, 134).[19] The destroyer Tamburlaine is shown here to be capable of sincere affection, which is in stark contrast with the traditional description of the tyrant as a lustful ravisher of women.

The relationship between Tamburlaine and his friends is another aspect of his figure where Marlowe's hero emerges as radically different from the traditional tyrant. At the beginning of the tragedy, as he persuades Theridamas to desert his king and join him, Tamburlaine proudly presents his other two followers, Techelles and Usumcasane, as "my friends in whom I more rejoice" (*Tamb. 1* 1.2.241). He promises Theridamas that "by the love of Pylades and Orestes / . . . Thyself and them shall never part from me" (1.2.243, 245). The allusion to the well-known classical example of perfect friendship is by no means ironic: on the contrary, Tamburlaine keeps his friends close throughout the tragedy and constantly rewards their loyalty. In turn, Techelles, Usumcasane and Theridamas turn into 'inferior' versions of him: in their first appearance in *Part Two* (*Tamb. 2* 1.6.47-91), they proudly describe to Tamburlaine how they have continued to enlarge his empire, in words that sound in every way identical to his (see Vitkus 2003, 74). While the tyrant described by La Primaudaye does not tolerate the presence of virtuous men around him (also because he is afraid they would take away his power), Tamburlaine openly seeks it out, exhibits it as a further demonstration of his skill as a ruler, and never doubts their loyalty towards him.[20]

The only other instance of tyrannical inclinations (aside from cruelty) in Tamburlaine's character can be found in his desire for riches, which recalls the traditional datum of the tyrant's greed.

[19] Tamburlaine's decision could also be interpreted as an act of Realpolitik, made to confirm his power through the use of clemency. In this case, it would recall Julius Caesar and his well-known use of *clementia* as a political tool: a not unlikely conclusion, since one of the models for the characterisation of Marlowe's hero is the portrayal of the Roman dictator in Lucan's *Pharsalia* (see Ward 2008, 318-27).

[20] On that subject, Tamburlaine, as many scholars noticed, "never loses faith in himself or falls into despair" (Ward 2008, 321). He thus avoids completely one of the most traditional features of the tyrant's portrayal, fear (on which see the essays presented in Bigliazzi 2017).

However, just like cruelty, this apparently traditional feature is also deeply reformulated. Unlike La Primaudaye's tyrant, Tamburlaine does not strip his subjects to enrich himself: his desire for material wealth is aimed at other lands and other kings. It is not even wealth in itself that he desires: the possession of riches is part of his more general desire for glory. This aspect appears from Tamburlaine's first scene in the play, when the prisoner Zenocrate begs him to free her by demanding a ransom, and Tamburlaine disdainfully refuses (*Tamb. 1* 1.2.84): "Think you I weigh this treasure more than you?". The same answer he gives later to Bajazeth, when the defeated Turk king also asks to put a ransom on him: "What, think'st thou Tamburlaine esteems thy gold?" (*Tamb. 1* 3.3.262). Both times he proves not to be the "sturdy Scythian thief" (*Tamb. 1* 1.1.36), "famous for nothing but for theft and spoil" (*Tamb. 1* 4.3.66) some of his enemies regard him as. This leitmotiv shall continue in *Part 2*, where Tamburlaine shows he loves his sons "more . . . / Than all the wealthy kingdoms I subdued" (*Tamb. 2* 1.4.18-19), and declares (not unjustly) to have become "arch-monarch of the world . . . / For deeds of bounty and nobility" (*Tamb. 2* 4.1.149, 151). Once again, then, Marlowe offers a new spin on a traditional element: while Tamburlaine's lust for conquest does show a materialistic side (see Vitkus 2003, 73-5), nothing in this behaviour shows him to just covet riches to enrich himself, as a traditional tyrant.

To sum up, the protagonist of *Tamburlaine* is characterised in a way that makes it impossible to place him completely within the traditional portrayal of a tyrant. While Tamburlaine does present some fundamental aspects of this figure, such as cruelty, ambition and to some extent greed, those are revised in a way that goes beyond their traditional viewing. The result is that Tamburlaine ends up being almost the opposite of his predecessors: while Cambises and Mordred are negative characters overwhelmed by uncontrolled passions, Tamburlaine is instead shown as always in control of his impulses, capable of either turning them to virtuous conclusions or simply keeping them in check (and, in the case of cruelty, even using them to confirm his power). This contributes to make him (unlike his predecessors) a paradigm of success: the presence in his personality of tyrannical inclinations never turns into weaknesses that either hinder his path to power, or acts as

indicators that something is not right within his kingdom or himself. On the contrary, sometimes the play seems to suggest that those same tyrannical traits are a vital component to his success. Such a suggestion brings Marlowe's play close to two other texts of the time, two paradoxical praises of tyrants, where the traditional condemnation of such figures was reversed, and they were shown as model of ideal kingship.

## 3. Who is Really a Tyrant?

> Saepe numero accidit in iudicio ferendo . . . ut deterior pars meliorem vincat. Etenim orta . . . vulgari opinione, quod Nero improbus esset, ac crudelis, adeo permanavit in omnium mentes . . . ut . . . si quis contradicere, vel illum laudare tentet, paradoxa dicere videatur.
>
> [It often happens that, in making a judgement . . . the negative element takes precedence over the positive one. Thus, when the vulgar opinion arose . . . that Nero had been dishonest and cruel, it entered so far into the minds of all . . . that . . . if anyone ever says otherwise or tries to praise him, he appears to be telling a paradox][21]

Right from the start the *Neronis encomium* by the Milanese physician and philosopher Girolamo Cardano (printed 1562) clearly states its thesis: the tradition that portrays Nero as a cruel and bloodthirsty tyrant is the result of collective ignorance. Nero, on the contrary, was a shining example of good governance, slandered after his death by the senate "in exemplum caeterorum qui regnaturi essent ne talia adversus illos auderent satagebant" ("to warn future rulers not to give any hostile attitude towards them"). This sentence alone is sufficient to make clear that the work is much more than a simple literary game: Cardano's revisionism of the historical perspective on Nero is a form of social criticism.

Starting from a re-examination of the accounts of Suetonius and Tacitus, the philosopher goes so far as to explicitly challenge the entire Humanist educational tradition, guilty of not having been able to define well "qualis sit optimus princeps" ("what makes the worthiest prince") and "quae . . . sint officia optimi principis"

[21] I quote the Latin text from Cardano 1562, 138; all translations are mine.

("what are the duties of the worthiest prince"). On the contrary, the Humanist writers mixed up and confused the information so much "ut optimi habeantur tyranni, improbi vero qui optime regunt" ("that excellent rulers are considered tyrants and evil ones excellent rulers"). With his rehabilitation of Nero, Cardano intends to propose a complete reinterpretation of the model of the good king and create the alternative model of a ruler who would really do what is good for the State – that is, combat the excessive power of the nobility and support the lower classes, re-establishing an authentic social justice.[22] Nero, says Cardano, tried to do that during his ill-fated reign, and failed only because Fortune was adverse.

The mention of Fortune reveals the influence of Machiavelli's political theories on Cardano's thought. Other traces of such an influence can be found in other passages.[23] In defending Nero against the accusation of cruelty, i.e. of having committed crimes without motive, Cardano points out how the emperor either killed people who were a danger to him or the state (such as Britannicus or Agrippina), or acted 'cruelly' only against the guilty. His was therefore a "crudelitas . . . opportuna", of which "nulla melior ad continendum regna" ("cruelty . . . in time and place . . . most useful to preserve the kingdom"). The passage is a reprise of Machiavelli's definition of "crudeltà bene usate . . . che si fanno . . . per la necessità dello assicurarsi"[24] ("well-used crimes . . . made . . . to ensure power"). Cardano also rejects the historiographical tradition of enumerating Nero's private vices: "Quae delinquit princeps in saevitia, in rapinis, in iudiciis, non tuendo fines imperii, populum premendo fame, haec principis sunt vitia. At si immodice se vino dedat, aut crapulae, aut libidini, aut aleae, aut delicatiori vitae: haec non malum principem

[22] To this end, Cardano ventures into two lengthy digressions, the first aimed at demonstrating which is the fairest form of government, and the other how the solidity of the state depends on the prince's ability to keep the authoritarian tendencies of the nobles at bay. See Di Branco in Cardano 2008, 25-34 for the connection between these passages and the political conditions of the Duchy of Milan at the time.

[23] The idea that the prince must support and favour the poor is derived by Machiavelli's *Discourses over the first decade by Livy*: cf. Di Branco in Cardano 2008, 19-25.

[24] I quote the Italian text from Machiavelli 2020; my translation.

efficiunt" ("The vices of a prince are cruelty, robbery, unjust judgments, failure to defend the borders of the empire, reducing the people to starvation, not an inordinate love of wine, good food, sex, gambling or a life devoted to pleasures"). Here too, Cardano is expanding on a concept present in *The Prince*, where Machiavelli distinguished between the vices the prince needed to avoid, "quelli . . . che gli torrebbono lo stato" ("those . . . that would take away his state"), and the others, from which he should "guardarsi, s'e' gli è possibile: ma non possendo, vi si può con meno respetto lasciare andare" ("beware if it is possible: if not, he can indulge in them with fewer scruples").

