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ADVISING THE ACTORS IN *HAMLET* AND *THE ANTIPODES* : RICHARD BROME, SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPORARY ?

In Shakespeare's eponymous tragedy[1], Hamlet provides the «tragedians of the city» (II.2.325) as announced by Rosencrantz, («The best actors in the world» (II.2.391) according to Polonius) with last-minute instruction before they enact *The Murder of Gonzago*. The device of the play within the play which reflects «structural duplication»[2] as Georges Forestier puts it, will enable Hamlet to «[...] catch the conscience of the King» (II.2.594). In all likelihood, decades later, Richard Brome draws upon analogous advice in his «topsy-turvy» comedy, *The Antipodes*[3], when he has Letoy, a fantastic Lord, counsel his company of professional actors. As early as Act I Scene 5 of the play, Letoy discloses the following about his private troupe :

> These lads can act the emperors' lives all over,
> And Shakespeare's chronicled histories, to boot ;
> And were that Cæsar or that English Earl
> That lov'd a play and player so well now living,
> I would not be outvied in my delights [...]
> I love the quality of playing ; ay, I love a play with all*
> My heart, a good one ; and a player that is

A good one, too, with all my heart.

(I.5.67-70 ; 72-4)

Publicly proclaiming his own «apology for actors» in the wake of Thomas Heywood's apology, first published in 1612 [4], through a recollection of theatrical patrons and not just any dramatist past but Nero, the Earl of Leicester [5] and Shakespeare, Letoy recalls his wonderment of actors and their profession. His respect towards them is thus in harmony with Hamlet's own, as revealed via the request made by the latter to Polonius : «Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstracts and brief *chronicles of the time» (II.2.514-5). A great deal more can be said, of course, on the subject of Letoy's apology but the word to which attention needs to be drawn is «good». According to Letoy, and by extension to Brome, what makes a good player ? Deferring the response to this question, it is necessary to add that Letoy's actors are on the verge of performing in an inner play whose, «far fetch'd title over lands and seas / Offers unto your view th'Antipodes» (II.5.4-5). The purpose of the inset play, as devised by Letoy with the assistance of Doctor Hughball, is to cure Peregrine of his melancholy, his «Mandeville madness» by making him believe that he has really travelled to the other side of the world, «but in a dream» (II.1.15).

Over the last thirty years, critics have gone about reassessing the way in which players performed their part, particularly on the Elizabethan stage [6]. Given the absence of formal treatises on acting, extant plays and contemporary references have for the most part served as primary sources when reflecting upon the way in which the actors [7] played their parts. Indeed with regard to the 1630s, the acting methods of players in the smaller indoor playhouses of Caroline London have received little or no attention. Research has primarily been devoted to theatrical location, architecture and size in its relation to theatre audience capacity. In his critical work on Jacobean private theatres, Keith Sturgess suggests that they were «probably no more than a third of that of their public counterparts» [8]. Other evidence about the size of indoor playhouses may be gleaned from James Wright's *Historia Histrionica* published in 1699. Cast as a dialogue between two interlocutors, Lovewit and Truman, the latter explains :

The *Black-friers*, *Cockpit*, and *Salisbury-court*
were called Private Houses, and very small to what

> we see now [...] for they were all three Built almost
> exactly alike in Form and Bigness.[9]

The Blackfriars, the Cockpit in Drury Lane, or Phoenix[10], as it was also known, and the Salisbury Court[11] where Brome's *The Antipodes* was first performed in 1638 by Queen Henrietta's Men[12] thus formed the trio in vogue during the 1630s. It is also important to mention that the King's Men (formerly known during Shakespeare's time as the Lord Chamberlain's Men and who used the Blackfriars as their winter playhouse when not at the Globe during the summer season) also performed six of Brome's plays, prior to his becoming house playwright for the Salisbury Court in 1635.

In *Playhouses and Players*, R.A. Foakes notes that in the 1630s these «private theatres[13] brought a qualitative shift because of the change in the audience's relationship to the stage, and the greater intimacy of space»[14]. Given the want of primary sources regarding actors and acting during this period, one can only assume that some changes took place. It would be erroneous, however, to conclude that a greater intimacy of space inevitably implied a radical shift in acting style or to the parts of acting that were of concern to the dramatist in respect of a player's «performance practice», a term that I borrow from Robert Weimann's recently published *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice : Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, and from which I propose to quote.

Having granted myself licence to use the word «contemporary» in the title of my paper with regard to Shakespeare and Brome (which to coin Hamlet's words, does not suit the title of the conference if its signification is applied *stricto sensu* — the Bard and Brome composing their plays decades apart) I shall provide a comparative analysis of Act III Scene 2 in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and of Act II Scene 2 in Brome's *The Antipodes* from which we can consider the instructions addressed to the actors within the scope of fiction. Four primary components of acting will be examined : voice, words and actions, body and gesture and textual deference prior to the staging of the inner play. This paper will attempt to show that despite a difference in genre (the interior play in *Hamlet* portraying tragedy-within-tragedy, and the one in *The Antipodes* comedy-within-comedy) Letoy's instructions to his actors frequently mirror those given by Hamlet.

