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‘Pretie conveyance’: *Jack Juggler* and the Idea of Play

This essay addresses the controversy around the antitheatrical epilogue to the anonymous Tudor play Jack Juggler. Based on a close reading of heterogeneous voices in the prologue combined with analysis of diverse traditions of playing invoked by the drama, it argues that the audience’s communal authority, centred in a shared experience of watching this comedy, threatens the epilogue’s pedantic, single-voice authority.

Scholars who have written about *Jack Juggler*, a Tudor adaptation of Plautus’s *Amphitruo*, disagree about the play’s stakes. Most notably, they question the apparent contradiction between the play (and/or the prologue) and its epilogue. The epilogue suggests the play holds a meaning that goes beyond its comic revelry by referring to the exchange of identities that makes up the main action as a lie.¹ Taking this epilogue seriously means understanding the play not as a comedy an audience should appreciate for its deployment of the dramatic convention of playful impersonation, but rather as a lie that innocent playgoers have been forced to acknowledge as true. The epilogue’s summary may also be seen as explicating the play’s topical meaning, an element the prologue vehemently denies is present. To take the epilogue seriously, however, goes against the fact that the main text of the play is aware of the joyous experience of an audience witnessing a performance of comic make-believe.

Some, starting with David Bevington, have dismissed the epilogue as a later addition.² Bevington’s interpretation solves Whiting’s puzzlement that this ‘amusing little play’ takes an unexpected final turn that causes ‘the reader of this thoroughly derivative farce ... gradually to realize that he is engaged with a clever, though not very subtle, attack on transubstantiation’.³ While the epilogue may seem to repudiate the play’s commitment to joyous entertainment, some read it as a culmination of the drama’s message; Beatrice Groves, for instance, argues that the entire text satirizes the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, reacting to and

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criticizing Marian anti-Reformation backlash.⁴ This reading revives F.S. Boas's opinion that the play's 'apparently jocular exterior' veils 'an extraordinarily dextrous attack upon the doctrine of transubstantiation and the persecution by which it was enforced'.⁵ The question remains whether the play's comic revelry is merely a veneer, hiding deeper significance, or the text's most crucial element.

The text's history does not clarify matters. The author is unknown, although Nicholas Udall is a potential candidate. William Copland printed the earliest surviving playbook in 1562, but most agree that the play was written earlier. This gap between composition and printed text leaves room for speculation about differences between possible earlier and later versions. Peter Happé acknowledges that 'the Prologue and the Epilogue seem to point in rather different directions'.⁶ Still, in line with the Boas–Groves interpretation, he proposes that there may be a coherent strategy between epilogue and play-text and proposes a single author for both, partly because of what he calls the prologue's 'over emphasis of trivial myrth',⁷ and partly because the epilogue's complaint against tyranny seems less likely to be an Elizabethan addition than a contemporary comment on 'what went on under Edward or Mary'.⁸

Together with Bevington, I assume there must have been some English version without the epilogue (perhaps also some parts of the prologue), but I think even without the epilogue light comedy is not all there is to *Jack Juggler*. The dangerous ambiguities regarding similarities between theatrical and potentially deceitful social acting are significant, giving ground for the epilogue to capitalize upon. Rather than taking sides in this debate, I consider the extant text without trying to streamline its meaning either by dismissing the epilogue or integrating the play's heterogeneous voices into a unified whole. Instead, I discuss the play as a comedy that relies on both ritualistic and mimetic traditions of acting and shows awareness of the need for its audience to willingly engage with the play's new convention. Given the twists and turns in the reception history of texts that adapt the *Amphitruo* myth, we miss a crucial point if we insist that *Jack Juggler* is simply a Protestant attack on plays as lies — or support the apparently opposite idea that the play's anti-theatrical epilogue is only a later addition we can ignore. These two options do not in fact exclude each other unless we expect the printed version of the play to display a conceptual unity which — as the play itself testifies — is missing from its context of diverse conventions of acting and understandings of the functions of playing. The puzzle of the epilogue proves less important if we expand our discussion, first, to examine the text's relationship to its Plautine source, and then look at the prologue together with other voices in the text that explain what the drama does.