The two passages show how much Cardano departs from traditional Humanist political thought and its usual association of bad kingship with vicious personality. To Cardano, the sovereign's personality is irrelevant if he, in his public activity, nevertheless pursues the common good;[25] he even affirms that some crimes can be justified as the deed more profitable for the state: "plura sunt . . . quae sub pietatis specie fiunt, apud Deum maxime impia" ("many acts . . . that are done with religious scruples are often the most ungodly").[26] Nero's cruelty falls into the latter category, also because, as Cardano shows, the emperor tried instead to be mild anytime he could. In the face of this fundamentally just attitude, it matters little that he was too devoted to certain pleasures such as theatre or sex.

Another criticism that Cardano makes against the previous Humanist tradition concerns the lack of consideration of the historical context: "Compara, si recte libet iudicare, homines hominibus, tempora temporibus, non simpliciter hominum facta" ("If you want to judge rightly, compare men with men and times with times, not simply human actions"). In this, Cardano is following the

[25] In this, Cardano anticipates a development of European political theory that will be fully realised in the 1570s: see Bushnell 1990, 49.

[26] Yet another echo of a notorious passage of *The Prince*: "se si considera bene tutto, si troverà qualche cosa che parrà virtù, e seguendola sarebbe la ruina sua: e qualcuna altra che parrà vizio, e seguendola ne nasce la sicurtà e il bene essere suo" ("if one considers everything well, one will find something that will seem virtue, and following it would be its ruin: and some other that will seem vice, and following it would be its safety and good being").

example of contemporary historians such as François Baudouin (*De institutione historiae universae*, 1561) and Jean Bodin (*Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, 1566). As highlighted by Anthony Grafton, both these authors, in contrast with the previous Humanist way of writing history, "emphasized the need to read in a critical manner, with an eye always on the credibility of the sources" and argued that the historian had to be capable "to set events into their political and legal contexts" to better understand them (Grafton 2007, 68-9). Cardano's aforementioned critical reading of Suetonius and Tacitus, and his insistence on judging Nero's actions according to the ethos of his time perfectly fits within this method. This allows Cardano to show how good Nero was in mitigating the abuses of the powerful, thus proving he was a true servant of the laws, and not the tyrant described by previous historical tradition.

To sum up, with his *Neronis encomium*, Girolamo Cardano presents a profound critique of the traditional Humanist political theory. He accuses his predecessors of endorsing the ideal of a sovereign that served to sustain an unjust social system. They ignored both what the true duties of a sovereign were and what was important in determining the goodness of their reign, and focused instead on an abstract ideal divorced from history. With Nero, Cardano proposes a different model of a sovereign, ready to be cruel if the good of the state requires it, but only against the powerful, while instead showing mercy to everyone else and acting justly towards the poor, of which he defends the rights. Cardano's *Neronis encomium* is ultimately a work of rupture, where the literary genre of paradox is used to promote 'subversive' ideals in the name of social justice.

By a curious coincidence, it was precisely in England that Cardano would find an imitator. It is probable that William Cornwallis the Younger's "Praise of King Richard the Third"[27] (printed in 1616, but probably written in the 1590s: cf. Medori in Cornwallis 2018-2019, 8-9) took the *Neronis encomium* as its model, as the presence of a direct quotation from Cardano in the text seems to prove (*Culpatur factu, non ob aliud, quam exitum*; "they

[27] The authorship of this text has long been questioned, but scholars now agree that it belongs to Cornwallis: see Medori, Cornwallis 2018-2019, 9.

approve, or disprove all things by the ending", Cornwallis 1616, C2*r.*). Anyway, even if Cornwallis is not directly imitating Cardano, still he is undeniably moving in a similar direction. As the Italian author did with Nero, so Cornwallis, in presenting Richard III as the victim of an erroneous popular opinion, reviews all the crimes traditionally imputed to him. He either reverses them into positive actions, or points out that there is no definitive proof of his guilt, at the same time emphasising the goodness of his government: "He was no taxer of the people, no oppressor of the commons . . . no suppressor of his subjects, to satisfy either licentious humours, or to enrich light-headed flatterers" (Cornwallis 1616, C2*v.*).

The terminology of this sentence, with its use of terms specific to English political culture, highlights the biggest difference between Cornwallis and Cardano: as a whole, the "Praise of King Richard the Third" lacks the polemical edge of the *Neronis encomium*. While Cardano used his historical revision to denounce an entire cultural tradition, Cornwallis merely accuses the sovereign's contemporaries of being biased towards Richard.[28] Also absent from Cornwallis' text are the digressions about the nature of the excellent prince and his actions. If the Italian author set out to question the political theory of European Humanism, his English colleague merely attempts to re-evaluate an ill-treated historical figure.[29] This is not to say that Cornwallis' text does not contain some provocative passages. Following Cardano, Cornwallis justifies the killing of Edward V and his brothers as necessary for the welfare of the country: "The removing such occasions of civil wars in a well-ruled commonwealth, is most profitable, most commendable; being no cruelty, but pity, a jealousy of their subjects, and a zealous regard of their own safeties" (Cornwallis 1616, C4*r.*). We find in this

[28] Not just them: Cornwallis also accuses his own contemporaries, who prefer to give credence to "the partial writings of indiscreet chroniclers and witty play-makers, than his [Richard's] laws and action" (1616, C3*r.*). We do not know whether Cornwallis includes Shakespeare among the "play-makers"; in any case, Richard III had also starred in other plays: see Medori, Cornwallis 2018-2019, 40n61.

[29] The work ends with an afterword, "Yet for all this know, I hold this but a paradox" (Cornwallis 1616, E3*r.*), which can be seen as an attempt to defuse any possible 'subversive' reading.

passage traces of the Machiavellian theory of the necessary cruelty: a significant presence, given the poor reputation of Machiavelli's theories in England.[30]

More interesting still are two brief theoretical digressions in Cornwallis' text. The first concerns the principle that subjects cannot really judge the actions of kings. Firstly, their knowledge of facts is limited: "our knowledge extends to things equal or inferior . . . in terrene matters (if surpassing our estates) they are only snatched at by supposition" (506-7, 508-10). Secondly, very often the judgement of subjects does not take into account that "what is meet, expedient in a Prince, in a lower fortune is utterly unmeet, inexpedient" (497-9). In a sense, here Cornwallis is going further than Cardano: if the Italian philosopher was declaring the fallibility of the traditional model of the sovereign, Cornwallis is declaring its inadequacy. Kings move on another plane than their subjects, therefore any judgement on their actions requires the assumption of a different perspective. In this, one can see the insistence of the Elizabethan official ideology on affirming the sacredness of kingship as an institution beyond the behaviour of the person.[31] In the hands of Cornwallis, this same principle becomes the justification for a kind of ethical *aporia*: not only does it justify acts of cruelty as responding to a logic other than that of morality, but it also suggests that if it is not possible to know exactly what motivates the actions of kings, then any moral judgement is worthless.

Along similar lines is the second digression concerning ambition, presented as a 'natural' condition of kings: "Princes are naturally ambitious . . . ambition makes them to effect their desire . . . princes err against nature, if they aspire not" (1-2, 7-8). Richard's decision to take the throne is thus also justified on the basis of this 'naturalness'

[30] Which however did not prevent his dissemination. *The Prince* was translated twice in English, and both translations survive in manuscript form: see Petrina 2009. On the *PLRE*, a Latin translation of *The Prince* is found in the library of a scholar, Edward Higgins, in 1588 (149.106), and a French translation of the *Discourses* in that of a Member of Parliament, Sir William Fairfax, in 1591 (264.11).

[31] It is the famous theory of the 'two bodies' of the king, which English jurists transferred from the ecclesiastical to the secular sphere to strengthen the monarchy: see Mack 1973, 7.

of ambition as a characteristic worthy of a prince. Cornwallis even goes so far as to say that Richard "wanted nothing to make him an accomplished Prince, but that he was not ambitious enough" (1616, C3*r.*). This notation is particularly interesting because, as we saw, ambition is the tyrant's original sin in Elizabethan political theory. In his attempt to demonstrate how Richard was an excellent ruler, Cornwallis thus ends up advocating that the benefit for a prince to assume 'tyrannical' characteristics such as ambition and 'necessary' cruelty. In this, Cornwallis' praise truly denounces an ideal proximity to *Tamburlaine* and Marlowe's questioning of the model of the tyrant that we saw in Part 1.