Restraint versus ranting.

In his footnote to Act III Scene 2 of *Hamlet* — based upon Q2 and Folio, G.R. Hibbard explains :

> At first sight, the dialogue between Hamlet and the leading Player, with which the scene opens, appears unnecessary. It contributes nothing to the action ; and the advice it gives to the Players seems irrelevant to the playing of *The Murder of Gonzago*, which calls for rant rather than restraint. It does, it is true, provide Hamlet with an opportunity to voice his views on the art of acting and to express his views on histrionic excess.[15]

If as Gibbard intimates, the inner play calls for rant rather than restraint, Hamlet's advice to the players from the opening lines of Act III Scene 2, clearly instructs them against haranguing their speech. Vocal moderation thus anticipates Hamlet's allusion to begetting «a temperance» (III.2.7), as opposed to excess on behalf of the *histrion*. As a transition to Hamlet's instruction regarding the «speech» (III.2.1) that he has just pronounced for the First Player, demanding that he speak it «trippingly on the tongue» (III.2.2), unlike the Prologue of Letoy's inset play whose speech, «had bin well [...], if [the actor] had not dreamt / Too long upon [his] syllables» (II.5.22-3), the Prince's discourse takes on a more general tone. He discusses the art of acting with particular reference to the primary prism through which a spectator hears the author's text, that is, the player's voice : «But if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town crier had spoke my lines» (III.2.2-4). Hamlet then gives the players a final caveat :

> O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, [...] I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it.
>
> (III.2.8-13)

If Hamlet, therefore, cannot lend his ears to the vociferous delivery of a passion, that is a passionate speech, then perhaps the player should feign, «Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, / A broken voice, and his whole function[16] suiting / With forms to his conceit»[17] (II.2.543-5), as recounted by the Prince in his soliloquy, just after having heard the First Player recite the lines referring to Hecuba. Though Hamlet's advice to the players in Act III Scene 2 makes no mention of the First Player's performance, it is

important to note that the actor's voice in Act II Scene 2 of the play befitted the fiction he acted out.

In Brome's *The Antipodes*, Letoy prolongs what appears to have become by the 1630s the playwright's age-old remonstrance against ranting styles of performance, excessive tone and unnecessary declamation on the stage. Letoy begins by advising the actor who will speak the Prologue to the inset play, how not to speak his part : «Nor in a comic scene play *Hercules Furens*, / Tearing your throat to split the audients' ears» (II.2.19-20). The allusion to Seneca's tragedy, *Hercules Furens*, translated into English by Jasper Heywood in 1561 enables Letoy to warn his actors against speaking their lines in a bombastic or declamatory manner. By the 1630s, the recommendation of using one's voice in this fashion had, in all probability, become the norm. Despite the apparent difference between the Globe's «groundlings» which reads «ignorant» in Q1, and the Salisbury Court's indoor «audients», or seated spectators, restraint versus ranting is advocated in both plays. This exigency of performance practice, was possibly even more of an imperative in the smaller indoor playhouse. Sturgess observes :

> The enclosed and smaller volume of the Blackfriars or Phoenix would have created very different acoustical conditions from those pertaining at the Globe. The actor had a smaller space to fill with his voice and his words would be in no danger of escaping to the skies. Also, unlike in the public houses, there would have been little or at least less competition from noises either from outside.[18]

Finally, if the player rants and raves his part in the inset comedy, then his delivery may be likened to the «untun'd kennel» a pique pointed by Thomas Carew at the Red Bull players during this period for their lack of consonance following the success of James Shirley's, *The Grateful Servant* at the Cockpit, and William Davenant's failure of *The Just Italian* at the Blackfriars[19]. In *The Antipodes*, therefore, Letoy's disapproval of playing the ranter could consequently create a dissonance in performance, mirroring what should not be heard[20]. Thus Letoy echoes yet again Hamlet's disapprobation regarding those players who «have so strutted and bellowed» (III.2.33) on the stage. Letoy's instructions on voice are

clearly relevant to the performance of the inner play which is, as I have already stated, a comedy.

A reversible duo : words and actions.