Plautus's *Amphitruo* offers important clues about the complexities of *Jack Juggler*. Both plays emphasize the ultimate ambiguity of playing, exploiting the fact that impersonation inevitably destabilizes authentic identity, regardless of whether it happens in a theatre or not. Any adaptation of either the original *Amphitruo* myth or its Plautine version raises questions about the authenticity of social role-play. These themes would resonate in social contexts with accelerated social mobility and abrupt shifts in religious background. Sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander deals with social performances in similar contexts, moments when ritual changes into mimetic performance, simultaneously with the emergence of the public sphere as a compelling social stage.⁹ Following Alexander's logic we may understand the epilogue using a theatrical play on deception as a performative act as a means of undermining the authenticity of the Catholic performance of transubstantiation. Paradoxically, the epilogue has to rely on the illusion of mimesis for a real effect on the social stage: the performative, transformative, and socially very *real* working and appeal of what looks like mere make-believe play.

In order to understand the stakes of *Jack Juggler* and to see what it specifically does, we need to look at the play-text's flexible relationship with its source, *Amphitruo*, and examine its shifting explanations for the purpose of playing — in line with shifts on the social stage. Rather than trying to resolve the heterogeneous, occasionally paradoxical voices of *Jack Juggler* into one coherent reading, I see them as reflecting diverse, sometimes contradictory aspects of the contemporary Tudor discourse on playing. We lose crucial aspects of *Jack Juggler* if we ridicule or downplay what it suggests are the joys (and dangers) of communal play.

An intriguing aspect of *Jack Juggler* is also part of the Plautus play. The prologue of *Amphitruo* describes the play as a tragicomedy, arguably the first ever.¹⁰ That is, Plautus's prologue introduces the new genre (tragicomedy) by adding a plot to the original myth, involving servants as a comic equivalent of the 'high', tragic main plot involving Jupiter and *Amphitruo*. The play features both comically and tragically deceptive playing, entails ambiguities surrounding theatrical acting, and allows for anti-theatrical readings of the dishonesty inherent in impersonation. In Plautus's *Amphitruo* the chief deceiver is Jupiter, who impersonates Alcmena's husband, the eponymous hero, in order to enjoy her company. In this setup the actor impersonating another character at the heart of the plot is divine, making it problematic to question his authenticity or morality. As a result of Jupiter's act, the deceived Alcmena commits adultery without having made an immoral choice, and without intentionally surrendering her chastity. The play's comic plot mirrors the more serious one in the same way as the divine characters mirror the mortals whom they impersonate.

Imitating this source, *Jack Juggler's* plot centres on an element of the comic plot, the part in which Mercury, Jupiter's servant, dresses as Sosia, Amphitruo's servant, and prevents him from entering the door of his master, thus completely shaking Sosia's sense of identity.¹¹ The English version may have omitted the serious Jupiter plot because of its focus on adultery, considering such subject matter improper for the boy actors performing the play. The adaptation, however, incorporates some elements of the tragic Amphitruo-plot beyond the characters of Master Buongrace and Dame Coy, who are not affected by a doubling of the master, unlike in the source. At the end of act two, Amphitruo reflects on his fear of not knowing who he really is. Sosia advises him about making sure not to lose himself, quite similarly to the duped servant in *Jack Juggler*, whose farewell speech warns the audience about the danger of losing their identities.¹² The playwright might have wisely decided at a time of political turmoil to leave out the chief god whose love interest propels the plot to avoid risky allusions within the contemporary English context.¹³

In *Jack Juggler*, Jack as well as Jenkin Caraway foreground the alarming possibility of losing one's identity before the epilogue singles out the tragically immoral prospects of this dynamic. This use of the servant character is curious. Had the play faithfully adapted the playful and comic servant plot of *Amphitruo*, then *Jack Juggler* would have supported some of the epilogue's conclusions about poor, deceived innocents, because in Plautus's play the deceived servant, Sosia, is blameless. The trick of impersonation against the servant, as I will argue, is more justified in *Jack Juggler*, undermining the epilogue's tragic conclusion.

Comparing the Plautine double plot to *Jack Juggler* offers important clues, but Plautus's adaptation of the Amphitruo myth is similarly suggestive. Plautus innovates by transforming the Amphitruo myth from a tragedy into tragicomedy. He adds a layer involving the two servants that comically mirrors the serious story of the two identical-looking fathers (Amphitruo and Zeus). The ultimate point of the comic servant plot in *Amphitruo* is not the cruelty of fate or divine injustice, but the audience's amusement over the loss of a character's self. Plautus changes two important things: he makes the myth a play, and he mirrors the serious myth (already about mirroring identities) within a comic plot. In relation to the serious bit, the servant plot (which becomes the main plot of *Jack Juggler*) not only provides comic perspective on the mythic plot events in Plautus's play, but also introduces a pointedly theatrical, metadramatic quality that invites the audience to celebrate mimetic acting. Here, acting doesn't just involve performing a communal myth to reinforce a community's values; rather, acting is held up as impersonation, assuming a character not identical with the self, including in

