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On Lying / La bugia

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Nota sugli Autori	7
Roberta Mullini Editoriale: Un saluto (Editorial: A Goodbye)	11
Alessandra Molinari Introduction: On Lying	13
Emilio Gianotti Dirk ex Machina: Douglas Adams' Saga and Holistic Detection as Religious Satire	25
Alessandra Calanchi Lies from Outer Space: The Martians' Famous Invasion of New Jersey	49
Anna Cerboni Baiardi Tra virtuosismo e truffa: l'arte del falsario (Between Virtuosity and Fraud: The Forger's Art)	63

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Aoife Beville 79

"An Infinite and Endless Liar": Paroles as a Case Study of the Pragmatics of Lying in Shakespeare

Arianna Punzi 103

Attraverso la frode: la *Commedia* come conquista della verità della parola
(Dante's *Comedy* as the Apotheosis of the Truth of the Word)

Elena Acquarini 117

Riflesso della menzogna nella transgenerazionalità
(Reverberation of Lies in Transgenerationals)

Stefano Pivato 129

Pinocchio, metafora della politica italiana
(Pinocchio as a Metaphor of Italian Politics)

Alessandro Di Caro 143

Il paradosso del mentitore
(The Liar Paradox)

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"An Infinite and Endless Liar": Paroles as a Case Study of the Pragmatics of Lying in Shakespeare

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Abstract – Lying is part of our life and part of our literary canon, the choice to lie, not lie or *almost* lie is both a moral and linguistic one. In the present paper lying, and related concepts such as deliberate obfuscation and deceptive implicatures, will be examined from a pragmatic, specifically neo-Gricean perspective. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of deception in the process of characterisation, with a particular focus on the form and function of the mendacious language of Paroles, the "infinite and endless liar" in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Following the analysis of current pragmatic definitions of lying, this article proposes a distinction between Off-Record Verbal Deception (ORVD) and prototypical lies in the analysis of textual examples, in order to understand how these strategic linguistic choices affect the construction of character.

Keywords – Pragmatics of lying; Shakespeare; Pragmastylistics; Characterization; Verbal Deception.

> "We all know what it is to lie, to be told lies, to be correctly or falsely suspected of having lied."
> (Bok 1999)

1. Introduction

1.1. Methodological coordinates

Lying is, undeniably, a linguistic phenomenon which pervades our lives and our literature. Attempting to define the slippery categories of deception and dissimulation is no easy task, yet the communicative choice to deceive must fall within the domain of pragmatics. Indeed, recent years have seen a flurry

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of publications regarding the linguistics of lying, mostly from a pragmatic perspective. Some landmark publications include *Lying Misleading and What is Said* (Saul 2012b) and the *Oxford Handbook of Lying* (2019), edited by Jörg Meibauer, who boasts several other recent publications on the topic in the past decade (2011; 2014; 2018). Recent years have also seen many key articles (Adler 1997; Fallis 2009; 2012; Saul 2012a; Carson 2016; Kisielewska-Krysiuk 2017; Dynel 2020), various attempts at an appropriate definition (Carson 2006; Mahon 2016) and a rich and stimulating debate among authors (Dynel 2015; Meibauer 2016). However, very little research has, thus far, applied these recent developments in the linguistics of lying to the study of the language of Shakespearean texts (Rudanko 2007; Del Villano 2016; Scott 2019). Meanwhile, in historical pragmatics there is a wealth of recent research on early modern texts (Busse and Busse 2010; Culpeper and Kytö 2010; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013). In pragmatic approaches to Shakespeare there has been a focus on areas such as characterisation (Mullini 1985; Culpeper 2001), political power (Kizelbach 2014), (im)politeness (Rudanko 2006; Del Villano 2016) and dialogical asides (Mullini 2016). These pragmatic models, along with semiotic and discourse-based approaches to play-texts, such as those found in Elam (1980; 1984), underpin the methodology of the present study. Another cardinal point for the investigation of interpersonal mendacity is that of interactional storytelling; this study draws from Bowles' 2010 volume *Storytelling and Drama: Exploring Narrative Episodes in Plays*, which provides a theoretical framework for analysing embedded narrative in dialogical texts. Bowles' Conversational Analysis (CA) approach to narrative episodes in theatre proved a reference point for the study of embedded mendacious narratives within the plays (2010).

The present study aims to apply these linguistic models to the dialogue of – and regarding – the character of Paroles in Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*. The focus is primarily on the process of characterisation: how the linguistic phenomenon of lying, as understood from a neo-Gricean [1] perspective, contributes to the creation of character. As Culpeper states, "the con-

[1] A neo-Gricean perspective on pragmatics arises from the refinement and expansion of Grice's "seminal but patchy proposal" (Huang 2017, 50) which has been seen over the past decades. In this essay neo-Gricean notions (Dynel 2011; Fallis 2012; Meibauer 2018, etc.) will be preferred to those of other currents in pragmatics which are less concerned with lying and deception. For a comprehensive overview of neo-Gricean pragmatics see Huang (2017, 48-78).