If *declamatio*, or the art of speaking, according to a treatise entitled *State of the Drama in 1616, illustrated by a contemporary publication : Players*, «counted [the player] both a glory and a commendation : for as an Orator was forcible in his elocution ; so was an actor in his gesture and personated action» [21], Hamlet too counsels that the players «use all gently [...] and beget a temperance» (III.2.5 & 7). Such advice culminates in the purpose of playing :

> Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere, the mirror up to nature [...].
>
> (III.2.15-21)

It is in this moment of the text that Hamlet underlines the exigency of «putting one's discourse into some frame» [22]. According to Weimann, Hamlet's humanistic tenets denote «the high Renaissance poetics of representation [...] in the neo-Aristotelian mirror of what 'should be'» [23]. Moreover, these assumptions reflect what a «good player» is made of and who, thus framed, may promote moderation and sobriety. Those «poor players» who pursued this quality were often scorned and on occasion condemned by dramatists themselves (Jonson, Marston, come to mind) and by Puritans whom Brome puts to silence in *The Antipodes*. When disclosing information about the Antipodes to Peregrine, Doctor Hughball's appraisal of the players is laudatory : «players, too ; but they are all the sob'rest, / Precisest people pick'd out of a nation» (I.6.198).

Hamlet's utterance regarding «the purpose of playing» has been attributed by editors to Cicero's often quoted definition of comedy as representing «an imitation of life, a mirror of custom, and an image of truth» [24]. In Letoy's inset piece, prior to making Peregrine believe that he

has really travelled to the Antipodes, Doctor Hughball describes the country and its people :

> In outward feature, language, and religion, [they]
> Resemble those to whom they are supposite :
> [They] [...] under England, (appear) English
> To the exterior show ; but in their manners,
> Their condition of life,
> Extremely contrary.
>
> (I.6.106-7, 110-3)

Although the Doctor's account may seem to represent an inversion of normality, the already established satiric *topoi*, women ruling their husbands for example, provide a mirror of custom which enables the reader to view *The Antipodes* as Martin Butler puts it in *Theatre and Crisis* as «what *is*, not what is not»[25]. In other words, Letoy's fictional Anti-London, is not atypical, but an image of truth which depicts Brome's real London.

Though Letoy's address to the actors in *The Antipodes* omits the moral dimension[26] associated with the purpose of playing, excluding any mention of imitation, unlike his predecessor who refers to those players who «imitated humanity so abominably» (III.2.33), the fantastic lord's remarks on the art of acting, remain within the realm of individual instruction and condemnation ; Hamlet's moment with the players, however, tackles the art of acting in a more general manner. Letoy's more systematic mingling of counsel on the one hand, and censure on the other vis-à-vis the art of acting, insists that performing one's part in a comedy does not warrant the actor, any more than it does in a tragedy, to overplay his part. In this respect, acting in a comedy also requires the player to frame his discourse. Letoy's allusion to the «comic scene» suggests that «what is sauce for playing one's part in tragedy is sauce for acting in a comedy». It all comes down to finding the right balance or mingling the words and actions in such a way so as to create a mean between them, or an ideal middle way.

This notion of the mean or medium, is derived from Aristotelian philosophy[27] and is designated by the word *meson*. Rather like Hamlet who advises the players to «[s]uit the action to the word, the word to the action» this reversible duo represents «a precariously relative balance [...] on the Elizabethan stage [...] at the very point where "word" and "action",

text, voice, and body come together, relations of “author’s pen” and “actors voice” are very much at issue»[28]. This contention continued right into the 1630s, and the Danish Prince’s association of words and action, is imitated almost verbatim by Letoy. The fantastic lord’s invocation to his actors aspires to a sensorial symbiosis between the visual and ocular :

> But words and action married so together
> That shall strike harmony in the ears and eyes
> Of the severest, if judicious, critics.
>
> (II.2.35-7)

The appeal for moderation with regard to words and action, or a medium way of performing as expressed by both Hamlet and Letoy, also becomes the impetus behind the purpose of playing in Brome’s play within the play. Unlike its Elizabethan predecessor which was concerned with revenge or exposure of guilt, the inset play in the comedies of the Caroline period[29] was designed to cure, thus stressing the «cathartic» dimension mirrored by the interior play. Regarding his artistic bent, Letoy prides himself upon his successful cure of Peregrine’s melancholy:

> [My] Art [...] can take hold of [Peregrine] to wind him up
> Into his proper centre, or the medium
> From which he flew beyond himself.
>
> (IV.13.12-4)

The imperfect quality of the actor who does not marry together words and action, the perfect frame that reflects the type of «good» or «perfect player» that Letoy loves with all his heart, has become, however, a former imperfection which Quailpipe[30] informs his lord that his fellow thespians and he, «are [now] corrected in» (II.2.38). Letoy’s double endeavour which combines both instruction and correction relating to each player’s mode of acting, also echoes the word «reform» used twice during Hamlet’s speech. Weimann deals with this demand for reform vis-à-vis the actor’s moment of display on the stage by pointing out what was essentially at stake :

> [Reform appeared] At the turn of the century, even before *Hamlet*, [...] was first produced [...] [when] certain performance practices were

> increasingly singled out as a target for attack. This was the case of the emerging satire, as practised by Joseph Hall (1597) and Everard Guilpin (1598), where the former, [...] attacked the «self resembled show» of the «self-misformed», self-disfigured player [...] while the latter socially downgraded the jig and, with it, relegated Kempe the clown to the forbidding level of an exclusively vulgar type of cultural composition.[31]