this case the assumption of an already disguised character. Plautus adds a comic part featuring another divine-human pair as if it derives from the source myth. Relying on the assumed authenticity of the added, comic part — passing it off as an element of the myth — Plautus thus validates mimetic acting and comedy. Plautus shows his awareness of the fictitious, potentially questionable status of mimetic acting, a new type of performance, and of the need for audience approval of this type of stage representation. *Jack Juggler* suggests its own sensitivity to this same need.

Jack Juggler starts with the prologue's very specific rationale for presenting a play. The prologue's first lines are Latin quotes from Cicero's moral maxims 'Englyshed' and interpreted for the audience: 'Emongs thy careful business use sume time mirth and joye / That no bodilye worke thy wytt breke or noye' (13–14). Decades before the peak of the English anti-theatrical debate, the author seems aware of the moral ambiguity inherent in the pleasure provided by playing and offers a lengthy rationalization of the undertaking. He makes sure to rule out criticism against the play by qualifying the mirth it offers as 'quiet' (16) and 'honest' (20, 26), a 'convenient' pastime (38, 47). The prologue presents pastime as a necessary break from everyday labour: it refreshes the audience and gives them strength to continue with their work. The play thus opens by drawing parallels between the necessity of eating, drinking, and sleeping — all of which promote bodily health — and the occasion of the performance, since both keep the mind 'pregnant, freshe, industruis, quike and lustie' (25). The prologue approves of playing for reasons of 'pastaunce, mirthe, and pleasurs' (38) provided that they 'keape within due mesars' (39).

While seven out of twelve stanzas in the prologue elaborate on the necessity to suspend work, in a slight shift stanza eight emphasizes the necessity of alternating between labour and its suspension. As the prologue suggests that the ritualistically regulated time for mirth is inevitable, it does not allow the audience a choice about whether to take part in the community's customary rhythm of alternating between work and holiday; the suspension of labour is inseparable from recreation and mirth. But at this point the prologue offers a new vindication for the performance:

The hearing of [the old commedie] may doo the mynd cumfort,
 For they be replenished with precepts of philosophie
 They containe mutch wisdom and teache prudent pollecie,
 And though thei be al written of mattiers of *non importaunce*
 Yet they shew great wite and *mutch pretie conveiaunce*. (51–5; emphasis mine)

The required pleasure specified here is ‘an old commedie’ (50): not a folk play associated with communal ritual but rather one that comes from the ancients. The implicit tension here is between the type of play following the ancients, newly introduced for the English audience, and the ritualistic type of play that they are used to. The former has to be defended for dealing with matters of ‘non importance’, while the latter is authenticated as a compulsory suspension of labour. Still, even ritual may be suspicious due to its playful, ludic aspects, elements which also make it enjoyable. As Mervyn James explains, a tension ‘had always existed within the cycles between their quality as “ritual”, arising from their nature as a “work” done for “the honour of God and the city”; and their quality as *ludus*, that is a kind of “play” in the literal sense: a game’.¹⁴ The qualification of mirth as honest reveals the prologue’s awareness of this tension.

Just as the prologue rationalizes the need for ‘myrth’, it explains to the audience *how* they should take the new type of entertainment, mimetic comedy. The prologue justifies such playing as comforting the mind not because it ritualistically suspends labour and everyday seriousness, but because it includes philosophy and teaches wisdom. Most significantly, although this new type of comedy seems to be trivial (focusing on fictitious ‘matters of no importance’), audiences should appreciate it for its ‘pretie conveiaunce’, namely its aesthetic qualities. The word ‘conveiance’ here is also metaphorical, suggesting carrying and translating: stanza eight pushes the fast forward button, turning ritualistic into mimetic playing.¹⁵ The prologue thus includes an interpretation of *Jack Juggler* that Douglas Peterson expands into a reading of the play as framing an older, ludic type of fiction within a new, mimetic one. In order to teach the new code to an audience unfamiliar with the classical, mimetic conventions of acting, the prologue makes the following specification and distinction: all playing is a source of mirth by definition, as long as it involves the ritualistic suspension of everyday of work, while non-ritualistic play has its own, specific beauties of aesthetic, artistic design. Should the Tudor audience accept the mimetic convention (new compared to ritualistic play), they will be equipped to appreciate it, in addition to what has been familiar to them.¹⁶ According to the prologue, the play it introduces offers both types of play and joy. The choice of *Amphitruo* for teaching the new convention, however, is in some ways paradoxical, since in Plautus the mimetic code of ‘acting as pretending to be another person’ gets introduced through its extremes: Jupiter, relying on his divine powers, simply transforms himself to look like Amphitruo in a perfect but deceptive embodiment.