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struction of people – or characters – through interaction is an aspect of meaning construction, and, as such, it is a pragmatic matter" (2001, 23). In order to determine the linguistic cues used to construct the character of Paroles this paper will draw on Culpeper's application of attribution theories [2] and the relevant kinds of attribution (*person* attribution, *stimulus* attribution or *circumstance* attribution) which aligns these cognitive concepts with the stylistic notion of foregrounding (2001, 115-43).

Turning to the object of analysis, *All's Well That Ends Well* is listed among the comedies in the *First Folio*. The play centres around Helen, an orphaned physician's daughter, and her clever ploy to win Bertram's hand in marriage by curing the king and thus securing his favour. Bertram reluctantly submits to the marriage in obedience to the king but immediately shuns his bride and flees to war in Italy in the company of his equivocal companion Paroles. Helen continues to pursue Bertram and follows him in order to organise an elaborate trick which will fulfil his seemingly impossible demands of wearing his ring and bearing his child in order to have him recognise the marriage. *All's Well That Ends Well* falls into the category of the "problem plays", an enduring – if enigmatic – label which first appeared in the late 1800s [3] but continues to inform Shakespearean criticism. For the purposes of this paper it is preferable to consider Melchiori's recategorization of the play (along with its "problematic" companions) as "drammi dialettici" ("dialectical dramas"), which avoids the vague and intuitive classification of the plays as *problematic* and endeavours to investigate their dialectical nature asserting that:

> la loro vitalità è invece tutta nel dibattito interno al dramma, indipendentemente dagli esiti, sta in un continuo confronto dialettico che acquista valore assoluto di ricerca di una verità che, proprio per essere vera, non può essere unica e univoca. (Melchiori 2010, 406) [4]

[2] Here Culpeper 2001 draws on the cognitive theories outlined by Jones (Jones and Davis 1965; Jones and McGillis 1976; and Jones 1990) and Kelley (1967; 1972; 1973), acknowledging that these authors elaborated on the ideas which had first appeared in Heider 1944 and 1958.

[3] Dowden may be said to have first classified the plays in this grouping in 1889; the term "problem plays" was first used in 1896 by Boas (1910), who included *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Troilus and Cressida* and (controversially) *Hamlet*. The categorisation has demonstrated a remarkable longevity (Tillyard 1950; Toole 1966; Lawrence 1969; Rhodes 2000; Barker 2005).

[4] "their vitality is all in the internal debate in the drama, independent of the outcome, it lies in a continuous dialectical debate which acquires the absolute value of a quest for the

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The dialectical nature of the plays is intended here both in the classical sense of an exchange of contrasting opinions without the necessity of a final resolution and as a linguistic notion of discursivity. Thus, Melchiori's categorisation underlines how this dual dialectical dimension in *All's Well That Ends Well* is central to the analysis of the play-text. The play invites an examination of the strategies of communication employed within the text.

1.2. Historical coordinates

Lying, and the related concepts of truth and truthfulness, have long fascinated writers, philosophers, theologians, and political theorists alike; from Aristotle [5] to Kant the epistemological and ethical concerns raised by mendacity have had a privileged place in Western thought. Deception is not a historical phenomenon consigned to one particular period, but a wholly human activity:

> […] humans' propensity to lie might be seen as an attribute coterminous with the evolutionary emergence of verbal language, which they alone among the higher animals are privileged to possess, and which grants to mendacity and dissimulation a range of possibility infinitely greater than what is available to creatures incapable of speech. (Zagorin 1996, 856)

Or, as Francis Bacon observed, there is in mankind "a natural, though corrupt, love of the lie itself" (1909 [1625]). In our postmodern (and ostensibly post-truth) age we are still fascinated by mendacity and dissimulation, but such themes were also the subject of contentious debate in the pre-Enlightenment (pre-Kantian) era. Early modern theologians and men of letters were fixated with dissimulation and equivocation (Hadfield 2013; Berensmeyer and Hadfield 2015). The doctrine of equivocation (as espoused by Jesuits, Waldesians and others) aimed to allow the speaker to avoid religious persecution by permitting him to deliberately mislead the authorities while maintaining a pure conscience. Furthermore, early modern discussion of statecraft often underlined the necessity of "policy" – a by-word [6] for *astuzia*

truth, a truth which, in order to be true, cannot be unique and univocal" – all translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

[5] For a summary of classical and contemporary philosophical approaches to lying see Mahon's chapters in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying* (2019).

[6] See Orsini (1946) for the origin, meaning and use of the term *policy* in Elizabethan political discourse.