Unable to tackle the wider implications regarding the idea of «reforming» and «correcting» and its subsequent relation to writing and playing on the stage in Brome's play, it is necessary to underline that Quailpipe overtly defends his co-actors and their profession. Moreover, in the wake of Hamlet, who invokes the censure of «the judicious»[32] which must «o'erweigh a whole theatre of others» (III.2.25-6), Letoy's concern about the spectators' response is voiced during a momentous time in the history of the English stage. After an 18-month period of silence, Queen Henrietta's Men will perform anew. A severe plague had closed London's theatres from the 12th of May 1636 to the 2nd of October 1637. The players' return is voiced from the outset of the play. Blaze, who welcomes Peregrine's father to London, mentions his city's recent tribulations :

> We are, (like half-pined wretches that have lain
> Long on the planks of sorrow, strictly tied
> To a forc'd abstinence from the sight of friends)
>
> (I.1.6-8)

If these fictional Londoners have suffered, then the players' plight is also very much a part of what Blaze's lines disclose.

Finally, in *The Antipodes*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is probably not the only source upon which Letoy's enduring advice on the necessity of marrying together words to actions and actions to words draws. Hamlet's exhortation to the players, a genuine juggling-act of words and actions, is itself most probably indebted to «the discourse of rhetoric, courtesy, and civil conservation»[33]. Weimann provides proof of this by citing extracts from Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), translated as early as 1561, informing the conduct of gentlemen, and from Stefano Guazzo's *The Civile Conversation* translated around 1581 / 1586. The

following citation is a passage which shows the proximity between the two :

> The voyce must neither be fainte like one that is sicke, or like a begger ; neither shrill nor loud like a crier [...] yet herein is required such a moderation [...] to see the woordes agree to the jesture, as the daunce doeth to the sowne of the instrument [...] That is, wee must imitate those which neither Saintlike are too ceremonious, neither Jugglerlike are too quicke and too full of action [...]. So great agreement is there betweene the words and the countenance, and the countenance and the wordes.[34]

Referring to «The Authours of Rhetoricke», Guazzo thus distinguishes words from gestures. He advocates temperance and moderation between them and in so doing adumbrates Hamlet's future advice to the players.

Body and gesture : «using all gently»

Hamlet's use of the past tense, «as I pronounced to you» (III.2.1) in the opening lines of Act III Scene 2, suggests that his advice to the players is a continuation of something he has already begun. Shortly after his instruction on vocal temperance, the course of his speech moves on and refers to gesture. Anticipating the reversible duo which has just been considered, Hamlet instructs the First Player : «Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently» (III.2.4-5). Identified in Jenkin's edition of the play, as deriving from, «Quintilian's objection to this kind of hand movement in oratory»[35], this unique reference to the «hand» and how it should be carried, may perhaps assist the actor playing the part of Hamlet in suiting the words to the action. The adverbial «thus», hemmed in by commas, may stand for the actor's cue to «saw the air with his hand». Like Hamlet who advises the players with regard to the appropriate gesture, instruction which anticipates begetting «a temperance», Letoy's discourse also tackles this part of performance practice in a plain manner. This is in accordance with his humour for seeing a play in his «plain clothes» (I.5.82) and having his «actors [perform] in their brave ones» (I.5.83). Hamlet's reference to the «hand» as a prolegomenon to the more elaborate, «Suit the action to the word, the word to the action» suffices in terms of dealing with the type of gesticulation the Prince wants the players to avoid.

Letoy's disapproval of his actors' bodily gestures reveals, however, their absence of discretion. Their over-physicality when playing, is not without detriment to «their set speech» (II.2.22). Despite Parr's convincing analysis, who argues that «Letoy's way with his actors is thoroughly autocratic and even bullying» [36], I would also like to add that the lord's downright criticism of his actors, in this moment of the play, aims at ensuring that his players successfully perform their part in the inset comedy and fulfil its purpose. Yet before considering Letoy's condemnation of superfluous gestures, it is important to turn to Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actor's*, upon which Brome probably drew, for this part of Letoy's speech. In his *Apology*, regarding body and gesture, Thomas Heywood writes :

> And this is the action behoouefull in any that professe this quality, not to vse any impudent or forced motion in any part of the body, no rough, or violent gesture, nor on the contrary, to stand like a stiffe starcht man, but to qualifie euery thing according to the nature of the person personated : for in oueracting tricks, and toyling too much in the anticke habit of humors, men of the ripest desert, greatest opinions, and best reputations, may breake into the most violent absurdities. [37]

Letoy's criticism regarding the parts of the body and excessive gestures on behalf of his actors, mirrors the passage, just quoted, in several ways : the «overacting tricks», the «forced motion», the «antic habit» and «absurdities» are words that Brome puts into Letoy's mouth :

> And you, sir, you had got a trick of late
> Of holding out your bum in a set speech,
> Your fingers fibulating on your breast
> As if your buttons or your band-strings were
> Helps to your memory. Let me see you in't
> No more, I charge you. No, nor you, sir, in
> That over-action of the legs I told you of,
> Your singles and your doubles [...]
> And when you have spoke, at the end of every speech,
> Not minding the reply, you turn you round
> As tumblers do, when betwixt every feat
> They gather wind by firking up their breeches.