## 4. The Good Tyrant

> It is written of him that in all his assaults . . . he usually would hang out to be seen of the enemy an ensign white, for the space of one full day, which signified . . . that if those within would in that day yield them, he then would take them to mercy without any their loss of life or goods. . . . The third day he ever displayed the third [ensign] all black, signifying thereby that he then had shut up his gates from all compassion and clemency, in such sort that whosoever were in that day taken . . . should assuredly die for it . . . Whence assuredly it cannot be said that he was very cruel, though otherwise adorned with many rare virtues. But it is to be supposed that God stirred him up an instrument to chastise these princes, these proud and wicked nations.

The passage comes from one of Marlowe's sources, Pedro de Mexia's *Silva de Varia Leción* in the English translation by Thomas Fortescue (1571).[32] Up to this point, Tamburlaine has been praised as an ideal leader, and it is therefore with some reservation that the author has to tell about the cruelty shown by him against innocents, thus acknowledging the presence of a negative psychological element amidst his hero's virtues. The passage is indicative of the ambiguity underlying the figure of Tamburlaine in all of Marlowe's sources, where on the one hand "the Mongol conqueror" was "extolled

[32] I quote Fortescue's translation in the version found in Thomas and Tyndelman 1994, 88.

. . . as a modern hero" (Ribner 1954, 354), but on the other each author inevitably had to also relate the stories concerning his cruel behaviour. Usually, the answer was the same as in Fortescue: pointing out the providential framework behind Tamburlaine's actions, so that the tyrant's cruelties would fall within his nature as a heaven-sent scourge.

As underlined by many studies, in his tragedy Marlowe questions such an interpretation of Tamburlaine's story (cf. Vitkus 2003, 59-64; Whitfield White 2004, 70-3). Despite several characters invoking a divine help, no action in the play can be clearly identified as the result of a heavenly intervention; and as for Tamburlaine's claims to be an heaven-sent scourge, those are heavily put in doubt by the tyrant constantly changing the identity of the God whose will he is supposed to perform.[33] No providentialist explanation can then be applied to the action of *Tamburlaine*, which means that the negative sides of the protagonist's character can no longer be dismissed as a side-effect of a divine plan. This strengthens the paradox of his figure as it has been described in Part 1: the elimination of a providential framework makes it even more difficult to determine whether Tamburlaine is to be regarded more as a good king whose positive upward parabola leads to the founding of a new empire, or a bloodthirsty tyrant who conquers power with a skilfully planned use of violence.

From this point of view, Tamburlaine's ambiguity recalls that of another central figure in Elizabethan culture: Cyrus the Great,[34] founder of the Persian empire and recognised figure of ideal ruler in Renaissance culture, thanks above all to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, a founding text of Humanist educational literature (see Grogan 2007, 65-7).[35] In England, the work had been read in universities since the

[33] The final impression is either that this is mainly a political strategy to justify his actions (as suggested by Whitfield White), or that the true God whose cult Tamburlaine is spreading is actually himself (see Ragni 2018).

[34] Marlowe was not the first to establish a comparison between Tamburlaine and Cyrus: Fortescue's aforementioned biography opened with an episode in which the boy Tamburlaine, elected king in jest by his peers, already proves himself adept at ruling (cf. Thomas and Tydeman 1994, 84), just as Cyrus in Hdt 1.114.1-2.

[35] On the fortune of the *Cyropaedia* in the Renaissance see Humble 2017,

1540s, and then translated in its entirety by William Barker (1567), who extolled the character of Cyrus as an emblem of a perfect sovereign, ruler of an ideal country where all citizens are subject to a strict social education regarding civic virtues. This made Xenophon's text, Barker pointed out, an educational text not only for princes, but also for subjects (see Grogan 2014, 50-2, 55-6). And yet, just as for Tamburlaine, for Cyrus too this official exemplary status concealed a far more ambiguous assessment. On the one hand, a different cultural tradition derived from the Middle Ages, and supported in the Renaissance by the rediscovery of Herodotus' *Histories* (whose first two books were printed in English translation in 1584), presented a very different portrayal of Cyrus as a haughty tyrant (see Grogan 2013, 32-4). On the other hand, the *Cyropaedia* lent itself to a reversed interpretation of Cyrus' exemplarity: the Persian king's rise to power in Xenophon's text hints at aspects of violence, cruelty and deception (cf. Newell 1988, 118-21; Grogan 2014, 60-4). This ambiguity justifies the 'sceptical reading' of the *Cyropaedia* in Machiavelli's *Prince*, where Cyrus is described as a shrewd politician capable of making his people respect him so as to better satisfy his own ambitions.

All these aspects can be found in the figure of Tamburlaine, whose path in the tragedy recalls in its dramatic structure that of Xenophon's Cyrus (see Rhodes 2013, 209-12), and whose behaviour can well be interpreted in the light of the Machiavellian 'sceptical' reading of the *Cyropaedia*.[36] As Cyrus, Tamburlaine avoids giving in to vices that would alienate the favour of his allies (he respects and honours Zenocrate, always rewards his friends, does not deprive his subjects of their riches) and instead commits those that serve to demonstrate and consolidate his power (he has no mercy for his enemies, shows no respects for divine or human laws, robs and pillages the lands of other kings). Tamburlaine thus retains the exemplary stature he has in the sources, but with a very different meaning: the providentialist theory that justified Tamburlaine's crimes as a consequence of a divine will is replaced by the more

418-23, 426-30 and, more recently, Humble 2020.

[36] Irving Ribner already recognised an influence of Machiavelli's theories on Tamburlaine's characterisation: see id. 1954, 354-6.

'concrete' ideal of a ruler capable of behaving in the right way in order to gain and retain power.

In this respect, *Tamburlaine, Part One* presents some really interesting contacts with the fore-mentioned reappraisals of Nero and Richard III in the texts of Cardano and Cornwallis. We could even say that Tamburlaine sometimes seems to be a sort of scenic correspondent of the 'good tyrant' described in the two paradoxes: he 'performs' those aspects of Nero and Richard III's behaviour praised by Cardano and Cornwallis, thus confirming himself as a 'new' model for the ideal king. If Cornwallis had justified ambition as a royal trait, and criticised Richard for not having enough of it, Tamburlaine's main psychological characteristic is boundless ambition, which leads him to his path of endless conquest (see above, p. 7). If Cardano had emphasised the irrelevance of the king's personal vices when they are not harmful to his action, by respecting Zenocrate Tamburlaine manages to reverse his bad reputation with Zenocrate's father and even win his respect, despite his original kidnapping. "I am pleased by my overthrow / If, as beseems a person of thy state, / Thou hast with honour used Zenocrate" (*Tamb. 1* 5.2.418-20), says the same Soldan that previously roared against "the rogue of Volga", that "holds . . . / the Soldan's daughter, for his concubine" (*Tamb. 1* 4.1.5-6). If, finally, both authors affirmed the necessity of crimes to maintain power, Tamburlaine's use of spectacular acts of violence is shown as pivotal in striking terror and spreading his fame among his enemies, as shown by the fear of the Governor of Tyrus for his city: "I fear the custom proper to his sword, / Which he observes as parcel of his fame / Intending so to terrify the world" (*Tamb. 1* 5.1.13-5). The two paradoxes and Marlowe's tragedy thus find themselves united in the common attempt to propose a new conception of the ideal sovereign, one where the 'goodness' of a king is determined by his ability to act in the best way for the state or for himself.

It remains to be understood how *Tamburlaine, Part Two* fits in this framework, since the differences between the two parts are so profound that many critics have come to recognise them as dialectically opposed to each other (cf. Ribner 1954, 356; Vitkus 2003, 73-5; Wilson 2004, 214-7). Significant, in this regard, is the fact that Tamburlaine's first action in this play, the mourning for Zenocrate, is

also his first defeat (cf. Thornton Burnett 2004, 128). What follows is a series of events that denounce Tamburlaine's increasing difficulty to contain the world of drama within his will: his son Calyphas refuses to follow in his footsteps, and his follower Theridamas fails to repeat with Olympia the seduction Tamburlaine accomplished with Zenocrate (cf. Thornton Burnett 2004, 128-9). At the same time, some of the 'tyrannical' traits of Tamburlaine's personality also tend to worsen. The desire for riches seems to become sometimes predominant over that for glory, as emerges from both his speech in *Tamb. 2* 4.3.96-133 (with its images of pomp and triumph) and the one at the moment of his death. There, Tamburlaine laments he shall leave numerous parts of the world unconquered, and the description he gives of them insists more on their material wealth than on the glory he shall achieve from their conquering (on which see Vitkus 2003, 74-6). Also, his cruelty partially loses its function as a political tool and increasingly becomes a desperate attempt to maintain his grip on the world: the burning of the city where Zenocrate dies is borne out of pure personal pain, and the bridling of the Eastern kings resolves in the grotesque spectacle of a chariot almost unmovable (cf. Thornton Burnett 2004, 135-8). The ideal stature of Tamburlaine is thus lowered, and it is tempting to see "signs of Marlowe's disillusionment" (Ribner 1954, 356) in the ideals he expressed in *Part One*.