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or shrewdness in political matters. Machiavelli, along with writers such as Guiccardini and Castiglione, offers the most salient examples of such discourse. While, undeniably, the lively discussion of the (im)morality of deception had stretched across the Middle Ages [7], it is evident that "in the confessional conflicts, persecutions and enforced conformity of the Reformation, the problem of dissimulation assumed a greater relevance than ever before" (Zagorin 1990, 33). Religious leaders such as John Calvin and Henry Garnet espoused contrasting ideas of casuistry which teased apart (often biblical) examples of mendacity in order to defend or condone the strategy involved. As Zagorin (1996, 905) so aptly puts it, "In light of the widespread practice of dissimulation during this period and of the doctrinal rationalizations that were used to justify it, we might give this era a further title and name it the Age of Dissimulation".

Certainly this concern with lying and truthfulness could not help but bleed onto the early modern stage and page, where it found aesthetic expression. Thus, on the stage the figurative and fictional language of the play-world (re)presented these same gaps between, in Gricean terms, "what is said" and "what is meant".

2. Pragmatic perspectives on lying

In pragmatic terms lying can be understood as a violation of Grice's Cooperative Principle, namely the violation of the Maxim of Quality which states "do not say what you believe to be false" (Grice 1989 [1967], 26-27; Fallis 2012; Dynel 2011; 2016). It is important to note that this must be, in Gricean terms, a "quiet and unostentatious" violation in order to deceive; opting out or "blatantly" flouting the maxim would result in irony, metaphor or other forms of conversational implicature which are not intended to mislead. Dynel neatly distinguishes these two options as *overt* untruthfulness and *covert* untruthfulness (2016), a distinction which we shall return to. Another pragmatic perspective on lying is provided by Speech Act Theory (SAT) in which lying is generally considered as an assertion which does not respect

[7] One need only think of Augustine's and Jerome's starkly differing interpretations of Paul's rebuke of Peter in the letter to the Galatians, or of Aquinas' later commentary on lying in his *Summae Theologiae*. See Zagorin (1990, 15-37).

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the Sincerity Condition (Austin 1962; Searle 1979; Reboul 1994). However both of these notions raise considerable theoretical issues. Is it possible to lie by violating the other maxims? Is it possible to lie without making an assertion? Essentially, the phenomenon of verbal deception lies on the semantics-pragmatics interface.

Before delving into technical linguistic definitions of lying, it is useful to briefly consider an apt description of strategic verbal deception as uttered by Isabella in *Measure for Measure*: "To have what we would have, we speak not what we mean" (II.4.119). This description is stunningly pragmatic in nature, focussing firstly on the illocutionary force of the speech act and secondly on the violation of the Cooperative Principle.

Most linguistic definitions of lying run the risk of being either too narrow or too broad. In the too-narrow camp are the so-called "deceptionists" and "assertionists" whose traditional definition has been succinctly summarised as follows: "(L1 [the traditional definition of lying]) To lie [is] to make a believed-false statement to another person with the intention that the other person believe that statement to be true." (Mahon 2016, 2).

Such a definition would entail the following four conditions: to lie one must: (i) make a statement (statement, or assertion condition), (ii) believe what one is stating is false (untruthfulness condition), (iii) make this untruthful statement to another person (addressee condition), (iv) intend that the other person accept the statement as true (intention to deceive condition) (Mahon 2016). While the untruthfulness condition and the addressee condition tend to be widely accepted, the "deceptionist" and "assertionist" stances are the subject of intense linguistic and philosophical debate [8].

Meibauer's definition lies in the too-broad camp. He analyses lying both as a speech act of insincere assertion (2011; 2014) and as an instance of the violation of the maxims of Quality (2005; 2014; 2018). He contests both the assertion condition and the deception condition. While he purports that deception need not be written into the definitions of lying, his definition, however, admits that "the deception follows from the lack of truthfulness on the part of the liar" (2014, 104). In this regard he differs from those deceptionists which have explicitly included the intent to deceive in their definitions. Meibauer parts ways with other neo-Griceans on the lying/misleading divide in proposing a revision to the standard definition which is expressed as:

[8] For an up-to-date summary see Meibauer 2019.

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(L2) A lied at t,
Iff [9] a) A asserted at t that p,
b) A actively believed at t that not p. (2005, 1376; 2014, 103)

This is then expanded with the following:

(L3) A lied at t by uttering the declarative sentence s
iff (a) if the definition of the lie in (L2) holds,
(b) or if A thereby conversationally implicated that q, but actively believed that not q. (2005, 1382; 2014, 125)

This definition has several positive aspects: principally it recognises the need to deal with non-prototypical lies. However, Meibauer intends to do away with the traditional lying/misleading dichotomy, insisting instead that "cases of misleading are not separated from 'proper' lying, they are part of the overall act of lying" and would therefore include falsely presupposing and falsely conversationally implicating among lying (2014, 154). It seems to almost satisfy the need to define and delineate some evident cases of verbal deception, yet its main problem is that of undermining the notion of cancellability. Meibauer's wittily titled 2014 volume *Lying at the Semantics-Pragmatics Interface* proves an insightful guide to the taxonomy of lying, drawing on Chisholm and Feehan (1977) and Vincent Marelli and Castelfranchi (1981).

