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Armado or the Other speaking the Native's Language: Racialising the Spaniard in *Love's Labour's Lost*

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Introduction

In Sebastian Münster's *Cosmography* (1572), there is a chapter dealing with the "diverse vices and deformities" attributed to the different nations, thus revealing the existence of national negative stereotypes stigmatising each country according to a series of specific flaws.[1] The "drunkenness and violencie of the Spaniardes" is denounced as well as their "subtle sophistry"[2]. These oversimplifications became racist as soon as they emerged as a systematic way to depict Spanish people and were compounded by the English interest in the transatlantic slave trade, adding an element of anti-Blackness.[3] The racialisation of Spaniards started to gain momentum with the political tensions growing between England and Spain. The failed invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was the beginning of an upsurge of patriotism and racist portrayal of Spanish people in political pamphlets as well as on the early modern English stage.[4] The 1590s was a decade during which xenophobia

[1] See Matthew McLean, *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster: Describing the World in the Reformation*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007.

[2] Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia*. *A briefe collection and compendious extract of the strau[n]ge and memorable things, gathered oute of the cosmographye of Sebastian Munster. Where in is made a playne descrypsion of diuerse and straunge lavves rites, manners, and properties of sundry nacio[n]s, and a short reporte of straunge histories of diuerse men, and of the nature and properties of certayne fovvles, fishes, beastes, monsters, and sundrie countries and places*, London, Thomas Marshe, 1572, p. 5.

[3] Even though it is claimed by Costard, the master of Dogberryisms in the play, Armado's racial identity is non-white. The latter is said to be "dun" when Costard mistakes the Spanish word "Don" for the racial English epithet "dun" as he utters Armado's name as follows: "Dun Adramadio, Dun Adramadio" (IV.III.190). This reference to Armado's blackness echoes the King's racist comment when speaking of Berowne's black lady: "Black is the badge of hell, / The hue of dungeons and the school of night" (IV.iii.245–246). Colorism resonates with accentism throughout the play to define blackness as a marginalised racial identity. All further references to this text are to William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[4] See Barbara Fuchs, "The Spanish Race" in Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo and Maureen Quilligan (eds), *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008, pp. 88–98; Barbara Fuchs, *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008; Eric J. Griffin, *English*

increased, riots against the presence of strangers as well as an interest in defining the national English identity mainly in opposition to the Catholic, Spanish enemy. Edward Daunce's *A Briefe Discourse of the Spanish State*[5] (1590) was dedicated to Elizabeth and symptomatic of the general atmosphere of anti-Spanish feeling developing in England in the decade.

After the death of Phillip II of Spain in 1598 and Elizabeth I in 1603, the relations between the two countries changed radically with the signing of a peace treaty in 1604 during the first year of James's reign. This political relief had a significant influence on the representation of Spanish characters on the English stage. Indeed, late Jacobean comedies like *The Spanish Curate*[6] (1622) by John Fletcher or *The Spanish Gipsy*[7] (1623) by Thomas Middleton are set in Cordoba and Madrid. Interestingly, the characterisation of Spanish characters is utterly deprived of irony or negative stereotyping – the Spanish braggart is no more.

The aim of this paper is to focus on the decade during which the theatrical type of the Spanish braggart was all the rage. I intend to explore the raciolinguistics of the Spanish dramatic type of the 1590s through the character of Armado in Shakespeare's comedy *Love's Labour's Lost.* Raciolinguistics is a branch of sociolinguistics interested in the role of language in shaping ethnoracial identity and in the construction of race as a discursive practice. It consists in viewing race through the lens of language, *i.e.* through linguistic production and metalinguistic comments used to negotiate otherness and navigate between discriminatory discourses of race.[8] In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Armado is racialised as the Other speaking the Native's language[9]. How does the play construct Armado's non-native English, and to what extent can we speak of a racialisation of his identity through language regarded as a marker of difference? I will analyse how the native speakers of the play respond to this racialised kind of linguistic alterity, and examine the connection between language and the construction of the English national identity through the character of Armado.

I. The Dialectics of Broken English and Idiomaticity

> ARMADO [to HOLOFERNES]. Pardon, sir, error! (V.i.105)

According to the classical racial type of the Barbarian developed in ancient Greece, the Barbarian cannot speak properly because he cannot think properly, so he cannot behave properly. Early modern English grammarians adopted the classical conception of language

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Renaissance Drama and the Specter of Spain: Ethnopoetics and Empire, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

[5] Edward Daunce, *A briefe discourse of the Spanish state vvith a dialogue annexed intituled Philobasilis*, London, Richard Field, 1590.

[6] Francis Beaumont, "The Spanish Curate" in *Comedies and tragedies written by Francis Beaumont and Iohn Fletcher …*, London, Humphrey Robinson, 1647.