However, even with this unmistakable diversity of tone, *Tamburlaine Part Two* still retains the ideological foundations of *Part One*, as proven by the first two acts of the tragedy, dominated by the two stories of Callapine, son of Bajazeth, convincing his gaoler Almeda to let him go, and of the Christian king Sigismund's betrayal of his alliance with the Turk king Orcanes. The episodes mirror the first events of *Part One* (Tamburlaine persuading Theridamas and Tamburlaine betraying the Persian king Cosroe), those that had initiated the conqueror's rise to power, and the characters are represented as "mini-Tamburlaines" (Thornton Burnett 2004, 128). Both these elements serve as an ironic confirmation of how successful the new 'model' of ruler proposed by Tamburlaine is: even his enemies are now imitating him. The story of Sigismund also serves as the most explicit questioning of the providentalist political theory (see Vitkus 2003, 57-8; Whitfield White 2004, 72),

thus confirming its substantial refusal: the world created by Marlowe is confirmed to be a purely human world, where the actions of the characters only have to contend with Fortune.[37]

This establishes another link between tragedy and paradoxes. In the *Neronis encomium*, Cardano, as we saw, affirmed the importance for human actions of "bona fortuna quaedam, sine qua nil arduum inter mortalia perficere . . . licet" ("a certain good fortune, without which nothing serious can be achieved in the world"). In a lesser tone, Cornwallis suggested that only Fortune prevented Richard from being recognised as a good ruler: "had he lived . . . Fame would have been no more injurious to him than to his predecessors" (1616, C2*r*.). Marlowe's tragedy seems to offer a theatrical counterpart to what the two authors wrote. In *Tamburlaine, Part One*, Fortune had consistently been on Tamburlaine's side, so that he could not unreasonably boast to "hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with [his] hand turn Fortune's wheel about" (*Tamb. 1* 1.2.174-5). In *Tamburlaine Part Two*, the reverse is true: Fortune now is his enemy, and slowly but progressively works against him. However, this happens through no fault of him; in fact, despite the worsening of his 'tyrannical' inclinations, Tamburlaine commits no serious error that really undermines his power. He is still victorious on the battlefield, his friends remain loyal to him, and his sons agree to follow his example (Calyphas being the only exception). Even in the face of Fortune's blows, Tamburlaine never comes to a complete breaking down, and still succeeds in maintaining his power until the very end, where he states that the only reason he is now dying is that "those powers / That meant t'invest [him] in a higher throne" (*Tamb. 2* 5.3.120-1) have decided not to favour him anymore. And even at that moment, he dies surrounded by his friends and sons like Xenophon's Cyrus. *Tamburlaine Part Two* thus ends on a note which confirms the message of *Part One*, thus affirming once more the leading character as an exemplary model of a new type of ideal sovereign, where even his more negative, 'tyrannical' features are

[37] Ribner recognises in this conception of the world elements of a non-Christian, classical idea of history: see Ribner 1953. It is also possible to see an influence of Lucan, the Latin poet author of the *Pharsalia*, whose first book Marlowe translated: see Ward 2008, 318-29.

essential to his success.

## 5. Conclusion

Answering the question from which this article takes its cue: yes, Tamburlaine is a tyrant, but for Marlowe this is not a demerit. On the contrary, as it has been pointed out, in *Tamburlaine* the traits of the protagonist's character, which would traditionally identify him as a tyrant, are presented as part of a successful political action. Tamburlaine's 'tyranny' is not a negative model of sovereignty, but a positive alternative to the traditional one. In this sense, *Tamburlaine* can be interpreted as a paradoxical eulogy of a tyrant, similar to those of Nero and Richard III by Girolamo Cardano and William Cornwallis. There, the condemnation of the two tyrants was overturned in the name of a renewed, different conception of sovereignty, whose basis could be found in Machiavelli's writings. Some aspects of Tamburlaine's characterisation recall what was written by Cardano and Cornwallis in those texts: a proof, if not of direct influence, at least of Marlowe's careful reception of the political debate of Renaissance Europe at the time, which the young playwright thus represents on stage. It was a daring operation, which paved the way for the Elizabethan theatre to discuss, more or less covertly, political issues like what it means to be a king, how the latter differs from a tyrant, and how the latter comes into being.

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8

# Thomas and Dudley Digges on the Early Modern Stage: *Four Paradoxes* and English Renaissance Drama

Fabio Ciambella

Abstract

A few scholars have acknowledged the biographical connection between the Digges family and the circle of intellectuals who used to meet at the Mermaid Tavern, Cheapside, London, known as the Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen. Even playwrights such as Ben Jonson and John Fletcher, among others, attended the meetings of the circle, although some scholars doubt that William Shakespeare would have been part of the brotherhood. It is commonly believed, however, that Shakespeare and the Digges family had a close relationship, as evidenced by some extant documents and literary works. This article seeks to develop this topic further, showing whether and how Thomas and Dudley Digges's *Four Paradoxes* (1604) might have influenced or been influenced by English Renaissance drama. Interdiscursive echoes of *Four Paradoxes* have been acknowledged in such plays as Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, especially in relation to the Just War tradition. Nevertheless, the circulation of paradoxes and war discourse was so pervasive that a closer textual reading is necessary to identify strong points of contact between the Digges' work and early modern plays. For this reason, a lexicosemantic approach is adopted in this article to locate references to *Four Paradoxes* in plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, or vice versa.

Keywords: Digges; *Four Paradoxes*; interdiscursivity; William Shakespeare; Ben Jonson

## 1. The Digges and Early Modern English Playwrights: Some Biographical Happenstances?

A few scholars have investigated possible biographical connections between the Digges family and early modern intellectuals and playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, or John

Fletcher, among others (see, for instance, Falk 2014, 162-9; Feinstein 2020; Hadfield 2020). Moving from alleged biographical circumstances, then considering intertextual and interdiscursive echoes between Thomas and Dudley Digges's *Four Paradoxes* (1604) and the English Renaissance drama, this article aims at understanding whether it is possible to establish a relation between the Digges' warfare treatise and war discourse on the early modern English stage.

Most researchers focus on possible direct or indirect – i.e., through a third party – connections between Dudley (1583-1639) and his younger brother Leonard (1588-1635) with William Shakespeare (1564-1616), since they were contemporaries and probably had common acquaintances, as we are about to see.[1]

First of all, a biographical datum suggests that Dudley Digges and Shakespeare may have been acquainted. When Dudley's father Thomas died in 1595, his mother Anne St Leger re-married Thomas Russell of Alderminster (near Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire), one of the two overseers of Shakespeare's will, along with Francis Collins.[2] Moreover, Shakespeare showed some gratitude towards Russell, declaring in his testament that he wanted to "give and bequeath . . . to Thomas Russell, Esquire, five pounds" (see note 2 above for bibliographical references). It has been said that it was Russell who suggested his younger stepson Leonard Digges embark upon a career as a writer and translator from Spanish, and due to Russell's connection with the playwright, Leonard "probably knew Shakespeare personally" (Vickers 1974, 27).

[1] Given the topic and aims of this essay, I will mainly deal with connections between Dudley Digges and English Renaissance drama, since his father Thomas died (in 1595) before Shakespeare's mature period and his younger brother Leonard did not contribute to the writing and collection of *Four Paradoxes*. For a thorough examination of Leonard Digges' connections with Shakespeare, see Hadfield 2020, esp. 4-13.

[2] As stated in Shakespeare's last will and testament: "And I do entreat and appoint the said Thomas Russell, Esquire, and Francis Collins, gent., to be overseers hereof" (the modernised transcription of Shakespeare's last will and testament is available at https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/document/william-shakespeares-last-will-and-testament-original-copy-including-three (Accessed 12 March 2022).

Nevertheless, neither Leonard's prefatory poem to the First Folio, nor his commendatory verses to the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's *Poems*, establish any kind of personal acquaintance between the two authors. Similarly, in a handwritten note to a third edition of Lope de Vega's *Rimas* (1613) that Leonard's friend James Mabbe gave their mutual acquaintance William Baker, Leonard inserted a short comment comparing Lope de Vega and Shakespeare, acknowledging them as the national poets of Spain and England, respectively, yet not exhibiting any personal connection with the English playwright.[3] Leonard demonstrates he is a keen admirer of Shakespeare, one who knows his works quite well[4] and who attended performances of his plays many times. Nevertheless, his dedicatory verses focus on the eternalisation of Shakespeare's works and his persona,[5] and their resistance to time, but Leonard provides no biographical data suggesting some sort of acquaintance between them.

Dudley Digges's direct connections with Shakespeare seem to be even more improbable than his younger brother's. Frank Kermode was possibly one of the first scholars to be convinced that Dudley Digges and Shakespeare knew each other. In his introduction to the first Arden edition of *The Tempest*, Kermode asserts that Shakespeare had acquaintances among the members of the Virginia Company of London, one expedition of which was shipwrecked in the Bermuda Isles in 1609. The account of this shipwreck by William Strachey (initially suppressed by members of the Company for its

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[3] "Will Baker: Knowing that Mr. Mab: was to send you this book of sonnets, which with Spaniards here is accounted of their Lope de Vega as in England we should of our Will Shakespeare. I could not but insert thus much to you, that if you like him not, you must never never read Spanish poet. Leo: Digges".