I'll none of these absurdities in my house.

(II.2.21-8 & 30-4)

I saw a production of Brome's *The Antipodes* mounted at *Shakespeare's Globe* in 2000. The following commentary draws upon the actor's performance in that production. Performing the text cited above, Tim Woodward, the actor who played Letoy, married the dramatist's words to the actions he performed. To this end, he fiddled with the buttons of his costume and carried out a movement with his feet to demonstrate, that is, to show, as derived, from the Latin *monstrare*, the over-action of the legs that his character condemns. Brome's text thus provided the actor playing the part of Letoy with what Anne Ubersfeld terms «internal stage directions» [38]. Moreover, the reference to the «bum, the fingers, the breast and legs», enabled the actor to shift from *logos* to *praxis* and convey through action the type of body motion criticized by the character played. What does this reveal, however, about performance practice in the Renaissance ?

If placed within the context of Letoy's criticism, the fantastic lord's fault-finding observations regarding his actors' gesticulation or *parapraxis*, as the etymology of the prefix and word suggest, that is, «going beyond» a set speech or action by including additional gestures, does not reflect the general trend of performance practice which moved from «body-oriented playing [to] text oriented-acting» [39]. The over-action which Letoy rebukes, culminates in the plural «absurdities». Derived from the Latin *absurditas*, which denotes a «lack of harmony and dissonance», the first actor's absurd posture and the excessive gestures on behalf of the second one reflect what Letoy considers to be ill-suited practice when playing one's part or evidence of «a bad player». Finally, any sort of «antic habit» which signifies absurdity in one's posture, or grotesque actions such as the holding out of one's bum or an over-action of the legs, which Letoy reprimands at length, inevitably diverts the spectator's attention from, as Hamlet puts it, «some necessary question of the play» (III.2.40).

Textual deference : overstepping the written word.

If players overact and go beyond what is, «set down for them» (III.2.37) as expressed by Hamlet, then overstepping the frame of the written word is precisely the advice with which both Hamlet and Letoy conclude their treatise-like instructions on acting. In his final address to

the Players, Hamlet centres his advice upon the very idea of authority and the actor's deference to the set speech :

> And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them ; for there be of them that will themselves laugh to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.
>
> (III.2.36-42)

Though editors have differing opinions regarding the possibility of putting a name to the face of Hamlet's «clowns» [40], the Prince's reference to the «set speech» does not betray his disapproval of extemporising. That clowns had the ability to perform, «jigs, [...] farcical afterpieces with songs and dances» [41] was well known.

Hamlet's advice to the players, therefore, in this moment of the play, is more valuable for what it, or rather, for what Hamlet does not say. Traditionally underestimated, the First Quarto (1603) provides examples of the type of extemporising Hamlet censures. The passage in Q1 which follows «the fool that uses it» in the conflated version of Q2 and Folio reads thus :

> And then you have some again that keeps one suit of jests, as a man is known by one suit of apparel ; and gentlemen quotes his jests down in their tables, before they come to the play, as thus : «Cannot you stay till I eat my porridge ?» and «You owe me a quarter's wages», and «My coat want a cullison», and «Your beer is sour» ; and blabbering with his lips, and thus keeping in his cinquepace of jests, when God knows, the warm clown cannot make a jest unless by chance, as the blind man catcheth a hare. Masters, tell him of it. [42]

By performing a clown's «cinquepace of jests», the Prince exposes his double-natured articulation regarding acting. Weimann notes :

> [...] Hamlet [...] is telling the players what not to do, but he does so by doing it himself. Thereby, he can in one and the same speech collapse two different orders of authority in the purpose of playing. One follows humanistically sanctioned, mimetic precepts, [...] the other — in the teeth of their rejection — the contemporary practices of Tarlton and company.[43]

This clowning around or extemporising is also something which Letoy criticises in his actor Byplay, a name which aptly suits the personage's part :

> *Letoy.* But you, sir, are incorrigible, and
> Take license to yourself to add unto
> Your parts your own free fancy, and sometimes
> To alter or diminish what the writer
> With care and skill compos'd ; and when you are
> To speak to your coactors in the scene,
> You hold interlocutions with the audients —
> *Byplay.* That is a way, my lord, has bin allow'd
> On elder stages to move mirth and laughter.
> *Letoy.* Yes, in the days of Tarlton and Kemp,
> Before the stage was purg'd from barbarism,
> And brought to the perfection it now shines with.
> Then fools and jesters spent their wits, because
> The poets were wise enough to save their own
> For profitable uses. Let that pass.
> Tonight I'll give thee leave to try thy wit
> In answering my doctor and his patient
> He brings along with him to our Antipodes.
>
> (II.2.39-56)