As current pragmatic definitions go, either all forms of misleading implicatures and insincere speech acts must be classed as lying, or we are left with no particular distinction for the half-truths, false implicatures, pre-supposition faking, and countless other strategies employed constantly in communicative contexts. Surely, it must be relevant to the theory of lying that one can say "I didn't say that, therefore I didn't lie" and successfully avoid charges of perjury. For example, in the aftermath of the oft-cited Clinton-Lewinsky scandal [10] the former president was not charged with perjury for his misleading (falsely implicating) remarks. I argue that a robust linguistic definition of lying must allow for these 'borderline' cases while taking into account the specific strategic choices of the Speaker in retaining a level of deniability. The

[9] "Iff" is used in much of the literature on lying, especially in texts from a logical/philosophical perspective to mean "if and only if" (see Carson 2010; Saul 2012; Meibauer 2014).

[10] While this example is found in much of the literature on lying since the 1990s, a thorough examination of the philosophical, linguistic and political complexities involved in varying interpretations is found in Saul 2012b.

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choice between brazen lying and subtle strategies of verbal deception must be considered as a pragmatic move within conversation.

Stokke (2013; 2016) argues that the distinction between lying and misleading is sensitive to discourse structure, drawing on Stalnaker's (2002) notion of 'common ground'. Stokke's series of astutely mirrored examples demonstrates that whether the same utterance can be counted as a lie or not depends on the question under discussion (QUD), "whether you lie or merely mislead depends on which question you are interpreted as addressing" (2016, 88). Indeed, this allows for S to strategically insert the proposition into the discourse without committing to it, for instance through falsely implicating or presupposition faking, yet "when one is lying, one is typically committed to the misleading information one conveys in a particular sense" (*ibid.*).

I would argue that the deniability afforded through what in common parlance we would call "*technically* not-lying" should not be expunged through an over-reaching definition of lying but rather incorporated into a broader model of verbal deception which distinguishes between prototypical lying and other forms of mendacity. I, therefore, elect to adopt and adapt the terminology used by Brown and Levinson in their foundational theories of politeness (1987). This goes beyond the notion of overt and covert untruthfulness raised by Dynel and distinguishes two forms of covert untruthfulness. Firstly, lying, which entails "going on record about the truth of p", or committing oneself to the truth of the proposition similar to the notions of "warranting the truth" or "adding to the common ground" found in some definitions of lying (Carson 2006; Saul 2012b; Stokke 2013). Secondly, Off-Record Verbal Deception (ORVD) which leaves the speaker with the possibility to deny having "asserted that p". My proposed modification of Meibauer's definition is as follows:

> (L4) A lied at t, iff
> a) S went on record to say p (committed himself to the truth of p)
> b) S actively believed at H that not p

or

> (L5) S committed Off-Record Verbal Deception (ORVD) to H by uttering the sentence r if S thereby conversationally implicated that q, but actively believed that not q.

Brown and Levinson's terminology was, of course, developed to tackle the notion of interactional politeness, however I believe it offers a fruitful frame-

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work for distinguishing between mendacious strategies. Their definition specifies that "If an actor goes off record in doing A, then there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent." (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69).

Which is further explained by Culpeper: "in a suitable context the hearer may be able to infer that the speaker [is saying X] but, if challenged, *the speaker could always deny this*" (2001, 244-45; emphasis mine). Specifically, the reappropriation of this terminology from its place in politeness theory to the dichotomy of lying/misleading offers a lens through which it is possible to examine the Speaker's deliberate choice to retain their deniability as a pragmatic move within the conversation.

This paper focusses principally on the qualitative analysis of deceptive strategies relevant to the process of characterisation. Mendacious utterances have been categorised and collated through close reading; lies are classified as such on the grounds of textual evidence regarding the untruthfulness of the utterance [11]. These instances of verbal deception were identified and analysed in order to establish a preliminary set of quantitative data regarding the strategic use of interpersonal mendacity within the play. Identifying and categorising mendacious linguistic strategies is necessarily influenced by a subjective interpretation of the truth values within the play-world. No doubt there is some scope for disagreement about some of the examples offered here. Scenes were selected for analysis in this paper due to the frequency and salience of mendacious utterances; the qualitative analysis of such exchanges attempts to examine *what type* of deceptive strategies are used and *how* these contribute to characterisation within the play.

3. A notorious liar

Paroles' name itself is certainly meaningful, as are many names in Shakespeare. It conjures both his "French-ness" and his loquaciousness, and, perhaps,

[11] The truthfulness of the speaker is distinct from the truth of the utterance, one can be truthful and say something untrue or, equally, one can be untruthful yet say something true. Bertram's vehement denials of Helen's possession of his ring (V.3.89 "The ring was never hers"; also lines 81, 92 and 112) are false (it was obtained during the bed trick) yet Bertram does not know this, he is speaking truthfully. However, when he tells the tale of the ring being thrown to him from a window (V.3.93-100) he is committed to the truth of a known-false utterance and is therefore lying on-record.