[7] Thomas Middleton, *The Spanish gipsie*, London, Richard Marriot, 1653.

[8] See H. Samy Alim, John R. Rickford, and Arnetha F. Ball (eds), *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race*, Oxford, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2016, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.001.0001, accessed 12 November 2021; Jonathan Rosa, *Looking like a Language, Sounding like a Race*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019.

[9] This play is not set in England but in Navarre, a kingdom associated in England at the time with a Protestant king, bordering Spanish and Catholic Castile and Aragon. As a result, the characters's "native" English is in fact French which creates a distancing effect for English theatregoers.

defined by the axiological binarism of eloquence and barbarism.[10] They associated themselves with the eloquent Greeks as the Romans did before them to gain intellectual superiority over outsiders, and in so doing racialised them as inferior barbarians.[11]

1. English as Armado's second language

In the expository scene, the King's description of Armado relies on the paradox of being both within and without, as the King puts it: "Our court […] is haunted / With a refined traveller of Spain" (I.i.161). In the sixteenth century, the verb "haunt" referred to the "[…] act or practice of frequenting or habitually resorting to a place" (*OED*, 2.a); Armado may be a stranger coming from another country, he is living permanently at court with the natives. Because he comes from abroad, English is Armado's second language and from his point of view, he speaks the Other's language. His otherness is mainly conveyed through his language, as H. R. Woudhuysen argues: "Armado's eccentric English and his being a traveller are combined in the play".[12] Interestingly, the King introduces Armado through his own strange language, resorting, for instance, to metaphors, "a mint of phrases in his brain" (I.i.163); to "the music of his own vain tongue" (I.i.164); and to personifications such as "high-born words" (I.i.170) to point out the strangeness of Armado's language. Far from being plain, Armado's tongue is overpolished and overflowing with "fire-new words" (I.i.176). After such a promising introduction, Berowne and the others are full of expectations, as Berowne admits himself before the King starts reading Armado's letter, "[…] I hope in God for high words" (I.i.188) which is echoed by Longaville's wit, "A high hope for a low heaven" (I.i.189). The King will come to the same conclusion after the reading of the letter, arguing that Armado's style is "the best for the worst" (I.i.259). Armado's strange language is racialised insofar as it reflects the stereotypical vices of Spanish people that were recurrently dramatised onstage at the time. The Spaniard talks a lot but does not do much – his discourse is without substance. His speech is vain, arrogant, and verbose. He is a stranger, so he does not use English as a native speaker would. Armado's language is marked by in-betweenness – he speaks English, though not idiomatically, even if his English is superior to Costard's for instance.

2. Logorrhoea and lack of eloquence

Armado's language does stand out – his discourse is characterised by what early modern rhetoricians and grammarians such as George Puttenham called "viciosities of language".[13] He would like to be eloquent, as he tells Holofernes, asking him to "preambulate" to be "singuled from the barbarous" (V.i.65–66). However, he makes too many "barbarian

[10] Puttenham examines the issue of "Barbarismus, or Foreign Language": "The foulest vice in language is to speak barbarously. This term grew by the great pride of the Greeks and Latins when they were dominators of the world, reckoning no language so sweet and civil as their own, and that all nations beside themselves were rude and uncivil, which they called barbarous; so as when any strange word not of the natural Greek or Latin was spoken, in the old time they called it barbarism; or when any of their own natural words were sounded and pronounced with strange and ill-shaped accents […]", see George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2007, p. 336.

[11] See Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors*, New-York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 27–28: "Linguistic failures signalling a total lack of skill or proficiency in the master tongue, betray the outsider and effectively deny corporate inclusion. […] In time flawed speech equated to defective values and character as language was canonized to convey an inviolate cultural antithesis."

[12] H.R. Woudhuysen, "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. H.R. Woudhuysen, Arden Shakespeare Third Series, London, Bloomsbury, 1998, p. 4.

[13] Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 209.

errors",[14] to use Ian Smith's words, to be an eloquent gentleman. Armado repeatedly commits barbarisms, which Quintilian defines as "offence[s] occurring in connexion [sic] with single words".[15] Holofernes speaks of his "mustachio" when relating a memory to the King. This term used in the Folio is different from the form "mustachie" that appears in the Quarto. Both words are barbarisms because they are words Armado created from existing foreign terms by changing the letters. As Quintilian describes, a barbarism "consists of adding a letter or a syllable to any word [the speaker] pleases, or taking one away, or substituting one for another, or putting one in a place where it is not right for it to be".[16] The word "mustachio" (V.i.84) is neither Spanish (mostacho) nor Italian (mostaccio); the word seems to be a linguistic hybrid entity created by Armado who, in doing so, transgresses the rules of grammatical correctness.[17] Indeed, Puttenham speaks of "soraismus or mingle-mangle":