In this moment of the comedy, Letoy's censuring of Byplay's volatile acting can be rather misleading. If Letoy's allusion to Tarlton and Kemp regarding the performer's «liberty» or skill at extempore, which «By the 1620s and 1630s [was] considered a thoroughly dated relic»[44], is understood as such, then it sounds false to *The Antipodes* at large and by extension to Brome's conception of playing, which was pro-extempore. Moreover, Butler has corrected the assumption that Elizabethan plays were no longer staged during the 1630s[45]. The reference to Richard Tarlton and

William Kemp, who were both noted for their jigging, jesting and extemporaneous practices, is perhaps voiced by Brome with irony[46] and is not to be viewed necessarily as a mirror of imperfection or passeism which Letoy's response to Byplay may suggest. Moreover, Letoy's condemnation of the actor's «interlocutions with the audients», does not bar his reference to the quality in acting from which he informs Byplay the stage has now been purged : «barbarism», that is, «a barbaric style in art, unrestrainedness» as reads in the *OED*. Though the notion of «purgation» may recall the correction and reformation mentioned previously, I think its relevance also resides to a large extent, in the «purgation» of Peregrine's melancholy. The effect of the interior play, as providing «catharsis»[47] through comedy or through «mirth and laughter» not only belongs to the «elder stages» as Letoy intimates, but is present throughout Brome's canon.

The recourse to extempore performance as a form of «unrestrainedness» or that which may not be strictly «set down» by the author, continues throughout *The Antipodes*. Brome's knowledge of and interest in this style of acting, a tradition based upon the *commedia dell'arte* was expressed by the dramatist as early as 1629. In the final act of *The City Wit*, the pedant Sarpego suggests that the masque, «should be done after the fashion of Italy by our selves, only the plot premeditated to what our aim must tend : Marry the Speeches must be extempore» (V.1)[48]. Though Letoy's remonstrance appears to go against Byplay's «free fancy», the success of the inner play, whose finality is therapeutic, will largely depend upon this very actor's extemporal skill. Prior to Letoy's encounter with his actors, Byplay's perfection in extempore is voiced as a model of excellence to Doctor Hughball :

> Well, sir, my actors
> Are all in readiness, and I think, all perfect
> But one, that never will be perfect in a thing
> He studies. Yet he makes such shifts extempore
> (Knowing the purpose what he is to speak to)
> That he moves mirth in me 'bove all the rest.
> For I am none of those poetic furies
> That threats the actor's life, in a whole play
> That adds a syllable or takes away.
>
> (II.1.14-22)

This avowal on Letoy's behalf is most telling with regard to the player who may alter or diminish the writer's text, a reality that Brome experienced. Composed by the dramatist following the Salisbury Court performance of *The Antipodes* in 1638, in the first quarto edition of the play, published in 1640, the playwright includes a note to the reader which recounts the reality of what Letoy criticises in Byplay's previous performances. Brome writes :

> *Courteous Reader : You shall find in this book more then was presented upon the stage, and left out of the presentation, for superfluous length (as some of the players pretended). I thought good all should be inserted according to the allowed original ; and as it was, at first, intended for the Cockpit stage, in the right of my most deserving friend Mr. William Beeston, unto whom it properly appertained ; and so I leave it to thy perusal, as it was generally applauded, and well acted at Salisbury Court.*
> Farewell,
> RICHARD BROME[49]

Despite the abridged performance of the playwright's comedy, as Brome's last words indicate, *The Antipodes* «was generally applauded and well acted». The closing remark that needs to be made here regarding deference to the writer's text, is that even though Brome's play was tampered with, similar to Letoy's Byplay for whose extemporising he has a penchant, the playwright's tenor towards the players is not caustic and derisive. One may have, however, expected it to be so, particularly from a dramatist who certain critics have too often regulated to the *Tribe of Ben*, and to that coterie of Jonsonian imitators[50]. The venomous voice is in fact Jonson's :

> The critique, predicated on a pre-eminent authorship, of performance practices, found its most virulent and sustained articulation in the work of Ben Jonson. In his plays, the common player (as well as the ignorant spectator) is taken to task in a fashion that deserves to be noted because the «trussing» especially of the performer intriguingly implicates the issue of authority.[51]

To reword the Prologue's lines in *Troilus and Cressida*, through Hamlet and Letoy, the Bard and Brome have not only had recourse to their «author's pen», but have also used in confidence their «actor's voice» regarding the criticism and counsel they have voiced to the players. That Shakespeare started off as an actor by joining the resident troupe at the Theatre in the 1580s is known. That Brome was also an actor is often overlooked and has been convincingly argued by Alwin Thaler, as evinced by a royal warrant[52] in which the playwright's name appears. The son, whose plays have existed in the shadow of England's «Poet Laureat» the English *Horace* as dubbed by Dekker — *Master Johnson*[53] — if not a theorist like his father, put pen to paper and composed his own *Peri Hypocrites*, very much *à la* Shakespeare. Though both plays differ in genre, whether the actors be tragedians or comedians, the verdict, pronounced by both playwrights ultimately unveils that their profession is one and the same.