[4] Nevertheless, he is wrong when he bombastically states, in the poem published in 1640, that "he doth not borrow, / One phrase from Greeks, nor Latins imitate / Nor once from vulgar languages translate, / Not plagiary-like from others glean" (12-15).

[5] In the prefatory poem to the First Folio, for example, Digges mentions "thy Stratford monument" (4) which, according to Park Honan, is the "earliest allusion to the playwright's monument at Holy Trinity church" (2001, 112).

accusations, then published by Samuel Purchas in 1625 as A *True Repertory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, July Fifteenth, Sixteen Hundred and Ten),* known as the Strachey letter, was probably one of the main manuscript sources for Shakespeare's romance:

> Shakespeare's knowledge of this unpublished work . . . makes it probable that he was deeply interested in the story. He was certainly acquainted with members of the Virginia Company . . . He also knew . . . certainly Sir Dudley Digges, ardent in the Virginian Cause, whose brother Leonard contributed memorial verses to the First Folio, and whose mother married Thomas Russell, the 'overseer' of Shakespeare's will. Both Dudley Digges and William Strachey contributed laudatory verses to Jonson's *Sejanus* in 1605, and Shakespeare acted in the play. Shakespeare's friend Heminge was at Digges's wedding, and signed as a witness. It seems likely that Shakespeare knew Digges. (1954, xix)

Dudley Digges was among that group of venturers belonging to the Virginia company, but the fact that Strachey and he may have written some commendatory verses for Jonson's *Sejanus*,[6] in which Shakespeare acted, does not prove any direct connection between the two authors. Similarly, the fact that Shakespeare was a friend to one of Dudley's friends, i.e., John Heminge, cannot be used as evidence of any acquaintance between them. On the contrary, a handwritten note by Ben Jonson confirms that Dudley Digges and he were friends. A copy of *A Geometrical Practical Treatise Named Pantometria* (1591) by Leonard (the Elder) and Thomas Digges (Dudley and Leonard's grandfather and father, respectively), now held at Worcester College, Oxford, is annotated by Ben Jonson, who wrote: "Sum Ben Jonsonii Liber ex dono amicissimi sui Dud: Digges auctoris filii" ("I am Ben Jonson's book from the gift of my very dear [friend] Dudley Digges, son of the author", translated in McPherson 1974, 40). Of course, the note cannot be dated 1591, since, although

[6] Dudley did write some verses on *Volpone* (perhaps, since the poem is signed D. D.) and, in his "An Elegy on Ben Jonson" (1638), he does not even mention *Sejanus* among Jonson's Roman plays, but only praises *Catiline* (1611): "Bold Catiline, at once Rome's hate and fear, / Far higher in his story doth appear" (53-4).

Jonson was 19, Dudley was only 8. Another biographical connection between Dudley Digges and Ben Jonson is testified by Thomas Coryat's *Crudities* (1611) – complete title: *Coryat's Crudities Hastily Gobbled Up in Five Months Travels in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhaetia Commonly Called the Grisons' Country, Helvetia Alias Switzerland, Some Parts of High Germany, and the Netherlands* – one of the first examples of travel writing in early modern England. The book was introduced by a long series of "Panegyric verses upon the author and his book"[7] by some of the most eminent poets and playwrights of the time, including Thomas Campion, George Chapman, John Donne, and Ben Jonson. Even Dudley Digges contributed a poem. According to Hadfield, "Dudley Digges' contribution suggests that he might have been part of the circle who met in the famous Mermaid Tavern, a forerunner of the drinking societies that dominated much of English cultural life from the eighteenth century onwards" (2020, 13). As Thomas Coryat himself ascertains in one of the 'greetings' he sends from the Mogul court in Ajmer, India (collected in *Traveller for the English Wits: Greeting*, 1616, a series of letters he wrote to his friends during his voyage to the Middle and Far East), the so-called Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen was a group of intellectuals who "meet the first Friday of every month, at the sign of the mermaid in Bread Street in London" (1616, 37. Modernised version mine). Since many of the personalities who wrote dedicatory verses in Coryat's *Crudities* were part of the Fraternity, Hadfield suggests that Digges could also have been among those gentlemen, although no extant document seems to prove it; neither can any hypothesis about Shakespeare's involvement in the circle be firmly advanced.

In addition to their uncertainty, the personal connections I have tried to outline above between the Digges family and early

[7] As Hadfield suggests, "The verses serve a variety of functions, making the book stand out as an unusual and distinctive volume at a time when there were few works of travel writing published . . . perhaps disguising the possibly subversive ideas and opinions contained in parts of the volume, or simply as a means of self-protection in a censorious age; and, most significantly, to promote the character of the 'Odcombian Leg-Stretcher,' showing how embedded he was in a larger community of writers and supporters" (2020, 13).

modern English poets and playwrights (Shakespeare and Jonson in particular) are not enough to prove that the intellectuals belonging to the Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen read Dudley's works, in particular his *Four Paradoxes*. The book was published in 1604, and the first hint of Dudley's alleged acquaintance with members of the Fraternity is in Coryat's *Crudities* in 1611. Within seven years Dudley was knighted by King James (1607) and elected a Member of Parliament (1610), and his admission to the Mermaid Club might have depended upon one of these events, which occurred between 1604 and 1611. Since no contemporary early modern writer mentions *Four Paradoxes*, we may infer that the book had a scant circulation among intellectuals. The following section introduces Thomas and Dudley's collection of paradoxes and attempts to understand whether and to what extent it influenced (or was influenced by) early modern English plays. To do so, I will examine the circulation of paradoxical texts at a macro-textual level, as well as lexicosemantic clues at a micro-textual stage.

## 2. Thomas and Dudley Digges and Their *Four Paradoxes* (1604)

*Four Paradoxes* is a collaborative work by Thomas and Dudley Digges, published by Dudley in 1604, nine years after his father's death. The complete title of this collection gives precise information about its textual genre: *Foure paradoxes, or politique discourses. Two concerning militarie discipline, written long since by Thomas Digges Esquire. Two of the worthinesse of warre and warriors, by Dudly Digges, his sonne. All newly published to keepe those that will read them, as they did them that wrote them, from idlenesse*. As the complete title indicates, the book is a collection of four political paradoxes about war, warfare, and warriors, two by Thomas (nos. 1 and 2) and two by Dudley (nos. 3 and 4). It survives in a single quarto edition published by the printer Humphrey Lownes for the bookseller Clement Knight, as the frontispiece notes.

The first two paradoxes were written by Thomas Digges (1546-1595), one of the most important and well-known early modern English astronomers and mathematicians. The Digges family had an established reputation in the field of sciences, as well as a predilection for four-handed publications, as explained below. Thomas's father,

Leonard (1515-59), translated some chapters of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) into English, and Thomas published them after his father's death as part of an appendix to the 1576 fourth edition of Leonard's *A Prognostication Everlasting*, entitled "A Perfect Description of the Celestial Orbs". Leonard taught Thomas the fundamentals of mathematics and astronomy, with the help of the well-known Elizabethan mathematician John Dee. At the same time, between 1586 and 1594, Thomas was appointed muster-master general[8] during the Eighty Years' War (i.e., the Dutch war of independence, 1566-1648), thus gaining expertise in matters of war and warfare. This event influenced the writing of paradoxes 1 and 2 "concerning military discipline" (xx)[9] in the collection analysed here. In *Four Paradoxes*, Thomas quotes another four-handed treatise, written with his father, i.e., the *Stratioticos* (1579). The book, which considers matters of warfare, was mainly written by Leonard and then expanded by Thomas (for details, see Webb 1950; Geldof 2016). Being the earliest English treatise to deal with ballistics (Swetz 2013), the *Stratioticos* anticipates some of the contents of *Four Paradoxes*, albeit adopting a purely arithmetical and geometrical perspective (Lawrence 2003, 323), which heightens its level of technicism.

As noted above, Thomas's eldest son Dudley did not develop an aptitude for astronomy, mathematics or warfare, and paradoxes 3 and 4 of the collection attest to this. After graduating from Oxford in 1601, he became a politician and a diplomat. In 1601 he financed Henry Hudson's expedition to the New World, an economic engagement that resulted in Hudson naming 'East' and 'West Digges' two islands in Hudson Bay.

According to Rosalie Colie, "the paradox is oblique criticism of

[8] "An officer in charge of the muster roll of part of an army or (less commonly) of a dockyard, penal colony, etc.; a person responsible for the accuracy of a muster roll" (*OED*, n.1a). Muster roll: "An official list of the soldiers in an army or some particular division of it, or of the sailors in a ship's company, convicts in a penal colony, etc." (*OED*, n.1b).