What comes after stanza eight are passages that introduce yet another element, what to several critics looks like a suspiciously exaggerated description of the play

as meaningless. The next several stanzas arguably invite the audience to look for deeper meaning precisely because it is denied.¹⁷ Plautus's name guarantees 'honest myrth' and aesthetic pleasure, but the prologue presents the play and its performance as 'not worthe an oyster shel, / Except percace it shall fortune too make you laugh well' (61–2), 'nothing but trifles' (68), 'nothing at all' (71), and 'a thing that only shal make you merie and glad' (69), before insisting 'That no man looke to heare of mattiers substancyall / Nor mattiers of any gravitee either great or small' (73). This is a lot of protest, indeed. The prologue hints that the times are such that seriousness is not welcome; therefore, 'this maker' presents the comic part of the Plautus source play only: 'for higher things endite / in no wise he wold, for yet the tyme is so quese / That he that speakith best is lest thanke worthie' (65–7).

In its last stanza the prologue asks the audience to accept the 'fantasticall conceite' rather than bending our brows at it 'sowerlie' (77–8). Only if the audience is willing to accept the new convention and appreciate a new type of comedy based on a Roman play — what Douglas Peterson would call a mimetic comedy instead of a ludic one — will the actors be called in to provide the promised pleasures. In summary, the prologue makes quite a heterogeneous argument, defending the play because playing is part of the necessary, ritualistic, and festive suspension of labour (stanzas 1–7) and because even if it seems to have no practical relevance, it has aesthetic qualities (stanza 8 and 12). In a very different vein, it denies topical meaning (stanzas 9–11), raising suspicions the epilogue makes explicitly.

But if the epilogue may be a later addition, could some parts of the prologue be too, perhaps stanzas 9 through 11? Interestingly, the same dynamics appear in what we would recognize as the main text of the play. Functioning almost as a second prologue, Jack Juggler, the vice, enters. Like the contradictory comic and tragic aspects of impersonation presented by Plautus and stressed by the prologue and the epilogue, the title character embodies opposing attitudes towards playing, in line with the ambiguities of the vice figure. In keeping with the prologue's point of view, Jack Juggler embodies the benign spirit of playing, similar to Heywood's early vices in *Weather* and *Love*, while from the epilogue's point of view Jack Juggler is a corrupt and immoral schemer, like the vice of later plays.¹⁸ Upon entering, he addresses members of the audience directly, and — echoing the prologue's ideas about the necessity of rest after a tiring day of labour — explains that the time has come to be 'merie' (94–5). But he soon shifts from providing a shorter version of the prologue's explanation about the necessity of mirthful play-making, to introduce himself as a character. Jack Juggler assumes his mimetic role here and thus conjures the mimetic world of the play. He combines the mimetic

locus and the festive *platea*¹⁹ in his speech by suggesting that the source of his and the audience's merriment will coincide in the 'mad pastime' (103) played by the boys' company. Such pastime is doubly presented as well deserved after a day of labour by the prologue and by Jack. The pastime is doubly presented as deserved by Jack and the audience. In other words, Jack introduces the idea that entertainers are both inside and outside the play within two lines: the boy players are presented as providers of the mad pastime ('played of a boye', 105), with Jack as the responsible playmaker within the mimetic world of the play (106–7).

The practical joke played on the servant Jenkin by Jack blurs Jack's fun within the mimetic world with the communal fun of attending and putting on a performance. Playmaking that is to come gets associated with the ambiguous, potentially sinful act of conjuring the devil before God ('I will conger the moull, and God before'²⁰), while the victim of the trick is depicted as an 'ungracious', 'foolishe a knave' upon whom Jack wishes to take revenge. Jenkin's actions (narrated by Jack to the audience and confirmed later by Jenkin during the plot) show that he is an untrustworthy servant who passes time immorally disregarding his duties rather than following his master's orders. Interestingly, all of Jenkin's activities relate to some sort of play or performance: fencing with shields (145), stealing apples by juggling them into his sleeve at the market (156), gambling (159), and cursing and swearing (164, 168).