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NOTES

[1] All citations regarding *Hamlet* are taken from William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G.R. Hibbard, World's Classics, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.

[2] Georges Forestier, *Le théâtre dans le théâtre sur la scène française du XVIIe siècle*, Genève, Droz, 1996, p. 10.

[3] All citations regarding *The Antipodes* are taken from Richard Brome, *The Antipodes*, ed. Ann Haaker, *Regents Renaissance Drama*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1966. It is also important to mention that there is an edition of the play which was recently published in *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, ed. Anthony Parr, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1999 (1995). Parr's edition is extremely beneficial regarding its introduction and annotations. The major difference between his and Haaker's resides in the fact that

whereas Parr has collated scene divisions, the latter has respected Brome's Jonsonian practice of beginning a new scene whenever a new character enters on stage. Finally, given that *The Antipodes* was recently staged at Shakespeare's Globe in 2000, an abridged version of the play has also appeared. See Brome, *The Antipodes*, ed. David S. Kastan and Richard Proudfoot, London, Nick Hern Books, 2000.

[4] Brome collaborated with Heywood on *The Late Lancashire Witches* in 1634. It was first acted at the Globe and published in the same year.

[5] «The emperor Nero patronised lavish theatrical spectacles ; the earl of Leicester had been an important sponsor of Elizabethan players, and his troupe established the first permanent theatre in London in 1576», Parr, *op. cit.*, n. 69 p. 236.

[6] For a thorough bibliographical account regarding Elizabethan acting styles, see «Bibliography (iv) Acting Style» in *The Revels History of Drama in English, vol. III 1576-1613*, ed. J. Leeds Barroll, Alexander Leggat, Richard Hosley, & Alvin Kernan, London and New York, Routledge, 1996 (1975), p. 481-2.

[7] For a detailed analysis concerning the terms player and actor and the concepts of playing and acting see «From common player to excellent actor», in Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice : Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 133-6. Weimann notes the following regarding the above-mentioned appellations : «the uses of these words (i.e players / actors and playing / acting) continued to overlap at least up to 1642. But if the long-term change, quite irreversible after 1660, can be summed up in a deceptively simple formula, the general trend was from body-oriented playing to text-oriented acting, without the latter, of course, ever quite engulfing the former». See Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[8] Keith Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Theatre*, London and New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, p. 41.

[9] James Wright, *Historia Histrionica* (1699). Quoted in John Orrell, *The Human Stage. English Theatre Design, 1567-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 189.

[10] This indoor theatre was converted from a cockpit in 1616-17 situated to the west of the city limits in Drury Lane by Christopher Beeston. According to critics, Inigo Jones is supposed to have designed the Cockpit. For a full account of the theatre, see Orrell, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

[11] This indoor theatre was converted from a barn in 1629 in the Whitefriars area. See R.A. Foakes, «Playhouses and Players : The Later Theatres», in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A.R. Braunmuller & Michael Hattaway, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999 (1990), p. 33.

[12] See «4. The Private Theatre Companies, their Playwrights and their Repertory», Sturgess, *op. cit.*, p. 56-70.

[13] Private playhouses refer to plays that were staged in indoor theatres, as opposed to public playhouses which had no roof such as the Globe or the Fortune. In *Theatre and Crisis*, Butler rectifies the distinction between the private and public theatres : «It appears that although the 'two traditions' are broadly and unmistakably distinct a considerable degree of interaction and cross-fertilization still took place between them, and the critical terminology that divides 'private' from 'public' implies misleadingly that the Blackfriars, Phoenix and Salisbury Court catered for a more withdrawn and restricted clientele than in fact they did. The *court* stage constituted such a 'private' theatre ; the town stages (which, after all, were open indiscriminately to anyone who could afford the admission prices) did not. A modification of the critical language used in discussing the two types of theatre is called for here. I propose that we should replace the terms 'private' and 'public' with 'popula' and 'elite' which, though they go against contemporary usage, provide a more appropriate and precise means of describing the *de facto* relationship of the two traditions, identifying the greater sophistication of the indoor theatres while avoiding the suggestion that their audiences were less a public than a band of specially invited and (somehow) privileged spectators». Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 132.

[14] Foakes, *op. cit.*, p. 32 & 36.