[9] All quotations from Thomas and Dudley Digges' *Four Paradoxes* are taken from the modernised edition edited by Fabio Ciambella (2022). Only the number of the paradox from which the quotation is taken and the line number(s) referred to are given in brackets to ease readability.

absolute judgment or absolute convention" (1966, 10). Agreeing with Colie's definition of paradox, Peter G. Platt calls such absolute judgement and convention "stable truths" (2009, 19). Moving from Colie's and Platt's assertions, *Four Paradoxes* must be read as a thematically homogenous treatise aimed at justifying wars and warriors' behaviour, when virtuous and right, against a long-standing tradition of "absolute judgement" and "stable truths" represented by writings condemning the rightfulness of wars and soldiers. For instance, in the first edition of his *Adagia* (1500), Erasmus had already stated his position on war by commenting on the Latin proverb "dulce bellum inexpertis" (war is sweet for those who have not experienced it). However, he returned to this thorny topic in his *Querela pacis* (1517, translated into English as *The Complaint of Peace* by Thomas Paynell in 1559), a treatise that condemns war because "it is unnatural since animals do not make [it]" (Tallett 1992, 238). In addition to the eminent Dutch philosopher, "Thomas More, Baldassare Castiglione and Juan Vives [as] 'Christian Humanists'" opposed war (Marx 1992, 49), with only scant exceptions when dealing with the Just War tradition against the Turks, as will be seen later.

The fact that *Four Paradoxes* belongs to the genre of Renaissance paradoxes is bolstered by the sense of bewilderment that pervades the collection when it provides examples from Latin and Greek war history. This tradition celebrated great warriors, such as Alexander the Great or Coriolanus, and justified wars as a necessary means to obtain peace. Moreover, the Digges continually state that Greek and Latin warriors were braver and less corrupt than early modern ones, although corruption affected ancient soldiers as well. This aspect also contributes to the text's paradoxicality, since it attacks the Renaissance "stable truth" of the notion of historical progress, which in this period "begin[s] to emerge in English thought" (Escobedo 2004, 207).

As previously anticipated, the frontispiece of *Four Paradoxes* states that the first two texts, which concern military discipline, were written by Thomas Digges, while paradoxes 3 and 4, focusing on "the worthiness of war and warriors", were written by Dudley. The two authors' spheres of competence are clear from the outset: Thomas deals with military discipline, sometimes even letting

himself be carried away by the impetus of his memories and experiences of war in the Netherlands. Conversely, Dudley's focus is purely political: by examining cases of corruption within ranks and governments since ancient times, he tries to defend the military profession (paradox 3), even justifying the benefits of war for the sake of peacekeeping (paradox 4).

As to their date(s) of composition, intratextual clues may help with this issue. In fact, Thomas Digges mentions Odet de la Noue's *Discours politiques et militaires* more than once in his two paradoxes. This work by the French diplomat, soldier and poet was published in 1587 and translated into English by Edward Aggas that year. Since Thomas Digges died in 1595, his two paradoxes must have been written between 1587 and 1595. Dudley, on the other hand, praises King James's great learning in his texts; hence, there is little doubt that his paradoxes were written sometime between 1603 (when the Stuart monarch ascended the English throne) and 1604 (when *Four Paradoxes* was published).

The first paradox is an invective against corrupt soldiers and officers who take advantage of their privileged position to steal public money and rise in rank undeservedly. Nevertheless, not even European states and rulers are spared in Thomas Digges's complaint, since, if soldiers were adequately paid, they would not try to obtain extra money by committing fraud. In this sense, this paradox also owes much to the satirical genre. All the European states and princes – except, of course, Elizabeth I – are the target of Digges's invective, as they pay their soldiers and officers too little, forcing them to corrupt others or becoming corrupt themselves. Dishonesty and fraud are personified by Mistress (sometimes Lady) Picorea, who corrupts warriors by bewitching them. The name Picorea is a French borrowing which indicates plunder and pillage. It is in this sense that the French noun *picorée* is employed in de la Noue's *Discours*, one of the main sources of Thomas's paradoxes, as seen above. Thomas Digges thus suggests more money be spent on soldiers' salaries, so that any nation can prosper without corruption among the ranks. The second part of the paradox introduces a two-column comparison, called "conference", aimed at illustrating the stereotypical behaviour of good and bad officers. The conflict between good and bad officers depends on the degree of corruption

exercised by Lady Picorea on soldiers.

The second paradox compares early modern artillery with the Greek and Roman militia, even though Thomas Digges provides no actual example from the past. In particular, Digges relates about Spartan warriors whose conduct he hopes late sixteenth-century armies and their commanders will adopt. Nonetheless, *tristia exempla*, i.e., negative examples, of cowardly and corrupt soldiers from the past are mentioned as well.

The third paradox, by Dudley Digges, is about "the worthiness of warriors" and thus aims to dignify the military discipline. Continual references to Greek, Roman and contemporary European authors help highlight virtuous and unvirtuous military behaviour. In Dudley's paradoxes, however, negative examples from ancient and recent history surpass positive ones. Thomas's son includes tyrants, inept commanders, and dissolute officers whose reprehensible conduct led to the defeat of their armies. Stylistically, Thomas Digges's plain writing, almost a scientific prose, contrasts sharply to his son's long and elaborate sentences, filled with quotations from Greek, Latin, Italian and French writers whom Dudley always acknowledges in marginal glosses. This sometimes complicates sentences a great deal and makes reading strenuous. Unlike his father, who had not received any university education, but had acquired notions of warfare through John Dee's mathematical and physical approach and through direct experience in the Netherlands, Dudley had graduated from Oxford and, as stated above, was a diplomat and politician; hence his style differs markedly from Thomas's.

The fourth paradox is the shortest of the collection, although it is certainly the most interesting from an interdiscursive perspective. It introduces Dudley's belief that sometimes wars are necessary to maintain peace. This concept is not Dudley's, but rather reflects the *multis utile bellum* principle whose foundation can be traced to such classical author as Lucan (in his *Pharsalia* or *Bellum civile* 1.182), as clearly stated in the subheading of the paradox. Nevertheless, alongside Dudley Digges several Renaissance intellectuals had embraced this principle, such as Machiavelli in his *The Art of War* (see Ciambella 2022, 207-8; 210).[10] One of the themes that paradox

[10] *Dell'arte della Guerra* (1521) was translated into English by Peter Whitehorne

4 shares with other contemporary writing is the exaltation of wars against Turks and infidels (whom Dudley calls "dogs"). This is the principle of the Just War (see 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. Dudley's position in this paradox is a thorny one; hence, he often turns to the principle of *auctoritas* to support his hypotheses with quotations from Latin and Greek sources such as Dio Cassius, Diodorus Siculus, Ovid, Horace, among others, and the Bible.

Overall, as stated above, the *Four Paradoxes*' pretentious Ciceronian style and the excessive, sometimes unnecessary, repetitions of the same concepts and ideas make it a hard read. If it is true that "the didactic ideal of imitation and repetition is still fully present at the end of the [sixteenth] century" (Berensmeyer 2020, 99), this text perfectly follows recurrent patterns of English Renaissance stylistics, thus explaining why repetitions and duplications of the same concepts are particularly marked, at least in Thomas Digges's paradoxes, while Dudley's style, full of quotations from Latin and French, as well as his English translations of them, impedes reading fluency.

## 3. *Four Paradoxes* and Early Modern Theatre: a Look at Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity

Before dealing with connections between *Four Paradoxes* and the early modern theatre, it is worth clarifying how the paradox as a genre contributed to the development of the warfare discourse in the English Renaissance. As hinted at in the previous section, each text of the Digges' collection goes against common shared opinions: paradox 1 affirms that soldiers need to be paid more, otherwise corruption among the ranks arises, paradox 2 states that the ancient militia was more advanced than modern one, although modern weapons are technologically more efficient, in paradoxes 3 and 4, Dudley Digges affirms that wars, especially those against the Turks, are better than peace, because they cure the European nations' internal conflicts, focussing the attention of

in 1573.

people on issues external to the nation. No other text of the period tackles the problem of war and warfare under such a paradoxical perspective.[11] Then what could these texts offer to early modern playwrights? Or, better said, what shared paradoxical features about war do we find both in the Digges' and in English Renaissance plays? In the attempt to answer this latter question, the examples from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama that follow do not demonstrate any direct intertextual connection between the Digges' text and Renaissance plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries; nonetheless, they testify how and to what extent the culture of paradox permeated any aspect and genre of sixteenth and seventeenth century, especially drama. If it is true that early modern culture is an epoch characterised by the "paradox as a mode of thinking and configuring experience" (Bigliazzi 2014, 7), interdiscursivity and recurring paradoxical patterns can be found in a variety of cultural manifestations of the time, as this section aims at demonstrating. To paraphrase Platt, the Renaissance culture of paradox provided early modern playwrights with a vocabulary and a conceptual framework for their presentation of a dizzying array of perspectives on love, gender, knowledge, and truth, in the optics of their interest in challenging assumptions and orthodoxies (2009, 1).