Jenkin rehearses the lies that he is to tell his mistress in a scene involving impersonation (252–305) to clear himself from the charge of not carrying out his duties: 'Therefore I woll here with my selfe devise / What I may best say and in what wise / I may excuse this my long taryeng / That she of my negligence may suspect nothing' (243–6). Jenkin's schemes are immoral primarily from the point of view of his master and mistress,²¹ but the way he spends his secret leisure time is problematic: while avoiding his duties he indulges in dubious games. At the moment Jack reveals the histrionic way he plans to revenge himself against Jenkin and provide himself with the mad pastime he had wanted ('To make Jenkine bylive if I can / That he is not him selfe, but an other man' (178–9), the play presents Jenkin's punishment as just and as well-deserved as the audience's 'mirth and joy' from watching the punishment. At the same time, the joy of the audience as participants at a festive performance may become tinged with the shadow of Jenkin's deceitful playing, even while the ambiguity surrounding impersonation itself offers humour or merriment. Once Jack confuses Jenkin in the main scene of the play, he teases the victim: 'Thinkest thou I have sayd all thys in game?' (88). Part of the fun is that the audience knows: Jack's game is part of the dramatic convention, but also a game since he is fooling Jenkin as part of the plot. One

'game' is 'honest', if the mimetic convention is accepted, while the other remains a plain deception, although offered for the sake of the audience's fun.

Noticing deviations from the Plautus plot makes clear the stakes *Jack Juggler* connects to merriment for the audience and potentially unjust punishment for Jenkin. Unlike Jenkin Caraway, Sosia is not guilty but rather attempts to follow his master's orders faithfully. The only thing that prevents Sosia from serving well is the riotous Mercury having assumed his identity.²² The numerous additions in *Jack Juggler* that depict Jenkin Caraway as potentially immoral, which appear both in Jack's accusations and in Jenkin's own words (900–3), are parts that 'English' the Latin play.

The additions that justify Jenkin's punishment make the crux posed by the epilogue even more puzzling.²³ If the epilogue is going to depict Jenkin as a deceived innocent, why include all these additions depicting him as guilty? Furthermore, the epilogue ignores the genuinely joyful aspects of both the ludic ritual and comedy of histrionic playing which make up most of the play, even in the gravest moments of Jenkin's supposed humiliation. The prologue's celebration of the suspension of labour and of necessary play is convincing, and Jack's acts as chief playmaker to provide a festive occasion full of role-play and 'mad pastime' are in line with what the prologue promises. The ludic moments of performance require that the allegedly poor and innocent victim, at a *platea* level at least, will also express the happy exuberance of communal playmaking. Peter Thomson sees the battle between Jack and Jenkin as an acting contest, a combat between two skilful players. He reads the scene in which Jack beats up Jenkin as a moment when an older style of playmaking surfaces: 'Jack's beating into submission of Jenkin is a discordant climax to a practical joke that has, until then, relied on his gift of the gab ... In performance, it probably signalled a reversion to the slapstick combats of mummers' plays'.²⁴ Jack and Jenkin here perform a type of playing that foregrounds a ritualistic, communal function but sets aside as irrelevant the aesthetics of mimetic illusion. In line with the logic of Douglas Peterson's distinction between an older (ludic) and a newer (mimetic) dramatic convention within the play, Thomson talks about the actors in the drama displaying two traditions of performance style: the older convention of the performer and the newer one of the actor. He illustrates the older convention with the combat scene: 'When two clowns were at work together on the sixteenth-century stage, they did not pass the baton *to* each other; they seized it *from* each other. The first audiences of *Jack Juggler* ... were watching not only a play but also a contest'.²⁵ Thus, Jack is Jenkin's doppelgänger in more than one sense. Although Jack is assigned the vice's role on the title page, both Jack and Jenkin display vice characteristics:²⁶ Jack is

the master of ceremonies, whose trickery is an indispensable tool in creating and maintaining the festive occasion of playing, while Jenkin indulges in petty mischief, gaming, impersonation,²⁷ as well as stealing while juggling, and becomes the butt of corrective laughter after his schemes go wrong.²⁸ We may interpret his explanation of his name in his opening speech as his identification with the role of the entertainer (“My name is Careawaie — let all sorrow passe’ [196]),²⁹ while at the platea level he is clearly aware of the mirth he too creates, for example when he winks at the audience, almost making fun of the mimetic convention they all embrace to appreciate the comedy:

Who soo in England lokethe on him stedelye
Sall perceive plainely that he is I.
I have sene my selfe a thousand times in a glasse
But soo lyke myslefe as he is, never was. (570–3)

In the epilogue’s view, though, the playmaking demonstrated by the plot exemplifies something completely different: the delusion of simple innocents (1001, 1012) who are forced to testify to obvious lies, like the moon being made of green cheese (1005) or that crows are white (1019). The epilogue is immune to both the joy of ludic playing and the aesthetic qualities of mimetic playmaking; it ignores Jenkin’s participation in the communal fun of the platea, as well as his corrupt disobedience of his master’s orders and indulgence in immorally playful but potentially entertaining performance. The epilogue pushes the whole playmaking scheme, the festive occasion spent watching a mimetic performance, into the category of lies and deceit. In other words, from the two layers of the two vices’ role-playing, the epilogue approves of neither: it simply rejects the ludic, mirthful, and joyful aspect, while misinterpreting the mimetic one because mimetic convention is not acknowledged. The epilogue presumes the audience, unlike Jenkin Caraway at the *locus* level, did not have a choice about whether to enter the communal event of coded mimetic playing, but rather was forced to participate in a lie disguised as a festive play. Although the prologue promised mirth, joy, and necessary recreation, the epilogue insists what the audience has really seen is all ‘trouble, miserie, and wofull grevaunce’ (1059) instead.

The epilogue seems not to have noticed that the audience for both *Amphitruo* and *Jack Juggler* (most explicitly in stanza eight of the prologue) needs to be taught to accept the shift from myth and ritual to artistic fiction and mimesis.³⁰ The servant plot in *Amphitruo*, combined with the introduction of a new convention that requires the audience’s wilful participation, lures the audience into the new role of having to acknowledge the authenticity of the new form. The heart of the

trick — to use terms from economy and marketing — is tying and bundling. The value of the myth and its ritualistic performance in *Amphitruo's* serious plot can be taken for granted, while the comic plot, together with the new logic of performance, requires the audience's approval to authenticate that which could otherwise be an empty, deceitful trick.

I suggest that the comic plot in both *Amphitruo* and *Jack Juggler* provokes and maintains the seriousness of playing: it invites the audience to acknowledge a type of play that, as a newly introduced (albeit 'old') type of comedy, cannot be validated as ritual but instead relies on the audience's decision to participate in its joyful aspects. The epilogue of *Jack Juggler* openly dismisses the elements that call for such participation rather than validating them, but that does not nullify what the rest of the play asks the audience to do. *Jack Juggler* teaches the audience how and why they should validate the play: appreciating the mimetic layer through the ludic that is integrated into it will give the audience access to a valuable type of play. What seems central to me is that this integration in the end merges rather than clearly separates or chooses between diverse, ritualistic and mimetic levels of play; the audience is called upon to witness the play's events throughout all layers, the prologue and the epilogue, Jack as the second prologue, and also by Jenkin, even Dame Coy (739). While the prologue goes to great lengths to explain how to interpret dramatic fiction, the main plot offers ritualistic, ludic combat between the two characters as actors as well as the improvisational spirit of creative and witty repartee. The communal authority the audience has developed through the shared experience of watching (and wanting to participate in the communal event of watching) a comedy continues to threaten the pedantic, but single-voiced, authority of the epilogue. In other words, the epilogue attempts to discredit the shared experience of actors and audience, an experience that has been produced and maintained by the choice of this community, and thus winds up acknowledging the liberating power of comedy. This power may be potentially dangerous or questionable; the prologue has to defend it from various perspectives, and the tragic and threatening aspects of playmaking and impersonation are obvious in the *Amphytruo* myth. Such danger is unacceptable to the epilogue. The epilogue therefore discredits not only a former ritualistic convention (the Catholic transubstantiation) but also a new logic of playing: with its authoritarian attitude the epilogue tries to negate the performative power of play in general, rooted in an uncontrollable communal experience — and the community's urge to expose itself to that experience through comedy.

To summarize, Jupiter's role-playing in the myth is not comic and lacks a theatrical quality. Plautus's play adds to the myth a metadramatic mirror through

its comic plot. In other words, Jupiter's role-play becomes doubly theatricalized by being included in a play and by being doubled in the role-play of his servant in the new comic plot. The comic plot merges theatrical acting and impersonation in general. While through the comic plot theatrical acting necessarily makes possible the threat of inauthenticity — and this potential inauthenticity is precisely what the epilogue of *Jack Juggler* condemns as deception — the joy it generates invites and relies upon the audience to validate it.