> [...] [what] the Greeks call *soraismus* [sic], and we may call the Mingle-Mangle, as when we make our speech or writings of sundry languages, using some Italian word, or French, or Spanish, or Dutch, or Scottish, not for the nonce or for any purpose (which were in part excusable) but ignorantly and affectedly.[18]

Moreover, Armado blends classical and vernacular languages by creating other linguistic hybrids with "infamonise" (V.ii.659) based on the Latin word "fama" and the English suffix "-ise", or "preambulate" (V.i.65) which is made up of the Latin noun "preambulum" and of the English suffix "-ate". Such errors were regarded as disruptive and vicious by linguistic purists who strove to preserve the purity of English with the publication of grammar and rhetorical handbooks.[19]

3. Mispronunciation, accentism, and the Spanish language

Throughout the play, Armado stumbles only on a single word, mispronouncing "Sirrah" as "Chirrah!" (V.i.28). The spelling of the barbarous version of the word is significant, for it is an instance of eye dialect that is used within the text to indicate a non-standard accent. The transformation of the voiceless, alveolar fricative [s] into the voiceless, palato-alveolar sibilant [ʃ] was considered as typical of the Spanish speakers of English in early modern England. This phonetic feature was commented upon as an idiosyncratic characteristic of

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[14] Ian Smith, "Barbarian Errors: Performing Race in Early Modern England", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 49:2, 1998, pp. 168-186, p. 168.
[15] Quintilian, "Chapter 5. Section 5", *Institutio Oratoria*, Book I, ed. Harold Edgeworth Butler, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1920 URL:http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0060:book=1:chapter=5&highlight=barbarism. Accessed 15 November 2021.
[16] Quintilian, "Chapter 5. Section 5", *Institutio Oratoria*. URL:http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0060:book=1:chapter=5&highlight=barbarism. Accessed 15 November 2021.
[17] The word "mustachio" was used in other texts at the time such as *Midas* by John Lyly, a play which has an anti-Spanish undertone, having Midas being identified with Philip II. In this play, Dello, the Barber's boy, makes a reference to facial hair when talking to Celia's page Licio: "All my mistres lynes that she dryes her cloathes on, are made only of Mustachio stuffe" (II.i.G3), according to the 1592 facsimile of the play. In the 2000 version edited by George K. Hunter and David Bevington, it reads "moustachio" (II.i.188). Of course, spelling was notoriously unstable at the time, but there seems to be a link between the anti-Spanish prejudice and the use of that word. See George K. Hunter and David Bevington (eds), "Midas" in *Galatea – Midas John Lyly*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000.
[18] Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 338.
[19] See Thomas Wilson, *The arte of rhetorique for the vse of all suche as are studious of eloquence*, London, Richard Grafton, 1553.

Spanish speakers in John Torie's *Spanish Grammar: with Certaine Rules Teaching both the Spanish and the French Tongues* (1590): "[the pronunciation of [s] as [ʃ] is a] token whereby the native Spanyardes are known from the strangers that can speake the Spanish tongue [...]".[20] With this instance, the Spanish accent is introduced as a cultural sign with negative connotations. It is stigmatised as an accent revealing a discrepancy between the speaker's pretention and arrogance and the reality of the latter's lack of legitimacy. Through Armado, the Spanish accent is introduced as too extreme, and unsophisticated, as Holofernes puts it: "[...] too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too peregrinate, as I may call it" (V.i.11–12). This offensive perception of the Spanish accent was recurrent in the drama of the 1590s and theatre-goers would have been able to interpret the Spanish accent as a sign of deficiency and inferiority:

> Of the male characters of Spanish stock, none is particularly admirable: the pretentious Armado of *Love's Labour's Lost* is penalized for his extravagance by humiliation and downgrading to the level of a peasant. [...] [T]he Spanish temperament [is] to be recognised in performance: they are aliens in values and manners [...][21]

We can argue that the Spanish tongue is the target of scapegoating in the play. This accentism[22] is also part and parcel of the stage performances of the play: "Recent performers of the role of Don Armado have generally employed extravagant delivery and gesture, and often a highly exaggerated Spanish accent [...]".[23] Armado seems to be essentialised through his accent to be represented as stupid, pretentious, vain, and unsophisticated.

II. Mockery and Unethical Laughter: Comedy and Racist Humour

> BOYET [to the PRINCESS]. "[...] one that makes sport/ To the Prince and his book-mates." (IV.i.92-93)

When does comedy become harmful? Where is the limit between pleasant comedy and offensive mockery? Who is the butt of our laughter? These questions were addressed by early modern thinkers who analysed laughter and its complexity.