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hints at how little substance there is to him beyond his verbosity. As Snyder remarks (1992, 269), "Character conception and name are intimately connected, for example, in the case of Paroles, the man of words who is named in the Folio speech prefixes and stage directions and repeatedly in the dialogue from first scene to last."

Tellingly, in his initial appearance onstage the audience is provided with a vital interpretative key for the character of Paroles. As he first appears on the stage Helen presents him as "a notorious liar" and neatly summarises his whole character arc:

> HELEN [...]
> *Enter Paroles*
> One that goes with him. I love him for his sake,
> And yet I know him a notorious liar,
> Think him a great way fool, solely a coward,
> Yet these fixed evils sit so fit in him
> That they take place when virtue's steely bones
> Looks bleak i'th' cold wind. Withal, full oft we see
> Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly. (I.1.87-93) [12]

When he subsequently engages Helen in witty banter, for which she is well prepared, we can observe the kind of rhetorical dexterity which Mullini (1985, 102) identifies as characteristic of the fool. That is the end which awaits him, though he could already be described as a character "whose life is the word and whose interaction effects the corruption of the others' words" (*ibid.*). Helen's initial judgment of Paroles as liar, fool and coward is reinforced as it is echoed by many other characters, creating an overwhelmingly high consensus regarding his character:

> LAFEU Go to, sir. You were beaten in Italy for picking a kernel out of a pomegranate, you are a vagabond, and no true traveller: you are more saucy with lords and honourable personages than the commission of your birth and virtue gives you heraldry. You are not worth another word, else I'd call you knave. I leave you. (II.3.235-239)

> LAFEU And shall do so ever, though I took him at's prayers. Fare you well, my lord, and believe this of me: there can be no kernel in this light nut. The soul of this man is his clothes. Trust him not in matter of heavy consequence. I have kept of them tame, and know their

[12] All quotations of *All's Well That Ends Well* are taken from Shakespeare 2016.

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natures. – Farewell, monsieur. I have spoken better of you, than you have wit or will to deserve at my hand, but we must do good against evil. (II.5.37-43)

COUNTESS Paroles, was it not?
LORD E. Ay, my good lady, he.
COUNTESS A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness.
My son corrupts a well-derivèd nature
With his inducement.
LORD E. Indeed, good lady,
The fellow has a deal of that too much,
Which holds him much to have. (III.2.75-80)

MARIANA I know that knave, hang him! One Paroles: a filthy officer he is in those suggestions for the young earl. Beware of them, Diana; their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust, are not the things they go under. Many a maid hath been seduced by them; and the misery is example that so terrible shows in the wreck of maidenhood cannot for all that dissuade succession, but that they are limed with the twigs that threatens them. I hope I need not to advise you further, but I hope your own grace will keep you where you are, though there were no further danger known but the modesty which is so lost.
DIANA You shall not need to fear me. (III.5.13-23)

These instances of other-presentation of Paroles provide key points of indirect evidence of Paroles' mendacious nature: most characters agree that he is a notorious liar. The exchange between the Lords and Countess Roussillon (III.2.75-80) provides further support to the stimulus attribution in that the characters agree with one another about the judgment pronounced. Similarly, Mariana's warning about Paroles (and men in general) is dutifully heeded by Diana. Her warning is made salient through the semantic parallelism in her listing of the so-called "engines of lust", interestingly three of these four instruments of corruption are verbal (promises, enticements, oaths), and Paroles will indeed use these very tools deceptively. According to the model proposed by Culpeper (2001) the information provided through this high consensus regarding Paroles' lack of regard for the truth and his intent to corrupt through dishonest means all contribute to the process of characterisation.

Striking, in the light of this high consensus, is the one dissonant voice which (initially) does not conform to the widely accepted view of Paroles-as-liar:

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> LAFEU But I hope your lordship thinks not him a soldier.
> BERTRAM Yes, my lord, and of very valiant approof.
> LAFEU You have it from his own deliverance.
> BERTRAM And by other warranted testimony.
> LAFEU Then my dial goes not true. I took this lark for a bunting.
> BERTRAM I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in knowledge, and accordingly valiant. (II.5.1-7)

Bertram's trusting attitude towards Paroles is foregrounded against the widespread agreement about Paroles-as-liar. Indeed, Bertram's insistence on Paroles' "valiant approof" and Lafeu's subsequent objection to the validity of such self-presentation creates a discounting effect, we understand, as Bertram eventually will, that he is deceived by Paroles. It is perhaps Paroles' successive attempt to save face by discrediting Lafeu as "an idle lord, I swear", which initiates Bertram's suspicions as he is not persuaded ("I think not so") and begins to realise that the general consensus which defends Lafeu's honour also condemns Paroles' dishonesty: "I do know him well, and common speech | Gives him a worthy pass" (II.5.44-48). Paroles' strategy here is to go on record (commit himself to the truth of the statement) by performing an oath "I swear". In Speech Act Theory (SAT) (Searle 1979) such an illocutionary act is classified as a commissive. Paroles proffers an infelicitous commissive which does not fulfil the sincerity condition. In this instance his on-record strategy backfires as Bertram contradicts him. His covert intention [13] of discrediting Lafeu in order to save face is most likely understood by Bertram, and is therefore unsuccessful. Here Paroles fails to deceive (Bertram is not convinced) but he has still lied (he went on record about the truth of a believed false statement).

