Études Épistémè

Revue de littérature et de civilisation (XVIe – XVIIIe siècles)

33 | 2018 :
Profane Shakespeare – Perfection, Pollution and the Truth of Performance

The Conversational Turn in Shakespeare

La conversion de la conversation chez Shakespeare

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Abstracts

English Français

The *OED* distinguishes two principal senses of the word "conversation": "the action of living or having one's being in a place or *among* persons", and "interchange of words, thoughts". The first (indicating a kind of *habitus*, frequently with moral inflection) presumes more about a conversant than the second. Hence in *Pericles* Gower speaks of the hero as "the good in conversation". While there is some overlap, there is a significant gap in meaning and a kind of cultural struggle waged between the two. In the early modern period the first sense (deriving from Augustine and the *Theatrum Mundi*) might be thought of as dominant and the second emergent. Both were the focus of theoretical elaboration: the first principally by puritans (resulting in a register of "Christian conversation"), the second in two principle ways, by Steffano Guazzo and Montaigne. Guazzo's *Civile Conversation* (tr.1581, 1586) begins by conceding its profanity in Augustinian terms, but then proceeds to redefine the word in a secular, pragmatic and essentially modern sense. Montaigne's understanding of conversation is informed by Guazzo's but adds a sophisticated understanding of conversation as dialectic. What I propose is to sketch these various meanings of the word "conversation", speak to the "turn" from one end of its spectrum of meanings to the other, and then identify this spectrum of meanings in Shakespeare. That Shakespeare understands conversation in its pragmatic sense should come as no surprise, but that he should systematically understand it in the sense of a moral *habitus* while also exploring it in the sense of dialectic should surprise.

L'*Oxford English Dictionary* distingue entre deux sens principaux du terme *conversation*. D'une part, la conversation est définie comme l'action de vivre avec ou de se tenir en un lieu, ou parmi d'autres personnes. De l'autre, elle correspond à un échange de paroles ou d'idées. La première définition, qui relève d'une sorte d'habitus, et qui est généralement coloré d'un sens moral, présuppose bien plus de la part de la personne qui converse. Ainsi, dans *Pericles* de Shakespeare, Gower parle du héros de la pièce comme du « *good in conversation* », voulant dire par là qu'il se

conduit ou qu'il « converse » honnêtement. Bien qu'ils se recoupent en partie, il subsiste néanmoins un écart, voire une forme de tension ou d'affrontement culturel, entre les deux acceptions de la conversation. Le premier sens, dérivé de saint Augustin et de la tradition du *Theatrum Mundi*, était le sens principal durant la première modernité ; le second sens, courant aujourd'hui, n'était alors que naissant. L'un et l'autre faisaient l'objet d'une réflexion théorique : les puritains s'était emparé du premier sens (décliné sous la forme plus précise de « conversation chrétienne »), le second était exploré notamment par Steffano Guazzo et Montaigne. Dans sa *Civile Conversation* (traduite en anglais en 1581 et 1586), Guazzo commence par reconnaître le caractère profane de sa conversation en des termes qui restent augustiniens, avant de redéfinir la notion en des termes pleinement laïques, et pragmatiques, c'est-à-dire modernes. La définition qu'en donne Montaigne reste informée par la pensée de Guazzo mais vient s'y ajouter l'idée sophistiquée d'une conversation qui serait dialectique. Le présent article se propose de développer, dans un premier temps, chacune de ces définitions de la conversation pour mieux mettre en lumière l'évolution de la notion et son tournant vers le sens moderne, avant de voir comment Shakespeare la décline. On ne sera pas étonné de voir que Shakespeare envisage la conversation en des termes assez neutres et pragmatiques, mais ce qui surprend davantage c'est qu'il l'envisage systématiquement, dans le même temps, comme un habitus et une dialectique.

Index terms

Mots-clés : Conversation, chrétien, sacré, Shakespeare, sensus communis
Keywords : conversation, Christian, holy, William Shakespeare, sensus communis

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Full text

1   The first six senses of the *OED* definition of "conversation" will strike us as foreign to its current meaning: namely, "interchange of thoughts and words, familiar discourse or talk".[1] The date of this now intuitive sense (*OED*:7a) is given as 1586.. The first six senses reach back centuries earlier. Sense 1 defines conversation as, "the action of living or having one's being in a place or *among* persons. Also *fig.* of one's spiritual being" (1340). All senses up to 7a belong to the same family of meanings. Thus sense 2 is: "the action of consorting or having dealings with others; living together; commerce, intercourse, society, intimacy" (c. 1340). The earlier family of meanings is different enough to warrant a distinctive concept along the lines of Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus*. Thus, whereas "the action of consorting" is understood as significantly constituting social identity, the *habitus* denotes a distinctive sub-set of the social world (such as locality or class) that, "functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions", and to which social identity is attuned.[2] The earlier sense of "conversation" thus suggests a species of *habitus* linking consortment with identity. Accordingly in *King Lear* Kent professes, "to converse with him that is wise and says little" (1.4.15): the quality of the conversation being inversely proportional to its wordiness. In *Pericles*, the identity testified to by one's conversation is moral or even spiritual. Thus the hero is described as "the good in conversation" (5.9) against the incestuous Antiochus.[3] But "sexual intercourse or intimacy" (OED, sense 3.a) – typically in an impure sense – can also be denoted, as in, "Hastings' conversation with Shore's wife" (3.5.30) in *Richard III*. Eventually this sub-sense of the word, with its implication of "apparent open guilt" (3.5.29), would evolve into the legal action of "criminal conversation" for the prosecution of adultery. All such conversation carries a fearful presumption of immersiveness. Fearful, because if the immersing milieu is tainted, then the self is necessarily subdued to that taint. Shakespeare voices this fear in Sonnet 111 when lamenting the "public manners" picked up by the "public means" (4) by which he has been obliged to earn his living: "Thence comes it that my name receives a brand, / And almost thence my nature is subdued / To what it works in, like the dyer's hand"

(5-7).[4] Both senses of "conversation" are implied: if the central image is that of vulgarity imbibed from conversation as *habitus*, the sonnet itself conducts a "familiar discourse" with the friend who has presumably upbraided the poet with his commonness.

2   While there is evidently a continuity between the earlier and the later senses of "conversation" there is also a gap that was to open up in following centuries to the point where the earlier sense would recede, leaving phantom traces (such as the quite recently obsolete statute regarding "criminal conversation"). In what follows I want to explore what is behind the shift of one sense to another, a shift which is coeval with the career of Shakespeare. In the wake of Lukács, one is tempted to say that the shift is connected with the change from a feudal society (in which identity is largely fixed) to a capitalist society (in which identity is more mobile).[5] Attractive though this thought is however, I prefer to operate at a more granular level. This must involve two related tasks.

3   The first is to explore early modern theoretical discussions of "conversation". While the *OED* can tell us that a shift took place, it cannot tell us how or why. For that we must have recourse to a range of early modern thinking on the topic. I will outline what I take to be three distinct species of conversational theory in Shakespeare's period: civil, holy and dialectical. The first corresponds to Stefano Guazzo's *Civile Conversation* (trans. 1581, 1586); the second to the puritan ideal and practice of a distinctly Christian way of conversing; the third arising from Montaigne's essay *Sur l'art de conférer*. Each theory is conscious of its rivals, depicting them with a distinctive slant. None is entirely reducible either to the earlier or to the later sense of the word "conversation". Each is cognizant of the turn in meaning if to different degrees. The initial aim of this paper is then to sketch out each of these three theories to a level of detail in keeping with article length. The second aim is to explore how the three conversational theories track in Shakespeare. We shall see that these early modern discussions have a strong ethical or indeed theological tinge, and it is in this spectrum of their meaning that the true moment of the shift or turn is grasped. In addition to my archaeological and critical projects, I wish to think more broadly of the significance of Shakespeare's achievement, given both the enormity of the leap into the philosophical future taken by "conversation" at this moment, and the profound contribution to that leap made by Shakespeare's great contemporary, Montaigne.

Civile Conversation

4   We can begin discussion of the conversational turn with a work written on its cusp: Stefano Guazzo's *Civile Conversation*.[6] Guazzo is already conscious of a notion that is mobile, that can no longer be taken for granted. The book takes the form of a dialogue between "Young Guazzo" a proponent of conversation in the earlier (and morally anxious) sense, and "Annibale" a proponent of conversation in an open and more modern sense. The first 30 pages or so are dominated by Young Guazzo's reluctance to converse *at all* in the sense of venturing beyond a state of hermetic solitude and engaging in the profane conversation of "companies":

> I say first, that to climbe to the true service of God […] the desartes, al by places
> and solitarie, are the right ladders. And contrariwise, companies are nought els but
> hookes and tonges, which withdrawing us by force out of the course of our good
> thoughtes, set us in the way of distruction: for that this life being full of suspitions,
> deceits, lasciviousnesse, perjuries, detractions, envy, oppressions, violences […] a
> man can not turne his eyes aside, but that he shalbe forced to beholde some evil
> thing or other, which entereth and insinuateth it selfe by a broade way unto the
> heart […]. (S. Guazzo, *op. cit.,* p. 24)

5   While Young Guazzo's aversion to conversation is driven partly by melancholy[7], his justification is both moral and Augustinian. "Our first father", he continues, "was as hapie while hee lived in solitarinesse, as hee was after miserable and griefefull when hee was in company" (*ibid.*, p. 25). A similar logic governs Milton's depiction of Adam falling through an addiction to Eve's conversation:

> How can I live without thee, how forgoe
> Thy sweet Converse and Love so dearly joyn'd,
> To live in these wilde Woods forlorn?
> Should God create another Eve and I
> Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
> Would never from my heart; no, no, I feel
> The Link of Nature draw me.[8]

6   C. S. Lewis contextualizes "sweet Converse" with Augustine's gloss on the Fall as representing a turn to *socialis necessitudo* (or the social bond constituted in Adam and Eve by virtue of their being "a married pair", which is to say a representation of human society in embryo).[9] The reason Adam's sin is endemic, according to Augustine, is to have initiated the split between divine and profane conversation. This is something of which English readers of Guazzo would have been strongly conscious, for the reason that (as we shall see) puritan conversation was an attempt to solder that split, to turn human conversation back towards God in a consciously "Christian" direction.