1. Harmful or Harmless Laughter?

Penny Gay points out the presence of "*aural* [sic] laughter-producing mechanisms" in *Love's Labour's Lost* – defining them as follows: "[...] when a character [is] mangling and misapplying the English language [it] tickles the collective funnybone because of his departure from the norm [...]".[24] When Ferdinand and his lords laugh at Armado, they mock

[20] John Torie, *The Spanish grammer vvith certeine rules teaching both the Spanish and French tongues. By which they that haue some knowledge in the French tongue, may the easier attaine to the Spanish; and the likewise they that haue the Spanish, with more facilitie learne the French: and they that are acquainted with neither of them, learne either or both. Made in Spanish, by M. Anthonie de Corro. With a dictionarie adioyned vnto it, of all the Spanish wordes cited in this booke: and other more wordes most necessarie for all such as desire the knowledge of the same tongue*, London, John Wolfe, 1590.

[21] Hugh Macrae Richmond, *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Dictionary of his Stage Context*, London and New-York, Continuum, 2002, pp. 431–432.

[22] To find out more about accentism, see Alan Davies, *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics: From Practice to Theory*, 2nd ed., Edinburg, Edinburgh University Press, 2007; and Suzanne Romaine, *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 2nd ed, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

[23] Paul Yachnin, *Shakespeare's World of Words*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015, p. 93.

[24] Penny Gay, "Chapter 1. Introduction: comedy as idea and practice", in *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 1–15, p. 4.

his inability to be as fluent as they are in English – they point out the lack of idiomaticity of Armado's Spanish-accented English. Longaville admits, as an understatement, that Armado's letter will undoubtedly make them "laugh moderately" (I.i.191). Armado is insulted and humiliated repeatedly throughout the play and the "accent of his tongue" (*King John*, I.i.86),[25] to use Queen Elinor's phrase,[26] is regularly emphasised as ridiculous. In *An Apology for Poetry, or The Defence of Poesy* (1595), Sir Philip Sidney denounces ethnocentric laughter as sterile compared to delight because it is not didactic, and so it does not teach the spectator/reader any ethical lesson: "For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched beggar or a beggarly clown; or against law of hospitality, *to jest at strangers, because they speak not English so well as we do? What do we learn?*"[27] (emphasis mine). Sidney is addressing here the difficulty of knowing the limit between appropriate, decent laughter and its opposite. Authors of jestbooks kept on arguing about the tipping point between harmless mirth and cruel mockery; for instance, Giovanni Della Casa wrote in *The Refin'd Courtier, or a Correction of Several Indecencies Crept into Civil Conversation* (1663):

> [...] Beware of Jeering instead of Jesting. These two are very much alike, and are frequently mistaken for one another, differing only in the Intention of the Author. The former is a real Injury, but the later an innocent recreation. Your jests may have salt in them, but no gall; or (in the words of a wise man) they must be gentle and harmless, like pretty sheep, not fierce and snarling like surly Dogs.[28]

Reception is what makes the difference between harmless, pleasant comedy and abusive, offensive laughter. As a matter of fact, that is the ethical lesson that the ladies teach the lords when Rosaline, a member of the French court, tells Berowne:

> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him that makes it. (V.ii.829–831)

From the point of view of the native speakers of the play, there is no harm in laughing at Armado's Spanish-accented language. However, from Armado's point of view, it is harmful and cruel. As he is attacked while performing in the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, Armado's acting is interrupted by insults after demanding the lords to keep silent with the monosyllabic, "Peace!"; then, he warns Longaville to stop abusing him, "[...] rein thy tongue" (V.ii.653). Contrary to the lords whose laughter is humiliating, the Princess shows her support to Armado with a few kind words, "Speak, brave Hector; we are much delighted." (V.ii.662). The discrepancy between the lords' harmful laughter and the ladies' pleasant delight is significant. Laughter is far from being harmless in *Love's Labour's Lost*, for characters are being "outfaced" (V.ii.608), "infamonise[d]" (V.ii.659), while others are "[...] not generous, not gentle, not humble" (V.ii.623). Armado, however, seems to be singled out compared to the other characters who are mocked throughout the play. He is

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[25] William Shakespeare, "King John", *The Norton Shakespeare, Digital Edition*, Stephen Greenblatt et al.(eds), New-York, 2016.

[26] She is speaking to King John about the Bastard, who resembles King Richard.

[27] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry, or The Defense of Poesy*, ed. R.W. Malsen and Geoffrey Shepherd, 3rd ed., Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 113.