4. A Spurio(us) Tale

Paroles is a strategic storyteller: his mostly mendacious tales are characterised by their communicative purpose.

[13] Rudanko proposes the delineation concepts of overt and covert intentions and of first and second order intentions: "A first distinction is between overt and covert intentions. An overt intention is simply an intention that the speaker wants the hearer to recognize, and a covert intention is one that the speaker does not want the hearer to recognize. The second distinction is between first-order and second-order intentions. A first-order intention is an intention about the world, or about the world of the play in this case. For its part, a second-order intention is an intention about a first-order intention" (2007, 113-14).

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BERTRAM I grow to you,
And our parting is a tortured body.
LORD G.Farewell, captain.
LORD E. Sweet Monsieur Paroles.
PAROLES Noble heroes, my sword and yours are kin. Good sparks lustrous, a word, good mettles. You shall find in the regiment of the Spinii one Captain Spurio with his cicatrice, an emblem of war, here on his sinister cheek. It was this very sword entrenched it. Say to him I live, and observe his reports for me.
LORD G.We shall, noble captain.
PAROLES Mars dote on you for his novices. (II.1.36-45)

In Bowles' framework for the analysis of narrative episodes in play-texts, a story like the one told here by Paroles is classified as a "'self-aggrandising' story in which tellers 'talk up' their role in the recounted events by presenting themselves in a flattering light or by boasting about their achievements" (2010, 61). Paroles' intention here is to boast about his previous military exploits. Given the weight of opinion against his trustworthiness, and his later displays of cowardice in war, it seems unlikely that this story holds any water. Labov and Waletzky's (1967) scheme for oral narratives of personal experiences is, as noted by Bowles (2010, 15-16), easy to apply to particular kinds of narrative, but not all-encompassing. The pattern is laid out as follows: orientation {abstract – complication – resolution – coda} evaluation (Labov and Waletzky 1967, 32-39). Not all stories follow this structure, certainly not all the small, everyday stories found embedded in dialogue; the original study called for subjects to recount a life-threatening experience and thus elicited a certain type of narrative (Bowles 2010, 16-18). However, I believe this structure is useful for the analysis of this bragging-tale told by Paroles.

The *orientation* (person, place, time) is provided through the proper name "Spurio", indicating that the action takes place in Italy, and through the mention of some previous "war". The *abstract* here takes the form of Paroles' request to tell: "a word, good mettles". The *complication* is provided by the account of conflict ("cicatrice", "this very sword", "emblem of war"), the *resolution* is provided in Paroles' message to his adversary "say to him I live", which along with the request to "observe his reports for me" functions also as the evaluation, that is the reason for which the story is told and the narrator's attitude towards it. The coda is found in the salutations which signal that the storytelling is complete. Paroles ostensibly tells this story with the aim of sending a message to an old opponent, however there are several clues which

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lead us to doubt the veracity of the tale. Firstly, the name Spurio itself strongly implies that the narrative may be *spurious* (the name will be used again by Paroles when he is under duress at IV.3.131). Secondly the story seems to fit a self-aggrandising-type [14]; I have classified it as a case of lying proper on the grounds that there is no textual evidence in its favour, while there is much reason to doubt the truth of the tale.

5. "What an equivocal companion is this"

Paroles is the most prolific [15] liar in the play (see *Tab. 1*), he is responsible for 21 mendacious utterances in the play, 8 of which are classified as Off-Record Verbal Deception (ORVD) and 13 of which are cases of lying proper.

Table 1 – Strategies of Deception in All's Well That Ends Well

Character	Non-verbal deception	ORVD	Lying proper	Total
Helen	2	6	3	11
Bertram	1	6	9	16
Paroles	0	8	13	21
Diana	0	5	2	7

Evidently he makes use of both on and off-record strategies of verbal deception but shows a preference for outright lying. Unlike Diana and Helen, he does not seem overly concerned with mitigating his lies for moralistic motivations. Helen's deceptive plot and Diana's assistance are justified throughout the play:

> WIDOW I have yielded.
> Instruct my daughter how she shall persever,

[14] Or a "bullshit" type in which there is a loose regard for the truth. On "bullshit/ bullshitting" see Carson's summary of the principle concepts and his main objections (2016) and Stokke's chapter "Bulshitting" in Meibauer 2019.