The connections between *Four Paradoxes* and early modern drama, and with Shakespeare in particular, have rarely been investigated (more generally, on Shakespeare and war, see Jorgensen 1956; de Somogyi 1998; Barker 2007; Bertram 2018).[12] As we have seen,

[11] To my knowledge, only Thomas Scott's *Four Paradoxes* (1602) contains a paradox "Of War", in verse, that focuses on some of the issues dealt with by the Digges. See Ciambella 2022.

[12] Although Michael Neill has highlighted interesting interdiscursive echoes between paradoxes and tragicomedy (in Fletcher's *A King and No King* in particular), understanding both genres as "kind[s] of *discordia concors*" and "art[s] of wonder and surprise" (1981, 319), the two collections of paradoxes scrutinised in this book do not seem to have strict connections with such a theatrical genre. See also Mukherji and Lyne's introduction to their edited collection of essays about early modern English tragicomedy for an understanding of tragicomedies as paradoxical plays in a broader sense (2007, 1-14). As previously noted, even John Marston's *The Malcontent* represents an interesting interweaving of satire and paradox applied to tragicomedy, this relation being more explosive and evident here than in ear-

whether Shakespeare had some kind of personal relationship with the Digges family is unclear, yet scholars have tried to find some intertextual and interdiscursive echoes between the Shakespearean canon and *Four Paradoxes*.

In 1899, William Craig was probably the first to note some references to Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* (1596-98) in *Four Paradoxes* (95). He believed that Falstaff's assertion to Prince Hal that "the tree may be known by the fruit as the fruit by the tree" (2.4.349-50) seems to echo Thomas Digges's "by the fruits judge unpartially of the trees" (1.876). However, this is highly unlikely for at least two reasons. Firstly, the metaphor of the fruit providing information about the tree is a literary cliché deriving from Matthew 12.33, as early modern contemporary works demonstrate; e.g., John Lyly's "No, no, the tree is known by his fruit" (Croll and Clemons 1916, 42), which Shakespeare parodies in *1 Henry IV*, or Stephen Gosson's "the tree [is known] by the fruit" (1841, 41). Secondly, *Henry IV, Part 1* was probably written between 1596 and 1598, and Thomas Digges had died in 1595. For this reason, it is impossible that Digges attended a performance of Shakespeare's play, just as it is hardly credible that the playwright could have read Thomas Digges's two paradoxes before their publication in 1604.

Paradox 3 by Dudley introduces an important invective against merchants, especially Venetians, shared by other Elizabethan writers.[13] The author considers that idleness is the worst flaw a gentleman can have, besides being corrupted and corrupting others, which is what Venetians do: "I ever thought nothing worse for gentlemen than idleness, except doing ill, but could not at the first resolve how they might be fitliest busied: to play the merchants was only for gentlemen of . . . Venice, or the like that are indeed but the better sort of citizens" (3.83-7). Therefore, driving away idleness by entering the military service is a noble thing to do,

ly modern English tragicomedies written after Fletcher's codification of the genre in 1608 .

[13] See also, among others, William Segar's *Honor military, and ciuill contained in foure bookes* (1602): "The Venetian, albeit reputeth himselfe the most noble gentleman of the world, . . . holdeth it no dishonour to traffique in marchandise" (230).

contrary to becoming a merchant. According to Ferber (1990, 437) and Rutter (2006, 198), the corruption of Venetian merchants had been already explored by Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* through such characters as Antonio and Shylock. In the comedy, Shakespeare distinguished between merchants driven by highly moral aristocratic values, i.e., Antonio, and those driven only by money and personal interests, i.e., Shylock. When Antonio accepts to pledge his pound of flesh to save Bassanio from debts towards Shylock, Ferber defines this gesture "heroic soldierly fashion" (1990, 432), a consideration that helps associating Antonio's character with noble military values although the real soldier is Bassanio, rather than base money-centred mercantilist attitudes. I argue that another important parallelism between *Four Paradoxes* and *The Merchant of Venice* can be drawn. In act 1, scene 1, when Bassanio asks Antonio to lend him money to court Portia, the merchant answers that "all [his] fortunes are at sea; / Neither ha[s he] money nor commodity / To raise a present sum" (1.1.176-8). As Thomas Digges stated at the very beginning of Paradox 1, such merchants as Antonio are "miserable foolish" (1.30) and ill-equipped, since they do not consider saving some money for other necessities and risk losing all their earnings:

> [I]f a merchant, setting forth his ship to the seas, fraught with merchandise, shall know that (to rig her well, and furnish her with all needful tackle, furniture and provision) it will cost him full 500 pounds: yet, of a covetous and greedy mind to save thereof some 100 pounds, or two, he shall scant his provision, wanting perhaps some cables, anchors, or other like necessaries, and after (by a storm arising) for fault thereof shall lose both ship and goods. (1.22-9)

As paradoxical as it may seem, saving some money and goods, instead of investing all of them in business, can prevent bankruptcy. One can imaginatively and hyperbolically assert that had Antonio "read" Thomas Digges' advice about saving some money and had he not sent all his ships at sea, he would not have needed to suggest Bassanio to ask Shylock for a loan, thus activating the series of events that characterises *The Merchant of Venice*.

Other echoes from *Henry IV, Part 2* and *Othello* can be treated as evidence of interdiscursive practices in early modern England

rather than as actual intertextual references by Dudley Digges to Shakespearean plays. In the final part of paradox 3, Dudley offers a prophecy against those who despise war:

> The time will come their country will leave fawningly to offer up her wealth to those her unworthy children that live by sucking dry their parents' blood, and rather motherlike respect those sons that are her champions, and seek to purchase her ease with painful industry, her honour with effusion of their blood, her safety with loss of life. (3. 701-6)

Aside from snobbish parallelisms with the Second Letter to Timothy ("the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers", 4:3), this passage also seems to echo Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 2* (3.1.75-6), when Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV, quotes Richard II's "proved prophecy": "The time will come that foul sin, gathering head, / Shall break into corruption". In fact, the late king Richard II also focuses on the corruption of the English militia and the entire nation, foreseeing a dark future for England. One cannot state with certainty that Digges might have been inspired from the 1600 quarto of *2 Henry IV*, where the two lines can be found, or witnessed a performance of Shakespeare's play, but the similarity between the incipit of Richard's prophecy and the beginning of this final paragraph of the Digges' third paradox is interesting from both a lexicosemantic and content viewpoint.

The above quotation is not the only excerpt from Dudley's two paradoxes that recalls *Henry IV, Part 2*. In the fourth paradox, Dudley compares wars with drugs, ascertaining that "foreign war [is] a sovereign medicine for domestic inconveniences" (4.258-60). Moreover, this idea seems to echo *Henry IV, Part 2*, when the king advises Prince Harry "to busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels" (4.3.342-3). As stated above, this does not necessarily imply that Dudley Digges had read or seen Shakespeare's history play, since, as Meron observed (1993; 1998), this idea was quite common and shared by sovereigns in early modern times.[14] Nevertheless, it

[14] Also, as Wallis noted (2006, 3-4), it is a widespread Renaissance tradi-

suggests that celebration of foreign wars as 'distractions' from internal crises were widespread and important interdiscursive practices in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

Another lexical similarity between paradox 4 and one of Shakespeare's plays introduces macro-textual parallels concerning the Just War theory. In line with many Renaissance European intellectuals, Dudley affirms that a just war against the Islamic threat from the East is desirable. In doing so, he compares the Turks to dogs, actually not an unusual trope in early modern English texts:[15] "I assure myself shall never be extinguished till the names of those dogs be clean extirpated" (4.448-9). This metaphor recalls Shakespeare's Othello's last words about having killed "a malignant and a turbaned Turk . . . the circumcisèd dog" (5.2.351-3). Both Dudley Digges and Shakespeare compare the Turks to dangerous stray animals to be eliminated.

Some critics have also focussed on the possible influences that the Digges' treatise might have had on Shakespeare's canon. The publication of *Four Paradoxes*, with its classical sources and quotations, anticipates Shakespeare's return to the Roman history he had somewhat set aside after writing *Julius Caesar* in 1599. After 1604, Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), *Coriolanus* (1608) and *Cymbeline* (1610), plays ranging from the first republican period to imperial Rome. Among the plays mentioned earlier, *Coriolanus* might be the most indebted to *Four Paradoxes,* given Dudley Digges's various references to the historical figure of the republican general who fought against the Volsci at Corioli, in the area known today as the Roman Castles. According to Jorgensen (1956, 182-84) and Muir (1959; 1977, 240), in *Coriolanus* the more Shakespeare distances himself from his main source, i.e., Norton's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (1576), the closer he gets to Digges' interpretation of Coriolanus' story, especially when Digges affirms that Coriolanus' ascent to consulship was hindered by the "two peace-bred tribunes Sicinius and Brutus" (qtd Muir 1959, 139). In paradox 4, Dudley affirms that when Rome was a

tion that doctors and war heroes were sometimes paralleled, when considering war as a bitter yet inevitable drug to cure sick countries

[15] See, among others, Burton 2005, esp. ch. 5, 196-232.