[28] "Giovanni Della Casa, "Chapter VI. Of Ceremonies and Complements", in *The refin'd courtier, or, A correction of several indecencies crept into civil conversation*, Translated from Italian into English by Nathaniel Waker, London, R. Royston, 1663, pp. 131–172, pp. 193–194.

shaped by the traditional stock figures of the Italian *Capitano* from *commedia dell'arte* and the Roman *Miles Gloriosus* from classical comedy.[29]

2. The Influence of Commedia Dell'Arte on Armado

In the *dramatis personae* of the play, Armado is presented as "a Spanish braggart", which explicitly connects him to the swaggering, soldier of *commedia dell'arte*. Drawing from classical drama and Plautus in particular, Italians created a popular theatre that could address Italian topical issues, and so have a resonance for their contemporary audience:

> The Spanish were the most bitterly detested of these figures. They devastated the land and tormented the conquered with studied cruelty and rapaciousness, customarily sacking the towns they assaulted; [...] and the languishing Spaniard soon became a popular comic type. Indeed, the laughable career of the soldier who now uttered sonorous brags in Castilian provided the Italians with a vehicle by which they were able to discharge their spleen and take at least a literary revenge against Spanish tyranny.[30]

Italian playwrights adapted the traditions of Roman comedy to their contemporary issues and used comic stage performances as a site of empowerment for Italians who were given the opportunity to laugh at the powerful Spanish enemy[31], and in doing so to exorcise their fears as in *La Commedia degli Ingannati* (1531) by the Italian playwright Alessandro Piccolomini.[32] Gradually, the Spanish braggart became one of the most popular stock characters of the *commedia dell' arte*, regarded as: "the fifth wheel, the odd man out, [...] he is always an outsider [...] his speech is that of the forestiere, or foreigner, an intrusive and mysterious presence, 'not from around these parts'".[33] This stock character is meant to express the superiority of the Italians over the Spanish through a negative egregious laughter.[34] As an explicit heir to the Captain tradition, Armado's character is mocked for being Spanish. This shows the extent to which drama, and more precisely concerning Armado, comedy is "a serious site"[35] for the production and dissemination of racism as well as the deflection of fears. Racist humour is effective in making people bond over the rejection of the same type; the experience of laughing together at the same thing creates a sense of community that often undermines the divisive nature of racist humour. Paul McDonald points out that the most common form of racist humour is "the stupid-ethnic

[29] See Eric Nicholson, "Chapter 6: Et in Arcadia the Dirty Brides", in Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (eds.), *Transnational Mobilities in Early Modern Theater*, pp. 93–112, p. 109; and Mace Perlman, "Chapter 8: Reading and Interpreting The Capitano's Multiple Mask-Shapes", in Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell' Arte*, London and New-York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 82–90, p. 83.

[30] Daniel C. Boughner, *The Braggart in Renaissance Comedy. A Study in Comparative Drama from Aristophanes to Shakespeare*, Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press, 1954, pp. 49–50.

[31] Spanish troops sacked Rome in 1527, so the fear of Spanish armed men was even more present than with the threat of the Armada in England. There seems to be an appropriate transfer of the Spaniard as Italian comedic figure to the English stage. See Bianca Concolino, "Les fluctuations de la représentation de l'Espagnol dans la comédie siennoise de la Renaissance", *Revue d'Histoire Culturelle de l'Europe*, "Légendes noires et identités collectives: construction, déconstruction, réfutation", URL: http://www.unicaen.fr/mrsh/hce/index.php?id=206. Accessed 15 November 2021.

[32] Alessandro Piccolomini, *La Commedia degli Ingannati*, Venice, Melchiorre Sessa, 1537.

[33] Mace Perlman, "Chapter 8: Reading and Interpreting The Capitano's Multiple Mask-Shapes", in Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell' Arte*, London and New-York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 82–90, p. 82.

[34] See Michael Phillips, "Racist Acts and Racist Humor", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 14.1, 1984, pp. 75–96.

[35] Raúl Pérez, "Racism without Hatred? Racist Humor and the Myth of 'Colorblindness'", in *Sociological Perspectives*, 60.5, 2017, pp. 956–974, p. 959.

jokes [,] where a member of the community is cast in the role of an idiot".[36] In what could be regarded as a metatheatrical prologue to the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, Berowne and the King introduce the Worthies by stating their names, the characters they will play on stage as well as their dramatic functions within *Love's Labour's Lost*, "The pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool and the boy." (V.ii.534–535). These theatrical roles were very well-known to the English theatre-goers and so would have been understood as explicit references to the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte*.[37] It seems that Shakespeare intended to connect very explicitly Armado with the Captain type of the *commedia dell'arte*, in which it was created as a scapegoat figure meant to be mocked and humiliated because of the manners associated with him – as a cathartic response to a collective fear.