7   A prime danger of conversation for Young Guazzo is its viral quality: "as some diseases of the body are infectious, so the vices of the mind take from one to another, so that a drunkerd draweth his companions to like wine, a Carpet knight corrupteth and effeminateth a valiant man: and so much force hath continual conversation, that oft times against our wils, we imitate the vices of others" (44). Vice is more viral or transmissive than it is a native condition. Hence: "I [...] perswade my selfe, that vices should be banished out of the world, if conversation were taken out of it: seeing that adulteries, robberies, violences, blasphemies, murthers, and infinite other evils, are learned by the conversation of men" (39). Courtly conversation – which positively requires the speaker's conformity with his *habitus* – is particularly suspect. Young Guazzo mentions a young gentleman who was pressured to blaspheme by the bodies of the saints (rather than swear by the body of a hen), "to the end he might be taken for a good courtier" (59). In Book 2, Annibale (perhaps reflecting the author's own unhappy experience of courtiership[10]) will reflect on the misery of the courtier always at the beck and call of the prince:

> The poore soule always liveth with an unquiet mind, and his maister doth
> continually loade him like a good horse [...] and never leaveth until hee have quite
> tyred him [...]. Whereupon I thinke not amisse to followe the fable of the earthen
> vessel, whiche in no wise woulde have the company of the brazen vessel. And you
> know wel, that in their companie a man cannot utter his minde freely nor doe any
> thing contrarie to their pleasure: if hee does, hee shalbe no friend of Caesars.
> (209-10)

8   Though an "earthen" rather than a "brazen" vessel in terms of Guazzo's metaphor, "civile conversation" has the advantage of freedom and the potential of real integrity. It is, "an honest, commendable and virtuous kinde of living in the worlde" (56).[11] On the one hand it is moral ("to live civilly, is not sayde in respect of the citie but of the qualities of the minde", p. 56) and on the other, constructively busy as distinct from the courtier-like mischief of, "conspyring together, and secretly devising howe to bring some Officer into the disfavor of his Prince" (117). "Civile conversation" is not merely a facility for engaging the world on its own terms but potentially a watchfulness over one's

integrity while doing so. Potentially at least, it is "honest" in the strongly moral sense of this word rather than the weakly decorous sense, which (in the words of Andrew James Hartley) was, "less about truth-telling […] than […] about the preservation of social and aesthetic decorum".[12] Finally, it is for everyone, "all sortes of persons of what place, or what calling soever they are" (56).

9   As Guazzo proceeds however, the moral emphasis is progressively diluted. The more profane the conversant, the more compromising the conversation. Yet our freedom to pick and choose our partners is constrained by pragmatism. Annibale advises that we should be prepared to converse with pretty well anybody. To be off-limits, a conversant must be branded with a mark like Cain. But in the inevitable absence of such a mark, all conversants must be regarded as "tollerable" (62). They will in other words include the very worst kinds of people: such as blasphemers and hypocrites (62, 67). Blasphemers might commit an intolerable offence against God, but the Christian must tolerate them because he cannot afford to make "reconing of the offences doone to Godwarde" (60). Hence, "though as a Christian you ought to flie them, yet as a courtier, you cannot keep you from them" (60). The Christian moreover should not flatter himself that he keeps the company of such men in order to convert them: they are far more likely to convert him.[13] Yet to forgo the company of such people, as of gamblers, would be too "precise" (105), a word which must not only have resonated in 1580s England, but may have had a role in shaping the very idea of the "precisian" or puritan.

10   Annibale's tone becomes ever more pragmatic: conversation is simply indispensable for making one's way in the world. Flattery eventually morphs from being an outright evil to an indispensable skill: "Take this with you, as trueth getteth hatred, so flatterie winneth love and breedeth good blood, insomuch that hee which would take flatterie out of the worlde, shoulde take away all humanitie and courtesie" (80). Much as in Shakespeare's Globe, the moral *topos* of the *theatrum mundi* is referenced ("this world was a stage, wee the players whiche present the Comedie, and the gods the lookers on, amongst whom belike he comprehended the Philosophers"), only to be inverted: these days, Annibale tells us, "there are fewe divine lookers on" (118). Thus whereas in the traditional *topos* descending from John of Salisbury, the moral person never acts the part of another, for Annibale: "to be acceptable in companie, we must put off […] our own fashions and manners, and cloath ourselves with the conditions of others, and imitate them so farre as reason will permit" (105). While:

> touching the respect of honestie and virtue, wee ought to bee always one and the same […] touching the diversitie of the persons with whom wee shall be conversaunt, we must *alter ourselves into an other* (my italics) […]. And he, which shall not frame him selfe to doe this, shall be driven to curse conversation" (105).

11   Annibale eventually adopts the view that self-knowledge and virtue actually emerge from the *theatrum mundi* rather than against it: "For if you consider it wel the judgment which wee have to knowe ourselves, is not ours, but wee borrow it of others"; thus: "our judgements and the knowledge of our selves dependeth on the judgement and conversation of many" (116). At this point the justification for civil conversation has gone beyond the merely pragmatic.

12   To conclude: while Guazzo begins by addressing himself to an early modern understanding of conversation, he drives the notion in a modern direction: pragmatic and secular rather than theological, democratic rather than hierarchical, dynamic as distinct from static and category-bound. Yet, pragmatic, collective and fundamentally socio-centric though it be, the model of "civile conversation" remains haunted by a suspicion of bad faith: profitable participation in "civile conversation" requires a virtually permanent suspension of ethical judgement. In view of the viral quality of

conversation mentioned by Young Guazzo earlier (44), the possibility of corruption is all too real. We are not so far from courtly conversation and the dominance of the *habitus* after all. The adjective "civile" is largely aspirational. Guazzo might less flatteringly have labeled his conversation "common", as (we shall see) it is in two scenes (1.2 and 2.1) of *Two Noble Kinsmen*, which taken together provide an extended Shakespearean reflection upon the conceptual problem faced by Guazzo.

Holy Conversation

13   In the very decade that Guazzo appeared in English, the Augustinian premise with which he begins was vigorously affirmed by the puritans. "Conversation" would seem to become a puritan word in much the way that – as James Simpson suggests – "hypocrisy" becomes an anti-puritan word.[14] In the puritan "surveys of the ministry" of the 1580s, benefice-holding clergy were drawn up into lists, by deanery and county, to be evaluated (among other criteria) against "their conversation". To choose from many, the 1586 survey of "the Deanrye of Kerier" in Cornwall, includes, against column 7 ("what his conversation is"), the following entries:

> A man carelesse of his calling and suspected of whoredome
> An honest man, a simple man
> A verie lewd man in forgery and superstition
> A dicer …
> He liveth idely, and cometh seldome to church
> He liveth as a pot companion; one Kendall hath the sheafe ….
> As honest of life as such pettifoggers be …
> A good dicer and carder, both night and daie
> His conversation is most in houndes.[15]

14   Conversation here is not about performance in the narrow ecclesiological sense in which Simpson insists that the term "hypocrisy" had originated. It is more about the pastor's relationship with his community. It is an amphibious criterion tying sacred calling to secular space, and reforming the latter in terms of the former. The inherent tension of this polarity comes through in George Gifford's *The Countrie Divinitie* (London, 1582) which takes the form of a dialogue between a puritan (Zelotes) and a lax Anglican (Atheos). Atheos defends his local minister (of Great Baddow in Essex) against Zelotes, as competent "to read the service as well as anye of them all", while remaining, "a verye good fellowe" (drinker, card-player, and *bon viveur*) outside the church (G. Gifford, *ibid.*, p. 1-2). The secular space should be left alone, argues Atheos. It is not the preserve of "busie Controulers", those "curious and precise fellowes, which allow no recreation" (*ibid.*, p. 3) and who have no ecclesiastical authority for their strictures. We are left with a stand-off. Where for Atheos everyday conversation should be entirely free of religious interference, for Zelotes it must be Godly. Implicitly, the argument is over the meaning of the adjective "profane". Where Atheos might have taken this word "in neutral sense" as "lay; civil, as distinguished from ecclesiastical" (OED, 2.a); Zelotes would take it in the strong sense of "persons or things: unholy, or desecrating what is holy or sacred" (OED, 1). The formation of the English noun "profanity" ("profane conduct or speech; also […] a profane or obscene act or word", OED) in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries testifies to the force of Zelotes's insistence.[16] Gifford's influence was to spread well beyond puritan circles. The word "conversation" is sprinkled liberally through George Herbert's Anglican, *The Countrey Parson* (London, 1652), which not only echoes Gifford's title but makes clear that the parson must be of exemplary conversation to win the confidence of his flock ("neither will they

beleeve him in the pulpit, whom they cannot trust in his Conversation").[17]

15   While the puritans were *not* (unlike Annibale) prepared to condone verbal abuse "to Godwarde", their response is a perfectly logical development from the Augustinian premise of Young Guazzo. Accordingly the unlicenced preacher John Angell defines conversation as: "a word of large extent, it reacheth to mans whole life, and all the several passages and businesses thereof [...] both in his thoughts, words, and actions, wherein he converseth with God, man, or his own self".[18] Angell's definition links vocal speech to silent speech (thinking or musing) and spoken prayer to silent prayer in a seamless web. Angell's usage recalls Augustine's *Soliloquia* (from which the term "soliloquy" derives), and his *Confessions*, every word of which is addressed exclusively to God.