[15] Hibbard, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

[16] According to the *OED*, in the late 16th century, function signified, «performance of».

[17] This line ends with a question mark which I have purposefully omitted.

[18] Sturgess, *op. cit.*, p. 50-2.

[19] See Georges Bas, «James Shirley et "Th'Untun'd Kennell"», *Études Anglaises*, tome XVI, n°1, 1963, p. 11-22.

[20] In Brome's *The Antipodes*, the Prologue announces that the «author» aims at moving the spectators' «delight». This echoes Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*. The author writes : «Comedie should be full of delight, [...] rather than a kinde of contrariety», Sir Philip Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, ed. Albert Feuillerat, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962, p. 40.

[21] See, «State of the Drama in 1616, Illustrated by a Contemporary Publication : Players», in *The English Drama and Stage Under the Tudor and Stuart Princes 1543-1664*, ed. W.C.H. A Series of Documents, Treatises, and Poems. Printed for the Roxburghe Library, 1869, p. 228.

[22] This is a reformulation of Guildenstern's remark to the Prince following the inset play in Act III Scene 2. Guildenstern's line to Hamlet reads : «put your discourse into some frame» (III.2.292).

[23] Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[24] Hibbard, *op. cit.*, n. 19-23, p. 248.

[25] See «The Survival of Popular Tradition». Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

[26] Contrary to the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods whereby the play within the play was concerned with revenge or exposure of guilt, the Caroline play within the play underwent major change. See Charlotte Spivack, «Alienation and Illusion : The Play-Within-a-Play on the Caroline Stage», in *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, p. 195-209.

[27] Aristotle, *The Ethics of Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J.A.K. Thomson, London, Penguin, 1976 (1953).

[28] Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 4 & 155.

[29] See Charlotte Spivack's article, already cited, and more particularly Act III Scene 3 of John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628).

[30] Quailpipe is the actor whom Letoy counselled against ranting. His name suggests a «high-pitched querulous voice, clearly then as now part of the stereotype of the curate. A quailpipe was a whistle used by fowlers to lure quails by imitating theirt call». See Parr, *op. cit.*, n°8, p. 220.

[31] Weimann brings to the fore a contradiction in terms of Hamlet's tolerance regarding words and action : «The same Hamlet, who enjoins "modesty" and "discretion" upon the players (words that, [...] are central concepts in the language of reform) is perfectly prepared to tolerate, even to exploit, the absence of such discretion in his encounter with the grave-digger», Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 122-3.

[32] According to Weimann, judicious was «a rare word with profoundly divisive connotations», *ibid.*, p. 153.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 157-9.

[34] Quoted in Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

[35] See William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Harold Jenkins, London and New York, Routledge, 1993 (1982), n. 4, p. 287.

[36] Parr, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

[37] Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, ed. Richard H. Perkinson, 1941.

[38] Anne Ubersfeld, *Les termes clés de l'analyse du théâtre*, Paris, Seuil, 1996, p. 31.

[39] Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[40] In Jenkins's edition of the play, he identifies Richard Tarlton as the clown. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, n. 39, p. 289. In Gibbard's edition, the footnote reads : «the use of the plural suggests that Shakespeare had no specific target in mind», Gibbard, *op. cit.*, n. 36-42, p. 249.

[41] Foakes, *op. cit.*, p. 43 and «The companies and actors» in *The Revels Drama*, *op. cit.*, p. 99-101.

[42] Hibbard *op. cit.*, n. 42, p. 250.

[43] Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[45] Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[46] I agree with Parr's analysis of this passage. For further elucidation regarding Brome's allusion to Tarlton and Kemp, see Parr, *op. cit.*, p. 45-6.

[47] See Joe Lee Davies, «Richard Brome's Neglected Contribution to Comic Theory», *Studies in Philology*, n°40, oct. 1943, p. 520-8.

[48] Richard Brome, *The City Wit*, in *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome Containing Fifteen Comedies in Three Volumes*, ed. John Pearson, London, 1873.

[49] Häaker, *op. cit*, p. 127.

[50] See Joe Lee Davies, *The Sons of Ben : Jonsonian Comedy in Caroline England*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1967.

[51] Weimann, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

[52] See Alwin Thayer, «Was Richard Brome an Actor ?», *Modern Language Notes*, n°36, fév. 1921, p. 89. Thaler writes : «Brome, like Field, was an actor before he became a playwright, and that, like Field, he may have been indebted to Jonson in both capacities. This evidence appears in the form of a royal warrant under date of June 30, 1628 [...]. The warrant is one of a miscellaneous list of orders for payment of court performances, allowances for actors' liveries, and the like. It reads as follows : «Warrant to swear the Queen of Bohemia's players groomes of his Majesties chamber without fee, viz. Joseph Moore, Alexander Foster, Robert Gylman *Richard Brome...*».

[53] See Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies, *Ben Jonson*, Paris, Aubier, p. 23.