3. Comic Scapegoating & Communality

Throughout the play, Armado is the target of abusive, and offensive remarks that provide Ferdinand and his lords with amusement, as Longaville explains in the expository scene: "Costard the swain and he [Armado] shall be our sport, / And so to study three years is but short" (I.i.177–178). The use of the term "sport" is significant insofar as it is ambivalent, meaning "Success, pleasure, or recreation derived from or afforded by an activity, originally and esp. hunting, shooting, or fishing [...]" (*OED*, 1.b). Consequently, Armado is sacrificed to provide a pleasant merriment for the King and his lords – he is harmed by racist humour. Pleasure, comfort, and laughter are experienced by Ferdinand and his lords who make the most of Armado's vulnerability. *Love's Labour's Lost* may be categorised as a comedy, "the cloud of sorrow" (V.ii.722) is almost constantly hanging over Armado – characters laugh but the jest is "bitter" (IV.iii.166) or "dry" (V.ii.373). When Rosaline describes the King as being "weeping-ripe" in the last scene of the play, we could imagine that she is speaking of Armado as he confesses, "The naked truth of it is, I have no shirt. I go woolward for penance." (V.ii.686-687). Armado is virtually at his wit's end when he utters these words – he has been laughed at by the native speakers who built a sense of community at Armado's expense. To use René Girard's theory,[38] Armado is the scapegoat whose sacrifice has a social function by working as a regulatory tool. The scapegoat exacerbates the violence of the group and preserves civil order by preventing the people of the group from fighting one another – instead they all direct their violence against the scapegoat. The lords lose the battle of wits against the ladies and we may infer that their violence and frustration is then targeted at Armado who is made to be an antagonist, losing the dramatic *agôn*. Thanks to Armado, the lords can express all their anxiety and anger for failing to be successful suitors. Berowne does not miss any opportunity to use the other as scapegoat when commenting on the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, announcing "We are shame-proof my lord; and 'tis some policy / To have one show worse than the King's and his company" (V.ii.507-508), or praising mockery, "Well said, old mocker." (V.ii.540). Berowne's solution seems to be denying fame to others so as to forget his own shame, thus reassuring himself by mocking others. Precisely these others are targeted because they have something in common with

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[36] Paul McDonald, *The Philosophy of Humour*, Penrith CA, Humanities-Ebooks, LLP, 2012, p. 82; see also Christie Davis, *Jokes and Targets*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2011.

[37] See Robert Henke (ed.), *A Cultural History of Theatre in the Early Modern Age*, Vol.3, London, Bloomsbury, 2017; Robert Henke, "Chapter 3. Transporting Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and the Magical Pastoral of the Commedia dell' Arte", in Subha Mukherji and Raphael Lyne (eds), *Early Modern Tragicomedy*, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2007, pp. 43–58.

[38] See René Girard, *Le Bouc émissaire*, Paris, Grasset, 1982; René Girard, *De la violence à la divinité*, Paris, Grasset, 2007.

Berowne and his friends – they both hope for fame only to find shame. As Roger Scruton argues, "laughter devalues its object in the subject's eyes" for it has "a quality of malice".[39] The function of humour is here to sublimate one's own shame into the mockery of the other to experience a sort of catharsis through laughter.

Moreover, throughout the play, Armado and Costard compete for the favours of Jacquenetta. This rivalry between a foreign character and a native character is reminiscent of the Prince of Aragon who is one of the many suitors taking the casket test to win Portia's hand in *The Merchant of Venice*. The latter and the other foreign suitors fail the test by picking the wrong casket except Bassanio, the only native suitor of Portia in the play. Contrary to the Prince of Aragon who is unsuccessful with Portia, Armado manages to seduce Jacquenetta and even to impregnate her, as Costard thinks[40] when he tells him, "[…] the poor wench is cast away: she's quick, the child brags in her belly already. 'Tis yours." (V.ii.656-658). "Jack hath not Jill" (V.ii.8843) in the play – except Armado. So, why is he both the target of racist humour, and the only one whose suit seems successful at the end of the play?

III. Shakespeare's Critique of the Early Modern English Obsession with Purity

> HOLOFERNES [to NATHANIEL about ARMADO]. I abhor such fanatical phantasimes, such insociable and point-device companions, such rackers of orthography […] (V.i.15–17)

Armado is mocked and abused throughout the play to denounce the attitude of his abusors more than to portray him as a reprehensible character. Indeed, Armado is racialised through his language use, which is made a marker of difference in the play, but he exists in an environment in which he is not the only one to experience oppression from a dominant group which claims to have better linguistic skills than he does. Shakespeare adds a twist to this atmosphere of racist humour and unethical laughter in order to defuse it. It is worth noticing how intersections between race, class, and gender blur the line between non-native and native speakers. More than a pretext to attack Spain, Armado is a prism through which Shakespeare questions the homogeneity of the English language and makes fun of characters abusing Armado through the use of both irony and satire.