16   It is roughly from 1576 – or the definitive split between Anglicanism and Puritanism following the removal of Edmund Grindal as Archbishop of Canterbury – that a distinctive speaking register appears.[19] It is not too far a stretch to call this a "holy conversation", borrowing Rona Goffen's term for that genre of *trecento* Italian paintings of sacred figures – typically, the virgin and child with assorted saints – apparently conversing with each-other in relatively informal pictorial spaces.[20] Like the paintings discussed by Goffen, a variously "Christian" or "right" or "heavenly" or "holy" conversation – explicitly advocated by puritan preachers such as Angell – attends to various Pauline injunctions to sanctity of speech.[21] *Ephesians* is but the most prominent of such *loci*: it is precisely because the fledgling congregation of Ephesus is surrounded by a pagan majority – "among whom wee also had our conuersation in times past in the lusts of our flesh [...] & of the mind" (2:3) – that Paul enjoins his flock to stop talking to the Ephesians and converse among themselves in what sounds like a different dialect: "speaking unto your selues in psalms / and hymnes, and spirituall songs" (5:19).[22]

17   Christian or holy conversation presumed a spiritual conversion (the two words share an etymological link – *verso / vertere* (to turn) – that puritan writers derived from the church fathers.[23] The inward turn of the sect upon itself was mirrored externally as (in Milton's words) an "incommunicable antagony" from the mainstream or, "a certain religious aversation and abhorring".[24] At its strongest, holy conversation divides spoken discourse between the godly and the ungodly. There was no midway point, no *sensus communis*. All that was not godly was profane in the strong sense. Who were the ungodly? As Guazzo informs us, they could be anyone and everywhere; an all-embracing and infiltrating otherness, to which the restless "turning" signaled in the etymology of conversation was dangerously liable. One's conversation was never simply one's own. Hence the peril of civil conversation. Holy conversation by contrast was hermetically sealed within the self-styled Christian community; and in its relative predictability more closely resembled monologue (sermon or discourse) than dialogue. When (as we shall shortly see) Montaigne critiques the Huguenot style of conversation, he imagines it as a monologue. When he imagines his own conversation, he imagines it as a dialogue, even of the self with itself.[25] Montaigne's self is never solidly evident to itself but forever turning itself in converse with a crowd of internalized faces.

18   What became of holy conversation? I have suggested that in comparison with the civil mode of Guazzo or the dialectical mode of Montaigne, it consolidates the pre-1586 senses of "conversation" as given by the OED. A history of its fortunes in the later seventeenth century is beyond our purview, but its eventual decline would seem to be related to the rise of secular and enlightenment culture from the Restoration.[26] Decline however is not disappearance. It lived on within non-conformism in England, Jansenism in France[27], and cults anywhere. In various forms of religious fundamentalism it persists to this day.

Montaigne

19   Montaigne's approach to conversation is informed by Guazzo's aversion to courtliness and his more idealistic hopes of civil conversation[28], but with the difference that Montaigne champions these principles with a purpose lacking in Guazzo:

> The speech I love is a simple, natural speech, the same on paper as in the mouth; a speech succulent and sinewy, brief and compressed, not so much dainty and well combed as vehement and brusque […] rather difficult than boring, remote from affectation, irregular, disconnected and bold; each bit making a body in itself; not pedantic, not monkish, not lawyer-like, but rather soldierly.[29]

20   Guazzo is more guarded than this. The difference is felt again in their contrasting attitudes to friendship. Where Guazzo respects the higher-order conversation of friends in principle, he denies its possibility in practice:

> But where at this day are those true friendes to bee found? […] I knowe not who is your assured friende, but I am sure that I have not yet founde mine, with whom I might use suche open, simple, and free behavior as you meane. For you must thinke it a harde matter to finde in the worlde two heartes which love perfectly. (167)

21   Recalling his friendship with Etienne de la Boétie, Montaigne presumes just this possibility: that of an unguarded, intimate and heightened conversation altogether free of the prudence and ceremony employed with mere acquaintances. Like puritan conversation, Montaigne's exchanges with La Boétie were linguistically distinctive: they conversed in latin.[30] From the moment of La Boétie's death however, Montaigne is "in motion" (to borrow from the title of Jean Starobinski's study) from the "symmetry" of his friendship to the "asymmetry" of his public relationship.[31] At the same time however, the title of the *Essais* continues to reference his pact with La Boétie.[32] Montaigne is never less than intimate, forceful, frank and truth-seeking.

22   This said, I want to draw attention to an aspect of Montaigne's thinking about conversation that is proleptically modern and enlightened. It is found principally in the essay *Sur l'art de conférer* (c. 1582) that Florio translates in 1603 as "Of the Arte of conferring".[33] Conversing here is an art of the mind, a free exploration of ideas and opinions, less to be valued for its utility than as, "the most fruitful and natural exercise of our spirit" (Florio, *op. cit.*, p. 519). It is a conception from which rhetoric or interested persuasion, is excluded. Montaigne actively wants to be bested in such a conversation. What he wants is disinterested discussion that is yet vigorous, rough, impassioned and completely unrespecting of persons and place. A "stubborn wit […] a sturdy wrestler" (Florio, p. 519) is preferable to mealy-mouthed deference:

> as our minde is fortified by the communication of regular and vigorous spirits; it cannot well be expressed, how much it looseth and is bastardized, by the continuall commerce and frequentation, we have with base, weake and dull spirits. No contagion spreds it selfe further then that. (Florio, p. 519)

23   For Montaigne, *habitus*-bound conversation debilitates in its very principle. At the heart of Montaigne's idea of conversation is freedom from "tyrannie, both verball and effectuall" (Florio, p. 524). This doesn't mean just tyrants but princes as such, like Guazzo's old master in whose company the courtier, "cannot utter his minde freely nor doe anything contrarie to their pleasure" (S. Guazzo, *op. cit.*, p. 210). In his *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, La Boétie had excluded tyrants from friendship or even the possibility of conversation for the reason that their conversant must always defer and so fail to provide the mental resistance that real conversation thrives on.[34] Religious

authorities are similarly constraining, whereas for Montaigne conversation is less about securing the self in a fortress of right belief than a willing surrender of self-confirmation: "publishing and accusing my imperfections" (Florio, p. 518). Conversation in short is more about finding the question than knowing the answer. In the "conference" essay, Montaigne contrasts his own Popper-like will to falsification, with Huguenot conformism. Hence he suggests, "these times are fit for us to reforme us *backward* [my italics]; more by dissenting than by consenting; more by difference then by accord".[35] Florio's choice of the word "reforme" unmistakably evokes the English co-religionists of Montaigne's Huguenots.[36] Montaigne goes on to suggest that reformed conversation convinces less by the merits of its argument than by rhetorical props, "the gravity, the gown, and the fortune of him that speaketh" (Florio, p. 523).

24   But if Montaigne's Socratic kind of conversation is so powerful a solvent of pre-existing belief and thus of secular and religious authority, by what criterion would one decide the truth of anything? Here Montaigne has recourse to an idea of "common sense", not in the sense of what he once called common foolishness ("*l'insipience commune*")[37] – suggestive of Voltaire's *sens commun* ("crude reason […] the first notion of ordinary things, a state midway between stupidity and intelligence")[38] – nor in the reductive cynicism of an Iago or an Edmund, but in the sense of Juvenal's *sensus communis*. In his eighth satire, Juvenal contrasts common sense with aristocratic pretension: "common sense is seldom found in fortunes that so much abound" (*Raris enim ferme sensus communis in illa fortuna*).[39] This is because aristocrats are obsessed with bloodline at the expense of broad human empathy or social solidarity. Juvenal reminds his readers that many of the great Roman houses can be traced to plebeian roots, and that some of the worthiest Romans – Cicero, Gaius Marius, Gaius Mucius, Horatius Cocles – were themselves commoners. Contrariwise, some of the worst – Catiline and Cethegus – were aristocrats. The true citizen has *sensus communis* in the sense of generous sympathy and a broad spectrum of social engagement. In Montaigne, I would suggest, *sensus communis* retains the wider social meaning of Juvenal but with a shift of emphasis from Republican patriotism to a concern for shared values and sustained ethical reflection. This of course has nothing to do with godliness or holy conversation. The person Montaigne admires is free-thinking ("my reason is not framed to bend or stoope, my knees are"), un-impressed by "overdarkened […] gravity" (Florio, p.526) or claims to authority. He is open of mien and predisposed to thinking that, "the plainest reasons, are the best seated", and that "the meanest and most beaten, are best applied unto affaires" (Florio, p. 525). Above all, *sensus communis* in Montaigne suggests a capacity for independent judgement whose very condition is a broad social empathy that constantly gives rise to ethical reflection. These thoughts are not entirely new. To some extent they are anticipated by Guazzo: "Disputation is the sifter out of the trueth. And for so much as the trueth is taken from the common consent and opinions of men, those opinions can not be knowen but by conversation and companie" (S. Guazzo, p. 41). What neither Montaigne nor Guazzo openly acknowledge is that the ethical value they place on *sensus communis* contradicts the Pauline notion of "solidarity in sin".[40] It is a marker of their modernity.