If the play wished to convey the lesson of its epilogue — that is, to call attention to the dishonest, deceptive elements of social and theatrical play — it should not have relied on Plautus's addition to the myth in his *Amphitruo* since that comic plot thematizes the need for the audience's willing participation in maintaining social performance and thus the values of the community. Tension arises from the staged conflict between the communal experience of the audience — the experience arising from the event of witnessing a comic performance — and the authoritative interpretation of that performance by the epilogue, an interpretation which is certainly not in line with the prologue's presentation and possibly also not in line with the communal, liberating experience of watching a comedy. Should we accept what the epilogue suggests, disregarding the mimetic convention of playful impersonation, we would find ourselves deceived by the prologue in much the same way that Jack deceived Jenkin, and our emotional investment with watching the comedy would prove inauthentic in retrospect.

Similar to its source *Amphitruo*, *Jack Juggler* presents the moment when ritual gives way to mimetic play, and thus playing emerges as a deliberate, shared choice the audience makes to openly support what has been hidden and unreflected upon up until the epilogue — the unpredictable potential for change in any performance. As Alexander suggests, a performative act lies at the heart of all ritual.³¹ This element may result in readings and experiences that entangle the potential joy of role-play with deceptive presentations of the self commonly seen as a threat in rapidly urbanizing early modern communities. Both the epilogue, and readings of the play as eucharistic satire, trivialize the deeply powerful and complex aspect of the performative element in playing — one that undoubtedly has the alarming potential to transform the familiar universe, and one that I see present in both Plautus's play and *Jack Juggler*. Both the epilogue and overly reductive readings of *Jack Juggler* see the comic playing as sugaring 'the pill of edification',³² rather than as offering an opportunity for metadramatic as well as communal reflection, displaying general dilemmas about social role-play, and showing the comic and tragic aspects of these dilemmas as ultimately intermingled, 'between earnest and game' (540).

Notes

In memory of Betsy Walsh

This article started out as a paper at the 2019 SAA conference in Washington DC for the seminar Tudor Performances convened by Jessica Winston. I am grateful to all participants for the inspiring discussions and suggestions, especially to Andrew Sisson. I am greatly indebted to Kent Cartwright for commenting on various versions. The two anonymous readers and the editors of *Early Theatre* provided invaluable insights and suggestions.

- 1 'As this trifling enterlud that before you hath bine rehersed / May sygnifye sum further meaning if it be well serched' (998–9). Parenthetical citations reference line numbers in Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes* (Cambridge, 1982).
- 2 David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge MA, 1968), 124–6, <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674734364>. Paul Whitfield White thinks that if the epilogue was a later addition, it is Marian rather than Elizabethan; see White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1993), 125–6.
- 3 Bartlett J. Whiting, *Proverbs in the Earlier English Drama* (Cambridge MA, 1938), 198–201.
- 4 Beatrice Groves, "One man at one time may be in two placys": *Jack Juggler*, Proverbial Wisdom, and Eucharistic Satire', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 27 (2014), 40–56.
- 5 F.S. Boas, *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (1918), quoted in Groves, "One man", 40. Interestingly, the line quoted in Groves's title and considered by all modern critics as a major proof of the play's critique regarding the doctrine of transubstantiation comes from the Plautine version, as Groves also points out.
- 6 Peter Happé, 'Theatricality in Classical Comedy and the English Interlude: *Jack Juggler*', *European Medieval Drama* 16 (2012), 99–113, 103 and 104, <https://doi.org/10.1484/j.emd.5.103763>.
- 7 *Ibid*, 105.
- 8 *Ibid*, 104 n 7.
- 9 Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy', *Sociological Theory* 22 (2004), 527–73, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511616839.002>.
- 10 Plautus, *Amphitryon*, trans. Constance Carrier, in *The Comedies*, ed. David R. Slavitt and Palmer Bovie, vol. 1 (Baltimore, 1995).