[15] This data is the preliminary result of the application of the linguistic model presented to the full text of *All's Well That Ends Well*. The prolificity of the lies here is not intended to pertain to the ratio to lines spoken, rather these four characters simply result as having employed the number of linguistic strategies indicated. Further analysis of this data set is required, but this initial indication of strategic preferences is worthy of note.

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That time and place with this deceit so lawful
[…]
HELEN Why then tonight
Let us assay our plot, which if it speed
Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed
And lawful meaning in a wicked act,
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact.
But let's about it. (III.7.36-48)
DIANA Only, in this disguise I think't no sin,
To cozen him that would unjustly win. (IV.2.75-76)

While Saul (2012a; 2012b) very convincingly argues that "merely misleading" is not as morally superior to lying as it would intuitively seem, she notes that it is nonetheless evident that "we tend to believe", as did the early modern audience, "these choices to be morally revealing" (Saul 2012b, 91). The off-record strategies identified within the play can be considered a kind of linguistic representation of the doctrine of equivocation which was central to the discussion on untruthfulness in early modern England. Helen and Diana practice the art of equivocation and prefer to employ ORVD strategies, while Bertram and Paroles seem to have no problem with outright lying (on-record). In comparing their linguistic choices (acts) we are also reflecting on the morality of the actor and "decisions about lying and misleading may be genuinely (not just apparently) morally revealing about the character of the actor" (Saul 2012b, 87). I argue that these patterns are, therefore, important in the process of characterisation; while Helen and Diana mainly seek to avoid going on record about untruths, Bertram and Paroles have no such qualms. Paroles even swears falsely: when he wishes to seem willing to undertake the heroic rescue of a drum captured by the enemy, he swears "By the hand of a soldier, I will undertake it" (III.5.55), however his plot to avoid combat is revealed in the following act when he plans to fake his injuries and give a false report ("I must give myself some hurts, and say I got them in exploit", IV.1.29-30).

However, after Paroles has fallen victim to his companions' trickery and has been outed as a braggart and "found an ass" (IV.3.275), he alters his strategy. In the final act he is called as a witness in Bertram's *ad hoc* trial, albeit a notoriously unreliable one:

DIANA I did, my lord, but loath am to produce
So bad an instrument. His name's Paroles.
[…]

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BERTRAM What of him?
He's quoted for a most perfidious slave
With all the spots o'th' world taxed and debauched,
Whose nature sickens but to speak a truth.
Am I or that or this for what he'll utter,
That will speak anything? (V.3.199-207)

Yet, despite both Diana's and Bertram's fears, he does not resort to his familiar tactics of outrightly bragging, instead he employs evasive, equivocal tactics:

PAROLES So please your majesty, my master hath been an
honourable gentleman. Tricks he hath had in him which gentlemen
have.
KING Come, come, to'th' purpose. Did he love this woman?
PAROLES Faith, sir, he did love her, but how?
KING How, I pray you?
PAROLES He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves a woman.
KING How is that?
PAROLES He loved her, sir, and loved her not.
KING As thou art a knave and no knave. What an equivocal companion
is this! (V.3.235-45)

In Gricean terms Paroles violates the maxim of manner, he does not avoid ambiguity but employs deliberate obfuscation. This is an off-record strategy: he is not committed to the truth of his claims, which are deliberately vague. This is not the first time Paroles employs ORVD, but it is interesting to note that after being duped and bested by his companions he no longer favours on-record strategies of deception. He also struggles with reticence:

PAROLES Faith, I know more than I'll speak.
KING But wilt thou not speak all thou know'st?
PAROLES Yes, so please your majesty. I did go between them, as I said,
but more than that he loved her, for indeed he was mad for her, and
talked of Satan and of limbo and of Furies and I know not what. Yet
I was in that credit with them at that time that I knew of their going
to bed and of other motions, as promising her marriage and things
which would derive me ill will to speak of. Therefore I will not speak
what I know.
KING Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst say they are married. But
thou art too fine in thy evidence, therefore stand aside. (V.3.249-259)

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But, as the King duly notes, he has "spoken all already", either he has failed to employ a strategy of reticence or he has deliberately feigned this unsuccessful attempt, the latter is most likely.

6. An infinite and endless liar?

Throughout *All's Well That Ends Well* the figure of Lavatch serves to reflect the moral corruption and degradation of the play world (Mullini 1997, 77); he functions as a mirror to Bertram's cynical view on marriage in his own vulgar expressions of his desire to marry (I.3.10-43), the subsequent rejection of his betrothed (III.2.10-13) and in his continued positive appraisal of cuckoldry. He is a "bitter" fool, to borrow the distinction made in *King Lear*; Mullini notes that he is the fool that is most often referred to as knave (1997, 77), indeed he himself claims to be both (V.4.17-23). It is in his interaction with Paroles that this fluidity between fool and knave is made most salient:

> PAROLES Away, thou'rt a knave.
> CLOWN You should have said, sir, 'Before a knave, thou'rt a knave'; that's 'Before me thou'rt a knave'. This had been truth, sir.
> PAROLES Go to, thou art a witty fool. I have found thee.
> CLOWN Did you find me in yourself, sir, or were you taught to find me?
> PAROLES In myself, fool.
> CLOWN The search, sir, was profitable, and much fool may you find in you, even to the world's pleasure and the increase of laughter.
> PAROLES *[to Helen]* A good knave i'faith, and well fed. (II.4.23-31)

Here, Lavatch serves as a foil to Paroles, he identifies both himself and Paroles as knaves and fools, thus foretelling Paroles' destiny as fool. The fool has a precise function within the court and within the play-world, certainly in the cynical world of *All's Well That Ends Well* his game is a dangerous tight-rope walk between truth and jest [16], "his word mirrors the most disquieting aspects of a decaying world" (Mullini 2007, 263). Indeed, as he replies to the Countess' accusations of knavery:

[16] "Sempre, tuttavia, facendo di questo ruolo di pazzo ufficiale lo specchio della stupidità altrui, senza dimenticare che attraverso i fools parlano spesso il pubblico, la saggezza popolare, la verità che si oppone alla menzogna delle apparenze" (Mullini 1997, 22).

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COUNTESS Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouthed and calumnious knave?
CLOWN A prophet I, madam, and I speak the truth the next way. (I.3.44-45)

This description of the fool as a "prophet" and a truth-teller may be difficult to envisage for Paroles, but his pragmatic shift from on-record verbal deception to off-record verbal deception is a clue that he has begun to explore how to "speak the truth the next way".

The notion of "ending" is problematic in *All's Well That Ends Well* (Snyder 2008, 51-52; Kastan 1985): the play does not offer a neat conclusion but seems ready to reset itself with a mere repositioning of the pieces on the board. As Snyder observes (2008, 51), "Not only does the King seem about to begin the action all over again by proposing to reward Diana with the husband of her choice, but the whole conclusion is hedged with conditionals and deferrals".

The King evidently remains unchanged by the play's actions, willing to commit the same error again. Bertram and Helen's circumstances have changed, but it is unclear to what extent their attitudes have been altered. Paroles, instead, has undergone a transformation which plays out linguistically, both in his strategic shift to off-record strategies and in his shift of pronominal address towards Lavatch [17]. While the play would certainly allow for a character like the King to be infinitely and endlessly himself, the description given of Paroles as "an infinite and endless liar" (III.6.9), is questioned in the final act. He has by no means become a stalwart of justice and truth, but he may learn the tricks of the fool's trade and come to tell "the truth the next way" (I.3.45) as the personal entertainer in the courtly home of Lafeu. The destiny proposed within the play-world corresponds then to that of Yorrick, who is notably described as "a fellow of infinite jest" (*Hamlet*, V.1.151-2). The plays non-ending invites an interpretation of Paroles as an infinite and endless liar, but as one that will adapt his mendacious strategies according to the circumstances in which he finds himself.

[17] "Formerly, as the companion of counts and lords, Paroles used 'thou' and 'knave' in talking with the Clown, aping his betters; now down and out, and indeed newly determined himself to live by fooling, he sees this same Clown as the back door into noble patronage. Paroles thus marks their new relationship by giving him not only the respectful 'you' but a title and a name. The title, abbreviated in the Folio text as 'Mr,' could be expanded as either Master or Monsieur; there is a compelling reason for favoring the latter, apart from the French milieu, in that "Monsieur" has been Paroles's own title in this play, exclusively his in eleven uses. He now applies the same honorific to the Clown, underlining his own loss of status as he reverses their former positions; the Clown cooperates by answering him with the condescending 'thou'." (Snyder 1992).

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This paper has outlined some salient examples of the construction and development of the character of Paroles both through mendacious discourse and meta-discourse on mendacity. The character of Paroles is constructed and construed through other characters' accounts of his words and actions and through his own linguistic behaviour. The frequent examples of other-presentation with high consensus on his status as a liar establish him as an equivocal character. The strategies employed by Paroles are, initially, prevalently on-record with a loose concern for the truth; however, after being the victim of a deceptive ruse he begins to adopt largely off-record strategies, avoiding any commitment to the truth in order to retain deniability. The examples examined here show Paroles' brazen disregard for the truth and his strategic use of mendacious discourse to perpetuate a braggart-soldier persona. His strategies of deception are not ultimately successful and lead to him preferring ORVD, the strategy favoured by Helen and her aides throughout the play. The pragmatic analysis of mendacious discourse as presented here is, admittedly, still in an embryonic phase, yet these preliminary observations regarding the character of Paroles are significant. Further investigation of the pragmatics of lying in Shakespearean plays would surely be beneficial to our understanding of mendacity in early modern theatre and to the study of the linguistic processes involved in characterisation. Lying as an object of analysis is necessarily problematic: there are, undeniably, great difficulties in identifying and categorising strategies which are intended to go unnoticed. The model of analysis presented here could be adapted and applied to other plays in order to investigate the strategic use of deceptive language among Shakespeare's characters.

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