25   It might be objected that Montaigne's idea of conversation is not at all new, that it simply reiterates the Platonic dialogue. This is true as far as it goes, but the iteration makes all the difference. In a recent article for *Philosophy and Literature*, Ann Hartle argues that Montaigne redefines the Platonic ideal of wisdom as a "sociable wisdom".[41] In the allegory of the cave, Plato imagines the workaday crowd as satisfied by the shadows of reality projected on the wall of the cave. Wisdom is to be sought outside the cave whence the real forms of ideas originate. Hence Plato's philosopher – the lover of wisdom – is he who turns his back on the crowd and strides out into the austere light of

truth. By contrast, Montaigne's philosopher finds truth within the cave. "Sociable wisdom" starts in the real world – that of the cave – but transvalues it, seeking, "the transformation of the human world, the production of society, a new mode of human association" (A. Hartle, *op. cit.*, p. 285). Montaigne's is a wisdom focused not on unchanging essence but on "the possible" (*ibid.*, p. 290), or the potential of experience to become something beyond itself. Experience by itself is associated with complacency or "presumption" – a self-esteem preening itself on its understanding (*ibid.*, p. 291). Hence experience can make the journey to possibility only via a philosophy that forgoes its "superiority" (*ibid.*, p. 294) or intellectual pride, in solidarity with the "common good" (itself attuned to a criterion of "common sense"). Accordingly Hartle cites Pascal's description of Montaigne's style as "totally composed of thoughts born out of the ordinary conversations of life" (*ibid.*, p. 295). Thus, rather than a profession or vocation, philosophy for Montaigne is "unpremeditated and accidental"[42]; it is an activity that arises in the course of that "strong and manly" conversation that pleased him by its "sharpness and vigour". As in his essays, conversation for Montaigne has the quality of "essaying oneself": "for there is nothing more pleasant in association with men than the trials (*essais*) of strength we have with one another".[43] It is vital that the trial be disinterested, divorced from personal investment and authority claims. Montaigne's idea of conversation in other words is everything that early modern or puritan conversation was not. It is open, not closed; exploratory rather than authoritarian; a dialogue rather than a catechism or sermon; defamiliarizing rather than *habitus*-bound. And it plays the ball not the man; it seeks to convince of course, but has no design of "converting" its audience into a different faith. It is like a wrestler who throws you but then pulls you back up for another bout. For all this, it is holy in the sense of presuming complete good faith in its interlocutor and so forswearing any recourse to the conversational vices of hypocrisy, dishonest persuasion or verbal abusiveness.

26   It is the sociability of Montaigne's idea of wisdom that distinguishes this kind of conversation from the Platonic dialogue, and it is this social quality too that anticipates enlightenment iterations of the notion of *sensus communis* in Shaftesbury's essay of that title, and in Kant's reiteration of Shaftesbury. *Sensus communis* itself would appear to anticipate Kant's "idea for a universal history", (which envisions a cosmopolitan extension of civic solidarity), the Enlightenment dialectic and Hegel's *geist*. Conversation of the kind foreseen by Montaigne is implicitly: philosophy, the dialectic, Jameson's "aporetic thinking", Derrida's "thinking of the path"[44]. The linkage is explicit in Hans Georg Gadamer:

> The art of dialectic is not the art of being able to win every argument. On the contrary, it is possible that someone who is practicing the art of dialectic, *ie.* the art of questioning and seeking truth, comes off worse in the argument in the eyes of those listening to it. Dialectic, as the art of asking questions, proves itself only because the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning; which involves being able to preserve his orientation towards openness. The art of questioning is that of being able to go on asking questions, *ie.* the art of thinking. It is called 'dialectic', for it is the art of conducting a real conversation [...]. [It] consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength [...] [It] is the art of the formation of concepts, as the working out of the common meaning.[45]

27   The profundity and modernity of Montaigne's *L'Art de Conférer* – in which conversation is not just a mode of discussion but a potential dialectic whereby the world is called upon to reinvent itself in a recursive movement of reflection – is unmistakable when viewed from the perspective of Milton's deeper reflections on the cosmic ecology of conversation in *Paradise Lost*. When Adam pleads for the society of an equal with

whom to converse, God answers as follows:

> A nice and subtle happiness I see
> Thou to thyself proposes, in the choice
> Of thy associates, Adam, and wilt taste
> No pleasure, though in pleasure, solitary. (8.399-402)

28   It is almost a reproof: conversation is made to sound like a luxury. Adam's current "associates" – the animals – he finds insufficient, and so too his happiness. Solitariness (the condition of God), he concedes, is superior, but only because in God, "is no deficience found" (8.416). Conversation (which includes "collateral love, and dearest amity", 8.426), is the flip-side of deficiency; it is a need provoked by the first man's consciousness that he is, "in unity defective" (8.425). Is a loving conversation proper to humanity at once a comfort and yet a fit marker of man's inferiority to God? Or would Adam's persistence in a solitary condition also have been proper, while inviting God to raise man to a yet higher "communion" with the deity, and thus a more perfect estate? Adam seems ambiguous on this point:

> Thou in thy secrecy although alone,
> Best with thy self accompanied, seek'st not
> Social communication, yet so pleased,
> Canst raise thy creature to what highth thou wilt
> Of union or communion deified;
> I by conversing cannot these erect
> From prone, nor in their ways complacence find. (8.427-33)

29   Paradoxically, the solitary God can raise his creatures to any height of "union or communion deified". By comparison with this ontologically direct and fruitful communion, human conversation is superficial, having no good purchase on the being of the lower animals, and – the poem goes on to make clear – on ourselves. Unlike in Montaigne then, conversation for the Milton of *Paradise Lost* (if not of the *Areopagitica*) is a dead end. It is not a world-shaping power. It has no deeper philosophical significance.

30   To summarize: in this brief survey of early modern English notions of conversation, we have identified four main positions along a friable spectrum of meaning. To begin with (as suggested by the first six senses given in the OED), the word "conversation" is primarily an "action of consorting" that prioritizes the *habitus* over the individual speaker. Secondly (1581-86) the translations of Guazzo introduce a notion of "civile conversation" which, while aiming at a degree of speakerly autonomy from the *habitus* (typified by courtesy in Castiglione), end in a pragmatism whereby moral claims are largely suspended. Third, from the mid 1580s, we find two species of "holy conversation": the puritan practice of "Christian conversation" and an essentially literary idealization of conversation between true friends which itself can be imagined in Christian terms (as we shall see it is in *Two Noble Kinsmen*). Though civil and holy conversations are sharply contrasting – the one open and secular, the other closed and godly – they are finally alike in conceding the immersiveness of *habitus* over autonomy. Thus where Guazzo advises the speaker to defer to the profanity of civil conversation (as its inevitable corrollary), the puritans fashion the rival *habitus* of Christian conversation to prioritize godliness. Finally Montaigne, who is influenced both by the holy conversation of friendship and the open conversation of Guazzo, pioneers a model of conversation that is at once morally autonomous and intellectually adventurous: a disinterested and unrhetorical truth-seeking that relies on and actively seeks out shared understandings of a kind capable of evolving new meanings. Here it must be conceded that relative to the other three models of conversation, Montaigne's (at its most far-

reaching in "The Art of Conferring") is far less culturally representative. Were the four stages to be ranked along a continuum of residual, dominant and emergent, then conversation as an "action of consorting" would be residual, civil and holy conversation would dispute the dominance between them, whereas Montaigne's conception would be emergent.

Shakespeare

31   How does this conversational spectrum track in Shakespeare? *Does it* track in Shakespeare? It does, I shall suggest, and over its entire spectrum. In view of their dominant status, we should hardly be surprised to find civil and holy conversation. They contribute to characterization and dramatic quality generally. Yet beyond this, Shakespeare (as we shall see) makes theoretical interventions to both conversational kinds, where conversation is elaborated as a theme in its own right far beyond the needs of specific dramatic contexts. I shall consider two such interventions, one on civil and the other on holy conversation. Shakespeare's treatment of holy conversation is also remarkable in non-theoretical ways that I shall also touch upon. First, he uses it against the grain of fellow playwrights such as Jonson and Middleton for whom it is a way of satirizing puritans. Second, as I hope to show, it furnishes an important structural feature in a significant number of plays. What of dialectical conversation? In view of its bare emergence and recondite nature, we might be surprised to find any evidence of it in the plays. Not only is it present however but, I will suggest, it accounts for some of Shakespeare's least accountable moments.

32   We can begin with the theoretical reflection on civil conversation. The plays are of course permeated by civil and courtly conversation *per se*.[46] But the significance of the reflection is that civil conversation is interrogated at a philosophical level. As we have seen, Guazzo's theory of civil conversation culminates in the realization that the self is radically insufficient: "the judgment which wee have to knowe ourselves, is not ours, but wee borrow it of others" (p.116); it takes other people to tell us who we really are and to make us who we really are. Many ironies arise from this unsettling realization, Iago's "I am not what I am" (1.1.65) being one. Iago does not say, "I am not what I pretend to be", but "I am not what *I am*". The repetition of the present tense of the verb, just after its negation presents a strong paradox. Iago means not just that his social persona is contradicted by his inner person, but that the two are symbiotic (the inner Iago *needs* the outer Iago in order – as Nietzsche might say – to become who he is: Iago is literally nothing if not "honest"). Guazzo's unsettling insight is approached more theoretically in *Troilus and Cressida*:

> [N]o man is the lord of anything,
> Though in and of him there be much consisting,
> Till he communicate his parts to others.
> Nor doth he of himself know them for aught
> Till he behold them formed in th'applause
> Where they're extended (3.3.110-15).

33   While Ulysses is hardly an honest broker, his logic is compelling: personal heroism has no social existence unless communicated to others. Contrariwise, communication can make things "poor in worth" seem "dear in esteem" (3.3.135, 134). This means that, "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin" (3.3.169); which is to say that a single shared attribute (such as size) is sufficient to make the inauthentic pass for authentic (Ajax is superficially like Achilles and superior if public opinion is on his side).[47] But it

also means that communication or conversation is a fundamentally denaturing or duplicitous activity. Civil conversation is less a forum than a marketplace; a corrupted currency. This is the opinion of a single character of course, but it is articulated with considerable philosophical care and credited to a book (Guazzo?) that Ulysses happens to be reading at that very moment. Achilles may not have read the book but he is *au fait* with the general position:

> This is not strange, Ulysses.
> The beauty that is borne here in the face
> The bearer knows not, but commends itself
> To others' eyes. Nor doth the eye itself,
> That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,
> Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed
> Salutes each other with each other's form.
> For speculation turns not to itself
> Till it hath travelled and is mirrored there
> Where it may see itself. This is not strange at all. (3.3.97-106)

34   Knowledge of the self comes from others; it is a knowledge gained less by introspection than an anxious "turning" outward. The verdict of the other is pitiless but also frivolous; novelty trumps genuine worth. The conversation in which the self finds itself is hardly idealized. For all this, there is no suggestion in Shakespeare that normal conversation is necessarily "profane" in the strongly pejorative sense.