- 11 A Medieval French version predating *Jack Juggler* already cut the two-layered plot in favour of the servant bit. See Hans Robert Jauss, 'Poetik und Problematik von Identität und Rolle in der Geschichte des Amphitryon', in *Identität*, ed. Odo Marquard and Karlheinz Stierle (München, 1979), 213–53. Dryden's adaptation (based on Molière's version) exploits the play's implicit criticism of deception not against Catholics but against Protestants; see Peter Thomson, 'Sound City Jests and Country Pretty Jests: *Jack Juggler* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*', in *Interludes and Early Modern Society*, ed. Peter Happé and Wim Hüskén (Amsterdam, 2007), 315–30, 315, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401205894_015. The troubling ontology of Alcmena's affair with Jupiter in her husband's guise became the central question in a German Romantic version by Kleist; see Ervin Török, *Elmozdult Képek: Nyelvi kép és megértés Heinrich von Kleist műveiben* (Budapest, 2015), 185–230.
- 12 Even if we suppose that the epilogue was not part of an earlier version of *Jack Juggler*, Caraway's farewell would end the drama with a somewhat melancholy note as he draws attention to the danger of losing one's identity: 'I praye God geve you all good nyght / and send you better hape and fortune / Then to lesse your selfe homward as I have don' (990–2).
- 13 For an example of the danger involved in an entertainer/vice mocking an actual monarch, Henry VIII allegorically represented as Jupiter, see Greg Walker's discussion of Heywood as Merry Report, the vice in *The Play of the Weather*; Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and Henrician Reformation* (Oxford, 2004), 100–19, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199283330.001.0001>.
- 14 Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), 45. James explains the ludic qualities of the plays involve 'the world of mime, mumming, carnival and the rituals of reversal' (45).
- 15 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. 'conveyance', especially I/2/a and I/9/b.
- 16 Douglas L. Peterson, 'The Origins of Tudor Comedy: Plautus, *Jack Jugeler*, and the Folk-Play as Mediating Form', in *The Work of Dissimilitude*, ed. David G. Allen and Robert A. White (Newark, 1992), 105–15.
- 17 This is the opinion of Peter Happé, 'Theatricality in Classical Comedy', as well as Peter Thomson, 'Sound City Jests'; Thomson, nevertheless, allows for the possibility that the epilogue is a later addition.
- 18 The vice as chief corrupter and impersonator of the deception attributed to Catholic priests appears explicitly in Bale's plays; see Happé, 'Theatricality in Classical Comedy', 111.
- 19 Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater* (Baltimore and London, 1978), esp. 73–84.

- 20 Both Happé and Axton read this as introducing Jack's devilish associations and conjuring. See Axton's notes to the play, on line 108, in Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 185 and Happé, 'Theatricality in Classical Comedy', 111. For Beatrice Groves, "'One man'", 49, the same line 'implicitly suggests the anti-Catholic satire that priests believed they could "trick" God into a wafer'.
- 21 From a structural point of view Master Boungrace and Dame Coye correspond to Amphitruo and Alcmena, but the connections are loose. Rather than embodying Plautus's couple who remain chaste to their best intention, in *Jack Juggler* their moral behaviour is dubious, referred to by Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, 125, as 'modest courtly hedonism'.
- 22 Sosia's truthfulness is not impeccable either: just like Jenkin, he prepares to narrate a fiction to his mistress and rehearses the lie that he is to tell when he arrives to the house. Like the entertaining miles gloriosus, he plans to share the news of the battle as if he participated in it.
- 23 While not equating Jenkin's sins with the relative innocence of the servant in the Plautine version, Peterson ('The Origins of Tudor Comedy', 110) sees the scapegoating aspects of the play: 'Jack's "mad pastime" continues to serve the communal function of scapegoating games in the native festive drama: it exacts justice upon an individual who violates the mores of the community to which he belongs'.
- 24 Thomson, 'Sound City Jests and Country Pretty Jests', 318.
- 25 Ibid, 330.
- 26 Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, 18, also remarks on the similarity between Jack and Jenkin as versions of the vice. Whiting, *Proverbs*, 199, implies the same when surprised by the fact that Jenkin, rather than Jack, speaks most of the proverbs of the play.
- 27 Thomson, 'Sound City Jests and Country Pretty Jests', 220, highlights the fun in watching Jenkin's performance impersonating Alice, the maid, in lines 226–32.
- 28 Ibid, 330.
- 29 Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, 125, thinks that Caraway's name 'connotes his comic irresponsibility'.
- 30 In this interpretation I rely on the parallel drawn by Alexander between the birth of ancient Greek drama from ritual and the birth of Elizabethan drama performed in public theatres, with important roots in medieval ritual and Corpus Christi plays; see Alexander, 'Cultural Pragmatics', 527–73, esp. 533, 543.
- 31 Ibid, 534.
- 32 Groves, "'One man'", 41.