"contentious commonwealth" (4. 290), Sicinius and Brutus tried to prevent Coriolanus from obtaining power and make war against the Volscians "to ease their city of . . . dearth . . . and appease . . . tumultuous broils" (4.285-7). There is no mention about the tribunes' attempt to hinder Coriolanus' ascent in Plutarch's *Lives*, Shakespeare's main source;[16] yet, in Shakespeare, Sicinius and Brutus convince the plebs to take back their votes for Coriolanus for his "malice towards you [the people]" (2.3.168), something Dudley Digges defines as Coriolanus's "cruelty" (4.294). In both Shakespeare and Digges, the tribunes depict the Roman general as a malignant, cruel would-be tyrant, a dangerous threat for the Romans' new republican freedom.

Similarly, Bliss (2000, 13) attributes the unPlutarchan metaphor of war as a "dangerous physic" which "jump[s] a body . . . / That's sure of death without it", in *Coriolanus* 3.1.155-6, to Dudley Digges' "extended praise of war", seen as "a sharp and merciless physician, and a violent purgation" (1.466-7). Moreover, the scholar considers "the [first] Volscian servingman's comic preference for war over peace" in 4.5.208-11 to be an echo of Digges' paradoxical view – rather than Lucan's – of the *multis utile bellum* principle:

> FIRST SERVINGMAN Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as day does night. It's sprightly walking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy; mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

The same principle, says Pugliatti (2010, 108), is applicable to Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), where "there [does not] seem to be any regret or nostalgia for the activities of the time of peace suddenly interrupted by war". The celebrations for Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding are interrupted by the three queens who ask Theseus to avenge their husbands' deaths at the

[16] It is well known that Shakespeare drew mainly on Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (1580). He may also have considered Livy's *Ab urbe condita*, whose English translation by Philemon Holland was published in 1600. Nevertheless, Livy does not even mention the tribunes and their attempt to impede Coriolanus' ascent.

hand of the Theban tyrant Creon. The married couple listens carefully and compassionately to the queens' mourning speech and, moved to compassion, decides to avenge the death of the three lords without a second thought by waging war against Creon. In doing so, they embrace Digges' *multis utile bellum* principle, since the husband and wife's initial status of peace is interrupted by their voluntary declarations of bellicose intent which will benefit *multos*.

Alleged influences and confluences between Shakespearean drama and the Digges' *Four Paradoxes*, be they shallow or extensive, prove the pervasiveness of the paradox and of paradoxical war discourse in early modern English culture. Borrowing from Hadfield and his sceptical view of a direct influence of *Four Paradoxes* on *Coriolanus*' insistence on the *multis utile bellum* principle:

> The argument [of *multis utile bellum*] is eloquently put, albeit simple enough: war cleanses a nation and makes it virile, manly, and honorable, whereas peace encourages complacency. This was a common complaint made against the "carpet knights" who were encouraged by Elizabeth in her final decade and James in his first, at the expense of the truly virtuous military men who had suffered in the field for queen, king, and country . . . Shakespeare may – or may not – have read *Four Paradoxes*. Its logic fits in well with that of *Coriolanus* and with the ways in which Shakespeare often used his sources, exploiting the paradoxes latent within them and often overturning their arguments and conclusions. (2020, 16)

We have noted at the outset that Dudley Digges knew Ben Jonson personally. Nevertheless, few elements seem to connect the playwright's work with *Four Paradoxes*. Although the copy of Leonard (the Elder) and Thomas Digges' *Pantometria* that Dudley gave Ben Jonson was published in 1591, we do not know when Jonson was actually given it, as Dudley was only eight when his father published his treatise about geometry, as hinted at above. The only certain date that connects both Dudley and Ben Jonson is 1611, when they wrote commendatory verses in the introduction to Coryat's *Crudities*. Thus, perhaps they got to know each other during those years, long after the publication of *Four Paradoxes*.

In paradox 3, Dudley talks about "[s]ome thankful poet that hath drunk store of castalian liquor and is full of fury" (3.46-7). The

reference to somebody drinking Castalian liquor[17] is perhaps to Ben Jonson's prologue to *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599), where Carlo Buffone (Thomas Dekker's representation), describing Jonson himself, says: "This is that our poet calls Castalian liquor, when he comes abroad now and then, once in a fortnight". This reference to the noun phrase 'Castalian liquor' is the only one found on EEBO prior to 1604. It is well known that Dekker's identification with Carlo Buffone in *Every Man out of His Humour* is parodic: on more than one occasion, Jonson tells his readers not to trust this character. After all, *buffone* is an Italian noun meaning 'buffoon', both in the sense of "a comic actor, clown; a jester, fool" (*OED*, n.2.a) and "a wag, a joker (implying contempt or disapprobation)" (*OED*, n.3). This passage from Dudley's paradox is ambiguous. He is certainly criticising the "thankful poet" who is "full of fury" and so he "cannot do better than . . . sing[ing] in verse excelling / wars worth the muses telling" (3.46-51). Nevertheless, one cannot understand whether Dudley is talking about Jonson or Dekker. Is Dudley speaking about Jonson as portrayed by Buffone/Dekker? Is he punning on Dekker? Considering Dudley and Jonson's friendship, maybe the author of *Four Paradoxes* is criticising Dekker. Yet, as stated above, in 1604 no evidence can be offered regarding Dudley and Jonson's acquaintance, not even the commendatory

[17] Digges' reference to Castalian liquor is ambiguous here, although little doubt can be raised about interlexical echoes from Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out*. Yet, from a semantic perspective, it is not clear whether Digges is alluding to the Canary wine Carlo Buffone talks about in the Prologue of Jonson's work or he is referring to the Castalian springs/fountains at Delphi from which poets drew inspiration in Greek and Roman times, understanding 'liquor' as "A liquid; matter in a liquid state . . . *Obsolete*" (*OED*, n.1.a). After all, the reference to the Castalian springs/fountains was extremely common in Latin poetry, not infrequently read by English authors in the original texts. For instance, the phrase Castalius liquor is attested in Latin in Venantius Fortunatus' *Carmina* 8.1 ("Castaliusque quibus sumitur arte liquor"). Moreover, focusing on Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593), Martindale and Martindale (1990) state that "Shakespeare used a quotation from Ovid's *Amores* as an epigraph for *Venus and Adonis*: *vilia miretur vulgus; mihi flavus Apollo / pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua* (1.15.35f.) (Let the crowd wonder at cheap things; for me let yellow-haired Apollo give cups full of the water of Castalia)" (57).

verses to Jonson's *Volpone*, which are attributed to Dudley (albeit only signed D. D.), and which could not have been written before 1605-6, when *Volpone* was staged for the first time. The War of the Theatres (Poets' War or Poetomachia, as Dekker called it) had just ended in 1604, after four years (1599-1602) of satirical exchanges between Ben Jonson, on one side, and Dekker and Marston, on the other, in the form of plays.

## 4. Conclusion

The analysis of intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between Thomas and Dudley Digges's *Four Paradoxes* presented above has demonstrated that there are evident echoes of paradoxical instances connected to war and warfare in early modern plays, especially in the Shakespearean canon. Nevertheless, the biographical happenstances analysed herein, concerning the Digges and English Renaissance playwrights, are not sufficient to establish an out-and-out, direct, and certain influence of *Four Paradoxes* on the plays of Shakespeare or Ben Jonson, and vice versa. The scant information we have about personal connections between the Digges family (Dudley in particular) and the English playwrights of the Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen provides no valuable biographical data that might account for or explain any mutual close intertextual relationships between the Digges' text and early modern English plays. On the contrary, such echoes should be understood as interdiscursive patterns highlighting the pervasiveness of the paradox as a genre and a philosophy in English Renaissance culture.

As this essay has tried to show, themes and conceptions such as the Just War theory or the *multis utile bellum* principle belong to a long-standing paradoxical Renaissance European tradition that does not directly and exclusively connect *Four Paradoxes* with Shakespearean plays such as *Coriolanus* and *Henry IV, Part 2*. Nonetheless, the Digges' treatise shows many points of contact with early modern plays, demonstrating that certain principles and ideas did circulate among intellectuals and writers (see for example Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and its engagement with military matters as analysed in Honda 2006), thus permeating many

cultural domains.

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This volume aims at providing a comprehensive view of the performative as well as heuristic potentialities of the theatrical paradox in early modern plays. We are 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. The book is articulated into three sections: the first, "Paradoxes of the Real", is devoted to a theoretical investigation of the dramatic uses of paradoxes; the second, "Staging Mock Encomia" looks at the multiple dramatic functions of mock encomia and at the specific situations in which paradoxical praises were inserted in early modern plays; finally, the essays in "Paradoxical Dialogues" examine the connections between a number of early modern mock encomia and ancient or contemporary models.

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25,00 €

ISBN 979-12-210-1709-0

ISSN 2464-9295