35   This might lead us to expect that holy conversation (which does find normal conversation profane in the strongly pejorative sense) would play little or no part in the plays except as caricature. Shakespeare caricatures puritan speech occasionally, but sparingly in comparison with contemporaries such as Jonson and Middleton (*Twelfth Night* is the obvious example). But I now suggest that holy conversation features on its own terms, extensively if unobtrusively, in the plays.

36   This brings us to the second theoretical intervention that we are to consider: the entirely sympathetic meditation on holy conversation in 1.2 and 2.1 of *Two Noble Kinsmen*). The first of these two scenes introduces us to Palamon and Arcite in the Thebes of Sophocles and Aeschylus. The play's opening scene is reminiscent of *Antigone*: three distraught queens petition Theseus in the midst of his marriage celebration to avenge the fate of their husbands, whose bodies have been left to rot unburied outside the walls of Thebes. At this (and suggestive of *Oedipus at Colonus*) Theseus chastises Creon for his impiety. Before this however we are introduced to Palamon and Arcite, who though Theban themselves, both regard Thebes as tainted, specifically in respect of its conversation. Arcite entreats Palamon to join him in fleeing Thebes while they are "yet unhardened in / The crimes of nature" (1.2.2-3). Remaining in Thebes would damn them in either of two ways. On the one hand, "to follow the common stream, 'twould bring us to an eddy / where we should turn or drown" (1.2.9-10). I suggest that "turn" here means "convert", playing on its latin equivalent *verso/versere* which is also a root of "conversion" and "conversation" alike. The point is to reform themselves and so resist drowning in the "common stream".[48] On the other hand, to reform or resist "the temptings in't" (1.2.4), would itself be "not to swim / I'th'aid o'th'current" (1.2.7-8) and, "almost to sink" (1.2.7). In Thebes, "every evil [...] Hath a good colour" (1.2.38-9), but refusing to conform to the Theban norm must expose the friends as "mere monsters" (1.2.42). For Arcite, one imbibes the wickedness of Thebes merely by participating in its conversation. Thus, "our milk / Will relish of the pasture, and we must / Be vile or disobedient" (1.2.76-8). For Palamon the dilemma is not so clear-cut: daily converse with the wicked is not necessarily corrupting: "another's gait [...] is not catching / Where there is faith" (1.2.45-6). Either way, Palamon and

37   In 2.1, after the defeat of Thebes and their capture, Palamon and Arcite resume their discussion of the morally compromising effects of Theban conversation. To Arcite, prison is just the discipline for which he has been yearning:

> Let's think this prison holy sanctuary,
> To keep us from corruption of worse men.
> We are young and yet desire the ways of honour,
> That liberty and common conversation
> The poison of pure spirits, might like women
> Woo us to wander from […]. (2.2.71-6)

Whereas in prison:

> We are one another's wife […]. Were we at liberty,
> A wife might part us lawfully, or business;
> Quarrels consume us; envy of ill men
> Crave our acquaintance. (2.2.80, 88-91)

38   "Common conversation" in this context is neither low in the sense of class (Shakespeare's "public manners"), nor high in the sense of the court. It is rather, Guazzo's "civile conversation" seen from a holy standpoint. Significantly, the theme of friendship has become intertwined with that of conversation. In Richard Edwardes's *Damon and Pithias*, friendship had been offset against the corrupt court of Dionysius in an ethical sense only. In *Two Noble Kinsmen* the suggestion is that friendship is marked off from the courtly milieu of Castiglione and the civic milieu of Guazzo by the purity of its conversation. Imagine, Palamon continues:

> What had we been, old in the court of Creon,
> Where sin is justice, lust and ignorance
> The virtues of the great ones? [….]
> We had died as they do, ill old men, unwept,
> And had their epitaphs, the people's curses (2.2.105-10)

In prison, Palamon and Arcite find an equivalent of Christian conversation. While, their language might not be overtly Christian, it is undeniably holy. The extended discussion conducted in these scenes might be read as a critique of "civile conversation" from the point of view of holy conversation.

39   If holy conversation is the subject of extended reflection in this play, it also plays important characterological and structural roles in others. We can begin with the second tetralogy. These plays are built on the problem of identity: its possession, loss, and recuperation. Thus in *1 Henry IV*, the king and his son virtually echo each-other in a desire to recover themselves. "I will from henceforth be more myself" (1.3.5), claims Henry to the Percies. "I shall hereafter, my thrice gracious lord, / Be more myself" (3.2.92-3), pleads Hal. But what is being oneself? For both characters it means recovering themselves from their respective conversational disorders.

40   For the father, a king faced with rebellious subjects, being himself, means being "Mighty and to be feared" (1.3.6). It means behaving like a king rather than a peer or a friend. Henry revealingly represents his habitual "condition" as, "smooth as oil, soft as young down" (1.3.7). This is revealing because disingenuous courtesy is also part of his political character. Thus in *Richard II*, we hear of Henry working the crowd when going into exile, doffing his bonnet to "an oyster wench" (1.4.30), bowing the knee to "a brace of draymen" (1.4.31); diving into the hearts of the common people, "with humble and familiar courtesy" (1.4.25). Henry seems to have forgotten that before making a habit of

ingratiation, he was the champion of principle, refusing to back down at any cost. The Bolingbroke who challenged Mowbray had acted out of a much more robust sense of himself. This leaves us with a question. When Henry speaks of being "more himself", does he mean returning to the implacability of his challenge to Mowbray, or being ingratiating as is his habit, or simply adopting the conventional persona of a king? Does he himself know what he means? I doubt it. His selfhood seems stranded somewhere between being and seeming, ordained and acquired, essence and adaptability, inside and outside.

41   Let's now turn to Hal's promise to be "more myself". Like his father, we have to assume that prior to his delinquency, Hal had started out more or less "like himself". But his delinquency makes for a curious parallel with his father's "humble and familiar courtesy". The father's "courtesy" is the exact opposite. But at a deeper level – relative to their theoretically "real" selves – it too is a delinquency, a conversational disorder. This may be less obviously true of Bolingbroke. But from midway through *Richard II*, Bolingbroke falls into an equivocal kind of nullity relative to the confident and outspoken man who had started the play. It is not just that equivocation – over the issue of whether Richard is resigning the crown or Bolingbroke is taking it – is in his interest. It is more that he disappears into that equivocation like a fish into its camouflage. Wavering between reasserting his feudal identity as the son of John of Gaunt, and the need to be seen as receiving the crown by default rather than taking it by force, Henry's centre of gravity evaporates. He becomes curiously passive, weightless and directionless: dependent on the default or support of others. This state of drift is something he never fully recovers from.

42   Unlike his father, Hal has a grip on his conversational disorder, with the vow of, "redeeming the time, when men think least I will" (1.2.214.). Though his logic is all too politic (Hal will exceed men's hopes by setting a low ceiling of expectation), his imagery is distinctly religious. The phrase "redeeming the time" echoes St. Paul's injunction to Christian conversation in *Ephesians*: "Take heed therefore that yee walke circumspectly, not as fooles, but as wise, / Redeeming the season: for the dayes are euill." (5: 15-16).[49] Figuratively, Hal's return to form will be a reformation ("my reformation glitt'ring o'er my fault", 1.3.210); conversion from a depraved conversation to a holy one. The emphasis is quite deliberate. Holy conversation here signifies a recovery of true selfhood from the profane conversation of the *theatrum mundi* in which men seek to play parts not their own. Hal's hint of a coming "reformation" is not accidental. It is part of a pattern in Shakespeare. Yet if this is granted a question arises as to the precise function of the Pauline imagery at this point: is it not a little grandiose? What Hal promises to do is not just redeem himself, but "redeem the time", because (as *Ephesians* continues), "the days are evil". My suggestion here is that the reference to *Ephesians* points to a wider remit. The disorder that Hal means to redress is not just his own or even the tavern's but that of the kingdom – whose disorder stems as well from his father's failure to converse "like himself". A king who is "himself" redeems a kingdom fallen on evil days because when he converses with his kingdom it becomes like itself.

43   The theme of holy conversation is surprisingly insistent in a number of other plays, and always in tension with a sense of conversational disorder. It book-ends several comedies. Here is where its structural character is seen. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Berowne is ordered:

> You shall this twelve month term from day to day,
> Visit the speechless sick, and still converse
> With groaning wretches (5.2.42-4)

44   This is not just an alternation of Lenten penitence with festivity, but a re-gearing of Berowne's conversation from playful to Pauline. After his year-long penitential aversation from wit, Rosalind hopes to find Berowne: "empty of that fault, / Right joyful of your *reformation*" (3.2.60-1, my italics). There is even a hint of puritanism: "Henceforth my wooing mind will be expressed / In russet yeas, and honest kersey noes" (5.2.412-13). Lower class puritans were said by Matthew Sutcliffe to "go like clownes in russet clokes".[50] In *Twelfth Night*, the alternation of holiness and festivity works the other way round: here the festive outburst is prefaced by a playful catechism:

> *Olivia* Now sir, what is your text?
> *Viola* Most sweet lady –
> *Olivia* A comfortable doctrine, and much may be said of it. Where lies your text?
> *Viola* In Orsino's bosom.
> *Olivia* In his bosom? In what chapter of his bosom?
> *Viola* To answer by the method, in the first of his heart.
> *Olivia* O, I have read it. It is heresy. (1.5.211-18)

45   Though witty, Olivia's conversational mode is clearly "holy" and far from caricature. Her mourning dress would have been indistinguishably puritan, as is suggested in a spin-off play, *The Puritan Widow*, where Olivia's dialogue (or a close equivalent) is heard in the mouth of a now caricature puritan. This is "Nicholas Saint-Antlings", one of three servants of the puritan widow who enter "in black scurvy mourning coats, and books at their girdles, as coming from church" (1.3). I suggest that the following exchange between Nicholas and a Captain echoes Olivia's exchange with Viola:

> *Captain* Why, and fool, thou shalt love thy Neighbour and help him in extremis.
> *Nicholas* Mass I think it be indeed; in what Chapter's that, Cousin?
> *Captain* Why in the first of Charity, the second verse.
> *Nicholas* The first of Charity, quath a, that's a good jest, there is no such chapter in my book!
> *Captain* No. I know twas torn out of thy Book, and that makes so little in thy heart.
> (1.4.128-36) [51]

Middleton must have recognized the holy character of Olivia's conversation in order to have adapted it as caricature.