1. Intersections between race, class and gender

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Armado is not the only scapegoat – he may be the only one being racialised for his language use, but there are other kinds of scapegoating in the play that nuance Armado's marginalisation. There are intersections between race and class in the play. Holofernes and Nathaniel have an explicit contempt for commoners whose English is different from theirs. They reproach Armado for being excessive in his language use, using the adverb "too" repeatedly, and they accuse Dull of being deficient, resorting to the prefix "un-" repeatedly as well. To put it differently, Dull may be a native speaker but his English is inferior, according to Holofernes, because his social status did not give him the opportunity to learn how to be as eloquent as Holofernes. Dialects of commoners are mocked and stigmatised as speakers of a poor English that can be paralleled with Armado's broken English. Moreover, there are also intersections between race and gender: the ladies often play the role of the lords' English teachers, correcting their language repeatedly

[39] Roger Scruton, "Laughter" in John Morreal (ed.), *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, New-York: State University of New-York Press, 1987, pp. 156-171, p. 168.

[40] It might also be understood as another stereotypical attack on the foreigner impregnating "native" women.

throughout the play[41]. Again, we can see intersections between race and gender in the way the language of the lords is stigmatised as hypocritical and deceitful by the ladies. With this intersectional context in mind, the racial stigmatisation of Armado's language should not be understood as being the only one targeted for being Other.

Ultimately, language appears as a marker of difference to stand for race, gender, and class; all these intersections are significant to point out that the issue at stake in the play is not only race politics. If we go further, we can notice a greater pattern of oppression conveyed through language criticism. The different kinds of metalinguistic comments of characters made to criticise the race, gender, or class of an individual through his language use challenge the nationalist idea of only one true form of English. These variations in language use question the very idea of a unique, fixed, standard English. In the sixteenth century, England did not have an official academy ruling over linguistic matters, but the Queen's/King's English was considered as the tacit linguistic norm. However, in the late sixteenth century, there had been a debate about how this normative English should be defined – this led to the inkhorn controversy.

2. The opposition to inkhornism and verbal immigration

Throughout *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare hints at this controversy, which was very significant for the English language at the end of the sixteenth century. Some grammarians and writers opposed verbal borrowings because they thought it would pollute the English language. Richard Verstegan insisted on the self-sufficiency of English:

> […] yf our selues pleased to vse the treasurie of our toung wee should as little need to borrow words, from any language, extrauagant from ours, as any such borroweth from vs: our toung in itself being sufficient and copious enough without this daily borrowing from somany, as take scorne to borrow any from us […][42]

Words coming from another language, whether classical or vernacular, are part of another linguistic system with its own consistency; the influx of foreign words into English would make it lose its own consistency and create an imbalance within the general structure of English. Four decades earlier, John Cheke had likewise been eager to preserve the English language from any foreign, barbarous impurity. For instance, he speaks his mind in a 1557 letter to Thomas Hoby:

> I am of this opinion that our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangeled with borowing of other tunges wherin if we take not heed bi tijm, euer borowing and neuer payeng, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt. For then doth our tung naturallie and praisablie vtter her meaning, whan she bouroweth no conterfeitness of other tunges to attire her self withall, but vseth plainlie her own, with such shift, as nature, craft, [and] experiens […][43]

The anxiety caused by the cultural bankruptcy to which Cheke alludes was palpable at the time, as along with an obsession with losing the specificity of English national identity with

[41] What is charming about this is that they are supposed to be French, teaching the Navarrans how to speak and behave in a more polished manner – Navarrans and their king were considered somewhat rustic in the French court.

[42] Richard Verstegan, *A restitution of decayed intelligence: in antiquities Concerning the most noble and renovvmed English nation. By the studie and trauaile of R.V. Dedicated vnto the Kings most excellent Maiestie*, Antwerp, Robert Bruney, 1605.

[43] Count Baldassare Castiglione, "A Letter of syr I. Cheekes", *The courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure bookes. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice or place, done into English by Thomas Hoby*, London, Wyllyam Seres, 1561.

the influx of new words: "[…] there was a serious danger of loss in excessive borrowings".[44] Indeed, Alexander Leggatt points out that "[t]he play's ultimate effect is to provide an image of insecurity".[45] During this linguistic debate, words became increasingly metaphorical to refer to English national identity; the English language was starting to become culturally meaningful to define an emerging Englishness. Thomas Wilson highlights the fear of cultural alienation and linguistic invasion, following Polonius' words to Laertes, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be […]" (*Ham*. I.iii.75).[46] Wilson exacerbates the early modern English obsession with purity and uniformity – whether religious, political, or linguistic:

> Emong all other lessons, this should first be learned, that wee neuer affecte any straunge ynkehorne termes, but so speake as is commonly receiued: neither seking to be ouer fine, not yet liuyng ouer carelesse, vsyng our speache as moste men doe, and orderyng our wittes, as the fewest haue doen. Some seke so farre for outlandishe Englishe, that thei forgette altogether their mothers language. And I dare sweare this, if some of their mothers were aliue, thei were not able to tel, what thei saie, and yet these fine Englishe clerkes, wil saie thei speake in their mother tonge, if a man should charge them, for counterfeiting the kinges Englishe.[47]

We could argue that Shakespeare is also taking part in the inkhorn debate by writing a comedy about the art of neologism and satirising different forms of inkhornism. He shows that verbal immigration is a phenomenon that cannot be stopped, because language as well as culture cannot be static; it is constantly changing and adapting to the habits and needs of the population. With *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare takes into account the two sides of the inkhorn debate and presents them as both characteristic of the English language; he seems to advocate a balance between the linguistic *status quo* and the creation of new words to maintain the possibility to be understood by all native speakers as well as to make it possible to express new ideas with new words.