46   *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure* also juxtapose holy conversation with common. To the extent that their language is respectively Christian and Jewish, Antonio and Shylock live in separate conversational worlds, each holy in his own way. What they share is a language of commerce. Shylock spells out the distinction with admirable clarity: "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you" (1.3.33-35). The Christian plot consists of two kinds of holy conversation – that of marriage and that of friendship – each pitted against the other. Figuratively, Portia's marriage with Bassanio is redemptive: "Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear" (3.2.311) echoes 1 *Corinthians* 6:20: "For ye are bought for a price".[52] Yet Antonio's love for Bassanio is equally redemptive and eventually challenges the marriage bond for priority. In the ring symbolism of the fifth Act, the play affirms the holy conversation of marriage over that of friendship. In *Measure for Measure*, Isabella is called upon to quit the sanctuary of her convent (in which converse with men is forbidden) for the corrupt conversational world of Vienna which then infects her with its virus. The process begins in 2.1, the first of two scenes in which she pleads with the magistrate Angelo for the life of her brother. Isabella's pleading has no effect on Angelo until energized by a performance coach she hadn't asked for: one of the most disreputable figures in the play, Lucio. The growing passion of her delivery seduces Angelo without either of them quite knowing what has

happened. In the end Isabella forgives Angelo because she recognizes her real if unwitting complicity in his downfall. The way back to the convent is then barred by a marriage proposal she cannot refuse. Vienna claims her for its own. In all five of these plays holy conversation is both a theme and a structure.

47   We can now turn to the question of whether the barely emergent end of the conversational spectrum – the quasi-enlightenment type found in Montaigne's *Art of Conferring* – also tracks in Shakespeare. This type, as we have seen, relies on a criterion of *sensus communis* in the moral and republican spirit of Juvenal. We can begin with a speech which relies on the ancient republican truism that Romans are not bondmen. "Who is here so base that would be a bondman?" (3.2.29-30), asks Brutus; Caesar's death is regrettable, but a living Caesar must have reduced all citizens to the status of subjects or "abjects". That the Romans are not finally swayed by this rhetorical question suggests that Brutus was over-optimistic about the ethical level of their *sensus communis*. Shakespeare's heavily qualified portrait of Brutus seems of a piece with his general skepticism as regards ancient republican values, *sensus communis* included.[53]

48   Yet for Shakespeare *sensus communis* does not belong exclusively to the ancient republican thought world. Just as for Montaigne, it can take on a more progressive nuance. Consider this extended rhetorical question from Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy:

> For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes [...] ? (3.1.72-76)

Oddly for a prince who is all too conscious of his royalty, Hamlet democratically invokes the frustrations of the common yet estimable citizen, the man of "patient merit". It is precisely the decent and constructive people, those around whom an enlightened *sensus communis* might potentially form who are driven to suicide. In Hamlet's mind, those who are driven to suicide are the good rather than the wicked, and commoners rather than aristocrats.

49   A more famously progressive moment is Shylock's speech on the humanity of Jews in *The Merchant of Venice*. It is a speech that reaches out for a *sensus communis* that the play – built on the popular premise that anti-semitism is *sens commun* in Voltaire's sense ("crude reason [...] the first notion of ordinary things") – insists is not there. But the power of the speech is such as to challenge that premise and accuse what passes for common sense with the charge of natural injustice. It is not so much the content of the speech that is challenging. We recognize here a variant of the same commonplace voiced by Henry the night before Agincourt: laying his exceptionalism aside, the king is a man, and must feel danger like any other. The difference is that the Jew is exceptional in a pejorative sense. What makes Shylock's voicing of this now up-ended commonplace so challenging is the dialogue it conducts with the horizon of belief to which his play and its scapegoating conventions are tied: the stubborn premise of anti-semitism and race hatred. To this, the speech is an irruption, an *aporia* demanding thought (Derrida's "thinking of the path"). Unlike Othello (shut up within his *locus* as Robert Weimann might put it) Shylock takes the floor (Weimann's *platea*).[54] He is an interlocutor, a virtual *raisonneur*, able to call his play, along with most of its characters and its audience into question. There is an irony however. That Shylock's appeal for human solidarity should end in a threat of revenge ("If we are like you in the rest,/ we will resemble you in that", 3.1.63-64), invokes the Pauline notion of "solidarity in sin", the reactionary antitype of *sensus communis*.

50   Here then are three moments that to varying degrees approach Montaigne's all but enlightened version of *sensus communis*. For my final example I want to return to the *Henriad*, and a passage in which opposed notions of conversation clash: that whereby the king understands himself as himself, and that whereby the common man takes stock of his situation. As king in *Henry V*, Hal commands an exemplary conversation with himself as with his subjects. On the night before Agincourt he tests the limits of this conversation – the degree to which it is participated by the common soldier – by going undercover among his troops. To his displeasure Hal does not see "himself" in the mirror of his soldiers' discourse, but instead a cynical face that he refuses to recognize. When (as "Harry le Roi") Hal hints that Sir Thomas Erpingham is pessimistic about the English prospects, Bates asks whether Sir Thomas has communicated this to the king. Hal replies that "it is not meet he should" (4.1.100) and follows up with the commonplace that, his royalty laid aside, the king is but a man and must feel this danger as any man would. When Bates takes this to mean that the king would rather be up to his neck in the Thames, Hal indignantly objects. The king would rather be exactly where he is. Fine, replies Bates, just so long as the king were here alone. That way, the king would be ransomed, and "many poor mens' lives [would be] saved" (4.1.121). Hal takes this personally: "I dare say you love him not so ill to wish / him here alone, howsoever you speak this to feel other / men's minds" (4.1.122-24). But "feeling" other men's minds is exactly the problem with this conversation. The king might be a man naturally but he is not socially or politically. He is literally beyond conversation with other men because he is the antithesis of *sensus communis* and incapable of its truth. Williams and Bates are unimpressed with Hal's claim that, "his cause [is] just and his quarrel honourable" (4.1.126-7) and hold him responsible for the carnage to come. Hal objects with a long passage of casuistry – reminiscent of the casuistry of the "salic law" passage of 1.1 – at the end of which he finds that his men distrust him as much as they did to start with:

> *King Harry* I myself heard the King say he would not be ransomed.
> *Williams* Ay, he said so, to make us fight cheerfully, but
> when our throats are cut he may be ransomed, and
> we ne'er the wiser. (4.1.195-8)

Hal wants to see the common sense argument of Williams and Bates as mere cynicism. But it is something more, an open-eyed critique of royal pretence. It is at least half way along the thought-path towards the proto-enlightened *sensus communis* that Montaigne borrowed from Juvenal.

51   Versions of Montaigne's notion of common sense are present in Shakespeare then, even though he is neither an enthusiast of ancient republicanism nor a progressive democrat. Much more eye-catching however is the lowest common denominator version of common sense, as in Iago, Edmund and other blunt speakers such as the Bastard Faulconbridge. Common sense in such figures is more often *sens commun*, a provocation to reaction rather than an invitation to thought. Consider Kent's abuse (in the voice of the blunt-speaking Caius) of Oswald as, "a one-trunk-inheriting-slave" (*The Tragedy of King Lear*, 2.2.27). This is the epitome of reactionary feudalism, the virtual opposite of Hamlet's class-warrior defence of "patient merit". Yet at its most viciously reactionary however (as in Iago) it seems to me that such common sense opens up *aporia* that are alive with progressive possibility.

52   Iago is a master of "common conversation" in the class-bound sense of being impolite or uncivil. Like Faulconbridge and Edmund, he is a bluntly spoken interlocutor between play and audience but in a far more richly evolved way; consistently seeking out common ground (*sensus communis*) with the audience of the most unprincipled and

degraded sort. Notwithstanding his "honesty", his watchword, "I am not what I am" (1.1.65), invokes the *Theatrum Mundi*. Yet Iago is plainly himself as interlocutor. This is what makes him so frightening. As himself – bearing the mark of Cain, as Guazzo might say – he seduces the audience no less than he seduces Othello. The audience becomes complicit with Iago just by listening to him, by finding him entertaining. The audience is sucked into his conversational world no less than Isabella is sucked into that of Vienna. Iago's conversation achieves its end simply by happening, by dominating, by not being stopped. If the audience is romanced into sympathizing with Othello against Brabantio, Iago's racist jokes remind them of their underlying *sens commun*. These jokes are funny because they are wickedly scapegoating, not in spite of it. Iago's humour works in the way that Thomas Hobbes explained laughter: as a mode of victimization ("laughter is a sudden glory").[55] Equally they work in the way that Eddie Waters – teacher of stand-up comedy in Trevor Griffith's 1975 play *Comedians* – explains the logic of racist and misogynist humour, as pandering to the audience's prejudices. The comedian invites the audience into the prejudice, and establishes it as their point of contact. There is, insists Waters, another kind of humour that does not victimize, that raises the audience's gaze rather than lowering it. But that requires talent, imagination and moral ambition.

53   One is tempted to think that while *sensus communis* can be elevated in the way that Juvenal and Montaigne thought, its first instinct is for the depraved solidarities of racism and sexism by which a given group effortlessly glorifies itself at the expense of scapegoats. As with Shylock Iago's interlocutor-function prefigures that of the *raisonneurs* of later seventeenth century comedy (Molière's in particular).[56] Not unike such figures (Cléante from *Tartuffe*, Philinte from *Le Misanthrope*) Iago occupies an intermediate position as interlocutor and actively promotes a "rational" perspective. The difference is that his *ratio* is consistently keyed to a *sensus communis* of prejudice and group malice. While Guazzo entertains the possibility of civil conversation being infiltrated by wickedness, he never quite entertains the possibility of its wholesale corruption by hate speech; partly because he views conversation in civil terms, or from the position of the decent citizen seriously exercised by the problem of safeguarding his decency.

54   This is precisely why Iago is so undermining. He commands the entire conversation of the play that is not Othello's. He is a far more theatrically potent figure than any of the *raisonneurs* of Molière, and arguably more so than Othello himself.[57] Iago's potency is an equal symbiosis of verbal brilliance with malice, allowing him to highjack conversation for "common" ends and worse. To the extent that *Othello* is a conversation with the audience or reader, they or we are in no position to condemn Othello for having been corrupted by Iago. It is they/we who are compromised and entertained in one. We may justify the attention we pay to this magnetic figure by condemning him as a villain. But as Montaigne has reminded us, we can be in two contradictory frames of mind at the same time ("whosoever studies himself really attentively finds in himself [...] this discord" [58]). We are not what we are. We abhor the vileness yet savour the deft alliteration of "coursers for cousins and jennets for germans" (1.1.116). But style and content are not so neatly disentangled, our covenants with Iago's language not so easily dissolved. Much of what Iago says is interlocutory, beyond the moral economy of the spectacle: "And what's he then that says I play the villain? / When this advice is free I give and honest, / Probal to thinking [...]?" (2.3.327-29). Iago's deeper evil is in thought, and thoughts as John Angell wrote, "are free from punishment by the Laws of men"; they "passe in the minde as currently as water in the livelyest fountain; it is not like a watch in thy pocket, which will not run without winding up".[59] The only check on the infiltrative quality of thought, in Angell's view is "the right ordering of conversation".[60]

But Iago's conversation with the audience is degrading. He seems to signal as much in his final challenge: "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know" (5.2.309).

55   Who is "you"? In the first instance it is Othello, but the word spills out to embrace everyone, fictional or real, who has seen what has happened and heard what has been said. Repetition of the second person pronoun means *you know who you are*. The audience, moreover, knows more than the characters know because it has been privy to Iago's thinking. Surely they / you / we, are all intended here. The words aimed at Othello call in question the demoralizing experience of which Othello's tragedy is a *mimesis*: it is the experience of our own conversation with Iago.

56   What is it that we "know"? Repetition of this biblically loaded verb invites over-determination, as in Eliot's question, "after such knowledge, what forgiveness?" Since F. R. Leavis, discussions of *Othello* have tended to turn on the question of the hero's culpability.[61] But this question is turned back upon "us", and the fragility of our own goodness.[62] What I think we "know" is something of the nastiness of the fun we have had in Iago's conversation and the fun of that nastiness; complicity in the victim-seeking jokes, the gulling of a race, the exhilaration of *charivari*.[63] If *sensus communis* is a shared experience, it can also be a tainting one. *Othello* understands itself as a play about race hatred in a way that *Merchant of Venice* does not. Hence, where the Jew-baiters of the *Merchant* represent the Venetian norm, race-hatred in *Othello* is concentrated in an overtly evil figure who then disseminates it to the audience in the guise of their own "common sense". The difference between the two plays is that in *Othello* we are that much further along Jameson's aporetic "thinking of the path". Iago then embodies a degraded *sensus communis* rather than the proleptically enlightened kind proposed by Montaigne. If we are infected however, we are intensely unsettled, morally shamed, and this is perhaps a step on the road to a better solidarity.

Conclusion

57   I have tried to show that all four competing models of conversation in English and European early modernity are entertained by Shakespeare, and that their competition plays itself out in his drama just as it does in the culture of the period. Even the barely emergent sense of conversation as dialectic (clearly visible only in Montaigne) is recognizably there. I have also tried to suggest that the competition between opposing notions of conversation gives rise to some of the most haunting and unsettling moments in Shakespeare.

58   But I want to suggest something more too. This is that while the historical competition has up until very recently been seen as having had "winners" – "civil conversation" prevailing over "holy conversation"; conversation in the sense of "interchange of words and thoughts" prevailing over conversation as an existential milieu; conversation in the sense of dialectic prevailing over conversation as ornament (Milton's "nice and subtle happiness") – the wins have been less conclusive than we might have imagined. In the last few years, on both sides of the Anglophone Atlantic, progressive politics has proved surprisingly vulnerable to a seemingly new but in fact very old kind of conversation. Reason has become the slave of identity politics. The *sensus communis* has been penetrated by extreme forms of racism and xenophobia. The verbal and rational content of these conversations is of far less moment than their powers of auto-confirmation. Political conversations have tended to close in upon themselves in an unholy parody of St. Paul. Evidence is ceasing to matter, alternative facts can always be found. Aversation on the one hand and preaching to the converted on the other are back. While we cannot continue this discussion in a paper of this scope,

there is perhaps enough to suggest that the conversational turn is not entirely of the past nor Shakespeare's engagement with it of purely archaeological interest.

Notes

1 I owe various debts of gratitude: to the early modern seminar of the *Institute for Historical Research*, Senate House London (for the puritan surveys of the ministry), to James Siemon (for Falstaff on conversation), to Richard Wilson (for Gadamer on conversation), to Anne-Marie Miller-Blaise (for Herbert on conversation), to Ewan Fernie (for the important discussion in *Two Noble Kinsmen*), to Denis Lagae-Devoldère (for co-hosting a WSC seminar on this topic, and suggestions on Montaigne), to Peter Behrman de Sinety for suggesting Geoffrey Hill's *Scenes from Comus.*

2 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, tr. Richard Nice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p.82.

3 *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998. Subsequent citations are from this edition. Act, scene and line references appear in the text.

4 Another reflection on the immersiveness of conversation occurs in *2 Henry IV*. Falstaff notices how Shallow and his servants have blended into each-other through habitual converse: "It is wonderful thing to see the semblable coherence of his men's spirits and his. They by observing him, do bear themselves like foolish justices; he, by conversing with them, is turned into a justice-like servingman. Their spirits are so married in conjunction, with the participation of society, that they flock together like so many wild geese [...]. Wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught as men take diseases, of one another, therefore let men take heed of their company" (5.1.57-70).

5 See Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1962. See especially, Chapter 2: "Historical Novel and Historical Drama", p. 101-201. Lukács sees early modern English drama generally as shaped by the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

6 *The Civile Conversation of M. Steeven Guazzo. The first 3 books translated by George Pettie, Anno 1581, and the fourth by Barth. Young, Anno 1586*, Sir Edward Sullivan, Bart., London and New York, Constable and Co., 1925. Further page references in the text.

7 Sir Edward Sullivan informs us that Guazzo and his younger brother Guglielmo, upon whom "Young Guazzo" is modeled, alike suffered from melancholy (*Civile Conversation*, p. ix-x).

8 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, London and New York, Longman, 1971, 9: 908-14.

9 Augustine, *City of God*, ed. David Knowles, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, p. xiv, p. 570; C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1942, p. 67.

10 According to Sullivan, Guazzo who had been active as a courtier, was "painfully cognizant of the slavery of his official position" (*Civile Conversation, op. cit.,* p. xi).

11 Andrew James Hartley ("'The color of honesty': Ethics and Courtly Pragmatism in *Damon and Pithias*", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 11, 1999, p. 88-113), reads this passage in terms of manners more so than morals: "the honesty alluded to here suggests a mannered etiquette expanded into an ethical system" (97).

12 A. J. Hartley, p. 89.

13 "Mary, hee that coveteth to reape commoditie of conversation, must seeke all that hee may to bee amongst those that either may bee made better by him, or else may make him better: but these of whom I speake have made a sacrifice of their soules unto the Divell, and have cast of all care of honour and of other mens opinions of them: and are so farre gone, that you wil rather become a convert then a converter" (S. Guazzo, p. 61).

14 The semantic evolution "hypocrisy" from medieval to early modern usage, and its association with puritans has been discussed by James Simpson, "Early Modern Hypocrisy and the Priesthood of All Believers". Paper read at the *History of Emotions* seminar, Queensland University, 26 June 2015. Simpson points out that "hypocrisy" comes to be the puritan attribute *par excellence.*

15 Collected in Albert Peel (ed.), *The Second Part of a Register*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1915, p. 98. This is a selection only from the Kerier survey. Various others follow, all detailing the "conversation" and/or "unfitness" of incumbent ministers.

16 John Carpenter, *The Plaine Mans Spirituall Plough*, London, 1607, speaks of "the generall voice of all malice […] profanity, impiety, naughtinesse and vice" (24).

17 George Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple. Or. The Countrey Parson. His Character and Rule of Holy Life*, London, 1652, Chapter 2. See also, Chapters 14, 16 and 23.

18 John Angell, "The Right Ordering of Conversation", in *Four Sermons*, London, 1659, p. 159.

19 See Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal, 1519-1583: The Struggle for a Reformed Church*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979. Collinson's thesis is that puritan sectarianism is a direct consequence of the frustration of Grindal's struggle for a Reformed Church by the Queen and conservative Anglicans.

20 Rona Goffen, "*Nostra Conversatio in Coelis Est*: Observations on the *Sacra Conversazione* in the Thirteenth Century", *Art Bulletin* LXI:2, 1979, p. 198-222. The tendency of these paintings is to progress from "conversation" in an ancient sense of "holy community" (*ibid.,* p. 199-201), to "conversation" in the sense of discussion.

21 For these usages see J. Angell, *op. cit.,* p. 155, 167, 171, 172. Among biblical *loci* noted by Goffen are *1 Peter 1:15* ("But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation") and *James 3:13* ("Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom") (R. Goffen, p. 199). The latter text is also cited by J. Angell, p. 172.

22 *The Geneva Bible: the Annotated New Testament, 1602 Edition*, ed. Gerald T. Sheppard, New York, Pilgrim Press, 1989, p. 98.