We could see the presence of Armado as a resident alien both within and without who embodies the synchronic evolution of English. His English displays several characteristics of the decisive evolution of the English language in the late sixteenth century. He may be the target of racist humour in the play, but he is also a metaphor for the English language, which expands thanks to borrowings from the Other's language and translations from other vernacular languages and the classics. The presence of Armado in the play can thus symbolically represent the gradual enfranchisement of new words in the English language. In *The First Part of the Elementarie* (1582), Richard Mulcaster describes the English language as a hybrid entity slowly integrating new elements as its own:

> All the words which we do vse in our tung be either natural English, and most of one syllab, or borrowed of the foren, and most of manie syllabs. Whereby our tung semeth to have two heds, the one homeborn, the other a stranger where of either hath a great train following it. when the minde is fraught with matter to deliuer, it is still in pain vntill it haue deliuered, and therefor to haue the deliuerie such, as maie discharge the thing well, and content all parties,

[44] Richard Verstegan, *A restitution of decayed intelligence: in antiquities Concerning the most noble and renovvmed English nation. By the studie and trauaile of R.V. Dedicated vnto the Kings most excellent Maiestie*, Antwerp, Robert Bruney, 1605.
[45] Alexander Leggatt, "Chapter 4. *Love's Labour's Lost*", in *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love*, London, Routledge, 1st edition 1974, reprinted in 2005, pp. 63–89, p. 88.
[46] William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 298.
[47] Thomas Wilson, *The arte of rhetorique*. p. 86.

> both by whom and to whom the matter is deliuered, it seketh both home helps, where theie be sufficient, and significant, and where the own home yeildeth nothing at all, or not pithie enough, it craueth help of that tung, from whence it receiued the matter of deliuerie. Hence commeth it that we haue our tung commonlie both stored and enlarged with our neighbours speches, and the old learned tungs. A thing not proper to vs alone, but commō to all those, which vse anie speche in matters more then ordinarie, naie in matters aboue the brutish. The necessitie of these foren words must nedes be verie great bycause the number of them is so verie manie, as it doth ap|pear most plainlie by the generall table, where hole ranks of enfranchised terms do match togither in one front.[48]

We may infer that Armado is himself a metaphor of the English language that Mulcaster imagined as a two-headed tongue. Indeed, he speaks sometimes with a Spanish accent, as the eye dialect of the text indicates, using terms borrowed from foreign languages, but he is still speaking English at the end of the day. He encapsulates the process of enfranchisement; throughout the play, he is an outsider-insider, but he is eventually naturalised by having a child with Jacquenetta. Even if it is only a possibility that the child is actually his, it suggests a symbolic naturalisation of Armado, and so the naturalisation of a foreign word into the English language.

Conclusion

The characterisation and dramatic function of Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* is complex and ambivalent. Even before he enters the stage, he is abused and stigmatised by his flawed language, full of "barbarian errors",[49] on which the native speakers comment. Armado is turned into a racial laughing-stock whose dramatic function reduces him to comic relief providing merriment to the King and his lords. The unethical laughter produced by the mockery of Armado, however, leads us to think about the tipping point between harmless pleasant comedy and harmful, racist humour. If Armado is the target of the lords' racist mockery, Armado's abusers are the target of Shakespeare's satire. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare achieves a destructive construction through his use of racist humour. Armado is stigmatised for speaking a non-native English; he is the target of racist humour turning him into a racialised laughing-stock. Shakespeare questions the legitimacy of this racist humour, however, by reminding his audience that there is no such thing as a true, natural English but many variations depending on race, class, and gender. *Love's Labour's Lost* is a play in which Shakespeare writes back at linguistic nationalists rejecting any kind of verbal immigration. As it happens repeatedly in the play, the trickster is tricked at some point. On the one hand, Armado is mocked by native speakers who make fun of his non-native English; on the other, native speakers believing in the fantasy of a unique, static English language are mocked by Shakespeare who satirises such linguistic nationalism by writing a comedy at their expense. We may infer that "mock for mock" (V.ii.140) is Shakespeare's intent in *Love's Labour's Lost*, for "There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown [...]" (V.ii.153).

[48] Richard Mulcaster, *The first part of the elementarie vvhich entreateth chefelie of the right writing of our English tung*, London, Thomas Vautrouiller, 1582, pp. 153–154.
[49] Ian Smith, "Barbarian Errors…", p. 168.