23 See J. Angell: "a man must first be a true Convert himself, before it be possible for him to order his conversation aright" (*op. cit,* p. 176). For an extended meditation on the linkage of "conversation" with "conversion", see Thomas Adams, *Heaven and Earth Reconcild*, London, 1613. Adams sees the minister as a coupler of men with righteousness: "Ministers are the copulatives that unite these convertentes, that make men and righteousnesse friends; which never naturally and heartily loved one another since that apple set our first parents' teeth on edge" (*ibid.*, p. 4). The "convertent" is imagined along the lines of the *conversos* of Spain, converting pagans, Jews or peasants voluntarily working the fields of monasteries and thus enjoying a semi-ordained status.

24 John Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, in *The Prose of John Milton*, ed. J. Max Patrick, New York, Doubleday, 1967, p. 156. Milton here adapts sectarian aversion to his own polemical purposes.

25 "I give my soul now one face, now another, according to which direction I turn it. If I speak of myself in different ways, that is because I look at myself in different ways. All contradictions may be found in me by some twist and in some fashion. Bashful, insolvent; chaste, lascivious; talkative, taciturn; tough, delicate; clever, stupid; surly, affable; lying, truthful; learned, ignorant; liberal, miserly; and prodigal: all this I see in myself to some extent according to how I turn; and whosoever studies himself really attentively finds in himself, yes, even in his judgement, this gyration and discord. I have nothing to say about myself absolutely, simply, and solidly, without confusion and without mixture, or in one word." ("Of the inconsistency of our actions", in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald Frame, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1965, Book 2: 1, p. 239-244, p. 242).

26 Its further history is complex and beyond present purposes. At his ejection from the ministry, Richard Baxter in *The Christian's Converse with God: Or, The Insufficiency or Uncertainty of Humane Friendship*, 1664, complains bitterly of the vulnerability of Christian conversational solidarity to the "self-interest" (303) and "self-love" (306) of trimmers within his own former congregation. At roughly this time however John Bunyan recounts his conversion at overhearing the conversation of humble women in Bedford: "they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world, as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their Neighbours, Num. 23.9 (John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, London, 1666, p. 14-15). While Baxter's plight signals the retreat of holy conversation under the former Commonwealth, Bunyan testifies to its enduring power within an embattled non-conformism. In 1694, *A Practical Discourse concerning Christian Conversation* by "Philopatris" and "Philodelphus", seeks to recover the conversation of "religious societies" (formerly sects) from their "Dogmaticall Curiosity" (*To the Reader*). Holy conversation is now less exclusive and denotes, "all converse which Christians have with one another on the Lord's day […] yet, by it we mean only a set and private assembly of sincere Christians, distinct from public congregations, which meet […] to edify one another in the Christian faith and practice" (*ibid.,* p. 124).

27 Pierre Nicole, "A Discourse Wherein is Shewn how Dangerous Conversation is", in *Moral Essays*, trans. anon, 2 volumes, London, 1696, vol. 2, p. 150-163.

28 For Montaigne's broad understanding of conversation and his debt to Guazzo, see the entry under "conversation" in Michel de Montaigne, *Dictionnaire*, ed. Philip Desan, Paris, Garnier, 2016. See especially titles translated by Donald Frame in the *Complete Essays,* as, "Of the education of children", "Of prompt or slow speech", "Three kinds of association", "Of friendship", "Of the affection of fathers for their children", "Of the art of discussion".

29 "Of the education of children", M. de Montaigne, *Complete Essays*, *op. cit.*, p. 106-31, p. 127.

30 For Montaigne's and La Boétie's use of latin, see Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1985, p. 55.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

32 In the context of friendship the word "*essai*" signifies virtue, "the sacrament of the friendly communion" (*ibid.*, p. 57). Though this is no longer the primary meaning of the title *"Essais"*, it leaves a coloration.

33 *Essayes Written in French By Michael Lord of Montaigne, Done into English by John Florio*, London, 1613. Hereafter "Florio".

34 See J. Starobinski, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

35 "Let those who in these latter dayes have so earnestly laboured to frame and establish unto us an exercise of Religion and a Service of God, so contemplative and immateriall, ponder…if some be found who thinke it would have escaped and moultred away between their fingers, if it had not been held […] as a marke […] of division and faction, more then by it selfe." (Florio, p. 519). Montaigne's scholarly French editor, Maurice Rat reads him as referring here to "les chefs Huguenots" (M. de Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. Maurice Rat, Paris, Garnier, 1962, Tome II, p. 366, n.768).

36 The word equivalent to Florio's "reforme" in Montaigne is "*amender*", which – like the Early Modern English "amend" carries a specifically protestant suggestion. The *OED* gives its primary and now obsolete sense as "to free (a person) from faults, correct, reform, turn from wrong".

37 M. de Montaigne, *Essais*, Tome II, p. 239.

38 "Sens commun", in *Dictionnaire philosophique* 1764 (Paris, Garnier, 1878, Wikisource, p. 417-19). My translation. Voltaire distinguishes his definition from Roman *sensus communis*, which he takes in Montaigne's sense of "humanité, sensibilité".

39 Juvenal, 8th Satire. The English translation of Montaigne's French translation of Juvenal is Florio's, Florio, *op. cit.*, p. 524.

40 The usage is relatively modern. See Giuseppe Badini, "Sin in the Theology of St.Paul", in *Sin, Its Reality and Nature: A Historical Survey*, ed. Pietro Palazzini, Dublin, Scepter, 1964, p. 79-100, here p. 83

41 Ann Hartle, "Sociable Wisdom": Montaigne's Transformation of Philosophy", *Philosophy and Literature*, 39, 2015, p. 285-304.

42 "Apology for Raymond Sebond", in *Complete Essays, op. cit.*, p. 409. See also Ann Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

43 A. Hartle, *op. cit.,* p. 302, citing from, "Of the Disadvantage of Greatness", in *Complete Essays*, *op. cit.*, p. 701.

44 Frederic Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism*, London, Verso, 2015: "Yet, as Derrida observed, the aporia is not so much 'an absence of path, a paralysis before road-blocks' so much as the promise of 'the thinking of the path'. For me however, aporetic thinking is precisely the dialectic itself" (6).

45 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1975, p. 330-31.

46 According to Sir Edward Sullivan, Shakespeare abounds in echoes of Pettie's translation of Guazzo (S. Guazzo, *Civile Conversation*, p. xxvi, p. xxxviii-xcii).

47 Just this point is made by panel 29 of "the Hawstead Panels", an emblem-lined room designed for and probably by Donne's patron, Lady Anne Bacon-Drury (the panels are currently held by Ipswich Museum). A near naked blackamoor points to a white swan with one hand, and to his white teeth with the other. The motto is "*Iam sumus ergo pares*", or, "Now therefore we are equal". In this case, the "touch of nature" (his white teeth) makes the blackamoor an identical twin to the white swan. For a discussion of this panel, see H. L. Meakin, *The Painted Closet of Lady Anne Bacon Drury*, Farnham and Burlington, Ashgate, 2013, p. 203-06.

48 See the discussion above and note 23.

49 *Geneva Bible* (1602), p. 98.

50 Matthew Sutcliffe, *An Answere to a Certaine Libel Supplicatorie*, London, 1592, p. 130 (incorrectly printed as p. 108).

51 *The Puritan Widow*, in Thomas Middleton, *The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2007, p. 509-42.

52 *The Geneva Bible* (1602), p. 83. Portia's meaning is very particular. As man is bought by Christ's sacrifice, "ye are not your owne" (1 *Corinthians*, 6:19), which is to say Bassanio is not to be parted with to another.

53 For arguments in favour of a Republican Shakespeare, see Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005. For Shakespeare's skeptical response to Livy's republicanism, see my "'Like Steel of Too Hard a Temper': Shakespeare, Plutarch, and the Idea of Pristine Virtue in Livy", in *Rome in Shakespeare's World*, ed. Maria del Sapio Garbero, Roma, Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 2018, p. 19-46.

54 For *locus* and *platea*, see Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.180-208.

55 For an analysis of Hobbes's theory of laughter in the context of two rival philosophies, see Simon Critchley, *On Humour*, London, Routledge, 2002.

56 Patrice Pavis begins his description of the *raisonneur* as follows: "Personage représentant la morale ou le raisonnement juste, chargé de faire connaître par son commentaire une vue 'objective' ou 'auctoriale' de la situation." (*Dictionnaire du théâtre*, Paris, Dunod, 1996, p. 284).

57 Of the stage Iago, Marvin Rosenberg observes: "He comes to us usually in the shape of a 'gay' scoundrel, raising more laughter than fear [...] Occasionally he appears hard and ruthless. In either form, he has tended to dominate Othello" (*The Masks of Othello*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971, p. 155). Rosenberg also tells: "a fine story about a prominent British Othello of this [ie. last] century who took an acting company into the provinces – a good company, with a particularly talented Iago to give the show balance. At the first stop, Iago drew all the rave reviews. The Moor promptly disengaged himself of this evil man, and for his next booking took a rather less competent Iago. This substitute also proved a villain and drew the best notices, and again the injured Moor rid himself of his crafty Ancient. For the next stop, he protected himself by giving the Iago role to an untried stage hand. This time, when the reviews came out, all the critics' good words were still for the villain. The distinguished actor capitulated. He engaged the best Othello he could find, took the part of Iago for himself, and basked in glowing notices for the rest of the tour. " (*ibid.*, p. 141)

58 M. de Montaigne, *Complete Essays, op. cit.*, p. 242.

59 J. Angell, *The Right Government of Thoughts*, in *Four Sermons*, London, 1659, p. 51, p. 13-14.

60 *Ibid.*

61 F. R. Leavis, "Diabolic Intellect and the Noble Hero: Or the Sentimentalist's Othello", in *The Common Pursuit*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1962, p. 136-59.

62 See for instance Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001.

63 One can of course play Iago simply for malice. (Frank Findlay is an unfunny Iago in Olivier's production). But this is to ignore (and largely cut) the spice of the role. Ian McKellen achieves a nice balance in Trevor Nunn's production.

References

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